

**PROPOSAL TO RENAME WEST VAN NUYS AS LAKE BALBOA
AND
MAKE OFFICIAL THE AREA CURRENTLY KNOWN AS LAKE BALBOA (CF # 06-2613)**

**Report of the Hearing Conducted by the
West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa Neighborhood Council
February 21, 2007
and Impact Statement**

Background Information

At one of the early WVN/LB NC meetings community stakeholders asked for assistance in extending the boundaries of Lake Balboa to include the rest of Van Nuys west of the I-405 Freeway. An ad-hoc committee on renaming was formed to look into the matter. The Los Angeles City Council adopted a policy on January 31, 2006 (Council File 02-0196), which provided a process for advocates seeking a name change for their community. A written application, including petitions with more than 630 valid signatures, was filed with the City Clerk to initiate the process of expanding Lake Balboa. Shortly after filing the City Clerk asked that the application be changed to include the existing Lake Balboa because there was no archival record of Lake Balboa ever being so named. In an email message, dated October 17, 2006, from Marisol Espinoza, District Director for Councilman Dennis Zine, she stated "I did some further investigating and found out that we did not introduce a motion to rename Lake Balboa. Councilman Zine did indeed write a letter instructing DOT to install signs at the boundaries of the community..."

The application was changed to include the "existing" Lake Balboa and re-filed. The City Clerk reviewed the revised Application for completeness, deemed it complete and date-stamped it as approved for filing on October 25, 2006

The City Clerk established a Council File and number, input the information into the Council File Index (CFI), and submitted the file for referral to the Education and Neighborhoods Committee. A six-month deadline for a public hearing was noted on the file for reference.

The City Clerk transmitted a copy of the Application Package to each of the following departments for review and comment: Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), Transportation, City Planning, Community Redevelopment Agency, Bureau of Engineering.

Our Neighborhood Council decided to hold the optional hearing on the matter and established the date of February 21, 2007 for the hearing. Methods for community notice of the meeting were approved by DONE, including posting (well ahead of the 72 hour requirement), flyers sent home via the local schools, direct delivery and mailing to over 300 businesses, and postcards sent to our established mailing list.

The Hearing

The hearing was held at Mulholland Middle School and was attended by approximately 160 stakeholders. The above background information was distributed and explained in more detail. Lynda Levitan, Field Deputy for Tony Cardenas (CD6), verified the fact that the current Lake Balboa community renaming was never officially filed. The entire hearing was digitally recorded.

Twenty-five people took the opportunity to speak, while another seventy-six filed written comment cards. In addition there were two written comments that were emailed to the Chair of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Renaming prior to the hearing. A signup sheet was provided for those wanting to join the Ad-Hoc committee and help write the report and impact statement. Nine people added themselves to the committee list.

The Post-Hearing Ad-Hoc Committee Meetings

Notice of the first Ad-Hoc Committee meeting to write the report was sent out via email and by phone call to those already on the committee and those additional stakeholders that signed up at the hearing.

At the first of two post-hearing Ad-Hoc Committee meetings, the written comments were analyzed and divided into categories of For the Proposed Expansion, Against the Expansion and For the Expansion with some limits or qualifications, and Neutral. From the checked boxes on the Speaker cards and committee members' notes those twenty-five speakers were divided into the same groups.

The arguments for the proposed name change (55) included:

- Gives area more recognizable geographic identity
- Improve sense of community & image
- Not be stepchild/orphan/lost in size of Van Nuys identity
- Logical boundaries consistent with WVN LB Neighborhood Council
- Improved services & response from L. A. City Council
- Greater political strength
- Inclusive and diverse community with a louder and stronger voice
- Proposed Lake Balboa will have more clout with 80 thousand stakeholders (40 thousand residents and 40 thousand workers) rather than 4 thousand residents (per Daily News article) or 3 thousand households.
- Improved property values in the long run
- By having the northeast corner of the geographic proposal, we become a full and complete community having residential, commercial, and industrial sectors. Proposed Lake Balboa would now be a town with everything – jobs, homes, renters, services, airport, small and large businesses, restaurants – not just a residential suburb.
- Addresses south of Victory to the L. A. River, including the Lake. They are in our city now, according to the United States Postal Service, already having the 91406 zip code.
- Lake Balboa would include the Lake called Lake Balboa as part of the community.
- Areas are the same residentially – both include single family interiors surrounded by multi-family high density dwellings along the arteries
- All are affected by the VNY Airport
- All have the same problems and need the same solutions

The arguments against the proposed name change (31) included:

- Threatens current property values – they will go down
- Inclusion of the Van Nuys Airport, with noise, congestion, and industrial complexes can only serve to reduce current property values.
- Want to maintain small, residential identity
- Keep nice single-family housing
- Against expansion because for fear of diluting and damaging positive image
- Would be adding undesirable area that is inconsistent with Lake Balboa
- If adding a scummy area, it defeats the purpose of creating Lake Balboa.
- Outside areas are crummy
- Includes high density, low income, crime ridden areas
- Do not want strip clubs and adult entertainment shops
- No benefits to adding industrial area. We don't receive their taxes; they add negativity, violence, and scum.
- No need to expand to include gang territory and run down houses.

Comments to Modify the Proposal (14) included:

Leave out Van Nuys Airport - it should remain a part of "old" Van Nuys
Exclude Van Nuys Airport and the northeast industrial areas
Expand Lake Balboa to include the actual "Lake Balboa" in Beilenson Park, but nothing else

There were three comments that were deemed "Neutral"

Additional Information about the proposed, geographically isolated, industrial northeast sector:

It would add to Lake Balboa:

Budweiser Brewery
Superior Industry – alloy wheel manufacturer
United Parcel Service
The Flyaway Bus Terminal
Van Nuys Industrial park
TV/Film Industry – Sound stages, location shooting, equipment rental
Aviation Industry –FAA, Airframe & Engine Maintenance/Service, Raytheon, Fixed Base Operators,
Avionics Manufacturers/Installers, and ancillary service companies
Bars, including Club 7557 and perhaps two "strip clubs"

The Ad-Hoc Committee then did some research into the area of concern listed in the arguments against the proposal. Crime information was gathered from the Senior Lead Officer in the eastern portion of the community and other reliable sources (See Appendix A: " Crime - West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa"). Information on Van Nuys Airport was compiled (See Appendix B: "Van Nuys Airport Information"). Real estate values were researched to see if the proposed expansion would decrease the value of the current Lake Balboa homes (See Appendix C: "Real Estate Values - West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa Area").

The second post-hearing Ad-Hoc Committee meeting notice was sent to all of the committee members via email and telephone calls. Additional stakeholders (not on the list of committee members) showed up at this second meeting. They were welcomed and brought up to date on the process and shared their concerns and knowledge of the renaming issue. The information on the areas of concern were shared and discussed. The Impact Statement was drafted which was felt to reflect a true picture of the effects of expanding the Lake Balboa area to include the rest of West Van Nuys.

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The Conclusion

The conclusion of the Ad-Hoc Committee is that concerns related to crime, property values, inclusion of an industrial area and Van Nuys Airport were not validated. In fact, they demonstrated a potential positive impact if the entire area were renamed "Lake Balboa".

Crime and gang activity in the whole area is similar and by working as a larger community along with the law enforcement agencies, there is a better chance to make significant reductions in both of those areas of concern.

Property values are more likely to increase in the entire area as a result of renaming. There is already a pattern of improvement and new construction of the multifamily dwellings along the major corridors.

Van Nuys Airport (which would remain Van Nuys Airport) is an asset and would likely be more responsive to a unified community surrounding it. The community would have more say in the plans for the airport redevelopment, including a proposed Museum of Flying.

The industrial sector is geographically isolated from the residential areas and provides a source of many quality jobs for our community.

Therefore, the Ad-Hoc Committee on Renaming recommends that the "Proposal to Rename West Van Nuys as Lake Balboa and Make Official the Area Currently Known as Lake Balboa" be sent on to the Los Angeles City Council by the Board of the West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa Neighborhood Council with a recommendation to support the proposal.

Impact Statement (To appear on the City Council Agenda)

After reviewing the results of the public hearing of the proposal to rename, it is the finding of the West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa Neighborhood Council that the community is in favor of being inclusive rather than exclusive and supports the renaming. This was expressed, both orally and in writing, by a large majority of those in the WVN/LB application area. Concerns related to crime, property values, inclusion of an industrial area and Van Nuys Airport were investigated. The findings did not validate such concerns. In fact, they demonstrated a potential positive impact if the entire area were renamed "Lake Balboa".

Appendix A: Crime – West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa

The LAPD in the West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa (WVN/LB) area is under the jurisdiction of two Senior Lead Officers, David Ham, who handles all of the Lake Balboa and much of the West Van Nuys area, and Ronald Carter who handles the part east of the Van Nuys Airport. During the time that the Ad-Hoc Committee on Renaming was researching the claims by some Lake Balboa residents at the hearing that crime is more rampant in the proposed expansion area, SLO Ham was on vacation.

Breakouts of crime statistics between the two areas are difficult, since one part of the community “melts” so easily into the other, and each is so completely affected by the other. While one usually thinks of ‘gang-bangers’ holed up in seedy apartment complexes, the truth of the matter is that many of these folks move into the “nicer” areas of residential communities, i.e., single-family homes and condominiums. Officer Carter believes this is often due to the influence of older family members, wanting to get their own children and grandchildren away from the affects of the “criminal” lifestyle in other areas of the city.

KNX1070 Radio Investigative reporter Michael Linder said, "Gangs are not limited to poor or minority neighborhoods."¹ LAUSD Police Chief Larry Manion stated, "Gangs are mobile so all of our schools, all of our communities around schools obviously have issues that they have to deal with on a daily basis, from the San Fernando Valley to San Pedro."²

While residents of Lake Balboa would like to think of themselves as isolated from the crime associated with areas to the east or west, this is NOT really the case. There is the familiar sound of helicopters hovering over homes, both during night and daylight hours, as police activity occurs on the ground nearby. Probably many residents have seen drug deals taking place within their own neighborhood, perhaps even on their very own street, or in the alleyways behind their homes, and at the local fast food restaurants.

Three people were shot to death recently in Lake Balboa (said to be by gang members). There was also a gentleman who was visiting the ATM in the West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa neighborhood and was shot while withdrawing money. There was a robbery at the local Jack-in-the-Box last year, and a murder at a local tattoo parlor. There was a gang murder of a young man on Balboa Blvd., just east of Birmingham High School last year, and Victory and Vanowen are used as “highways” by the ‘gang bangers’ traveling from the east valley to the west valley and back again.

In addition, there is graffiti that adorns walls and fences, buildings and vehicles in the area. It springs up overnight, and is a constant nuisance that must be dealt with on a day-to-day basis in the neighborhood. Whether put there by taggers, or by gang members themselves, the threats insinuated by the markings are no less intimidating and disturbing to those that live and work, or go to school or church in the area.

Cars and trucks are broken into and vandalized on almost a regular basis. Homes are broken into and precious possessions taken in broad daylight, terrifying the elderly and those who live alone.

And finally, there is a need to address the porno film operations being conducted not only in West Van Nuys, but also in some of the “nicer” areas of Lake Balboa.

There is crime here, no matter what the neighborhood is called; the crime is not going away until the stakeholders¹ choose to make it go away -- by working with each other, the law enforcement agencies, and the surrounding communities. Calling part of our neighborhood Lake Balboa and pretending that crime is over there in West Van Nuys is, at best naïve, and at worst extremely irresponsible, because it does not allow the problem to be addressed and it inhibits working to find solutions.

1,2 "Lure of Street Gangs." KNX 1070 Radio, CBS, 5 March 2007

There are some good things starting to happen in the WVN/LB area – some of the streets just west of the I-405 are beginning to “clean up their act” in terms of new construction and renovation. Our West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa Neighborhood Council is developing a strong “Land Use” Committee to work with developers in making sure that new projects planned for the area will be in keeping with the kind of neighborhood stakeholders want to live in -- not just those that will make a fast buck for a few folks who may never pass this way again once their development is finished.

There is now the chance to become a more wonderfully safe, healthy, prosperous, beautiful, vibrant and unified community in which to live. This is why a large majority of those providing oral and written comments at the WVN/LB NC hearing indicated they supported the application to rename the community to Lake Balboa.

Appendix B: VAN NUYS AIRPORT

Van Nuys Airport is the world's busiest general aviation airport and the 22nd busiest airport in the world. In 2006, with just two parallel runways, aircraft movements averaged 1,400 operations daily. By comparison, Los Angeles International Airport (with 4 runways) had roughly 1,700 operations a day.

The airport opened in 1928, and in 1929, Hollywood discovered the airport. Howard Hughes, Hoot Gibson, Cecil B. DeMille, Gene Autry and Wallace Beery were among the stars flying there, and soon the airport began hosting air races. Amelia Earhart set a new speed record out of this airport, and Howard Hughes' epic *Hells Angels* was filmed in part there in the 1930's, as was *Lost Horizon*, *Men With Wings* and *Test Pilot*. Additionally, hundreds of movies, television shows and commercials have been filmed at the airport. Episodes of the TV show *Alias*, and Season 5 of *24* were shot there. *Airwolf* used the hangars regularly.

In the 1940's, with the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Army purchased 163 acres of the airport and additional acreage to construct what became known as Van Nuys Army Air Field. Hollywood continued to use the airport for filming, and scenes from *Casablanca* were shot there.

In 1949, the city of Los Angeles purchased the airport from the War Assets Administration for a token payment of one dollar. The airport (envisioned as a base for Air Force fighter/interceptor planes to defend against a feared attack by Soviet-piloted bombers from Siberia in the late '40s) extended its runway (creating the tunnel on Sherman Way), leaving the airport with an extraordinarily long (8,000 ft!) runway for a general aviation field, an unintended legacy of the Cold War. In 1957, the airport was christened "Van Nuys Airport."

Today, more than 100 businesses are located on the 730 acre airport, which serves a variety of private, corporate and government aviation needs. VNY serves a vital purpose in reducing congestion and diminishing flight delays at Los Angeles International. It promotes business, and provides critical general aviation and emergency services. The airport also provides a base and maintenance facilities for fire, police, air ambulance, and search and rescue aircraft that serve the region. Most news helicopters from the Los Angeles area are based at Van Nuys Airport. In 1994, the area formerly occupied by the Air National Guard served as a critical operating site for the American Red Cross as it prepared thousands of meals to aid victims of the devastating Northridge earthquake.

While noise from the airport has been a major concern to neighbors, LAWA (Los Angeles World Airports) took a major step forward when it initiated a \$15-million residential soundproofing program in 2000. Approximately 1,050 dwelling units are eligible for this no-cost program to property owners.

A \$34-million bond project by the Los Angeles Fire Dept. is constructing permanent air operations and helicopter maintenance facilities on the former Air National Guard site. Hollywood celebrities, politicians, and business executives are known to use this airport because it offers them convenience and anonymity.

The airport provides a number of programs that benefit the region, including:

ACE – Aviation Career Education Academy, which is a free weeklong motivational program providing 20 high school students each year with a basic understanding of the aviation industry, plus general knowledge about VNY and LAX.

CAREER SCHOLARSHIPS – VNY partners with the San Fernando Valley Chapter of the Ninety-Nines, a nonprofit women pilots organization, to award aviation career scholarships, totaling tens of thousands of dollars since 1997.

ADOPT-A-SCHOOL PROGRAM – Through this program, VNY has “adopted” Gault Street Elementary School in Lake Balboa, which includes a weekly tutoring program, an annual Santa Fly-In during the holidays and special events participation. It has also worked with the local community to raise money and supplies for the school.

AIRCRAFT MECHANICS SCHOOL – Housed at VNY, this branch of the North Valley Occupational Center enables students to earn certification in general airframe and power plant mechanics. The program curriculum, approved by the FAA, consists of 45 subject areas to prepare students for a wide array of jobs in the aviation-aerospace industry.

MEDICAL FLIGHTS – VNY serves as a home base for both routine and emergency services, providing ramp/hangar space and maintenance facilities for police, fire and other City of L.A. helicopters. Specially equipped aircraft provide medical transport for relief to accident victims, hospital patients and those in need of life-saving transplant organs across the country. The airport’s former Air National Guard site still acts as a central staging area for large-scale emergency operations.

Economic Benefits of the Van Nuys Airport

- Contributes about \$1.2 billion annually to the Southern California economy.
- Supports over 10,000 jobs.
- Generates an annual earnings impact of approximately \$273 million.
- Generates taxes, rather than using tax monies, and produces \$73 million in state and local taxes annually by leasing space to a variety of tenants.

The airport creates, supports and attracts both aviation and non-aviation businesses in the Valley and Southern California. The airport property itself houses a major home improvement store, hotel, golf course complex and restaurants.

More than 300,000 visitors utilize the airport every year, flying on corporate, private and charter aircraft. Travelers appreciate the convenient urban location, and many spend money on local hotels, attractions and goods. The average expenditure per visitor is \$309, resulting in \$96.7 million per year for the economy.

Discussions are currently being held with Los Angeles World Airports involving possible redevelopment projects at Van Nuys Airport. These include, but are not limited to, the construction of a Flight Museum on airport property highlighting the colorful history of the Airport during its development, its wartime contributions, and its very large role in the entertainment industry. The inclusion of community meeting rooms, now sadly lacking in our area, are also being suggested.

The Airport is not going away! It is not going to change names! And though problems may exist for the residents living in close proximity to VNY, the benefits would seem to far outweigh the disadvantages of having such a prominent neighbor. And, as a community dedicated to the improvement of the ENTIRE area for ALL the stakeholders, the Airport can be a powerful ally, and as such, may well be more amenable to finding solutions.

In this day and age when, throughout the country, entire communities are literally dying from the loss of business, commerce and industry, the Van Nuys Airport should be looked at not as a detriment, but as a neighbor to be gratefully included within the boundaries of the Lake Balboa community. Stakeholders should work together on solutions to the problems, and on new and innovative ways to better our community through INCLUSION, rather than EXCLUSION of this wonderful resource!

Appendix C: Real Estate Values - West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa Area

Research on home values was performed by licensed Realtors in the area. The object was to compare home prices in the Lake Balboa area with the rest of the 91406 zip code, as well as neighboring communities to the east, north and west. The best way to determine what is happening is using the data of "Median Price Cost per Square Foot", because it is unaffected by the price, size, type, style, or location of homes within a given area. The formula is: Divide the "Total Sales Price" by the "Total Square Footage." This formula is the standard by which the real estate industry determines the "Base Value" of a property.

A comparison was done with 91406 (almost entirely in the proposed Lake Balboa), 91405 (Van Nuys east of Sepulveda Blvd.), 91335 (Reseda), and 91343 (North Hills) for the years 2004-2006.

The table below shows the changes over those three years.

Median Home Price per Square Foot by Zip Code

Year	Cost/Sq. Ft.	Rank	% Increase	Rank
Zip 91343				
2006	\$360	4	8.8%	2
2005	\$331	3	20.80%	3
2004	\$274	4	--	
Zip 91335				
2006	\$409	2	8.80%	2
2005	\$376	1	23.70%	2
2004	\$304	2	--	
Zip 91405				
2006	\$390	3	8.60%	4
2005	\$361	3	24.9%	1
2004	\$289	3	--	
Zip 91406				
2006	\$416	1	11.50%	1
2005	\$373	2	20.79%	4
2004	\$309	1	--	

Zip code 91406 (proposed Lake Balboa) has been number one in two of the three years and second in the other year in the Average Cost per Square Foot column using the above-mentioned formula. In 2006 it showed the greatest increase over 2005 (11.5%) of all these Zip code areas. It is the understanding of the realtors doing this research that most people in the real estate industry believed that January 2006 was when Lake Balboa's neighborhood was expanded from its original size to incorporated approximately 95% of the 91406 Zip code area.

Based on the above information it would appear that the perceived expansion of the Lake Balboa neighborhood has already had a positive effect on the value of homes in the 91406 Zip code area. This is contrary to the thoughts expressed by those opposed to the expansion at the WVN/LB Neighborhood Council hearing on February 21, 2007.