



Mar Vista Community Council



AGING IN PLACE

Mar Vista Community Council

Thursday, November 19, 2015

6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Windward School Room #800

11350 Palms Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90066

[See campus map for room location and parking here](#)

Co-Chairs – Sherri Akers, Tatjana Luethi, Birgitta Kastenbaum

Co-Founders – Sherri Akers, Tatjana Luethi

Draft Minutes

Attendees – Allison Beale, Mandi Carpenter, Sherri Akers, Birgitta Kastenbaum, Tatjana Luethi, Susan Hoyt, Patricia Gross, Marilyn Zweifach, Madeleine Schwab, Robin Doyno, Lenore French, Mohamed Hassan, Susan Black Feinstein, Frances S. Sotcher, Mildred Simpson, Ana Boehmer, Ed Gray, Rachel Caravello, Nathan Horwitz

- **Called to order** - 6.10pm
 - **Introductions**
 - **Public comments**
1. Robin: MVCC needs volunteers for the 2016 Homeless Count, January 27th, Wednesday night, volunteering for a few hours. Register at http://www.theycountwillyou.org/volunteer_registration_home - go to West LA and select Mar Vista
 2. Lenore: 1st Art walk in Mar Vista. December 1st, on Venice Blvd. from Inglewood to Beethoven from 6 – 9pm <https://www.facebook.com/marvistaartwalk/>
 3. Mohammed: Cycling without Age coming to town. Starting a non-profit to start this program. Tricycle and Rickshaw > Trishaw. <http://cyclingwithoutage.org/>
 4. Birgitta: Make it Mar Vista - Mar Vista Small Biz Saturday, Chamber of Commerce, November 28. Great family day. Birgitta looking for kids to make cards for isolated seniors. <http://marvistachamber.com/make-it-mar-vista/>
 5. Birgitta: Attended a Compassion for Choices event and saw Joe Barnes. He asked her to let the committee know that our MVCC motion supporting Death with Dignity was pivotal in getting LA City Council support which was key to getting it passed at the state. <https://www.compassionandchoices.org/>
 6. Sherri: There is a program launched at White House Conference on Aging to develop dementia friendly communities. It's a huge undertaking, maybe we can simply take small pieces and get aspects implemented in Mar Vista, then inspire the city of LA.
- Web-based Resources and Tools** - The first phase of the DFA website is available at dfamerica.org and includes:

- Sector specific best practice guides for businesses, community based supports, faith communities, the health care community, legal and financial services, local government, and residential settings. <http://www.dfamerica.org/sector-guides/>
- Provider tools for clinical providers and community organizations that assist with care coordination, EMR decision support, tools for managing dementia and information to share after a diagnosis is made. <http://www.dfamerica.org/provider-tools/>
- A Dementia Friendly Community Toolkit with a research informed, step- by-step process with integrated tools for convening, engaging, analyzing and acting together to create a dementia friendly community. <http://www.dfamerica.org/toolkit/>

- **October minutes unanimously approved**
- **New business –**

1. **Guest speaker and group discussion on Co-Housing - Frances "Sparky" Sotcher:** 25 years ago after four women met in a workshop on co-housing. They rented a two story home to form a community of single adults. Three years later, the landlord quit paying the mortgage and they were told to move out in 30 days. Instead, the four unrelated adults bought the house out of foreclosure. Under the name Unity Hearth seven adults ranging in age from early 20's to early 80's, both male and female tenants, live in harmony. Frances "Sparky" Sotcher brings years of experience of sharing a large home in Mar Vista with other single adults living as a community. Frances will share her knowledge about renting rooms, finding tenants, and the "House Agreement" that they have developed over the years.

Frances was widowed, and an empty nester, and did not want to live alone.

Decisions are made by consensus. Over time, Frances bought out the other owners but still runs it as an intentional community. Everyone helps to make a comfortable house. Anyone can have a significant other, or family members come over. Rents range from \$700 - \$1300/month and includes all utilities, internet, cable, supplies in laundry, kitchen supplies. Residents furnish their own room and buy their own food. Money from rent bought all the common furniture and decoration for the house. It's there for everyone to use. They established principles and guidelines, and have house meetings as needed.

It's a sharing community - for example, at some point some young men wanted a bbq, so this was discussed during a house meeting and purchased. They have a shared set of bikes, camping gear, and chairs to sit at the beach that has been left, or someone owns and let others use.

Very intergenerational. Currently a 30 year old with her 1 year old, another 30 year old woman, a 50 year old woman and a 70 year old women. Sparky has been doing this for the last 25 years. Had people from all over the world. Also, every possible religion and gender identifications have lived there. It has been a very fun way to live with others after she became a widow.

Intentional living comes in many forms, can be by age (seniors), or demographic (young mothers). They can be created around common interests and passions, for example farming, music, etc. Originally they started out as a vegetarian community but over the years voted to change that.

Benefits: you get to share expenses while having my own private bedroom and some have private bathrooms. They share the rest of the house as common space. Around the holidays, some people go to their families, those who don't create something together at the house and invite other friends. Emotionally it's wonderful to be able to have other people around and talk to them. In two 911 emergencies, they were there for each other, and

contact their family members. It's nice having people around when you need to recuperate. Having lot's of people in the house makes them all feel safe.

They have house rules. They have a sheet, but also have a white board in the kitchen. They have mailboxes for everyone, and text each other as a group. We have no drug and no smoking rules, alcohol in moderation. Everyone has a task; everyone gets a day to clean. Anyone can have guests.

They do have an eviction process but have only had to evict 3 people only in 25 years. All residents sign an agreement that if everyone feels that one person doesn't fit in, the group can ask that person to move out.

They rent rooms through Craigslist and Westside Rentals. Frances had a hand out of resources. Eco Village runs workshops on how to create environmentally friendly and intentional community together. There are many intentional communities in Los Angeles that you can join, or learn how to establish one yourself. She pays taxes on the income as a landlord.

Questions from committee attendees:

What happened when 1 out of the 4 co-owners passed away and or moved out?

We refinanced the house to buy out / pay off.

What if someone needs a caregiver to live there?

They would have to pay rent or share the bedroom if sleeping there.

Discussion about new minimum wage laws for caregivers that eliminated deduction for sleep hours and requires overtime after 8 hour shift. Co-housing may provide the opportunity to share caregivers and reduce the need for 24/7.

Question: Francis have you had seniors that needed to move out because of their care needs? Francis: One original owner died of cancer and lived there through the illness. The residents helped her until the end. Keep in mind she was not bed ridden.

What are some recurring issues in the house? Not cleaning the dishes in sink, emptying the dishwasher, taking out the trash.

Vetting process - she has a series of questions for a phone interview. Then they have an in person interview, meeting with as many tenants as available. It's discussed by the group and a consensus decision is reached.

Observation - It sounds like they key to their success has been "flexibility" and being a "problem solving group".

Pat - I had a great experience sharing homes as a single mom when I could afford living on my own. I thought about this again when I was in my 40's, an intentional and intergenerational community. Usually I was the one on the lease and would lease out rooms. I always had very great experiences. We were there for each other, happiness from sharing.

Allison - A friend of mine hosts international students. After I learned my husband is going away for 4 months, had 2 little children at the time. Became interested in hosting international students and get paid for it. You provide room and meals. Have been doing it for 2 ½ years, it has been a great experience, great income, get a 1099, and people to sit down with and have dinner. Had all kinds of culture living with us. We are now going to move family members of some of the girls we hosted, and visit her and her family in Switzerland.

Benefits: Supplements income, eliminates isolation. Living together. Pooling resources (making care affordable).

Francis, it seems like an obvious fit if you have an intergenerational housing situation. Solving the problems for seniors being isolated amongst themselves are solved by this intergenerational living model.

The longest tenants have been with us has for 12 years. Shortest was about 2 years. They run background checks.

How is your relationship with your neighbors, considering you have a lot of people in your house? – No one has ever brought it up, I know all of my neighbors.

Discussion - It's a paradigm shift on how we look at our own "assets". That's the whole point of the shared economy; what do you have that is valuable that you can use to generate income (monetize)? The Uber model (asset is your car), Airbnb model (asset is your house), creating employment for each other by hiring each others services, buying products from each other, etc. Can make arrangements not with money involved, but can also trade with each other.

Discussion - How can we create community amongst the family members who visit their loved one in an assisted living home? Point being: us all becoming a support and community for and to each other.

Resources –

LA EcoVillage has workshops on Co-Housing - <http://laecovillage.org/>

My house - Ourhouse.com model - <http://www.womenlivingincommunity.com/community-spotlight-my-house-our-house/>

Another model is to buy old motels and convert to affordable housing - http://www.housingfinance.com/developments/motels-rehabbed-for-affordable-housing_o

Robin recommended - Co-housing by Katie McCamant and Chuck Durrett - <http://www.cohousingco.com/>

Is there an opportunity to convert apartment buildings to co-housing? In New York, if 60% of occupancy are seniors it qualifies as a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community which brings certain city services and benefits. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/services/retirement.shtml>

2. **Rachel Caraviello** – [Affordable Living for the Aging](#) presented this 5-minute video which promotes shared living to seniors who have extra space in their homes. Watch it here: <http://www.alasenioring.org/program-video>

- **Old Business reviewed -**

- a. Update on Board response to motion supporting Councilmember Mike Bonin to create a new ordinance addressing short term rentals ([Council File 14-1635-S2](#)) – motion passed by MVCC BOD and is now part of the council file.
- b. Update on \$1,500 Neighborhood Purposes Grant for Westchester Playa Village – Susan Klein has scouted out potential venues for our upcoming outreach in Mar Vista. Lisa will be working on dates in February. We are also exploring other connections like the Senior Citizen Club that meets on Fridays at the Mar Vista Rec. Center.

c. **Future guest presentations**

- a. **December 17th (tbc)** - Sheila Moore, Sr. Director of Comprehensive Older Adult Services Jewish Family Services – "How to make the most of your trip back home" - what to look for to determine if your parents/grandparents need additional help, how to start difficult discussions, how to use this trip home to gather info you might need in an emergency/health crisis;
- b. **January** – Allison Bealle - on how to hire a caregiver, adult day care program and support organization
- c. **February** - Lilly Ortiz of LA Metro will present on their [On the Move Riders Club](#) (available for Dec if that doesn't confirm).
- d. **March** – Monica Moore of [UCLA Easton Center for Alzheimer's Disease Research](#)
- e. **April** – [Affordable Living for the Aging](#) roommates in Mar Vista to lead a discussion group, Q&A about their program (TBC)
- f. **Future speakers – suggestions**

- **Meeting adjourned 7:45**

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