



ALTADENA HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

Sustainability Issue

Where does the stuff in the Blue Bin go?

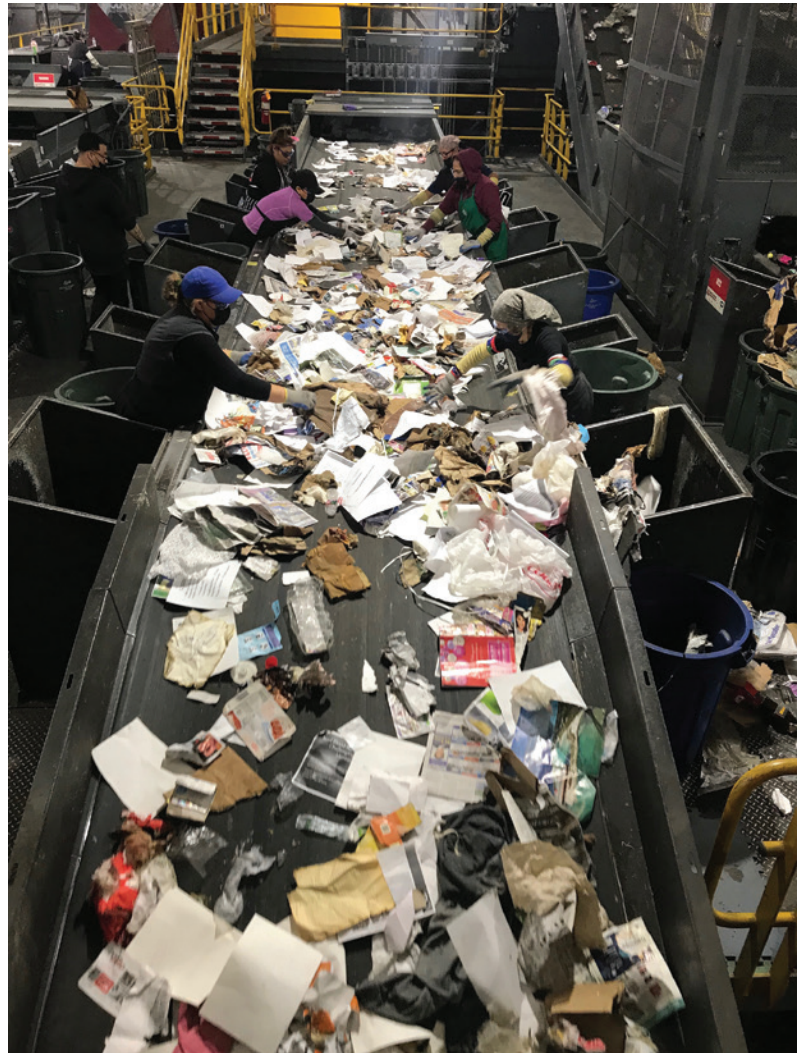
by Val Zavala

We see them every week. Those monster gray and red Athens trucks with giant metal arms that reach down to grab bins holding tons of garbage, yard waste and recycling Altadenans throw away each week. And the stuff in the blue bin, where does it go? What happens to all the milk cartons, cardboard boxes, junk mail, soup cans, milk jugs, pasta sauce jars that were in our kitchens for a short time then relegated to the blue bin? Is it really recycled? Yes, for the most part. Does most of it end up in landfills? Not in Athens' case. Does it go to China? Not anymore.

What follows is just a bit of what Mark Goldschmidt, editor of this newsletter, and I saw when we took a tour of one of Athens' recycling centers. Leading the way was Brian Hunter, the Operations Manager and Jessica Aldridge, Director of Sustainability. If any of you have an opportunity to take a similar tour – do it! It will change your view of our consumerist society.

First, don't call it a "recycling center." Those in the business call it a "Merf" short for "Materials Recovery Facility" or MRF.

Athens has three MRFs. One in the City of Industry and two in Sun Valley. We visited one of the Sun Valley facilities, 17 miles west of Altadena, which opened in 2014. The facility is a huge LEED certified 80,000 square foot, three-story building full of roaring machines. Athens still needs more capacity, and is building a fourth MRF in Irwindale.



Sorting paper at 150 feet per minute at Athens' Sun Valley MRF

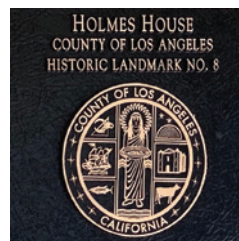
What happens to your stuff when it arrives at the MRF? Trucks arrive and drive onto the scales? A code reader identifies each truck, and automatically registers its route and payload. A detector next to the scales senses anything radioactive. It's rare, but does happen from time to time. Usually it's medical waste.

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Events



Holiday Celebration
Sunday, Dec 5th
2 PM to 5 PM



Historic Designation
Thurs Jan 20th 7 PM
Online Program
"In the Trenches"

Letter from the Chair

Sharon Sand



In its role as an advocate for the protection and preservation of Altadena, Heritage Board and committee members often spend time communicating with LA County officials, agencies, and utilities (Supervisor's Office, LA County Public Works, Southern California Edison, etc.).

It is a big part of the work we do that isn't always apparent, and sometimes done in collaboration with other community groups. The most recent example is the issue of street lighting. So, instead of the usual "Letter from

the Chair," I want to dedicate this space to print the letter that a group of coalition members, led by Heritage, recently sent to our 5th District Supervisor Kathryn Barger. It is about the conversion of Altadena's Street lights to LEDs, an issue we have been covering in this newsletter for a few years. As a result, community representatives recently had two virtual meetings with the County staff responsible for street lights and streetlight policies. The letter below spells out concerns of the Coalition and recommends a master plan and standards to protect Altadena's night lighting for decades to come.

September 26th, 2021

Kathryn Barger, Los Angeles County Supervisor, District 5
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

Dear Supervisor Barger,

We, the coalition of 11 Altadena groups below, appreciate your support for Altadena, that the Department of Public Works has elected to postpone the conversion of streetlights in Altadena, and that LED lighting will not be above 2700K. Your letter indicates to us that we might channel further comments through the Altadena Town Council, which the county will keep informed "as a courtesy." However, as a group that put in two years of effort into understanding and communicating with DPW and SoCal Edison about this important issue, we would like a coalition representative to have a seat at the table in further discussions, and in creating a master plan for Altadena's street lighting. Going only through the Town Council, which as a body had very little direct involvement in studying street lighting, does not best serve our community's interests.

We are also perplexed why there is no commitment in your letter to an Altadena master plan that would clearly lay out our future nighttime lighting. We have requested this since our first meeting with DPW, and have yet to receive any assurance that this is part of DPW's plan. Please respond to us on this specific issue. Because without a master plan, how are we as a community to assess what we will be getting? Things like the number and type of lights, whether lamps will be coated or diffused or dimmable? We can't measure/compare how much total energy or money will be saved with the new lighting. These facts should be knowable, quantifiable, and public.

We are further concerned that 2700K is the planned standard for Countywide LED conversion. While appropriate for high traffic corridors, it is on the high end, and often well beyond what should be used near homes, parks, and other natural areas. Just as different types of signs and traffic signals are used on different types of streets (i.e. stop lights or stop signs), one size does not fit all when it comes to LED lighting. Prof. Darren Evans, of Newcastle University, who was part of

a study on street lighting, said: "Light pollution is one of the few causes of biodiversity loss that has easy [and immediate] solutions. We need a balance between protecting both public safety and wildlife, by ensuring that lighting is well designed, away from important habitats and switched on for limited times."

As we stated, we appreciate your attention to Altadena's unique position, surrounded by nature on three sides: Eaton Canyon, the National Forest and Hahamongna Watershed. In the coming LED conversion, we want to keep our nighttime lighting as close as possible to what we have had for decades. This can be achieved by specifying that new lamps away from main corridors are 2200Kelvin, have diffused diodes, and are amber coated. We have done significant research and studied other communities' conversions — our coalition of groups and businesses advocate for this type and level of lighting. We look forward to working with County staff and SCE in coming up with an Altadena lighting master plan .

We believe this is necessary, and we look forward to your continued support to keep this project on track. Our coalition represents the broadest swath of our community, and respectfully requests a place at the table on this very exciting project to which we've devoted so much time and energy.

Sincerely,

Sharon Sand, Chair Altadena Heritage
on behalf of our coalition members
Safe Streets Committee, Altadena Town Council
Altadena Heritage
Neighbors Building a Better Altadena
Altadena Chamber of Commerce
Softlight Altadena
Arroyo Seco Foundation
Stop the Glare
Altadena Rotary
Altadena Arts Coalition
Los Angeles Bat Rescue
Altadena Crest Trail Restoration Working Group

Integrating Rooftop Solar into our Grid

By Anthony Parr

The original Luddites were 19th century textile workers in England who sought to protect their livelihood by resisting the mechanization of their trade in the Industrial Revolution in the early 1800s. Weavers, out of work in a profession stretching back centuries, were enraged, and sabotaged the mechanical looms that were replacing their craft. That was a populist uprising. Today's Luddites are less likely to be found among workers than in powerful corporate interests that "have always done it this way" and see change as a threat to their bottom line and the interests of their shareholders.

Supported by legislation and enticed by tax credits many California residents have taken advantage of the program originally promoted by governor Schwarzenegger to encourage carbon neutral generation by home based solar collectors. Participants could deduct 30% of the cost of installing rooftop from their income taxes. Others, unable or unwilling to put out the \$20-30,000 to install solar panels, acquired them through rooftop lease agreements with third parties that reduced their monthly electric bill but required little or no upfront payment. Furthermore, California legislators made sure "net metering" arrangements would permit customers with solar panels to sell the power they generate back into the grid at the retail rate. The result has been a hugely positive community investment in clean energy and a significant source of power for the state.



Grid Issues

Domestic electricity generation poses significant challenges both to management of the power grid and to the business plans of the big energy utilities. The latter's latest response proposed slashing net metering rates by 80%, and imposing a monthly charge between \$55 and \$90 on all customers with solar panels. (See <https://www.solarreviews.com/blog/california-net-metering-changes>) These drastic measures were originally proposed in AB1139, a measure that was narrowly defeated in the California Assembly in June, but then immediately referred to the Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), an unelected body appointed by the Governor. The CPUC voted unanimously to support it; a final decision is expected in January 2022.

Corporate Luddites?

Are our electric utilities 21st century Luddites? Their grievances echoes modern post-industrial society where traditional trades have been adversely affected as new technologies transform working practices. Readers will remember the killing of the electric car by General Motors in the 1990s, and more recently attempts by the Trump administration to boost the coal industry and roll back environmental rules that facilitate oil and gas exploration in sensitive areas.

Small-scale rooftop electricity generation does create a problem in managing the power grid, because the amount of power in the grid must be balanced, and solar fades out at sunset, a time of high demand.

Domestic solar generation will require changes in how the guardians of the grid manage it, because they cannot control the amount of electricity produced from its scattered sources. As Gretchen Bakke puts it in her very useful book *The Grid, the fraying wires between Americans and their energy future*, the grid was "designed for the effective transit of power from a few massive producers to a wide scatter of users." She adds: "Home solar installations turn this logic on its head without

doing much to help reconfigure the grid." But the utilities have created their own difficulties through institutional inertia and poor planning. Bakke points out that when California passed legislation just five years ago to require 50% of electricity generation to come from renewables by 2030, utilities did not factor rooftop solar into the equation!

Stealing from the Poor?

Without dwelling on the bad faith involved with individual customers who invested thousands of their own dollars in solar, we should recognize the fallacy in the utilities' current argument for disrupting the policy intents of the past 15 years. They claim cutting back on customers' ability to sell energy back to the grid at the retail rate will take from the rich and give to the poor – that the poor now pay more because the rich pay less. The better-off may have been enthusiastic purchasers of expensive systems, but nearly half of all domestic solar installation, often through leasing arrangements, has been in households with median incomes. They will be particularly hard hit by monthly surcharges. The additional absurdity is that

Continued on page 8.

Where does the stuff in the Green Bin go?

By Mark Goldschmidt

On a cool and cloudy Saturday in late October, Athens Services staged one of its semi-annual “Community Give Backs” and dumped 20 tons of fragrant steaming compost on a Loma Alta Park parking lot. Athens welcomed Altadenans to help themselves and many of us avid gardeners did! We were cautioned that the stuff was “hot”, extremely fertile, and to be sure to mix it with soil at a 4 to 1 ratio.

Athens’ PR Director Ed Chen was there. I asked him “How do you create this marvelous stuff out of our yard waste?” Turns out it’s pretty complicated, and accomplished on a massive scale. About 100 tons per day of our clippings and weeds, combined with food waste from commercial sources, enter the composting facility in Victorville. There it is screened, picked over manually for inorganic rubbish, run under a magnet to remove metal, ground up, and set out in windrows where it is thoroughly wetted. There it sits for a few days to mellow, getting tossed around from time to time by a huge machine, until it’s ready for the “Positive Aerated Static Pile Composting System,” a vast concrete pad perforated with holes every few feet. Big fans drive air through

these holes into the debris. Decomposition, aided by a steady flow of air from beneath, heats the mass to a minimum of 131 degrees Fahrenheit for 72 continuous hours to kill pathogens and seeds. Temperature, pH, and other factors are continually monitored, nutrients added when necessary, and when it is all balanced and cooked to a turn, it is re-screened and set out to cure for 30 days or so before going off to market. Most is sold for agricultural use, and a bit is given to communities Athens serves.

This process takes place according to many regulations and ordinances under the watchful eyes of composting experts and county officials; the finished product is certified organic by OMRI (the Organic Materials Review Institute). Athens is currently ramping up facilities to prepare for the enactment of California State Senate Bill 1383, which requires all restaurants, food service providers, and distributors to send edible food waste to a facility like Athens’ Victorville facility by January 1st 2022. Restaurants, caterers, cafeterias, etc., will have to comply by January 1st 2024. When will we be asked to contribute our food waste? Ed Chen says they are working on that.



Avid gardeners loading up on compost at an Athens “Community Give Back.”

Map Your Neighborhood

By Anne Nowlin, Altadena MYN Chairperson

“People, not kits. If you really want to be ready for the next big earthquake, forget the earthquake kit and go talk to your neighbors.”

– Lucy Jones, June 12, 2021 Los Angeles Times.

Altadenans have a long history of working together to help one another. Our community has experienced wildfires, mudslides, earthquakes, power outages and, most recently, a pandemic. We have survived these disasters with the help of a strong response system and a sense of resilience. But imagine a disaster of far greater magnitude. Altadena sits on a major transverse fault, ever under threat of a major earthquake, one that could knock out utilities we depend on—water, power, gas, phone. And, no counting on our fire department, power company, water companies, or sheriffs. All of our first responders will be immediately overwhelmed.

When every-day life is completely turned upside down and havoc reigns it will be VERY good to have a plan. This is where Map Your Neighborhood (MYN) can be a life saver, literally. MYN is a disaster preparedness plan for groups of individuals and families in homes in close proximity, and in apartment buildings.

Here’s how MYN works: one or more people act as “coordinator(s)” for their block or apartment building, and call a meeting of neighbors at their home. An Altadena MYN volunteer is there to explain a basic plan for working together before, during, and after a major disaster. The volunteer goes over basic do’s and don’ts when an earthquake strikes, hands out literature, acts as facilitator, and initiates a group discussion about personal and group earthquake preparation. Typically, 10-20 households

attend the meeting where they agree on a location where all who can will gather once the shaking stops. The group will confer and decide on what needs to be done. Some will check on vulnerable neighbors, others may provide first aid, check for gas leaks, listen to radios for emergency information, and do whatever else is needed.

Yes, survival kits are important; we will all need shelter, water, food, and emergency supplies. But as Lucy Jones said, it will be the relationships that will sustain us and hasten our recovery.

The long-term goal is for Altadena to continue to prosper as a community. It will be up to us, as citizens of this town, to make it happen. If you and your family are warm, dry and have food and water, you are more likely to stay and rebuild your life here in Altadena.

Altadena MYN committee members are all volunteers who believe that a community prepared for disaster is a strong community. Since 2017, approximately 18 % of residents of Altadena have participated in MYN. We need more.

If you are ready to get prepared for “the Big One” (and, as a bonus, meet your neighbors), email AMYN at mynrsvp2@gmail.com. Leave your name and phone number;

we will contact you and get you started. If you want to know if an MYN group already exists in your immediate area we will happily put you in touch with your block coordinator. Please check us out on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ALTMYN/>

For more from our local seismologist, musician, and author, Lucy Jones, listen to the NPR podcast, *The Big One: Your Survival Guide* at <https://www.npr.org/podcasts/674580962/the-big-one-your-survival-guide> Read the full LA times article by Lucy Jones at <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-06-12/earthquake-preparedness-tips-lucy-jones>



Our Endless River of Waste

By Mark Goldschmidt

I would love to know when regular trash hauling service began in Altadena. Former Historical Society chair, Jane Brackman, told me that before the War it was the Altadena Historical and Beautification Society, and that its main beautifying function was to remove trash dumped in the town’s many vacant lots. We own a 1923 house, an old trash burner graces the back of our lot, and I am forever unearthing old bottles and great quantities of broken glass and crockery in our garden. Things have evolved.

Ten years ago supervisor Michael Antonovitch signed an agreement making Athens Services the sole authorized curbside refuse hauler for Altadena. In return Athens promised a brand new fleet of natural gas powered trucks, rolling bins, bulky item pickup, customer outreach, and quite a lot more. Fees could only be raised in steps according to a formula. It was a good deal for Altadena.

Fees went down by more than a third. Rather than three different haulers with stinky diesel trucks traversing every neighborhood every day, now we had only one day of noise a week.

I have long wondered just what happens to our refuse every week, and was excited to join Val in an excursion to a state-of-the-art, highly automated recycling facility that mines our discards for marketable materials. We have shared what we learned in this newsletter; no one should ever take for granted those trucks that disappear our trash every week. Once it leaves our streets, it enters another world of logistics, technology and people. The technology at the Athens MRF (Materials Recovery Facility) was amazing, and the people we met impressed us; all were clearly dedicated and deeply knowledgeable about the surprisingly complex field of solid waste management.

Owen Brown Gravesite Committee — Progress despite lack of budget!

By Michele Zack

Abolitionist John Brown failed to spark a slave rebellion in his 1859 raid of the US Armory at Harpers Ferry, but his attempt is often referred to as “the first battle of the Civil War.” His son Owen participated, was the raid’s last survivor, and is buried on a hilltop that overlooks Altadena’s La Viña housing development, Millard Canyon, and the Meadows neighborhood. This site and associated history is being preserved by the Owen Brown Gravesite Committee; we are overseeing the conditions La Viña’s developer Cantwell Anderson agreed to (basically a land swap plus cash) in exchange for building permits from the County.

We have been meeting since April 1, 2021. The developer purchased the 6-acre gravesite in 2017 (to be placed in a land conservancy) and committed further to provide \$300,000 for educational programs and site improvements once he gains permission to build 18 final homes in La Viña’s six-acre “donut hole” originally zoned for a school. A school never happened in the 20 years since La Viña’s first 272 homes were built, the change in use required new permits.

In these eight months, the most surprising thing is how much our committee has accomplished despite the Community Benefit Account not yet being funded. This is because Cantwell Anderson is still working on gaining final permissions for the project. (The situation of construction permits taking longer than anticipated is something many can relate to!)

It is a tribute to the cooperation and good faith existing between the Committee and developer Tim Cantwell that the latter has advanced \$13,000 to restore the gravesite and pay contractors for initial work. This amount will be deducted from the \$300,000 commitment his company made when he receives final permissions and funds the Community Benefit Account. It is a situation LA County Department of Regional Planning (DRP) — which supports our Committee by running ZOOM meetings, documenting them and other business, and administrating the Community Benefit Account — has never seen before: a developer advancing money “on trust.”

So what have we achieved so far? Last summer the physical gravesite was restored, and Owen’s original gravestone returned. This restoration was also completed through cooperation, this time between the Owen Brown Committee and Save The Altadena Trails (STAT), the group that successfully sued a former gravesite owner over public access to it back in 2003-04. In the final adjudication, STAT gained the legal right to place a monument on a sloping promontory, Little Roundtop, Owen’s final resting place. At that time, the original gravestone was missing (see

altadenaheritage.org Fall Winter 2018 Newsletter for full story).

STAT is still represented by attorney Paul Ayers, who volunteered to find the correct spot to put the gravestone that had been kept in a secure location since its recovery in 2012. He is an expert in “forensic photography,” and used the technique of lining up ridgelines (which change little) from archival photos of Owen’s gravesite to determine its original location. A challenge was that the hillside has eroded slightly since Owen’s burial in 1889, and his head (and headstone) would have been in an awkward downhill position without mitigation. Altadena Heritage volunteer Mark Goldschmidt worked with the contractor in designing an unobtrusive low retaining wall, back filled with soil, to create level ground for the restored grave.

More major progress is that our Supervisor, Kathryn Barger has agreed to “co-nominate” Owen’s gravesite (with our Committee) as an LA County Landmark as further protection against development. Altadena Heritage first applied for this status in 1989 and was turned down! Times have changed, but we are taking no chances this time — and preparing a thorough application under the direction of our Project Historian Dr. William Deverell of USC and Sian Winship, a historic restoration specialist. Once the gravesite becomes a

County Landmark, State and National designations will possibly be pursued.

We’re also in discussions with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to take possession of the site, and guarantee care and public access in perpetuity to it.

A very supportive partnership with Pasadena Unified School District has allowed us to move forward in planning teacher training so students will learn about the abolitionist hero buried in our midst. Anchoring this training and classroom experience will be an exciting documentary film relating the Brown Family story and the civic project of restoring Owen’s gravesite. Altadena filmmaker Pablo Miralles has done preliminary work (with footage of the triumphant return of the gravestone and an interview with Harriet Tubman’s descendant!) and will complete the film once the Community Benefit Account is funded.

Our Committee consists of four volunteers. Diane Marcussen represents the Altadena Town Council; Marietta Kruells our trails community; John Burton, the Meadows neighborhood; and me, Michele Zack, Altadena Heritage. More community partners are in the works: Mountainview Mausoleum and Cemetery and Altadena Historical Society also look forward to collaborating with us to ensure this history is never lost.



Original Gravesite 19th Century.



Gravesite 21st Century with Larry Wilson of the Star News.

Altadena Tree Committee

By Mark Goldschmidt

Board member Anne Chomyn, a retired Caltech research scientist, thinks a lot about climate change, and particularly how it affects Altadena. Heat from the sprawling, paved-over LA Basin that blows up against our mountain backstop can raise temperatures 5-10 degrees above normal, and “normal” is already hot. After a little research, Anne found that the single most effective mitigation measure we can take is to increase our living canopy. Trees make cool shade, their respiration cools hot, dry air; added benefits are beauty, carbon sequestration, and air filtration.

So, two years ago Anne formed the Altadena Heritage Tree Committee to educate the people of Altadena about the need for trees, and to promote the establishment of a true urban forest. Last year she organized a “Tree Giveaway” event, and prepared for this by engaging Dr. Jerrold Turney, a research botanist and plant pathologist recently retired from LA County Arboretum, to give a series of three on-line workshops. The first workshop, “Right Tree, Right Place” addressed what to consider in selecting and siting a tree. The second went into detail on pruning and tree care. The third workshop demonstrated the proper way to plant a tree from a container. The workshops were recorded, they are super informative and fun to watch; available on our website; altadenaheritage.org.

Anne requested that everyone getting a free tree watch these workshops. A grant from Southern California Edison for combatting climate change enabled Anne to buy 40 trees for people to plant in their yards. It was a wonderful event, people picked up their trees and waved to old friends (we were still in full Covid). Those who received a tree were asked to send a photo of their planted tree. The Committee staged another Giveaway this year. There were 40 trees and 80 applicants; Anne, ever the scientist and a hard worker, checked every address on Google Earth and gave priority to those with the least existing tree cover.

Altadena needs trees to stay cool. Three cheers for the Tree Committee!

Note: A great friend of Altadena and trees is Norik Sahak, arborist and urban forester for Public Works. Not only is he sometimes able to intervene when trees are being badly pruned, he also has a budget to plant trees on street parkways – those are the strips of land next to streets that belong to the county but you have to take care of. (We got three beautiful 24” box California Peppers last year.) Call him or email, he will come and look at your situation and see if he can help. nsahak@dpw.lacounty.gov (818) 249 0248.



The Tree Committee plus one at this year's Tree Giveaway. From left Michele Zack, Kathy Musial, Lisa Heftman, Val Zavala, Anne Chomyn, and AH Member Michelle Huneven with Tatty Jane. Not pictured: Janet Castro, Mark Goldschmidt, Kathleen McDonnell, Rob Bruce, and Sharon Sand –Deb Squared Photo

Old Marengo Park Cleanup



Altadena Heritage staged another clean up day at Old Marengo Park on a recent Saturday morning. Altadena got the ball rolling with a design and a grant from Metropolitan Water on this little park on a piece of barren waste ground at Marengo and Woodbury 16 years ago. It was a fun get-together and man, we cleaned up!

Continued from page 3 - Integrating Rooftop Solar...

solar installation is now required in all new-build property, so first-time buyers and renters of these projects will be burdened not only by a substantial increase in construction costs, but also with a \$55-90 charge.

The proposal to cut the net metering rate by 40 to 80 percent and impose compulsory fees on solar users (NEM 3.0) looks very much like an attempt to curb the spread of rooftop solar. This will undoubtedly be its effect. The utilities will continue their plans for large solar farms in the desert, facilities that will certainly be needed to feed industry and other large-scale users. But to let their business plan dictate the range of energy choices now available, and deliberately discourage private investment in small-scale solar, is a retrograde move and a band-aid solution. What is needed is to rethink the ways in which power is generated and sold, and to recognize the value of decentralizing the system, making it more flexible and efficient.

Proper investment in battery storage, making it affordable for homeowners and possibly offering financing, will be crucial to solve the problem of unpredictable generation and supply. There are many hard questions to be answered and technical issues to resolve, but small-scale solar power is a proven contributor to a sustainable future and must continue to expand. Electricity production from renewable sources by homeowners and small businesses has been a great leap forward, both here and across the world, and we can't allow it to be curtailed by outmoded thinking and powerful vested interests.

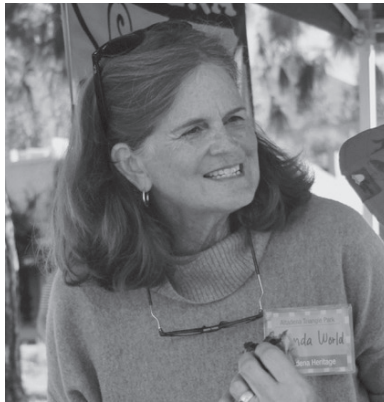
For more information, please see the factsheet produced by the Solar Rights Alliance (<https://www.solarrights.org/savecaliforniasolar>), and join the campaign.

In Memoriam - Linda World 1948 - 2021

Linda World passed away on June 1st. She was immediate past Chair of the Board of Altadena Heritage and many of you knew her. We announced her death in our July e-news, but as Linda was also a “print” journalist — and the most trusted and thorough proofreader of this newsletter — we want to honor her memory in these pages, too. She labored over them conscientiously for years, we had many a discussion over commas and semi-colons, and she truly loved and took pride in its publication — the most in-depth coverage of Altadena’s important issues available. She worked closely with Debbie Collins of Ms Dragon Print and Copy to get newsletters printed and mailed, and we called this newsletter (with irony) “Altadena’s paper of record,” because of the paucity of media coverage of our town.

Linda was the kind of person anyone would want on the team — when a job needed doing, she stepped up. A member and volunteer since 2006, in 2014 she joined Altadena Heritage’s Board after retiring as Senior Editor for the IEEE Computer Society, where she formerly had been founding managing editor of IEEE Internet Computing (1997-2001.) The year she joined our board, she led the committee attaining the years-long goal of migrating our organization’s architectural database from its outdated platform to a stable, user-friendly one. Linda continued her work on the Altadena Heritage Architectural Database (AHAD) throughout her time on the board, and beyond. Her husband Martin Zacks also served a few years on the board (at her prodding!), including time as treasurer — and so her entire household was devoted to Altadena Heritage’s work.

Linda served as Vice-Chair of the Board in 2015, Chair in 2016 and 2017, and Secretary in 2018 and 2019. She stepped up as Chair at a crucial time, when no one else was angling for the job and new leadership was needed. The life of an all-volunteer non-profit requires such heroes to survive.



During her tenure as chair, AH led fundraising and design efforts on the re-do of Altadena Triangle Park, and participated on the small committee with reps from the Town Council and Chamber of Commerce that designed the Welcome to Altadena monument and pole signs.

She was also a writer, and in the science issue (November 2014), she worked with long-time, beloved board member Richard Davies to write a great article: *Settling In After World War II*. Michele Zack relates that “She had a special bond with Richard, and mentioned to me several times that with [husband] Martin on one side of her, and Richard on the other at board meetings, she somehow got through them as chair!” Linda was born July 31, 1948, in Twin Falls Idaho. She went to Whitman College in Walla Walla Washington, and was a technical editor for Boeing in Seattle for seven years before moving to Los Angeles and working 20 years for the IEEE Computer Society. She and Martin were married for 33 years, and lived together happily for 40. They moved to Altadena 20 years ago. Both played in the Intercity Co-Ed Softball League of Southern California. She was a great batter, but retired due to injury in 2018. She and Martin could be found Monday mornings, playing at Farnsworth Park.

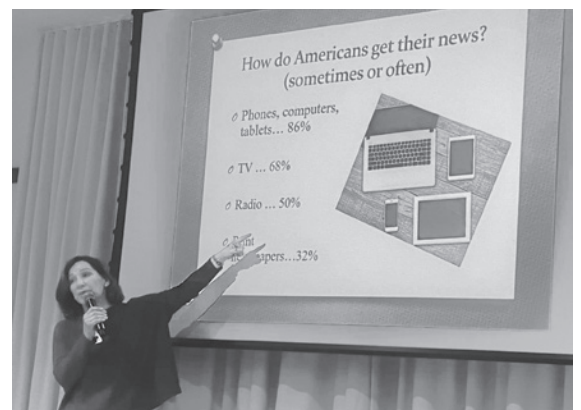
Linda had a daughter, Heather, from a previous marriage, married to Dan Lanir, and two grandchildren Ben (currently at UCLA) and Cecilia, still in high school and living with her parents in San Francisco. The family and near and far flung friends gathered in Altadena for a beautiful memorial on June 23. Several Altadena Heritage Board members attended and shared memories of Linda’s wonderful sense of humor, her no-nonsense attitude, and her service to our community.

We will miss Linda, whose death saddened us all, and surprised us — perhaps because she never seemed old.

From Walter Cronkite to Fake News

Val Enthalls at MonteCedro

Altadena Heritage Board Member Val Zavala, a journalist and 30-year KCET TV news anchor, spoke to MonteCedro residents in November about her career, and changes she’s witnessed in the way news is consumed over these years. Titled “From Walter Cronkite to Fake News,” her lively presentation was enthusiastically received. Val included humorous (but scary!) digital clips that clearly illustrated how easy it is to create a fake “news room” that distorts facts and spreads disinformation. She answered questions about how to spot, and not be fooled by, fake news circulating in the echo chamber of the Internet. Altadena Heritage has been a Community Partner of MonteCedro since it opened, providing programs for residents every year and sharing our newsletter. Several residents have joined, and many contributed to the re-do of Altadena Triangle Park.



Where does the stuff in the Blue Bin go? *Continued from page 1*

The truck then enters a cavernous indoor area and dumps its load on the “tipping floor”. A tractor-like machine with a big “claw” fluffs up discarded stuff that has become compacted. Workers spot and remove hazardous waste and large non-recyclable items. Would you believe that people have actually put bowling balls in the recycling?! This is not only stupid it’s dangerous, when tipped from the truck it becomes a 10-pound projectile.

After a preliminary sorting, the rest is put on a conveyor belt. Since many people put their recycling in plastic bags, the first stop is the “Bag Breaker.” Rotating rubber discs rip open the plastic bags to let the recyclables out. Please, keep your recyclables loose in the bin. Bagging them just makes for more work, and plastic bags are not recyclable at the MRF where they are known as “tangles” that clog machines.

Separating Materials

As the recyclable material continues its trip up a big conveyor belt the next step is to separate cardboard. Big discs turn and allow the small or heavier items like metal cans to fall below. The larger, lighter cardboard continues on and will eventually be “baled” into large cubes of for shipment. It will be made into new packaging.

After that, containers and paper are separated – they call paper “fiber.” This is where humans come in. Athens employs 1,730 people, many of whom work at the MRF’s sorting lines, tossing out contaminated fiber like wet paper or greasy pizza boxes.

The belts move at 150 feet per minute, so workers – mostly women — sitting next to the line have to move fast. The smell is not terrible but not great. It’s rather “sour.” Throughout the facility, and especially at all openings to the outside and at roof vents Athens uses misters to keep smells and dust down.

It is noisy. I asked if employees on the line were allowed to listen to music or podcasts on ear-buds while they work. No, unfortunately that’s not allowed. If an alarm goes off or there is another danger, they need to hear it.

Next, the line passes under powerful magnets that capture cans and other ferrous metals. Lightweight aluminum cans are winnowed with a blower, then go to a crusher. By the way, it’s best if you do not flatten your aluminum cans. The sorters work best with uncrushed cans.

Now for plastics. These are tricky, there are so many kinds. You have probably noticed those tiny triangles imprinted on the bottom of plastic containers; they have a number in the middle from 1 to 7. With the help of a magnifying glass you can read them. But how do they “read” them at a MRF? The answer – optics. Light beams don’t read numbers. They read the composition of the plastic in everything from water bottles to shampoo containers. If

you are a numbers reader like me, note that 1, 2 and 5 are the most re-useable. Number 7 is not good. Number 4s should go back to the store. Styrofoam is not recyclable.

Toward the end of the process, a system using artificial intelligence is able to identify desirables that may have slipped through the system. As Athens explains it: “Max-AI employs multi-layered neural networks, along with a vision system, to ‘see’ and identify objects similar to the way a person does.”

Final step - Baling time

After a long trip through bag busters, conveyor belts, weight separators, optic detectors, magnets and human sorters the final “recovered” materials are ready to be pressed into bales. This happens on the lower level where the useable stuff has collected in various bins. Cardboard is pressed into huge bales then loaded into containers and trucked to domestic customers or to a port where it is shipped to other countries to be recycled.

Off to Market

Who buys the recycled material? This is a KEY question. Finding buyers, or “markets,” for the tons of recycled material is one of the biggest challenges that Athens and all waste service companies face. Of the 1200 to 1500 tons that arrive daily, 50

to 60 per cent is normally “marketable.” The bales of cardboard, cans and plastic are a commodity, but the market can shift. Constant change is part of the challenge. For example, for decades China took a huge amount of America’s cardboard. The ships that brought Chinese goods to the Port of Los Angeles would return with tons of American cardboard. But in 2018 China suddenly announced it would not take any more American cardboard. (Contamination was a big problem.) That left America’s recyclers having to scramble for new customers.

Winnowing aluminum cans.



Fortunately, part of the problem has been eased with an increase in demand for cardboard for home delivery by retailers like Amazon. Glass and much plastic is recycled domestically. Athens says it was not hit too hard by China’s new policy, since most of its cardboard was uncontaminated and still desirable. Athens’ international customers include Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Korea, and Taiwan.

Aluminum and metal are very marketable. The challenge comes with plastic. Trying to find a market for plastics is tough because they contain so many different ingredients. Plastics are

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hard to break down and process into new products, so it's often cheaper and easier for companies to use new virgin plastic. It's hard to avoid plastic, but the people at Athens let us know they think we should all try!

Doesn't recycling just end up in landfills?

Some of it. Athens says 50 to 60 percent of what they receive is recovered for reuse and a new life (less on rainy days when much comes in wet and unusable). Yes, some of what customers put into the recycling should have gone to landfills in the first place, and now it has to be hauled to one from the MRF.

Change is ahead

Waste management is always evolving, it's not just market forces, it's also legislation. The next big step for Altadena residents will be organic waste recycling. This means that soon our food scraps can go into our green bin along with yard and landscaping debris. Watch for an announcement of this change!

All this costs money

Athens wouldn't say what it costs to run one MRF for a year, but it seems likely that the materials mined from our waste cover only a fraction of that. Most of the money comes from Athens' 250,000 customers, like me. In 2015 I paid \$230 for a full year of service. In 2021 my bill will go up to \$392. (I have no special discount.) Over those seven years my bill rose an average of \$23 or 8% a year, which is well over the inflation rate.

The letter we get from Athens each year says the increases are due to "changes in the Consumer Price Index, fuel prices, and solid waste disposal fees... These rates were calculated in accordance with the terms of the franchise agreement and reviewed by the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works." Athens' contract is with the County of Los Angeles and covers service to more than fifty communities in various cities

As I said, I don't see these costs going down in the foreseeable future.

The big lesson learned

Separating our recycling is a complex process involving a series of chutes, conveyor belts, tunnels, detectors, bins, blowers and some very sophisticated technology – plus human beings.

When I saw the tremendous amount of work and energy required I realized how important it is to REDUCE the amount of packaging we consume in the first place. Avoid products in plastic containers like cherry tomatoes or grapes. Buy in bulk whenever possible. Get rid of your plastic food containers and use glass jars for storing your food.

In short, send as little as possible to the MRF in Sun Valley. What you do send, be sure it is recyclable. Please, no bowling balls. A super useful website for all your recycling questions: canirecyclemy.com

To watch video of everything I've described go to: <https://athensservices.com/sun-valley-mrf/>

Recycling Dos & Don'ts

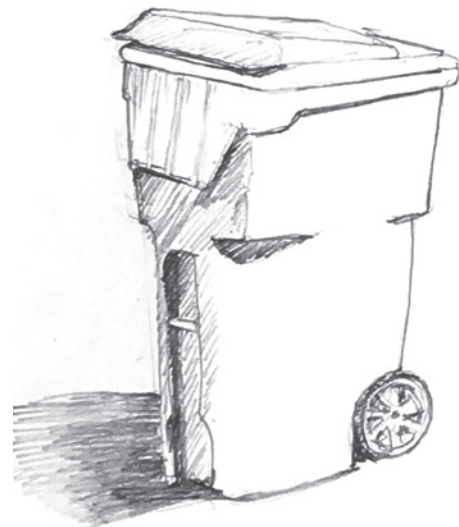
Please do:

- Rinse and clean food debris from containers
- Empty all contents from bottles
- Remove lids from glass jars, then put lids in recycling
- Keep lids or caps on plastic bottles.
- Keep labels on beverage containers
- Broken glass ok to recycle (not window glass)

Please do not recycle:

- Batteries
- Bubble wrap
- Clothes, fabrics, pillows
- Cleaning Products
- Fluorescent Light Bulbs or Tubes
- Electronic Waste
- Hoses
- Paints, Solvents, and Thinners
- Plastic Bags
- Plastic Sheets or Tarps
- Pesticides or Herbicides
- Paper" to-go coffee cups (They are lined with plastic.)
- Pet waste
- Pool Chemicals
- Soiled or greasy cardboard or pizza boxes
- Straws
- Shoes
- Styrofoam and Styrofoam "peanuts"
- Window glass

For more details on what can and cannot be recycled go to <https://athensservices.com/recycling-guide/>





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Sunday December 5 from 2 to 5pm

Join us for our
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Register to attend at
altadenaheritage.org to receive event address.

Members attend for free and non-member guests can pay \$15 at the door. Please register to attend and remember that a valid Covid Vaccination Card will be required for entry.



BECOME A MEMBER

Choose one:

- New member Renewing member

Type of membership:

- \$25: Individual \$35: Household \$30: Senior Household
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Are you interested in volunteering?

- Yes! Contact me. Not at this time.

Name _____

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