

## **Sunvalley Villas - Gate Committee Summary and Recommendations**

**January to March 2016**

**Committee members: Ron Blaufuss (committee chairperson), Ron Umstad, Tom Askew, Diane Krause, and Wayne Woods**

### **Summary: What has been done to date to prevent unwanted/non-resident foot and auto traffic in the Sunvalley Villas complex:**

1. Gate was installed on the west-most Billings Street entrance.

This was a straight path from Billings St. to 74<sup>th</sup> Street. This did stop car traffic, but moved much of the pedestrian traffic to the middle Billings St. entrance. There are still some fence climbers and people that slide under the Billing St. gate.

2. Bougainvillea bushes were planted between Buildings #7 and #11.
3. A fence was installed between Buildings #9 and #10.

This helped stop pedestrian traffic from going behind buildings #11 and #10 to gain access to the 74<sup>th</sup> St. entrance. However, some of the remaining foot traffic coming into the middle Billings Street entrance now simply walk through and climb over the fence behind/near building #1 (between the Casita's property) and/or they walk down the sidewalk behind Building #8 (closets to the phase #1 pool).

4. A few cactus (with drip system) were planted along the Casitas fence (to the south).

May have slowed down some pedestrian traffic, but not all.

**Steps and Actions that the committee completed to date:**

1. The committee met a total 7 times for up to 2 hours each meeting to discuss the issue at hand and brainstorm on options and action plans.
2. The committee created, distributed and collected the resident survey, as well as compiled results which were distributed to the board president and vice president and posted for general resident viewing (in the club house, on the bulletin board by the mail boxes, and on the website).
3. The committee conducted a meeting with a Crime Prevention Officer of the Mesa police department to discuss trespassing and security issues with the board president and vice president in attendance. As a result of our meeting, the Crime Prevention Officer will take the following actions:
  - a. contact the Mesa school transportation department to request that bus drop off and pick up spots be moved away from the direct entrances/exits to our complex in an effort to eliminate the convenience for school students to cut through our complex.
  - b. contact the owners of the apartment buildings to the north and the south of our complex to discuss our trespassing issue and request that they communicate with residents regarding trespassing enforcement in our complex.
  - c. contact the school located around the corner on Main St. to request that they discuss/address the trespassing issue and enforcement within our complex with students.
  - d. the Officer explained the Trespass Enforcement Program, for which our complex would qualify. The program would aid in helping to track and remove trespassers from our common areas. (See attached information.)

The Crime Prevention Officer did question the committee regarding why we have several existing entrances/exits to our complex/property. The committee explained that the builder designed the complex without any thoughts of gates. At the time of construction, the apartments also had not yet been built on the north side of Billings Street, and the school and Dollar General Store were not in the current 74<sup>th</sup> and Main Street locations.

5. The committee jointly formulated this final recommendation list based on the survey results, the meeting with the Crime Prevention Officer, on-line research and extensive communications and discussions among committee members and residents.

## Committee Recommendations:

1. Recommend to NOT install the proposed gate on the 74th St. entrance/exit area.

### Supporting Reasons:

- It is *not* a supported option by the majority of residents for a wide variety of reasons (70% of survey respondents do not support this option). Some of the more important reasons include:
  - 74<sup>th</sup> St. is the official address for the community.
  - It would redirect traffic and may have a negative effect on emergency vehicle response time.
  - Many questioned the effectiveness as a solution to the walk through traffic problem.
  - Cost of the gate & spending from the Reserve Fund was frequently cited as a concern.
  - Expensive to maintain electronic operated gates (based on research committee conducted).

2. Recommend NOT installing gates at any of the two remaining open Billings Street entrances/exits AT THIS TIME.

### Supporting Reasons:

- Thorough evaluation of this option is the next prudent step.
- Not enough time was allowed for a thorough evaluation of this option. The assigned task was to evaluate and obtain owner input on the 74th St. gate. Ongoing coordination with the police Crime Prevention Office, post office, fire department, and ambulance service need to be more fully developed before proceeding.
- The committee received conflicting information on whether both openings on Billings St. could ever both be gated. More time is needed to evaluate such a perceived/proposed solution.
- Less than 10% of survey respondents suggested Billings St. gates as a proposed solution (less than 25% suggested fully gating our community).
- There is no rush to implement such a solution as the survey revealed that our complex does not have a significant theft or vandalism problem within the past 5 years, but rather a primary problem of "walk through" traffic. (This fact was supported by comments from the Crime Prevention Officer and the police department records of calls to our complex.)
- Avoids a "Band-Aid" type fix at this time. Gating one remaining Billings Street opening (rather than both openings) will very likely simply push the foot traffic to the other opening (there are simply 80 steps between opening), possibly creating a different set of problems, such as foot traffic around or near pool #2.
- In a period where the board has been focused on building the reserve fund balance, significant monies should not be spent on an expensive item that "may or may not" resolve the walk through traffic/trespassing issue.
- Not spending the funds at this time will help to achieve the board's goal to increase the reserve fund balance. Elimination of the gate spending at this time would add back \$10,000 to \$20,000 into the reserve fund balance and may aid in keeping HOA fee increases lower in coming years.
- Recommend waiting to observe whether steps that Crime Prevention Officer took many have an effect on the unwanted foot traffic.

3. Recommend leaving the existing gate on Billings Street "as is" and NOT opening or revising the gate for foot or auto traffic AT THIS TIME.

### Supporting Reasons:

- Opening this gate for pedestrian traffic may or may not shift traffic to this location, as foot traffic will likely still pass through the other open Billings St. entrances based on habit.
- Opening this gate to foot traffic only sends the message to invite more foot traffic through our complex, which is contrary to the board's original goal when the 74<sup>th</sup> St. gate proposal was introduced.

4. Recommend that the signage at the entrances to the complex be assessed and improved where needed.

Supporting Reasons:

- It is felt that larger signs, with plainer language may reduce the walk through traffic. Existing signage may be inadequate or placed in inconspicuous areas.
- It is a nominal expenditure and was also a recommended step by the Crime Prevention Officer.

5. Recommend to plant a solid "wall" of thorny type plants and/or vegetation barrier (such as cactus, bougainvillea, etc) along the south fence between Sunvalley Villas and the Casita complexes.

Supporting Reasons:

- Recommended by the Crime Prevention Officer as a deterrent to stop trespassers who jump this fence area.
- Relatively quick and inexpensive fix to eliminate the fence jumping problem.
- Likely will be much less expensive than raising the existing fence.
- Contrary to previous conversations, the Casita's home owner's association is NOT interested in paying to raise the existing fence (per Jeff Twito).

6. Recommend that owners and residents call police immediately when any suspicious activity or persons are observed on our property.

Supporting Reasons:

- The Crime Prevention Officer indicated that the more calls they receive from residents within our complex, the higher we move on the departments "radar," meaning that they will provide more frequent squad car drive throughs during in-active times within the department's day (such as during the night or at the times when school busses drop off).

7. Recommend to encourage all owners to install outside motion lights outside of the front and back of the units and leave lights in on position all year long.

8. Recommend the creation of a new permanent Security and Safety Committee.

Supporting Reasons:

- a. The issue is a "hot topic" and has become important to some residents in our community.
- b. A committee would streamline the process to address trespassing, safety and security problems and situations that arise.
- c. A committee would be a single place where residents could submit concerns, problems or comments regarding issues such as vandalism, theft, and/or trespassing, eliminating the burden on board members.
- d. This committee could study points for access to quantify the amount of pedestrian traffic to determine the origin and destination of same.
- e. Recommend that this committee apply for and monitor the Trespass Enforcement Program.
- f. Recommend that any and all future gate additions/revisions should go through committee for future study before implementation to be prudent in proper evaluation.
- g. Members of the existing Gate Committee would volunteer to be part of this new committee, and/or share detailed information with the new committee related to work and steps taken to date.