

May 8, 2021

To: Education Arts and Culture Committee

Gabriel Hill: gabriel.hill@marvista.org

Pamula Solar: pamula.solar@marvista.org

Dana Christensen: dana.christensen@marvista.org

North Westdale Neighborhood Association President

Martin Rubin: martinrubin@earthlink.net

MVCC Secretary

Mary Hruska: busdisora@aol.com

From: Karin Logan

CC: Widget Moseley, Sarah Foss, Stekki Millman, Courtney Roberts, Andie Figlin, Stephanie Baker, Jen Bailey, Michelle Hahn, Andre Logan, C. Valinsky

Motion to Have North Westdale Neighborhood Elementary School Moved to Mar Vista

Background

My name is Karin Logan and my husband Andre and I have been Mar Vista residents since 2014. We consider ourselves very fortunate to be able to raise our two boys on the playgrounds and soccer fields of Mar Vista. Two years ago, we relocated from a condo in south Mar Vista to a home in North Westdale where we've met a dozen families just like ours with young children. The highly rated Richland school played an important part in our decision to relocate since both Andre and I are strong advocates of public education.

Issue

Shortly after moving in, we discovered Richland would be converting to a permit-only French immersion school. Although the school stated it gave priority to neighborhood students, it became apparent from speaking with neighbors that children from homes in the neighborhood were not gaining admission. Furthermore, all elementary school-aged children in North Westdale would be matriculating to the Nora Sterry School beginning in 2020/2021, in the Sawtelle/Japantown neighborhood. Nora Sterry has a lower rating than Richland and is located 2 miles north of our neighborhood, just 500 feet west of the 405.

Sending our children to Nora Sterry presents several issues—

- **Safety.** For parents who walk their children to school, the walk from North Westdale to Nora Sterry entails traversing dangerous highway underpasses with large homeless encampments. The encampments are associated with crime and drug-use and would be highly dangerous for our children to encounter. The surface streets are also multi-lane streets with high-speed traffic that

are not conducive for walking. In addition to being dangerous, the walk is approximately 35 minutes long.

- **Traffic.** Given the safety issues associated with walking, parents will be forced to fight their way through freeway traffic during the heaviest commuting hours to drop their children off at school. A google maps search shows the drive time doubles during the morning commuting hours around 8AM from 7 to 14 minutes. Part of the commute overlaps with the 405 freeway onramp at Olympic Blvd.
- **Community.** North Westdale belongs to the Mar Vista Community. Our children want to attend school with the children they see at the playground and around the neighborhood. Unfortunately, the two elementary schools that are closest to our neighborhood (Richland and Mar Vista Elementary School) have prioritized out-of-district children through elite French Immersion and Advanced Studies programs. Accepting out-of-district children over our neighbors goes against the spirit of building our community.

Request

I represent a group of families in North Westdale that are requesting LAUSD conduct a new boundary planning process with the input from the people in our community, taking into consideration these issues. We request our “home” elementary school be moved back to where we live, in Mar Vista. We have received 112 signatures supporting our cause through our online petition here (https://www.change.org/Westdale_Elementary) and attached.

Why the MVCC Should Support our Cause

We believe the LAUSD ignored their own boundary planning process in deciding to send the North Westdale children to Nora Sterry. Specifically, the boundary planning process states the following:

- “Attendance boundaries are **geographically based** and typically follow streets, railroads, water ways, ridgelines, and other geographic features.”
- “The need for additional school facilities is based on long-range goals for District-wide 2-semester operation in all schools and for all students to be able to attend a **neighborhood school** or school-of-choice.”
- “Additional factors considered are **traffic and safety issues.**”

The boundary planning process also stipulates that “attendance boundaries change when there is an opportunity to assign students from a school that is overcrowded to an adjacent school that has space.” While this may have been the case for Mar Vista Elementary (the next closest school to the North Westdale neighborhood) it is our understanding that the capacity issues at Mar Vista stem from an Advanced Studies program that allows them to accept out-of-district students over local residents.

Conclusion

It appears our Mar Vista schools have been prioritizing out-of-district students over their own neighbors, leaving our children to commute to a different neighborhood that is unfamiliar to them and out of the way. It is putting a burden on us as parents to have to find a way through traffic or enter our own stressful

and unpredictable permitting process. It is time for our neighbors in Mar Vista to recognize that we deserve a space in our schools so that we can attend school in the neighborhood we love!

Sincerely,

Karin Logan

Attachments:

1. Petition Signatures
2. LAUSD'S BOUNDARY PLANNING PROCESS