

El Dorado Realty, SoCal

NEIGHBORHOOD VOICE

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“Celebrating over 35 years of service”

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FROM THE DESK OF

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I don't know how your Halloween evening was, but mine was ridiculous, not one child came to our door. We had all the lights on and the gate open, but it was pretty much the same last year, did someone call "Trick or Treat" night off, and I didn't get the message? Oh well, it is probably for the best, except now we have to eat all the candy and I sure don't need it! When I talk to people in my office, they tell me they had plenty of visitors, one even estimated that they had had as many as 1,000, Wow. I know, next year I won't buy candy and just hope for the best.

Thanksgiving is coming up and I want to take this opportunity to wish you all well and hope you have a wonderful day.

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I have been meaning to do this for some time, I have written a couple of times about the City of Long Beach Water Department program to help homeowners wishing to convert their yards to be more drought resistant water. I know we have a number in the neighborhood who have taken advantage of program. Recently, my friend and colleague, Bryan Littlefield, finished his project and was telling me about it recently. I thought it could be helpful to others in our neighborhood, to write about his experience.

Bryan has a fairly large yard, as he lives on a corner and his front lawn, along with the parkway, usually took at least an hour to mow and edge. He heard, back in July, from a neighbor about the Water Department program and decided it was time to do something about his own yard. From the "before" picture you can see the need, he has large pine trees that drop constant needles and make mowing even harder and a good lawn almost impossible to maintain.



His first step was to go to the website, lblawntogarden.gov and read up on the subject to determine if his project would qualify. Basically the City will reimburse homeowners \$2.50/per sq. ft., up to 1,000 sq. ft. to replace grass lawns with drought tolerant plants and either decomposed granite (pea gravel) or some type of mulch. Bryan's yard was over 2,000 sq. ft., so he decided to start with the side yard and parking strip. He was required to take a free landscaping course, provided on-line, and submit an application and plan for his project. The plan Bryan supplied was a very rough sketch of the area he would be working on with the layout and names of plants to be used. All the preparatory information is easily available on the website and you can even view pictures of the "before" and "after" shots of all projects approved by the city. I counted 13 completed projects from our neighborhood.

After submitting his application, he heard back from the Water Dept. that his project had been approved and that he would have 120 days to complete the work.

Bryan's first step was to kill all the grass in the area to be developed; he first tried an inexpensive grass killer, with poor results. He then applied Round-up and within three weeks he was confident that all the grass was dead. Next he rented a sod cutter, which in essence cuts a width of grass a few inches below the surface and can then be rolled up and disposed of. Because his soil was very hard and the fact that he wanted to create mounds of dirt, he decided to roto-till the entire area to facilitate the earth movement and eventual planting, for someone with good soil and desiring a flat surface, this step could probably be skipped. In the next step, he chose to hire someone to come in and bull dose the earth into mounds creating a simulated riverbed and valleys. At this time he also had 4-inches of soil removed from the parking strip, so that the ground cover would stay in the area and not wash off on the sidewalk and curb. Most of Bryan's cost came from the equipment rental and help to contour the yard. Once this was complete, he covered the area with weed barrier, before having mulch and soil amendment delivered. One clue he had for others, be sure to cut an X in the weed barrier, at the planned plant locations, it is then easy to fold the material back

under the mulch when planting. The City can provide mulch or decomposed granite at minimum cost, Bryan chose to go to a private nursery and pay for delivery of the materials in order to save time, he also got small rock and boulders for the landscaping. Luckily, many neighbors had excess plants, including succulents and cacti, for the planting spots and he only had to purchase a few additional plants.

Bryan finished the project on October 16th; he figures he expended roughly \$2,500 in total for the project. He received approval of the final project a few days later and expects to receive \$2,500 shortly. I think you have to agree that the final product looks very nice and his neighbors feel much the same way.



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The planned Dog Park for our neighborhood is drawing close to fruition, it appears the Friends of the El Dorado Dog Park have reached, or nearly so, promised contributions, of nearly \$200,000

to fund fencing and other upfront costs. I attended a recent meeting where we were taken around to different proposed sites. The original location, up near the shopping center has been eliminated due to cost of creating necessary parking and rest room facilities. There are now three potential sites;

1. An area between the Nature Center and the City Gardens on land currently used for maintenance parking and overflow. This area is undeveloped, but can use the restrooms at "Possum Patch" picnic area? Entry is south of Spring at the Nature Center and is located close to the Animal Shelter, it is located in the Cities Fourth Council District.
2. In our Fifth District area stretching along Spring street, east of the entrance on the north side of Spring, over to the freeway. This is a high visibility area with parking at the Archery Field and the facilities located there. This area is little used and is already grassed in with many trees and close to the guard shack and is fenced along the entire length bordering Spring St.
3. Lastly, is an area to the north of the Archery Range, just past the entry shack, again this area would use the facilities and parking at the Archery Range. The site is less visible, possibly in a more highly used area, but has existing grass and trees.

I don't know how most of you feel about the Dog Park, but there is another chance to voice your opinion at a Parks & Recreation Commission meeting coming up on **Thursday, November 10th at the El Dorado Community Center on Studebaker, at 9:00 AM.** I am attaching a recent note received from Gerrie Schipske outlining her involvement in the project.

"After over a year of meetings with residents through my Lakes, Ponds and Wetlands Task force, we are very close to having an eastside dog park.

I was approached by residents over a year ago to find suitable land for a dog park. At first, we looked at El Dorado Regional Park - and found it not suitable because of a lack of bathrooms and parking or the location was near the power lines and SCE would not allow use underneath.

We also encouraged the residents wanting a park to form a nonprofit organization so they could raise funds to build and to maintain a dog park. And they did. They became the Friends of the El Dorado Dog Park.

We looked at the area adjacent the furthest north end of the park in hopes we could get Pet Smart involved. But again, parking and bathrooms were a problem.

I walked El Dorado Park south and located space between the ball fields and the golf course -- fenced on several sides -- and near parking and bathrooms -- it would be a good spot. However, it was too small.

So I turned my attention to looking behind the archery range and a spot near the Fire Station. Nah. Too expensive and it would take away dedicated park land.

So I got on Google maps and found that the city had three parcels being used for maintenance off Spring. I walked the property and became convinced it was a good fit.

There are good size parcels near the Animal Care Services Shelter -- which would offer a great opportunity for partnerships and education at the dog park.

City staff was opposed to using the parcel because it would mean relocating their maintenance into the other parcels.

Finally, staff agreed that the maintenance parcel would be the location for a dog park on the eastside.

So city staff is taking that recommendation to the Parks, Recreation and Marine Commission on November 10 and I encourage residents to attend and to let the Commissioners know how you feel.

This will be a great addition to the east side of Long Beach. I want to thank the residents who pushed for a dog park and city staff who also spent long hours checking out everyone of our suggested locations. Hope to see you at the meeting."

Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske

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On the real estate front, interest rates are still great, dipping down to below 4.00% for qualified, Owner occupied Buyers. One of our neighborhood Realtors recently advertised that loans were available for purchase of investment property for as low as 20% down payment. I verified the information with my preferred lenders and it is indeed true, the loan costs are a bit higher than the preferred 25 % down payment, but still very good. This means, for example, someone could purchase my listing on Lees with \$67,000 down payment plus closing costs, with a new loan of \$268,000. With a realistic 4.50% interest rate, their monthly payment would be \$1358/mo, adding taxes at \$384/mo, and insurance at \$50/mo, the monthly payment would be \$1757/mo. This property, in our neighborhood, can be easily rented for around \$1800/mo.

If you have money sitting in a savings account, earning today's rates, it might be a good time to consider an investment in real estate. I know, that even with a slow recover, we will see substantial increase in property values over the next ten years. If you wait long enough, one day you will say; "Oh my, if I had only invested in real estate back in 2011/12?"

I have recently begun taking on a few clients and managing their residential investment properties. I take care of screening tenants, renting the property and overseeing the maintenance of the property. If you are interested, or know anyone who might be, please give me a call. I love referrals!

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Ron Beeler

**El Dorado Realty SoCal
(562) 243-0645 or 429-0686**

ROOM NEEDED

We are still looking for a room in a home for the gentleman who has been living with us for over ten years. We only need the room in our home now for one of our grandsons. John has always been very courteous and respectful of our privacy. He does live on SSI, because of a disability, but he has always paid on time. He currently pays us \$425 per month, but knows he will, most likely, need to pay more once he finds a suitable home. If you are interested, or know of someone looking for a companion, please **call me immediately.**



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