



MarVista.org

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Certified Neighborhood Council
August 13, 2002

JULY 19, 2021

VIA EMAIL

TO: The Honorable Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles
Eric.Garcetti@LACity.org
The Honorable Paul Koretz, Councilmember, 5th District
City of Los Angeles, Paul.Korezt@LACity.org
The Honorable Nury Martinez, Councilmember, 6th District
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The Honorable Mike Bonin, Councilmember, 11th District
City of Los Angeles, Mike.Bonin@LACity.org
The Honorable John Lee, Councilmember, 12th District
City of Los Angeles, John.Lee@LACity.org

CC: Nick Melvoin, LAUSD Board District 4
City of Los Angeles, Nick.Melvoin@LAUSD.net

BCC: Karin Logan, Mar Vista Stakeholder

**RE: MAR VISTA CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO ATTEND NEARBY
MAR VISTA SCHOOL**

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers:

At the regularly scheduled meeting held on July 13, 2021, the Mar Vista Community Council (MVCC) unanimously approved the following policy motion:

The MVCC supports LAUSD mapping its "home school" areas so that all students who live in the Mar Vista area have their home school in the Mar Vista area for purposes of enrollment.

The MVCC asks the City of Los Angeles to contact and work with LAUSD to ensure that our Mar Vista children are able to attend a Mar Vista school. We have attached the original stakeholder motion and an addendum, "Background Information", to provide more information as to how this affects our Community and entreaty your assistance. We also respectfully request that the MVCC be kept informed of the City's efforts and communications with LAUSD regarding this matter.

Please, do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of the matter,

Kathryn Wheeler, Chair
Mar Vista Community Council
Kathryn.Wheeler@MarVista.org

ADDENDUM: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

RE: MAR VISTA CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO ATTEND NEARBY MAR VISTA SCHOOL

Karin Logan, a Mar Vista Stakeholder, brought to the attention of the Mar Vista Community Council (MVCC) a community concern regarding attending local Mar Vista schools. Her email, dated May 8, 2021, to the MVCC's Education, Arts, and Culture Committee (EACC) is after this addendum.

The MVCC's EACC arranged a June 12, 2021 Zoom meeting with Ms. Logan and other interested parties to discuss the rationale for redistricting local Richland students to Nora Sterry Elementary School that is located within the West Los Angeles-Sawtelle Neighborhood Council, rather than another Mar Vista school.

Here is the link to the Zoom meeting recording: https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/DVi1FNSVh7zHVLjeGbz-3H8Uq4fEtJkxZKs7xMvTQJ6psPJ6wvlQJ_pnN6OTTZQLBrjhH9vhuJXWD3kd.cp-3afk5VA1YToWo?startTime=1623532124000 Among those attending included:

Nick Melvoin, LAUSD Board Vice President
Allison Holdorff Polhill, Chief Advisor & District Director
Gerard Grenade, Principal Richland Avenue Elementary/Dual Language French
Joyce Dara, Community of Schools Administrator, West L.A
Erick Hansen, Venice Community of Schools Administrator
Karin Logan, Mar Vista Stakeholder

Summary of Discussion

Our school board member, Nick Melvoin, explained LAUSD's enrollment has dropped to approximately 450,000 students. They are working hard to develop and offer programs that the public wants and this French Immersion Program is one of them; similar to the Mandarin Immersion Program at Broadway Elementary School in Venice.

The Richland Principal, Mr Grenade, explained when he came to the school shortly before September, 2013, that Richland enrollment was declining. For whatever reason, local children were not coming to Richland and it was in danger of closing. He talked with the current parents and came up with the idea of a French Immersion Program. It has been so successful that it has taken over the whole school and there are plans to expand though grade 8. They plan to add 150 middle school seats.

When asked, "How many students attending are 'out of district'?" The response was ~60% are "on permits." The major draw of students is coming from the private French school on Overland, i.e., Le Lycee Francais De Los Angeles.

Because of demand and lack of local interest in the French Immersion Program, future local students were redistricted to a non-Mar Vista school, i.e., Nora Sterry Elementary School, 1730 Corinth Ave. 90025 (A block west of Sawtelle, between Iowa and Nebraska). It is in the West Los Angeles-Sawtelle NC boundaries and ~2 miles away from Richland.

Stakeholders buying into the Mar Vista area are informed that their local school is Richland, and believe that it is unreasonable to take away their local school and redistrict Mar Vista students to another school that is outside of Mar Vista. Additionally, there was no notice to the North Westdale Neighborhood Association or the Mar Vista Community Council about losing this local school. There was no discussion as to which of the other Mar Vista schools our local children could attend. There was some back and forth about dedicated spaces in Mar Vista schools (i.e., Mar Vista or Clover), but no promises were made.

The issue of another commuter school, i.e., Mandarin Immersion, in Zone 6 of Mar Vista did come before the MVCC and it was successfully defeated by the parents of Mark Twain Middle School, Beethoven Elementary School, and the surrounding neighbors. This new school would have brought an additional ~400 cars, twice a day on already "F" rated streets in a residential neighborhood. This school is also ~60% "out of district" and "on permit" students per LAUSD. Local students could only enter the school in kindergarten or if fluent at grade level in Mandarin.

Homeowners have provided the tax dollars to build schools throughout Los Angeles to relieve overcrowding, so students do not have to be bussed outside of their neighborhood.[<https://www.laschools.org/bond/faq> (list of school bonds)]

Mar Vista residents deserve to keep their local schools as local. They should not be turned into commuter schools bringing traffic and pollution into residential areas. At the very least our Mar Vista children should be able to attend the nearest local Mar Vista school, not by permission or by permit, but with guaranteed spaces reserved for them.

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