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NEIGHBORLY ADVICE

Small-town living on the Westside

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By Helene Lesel, Special to The Times

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Type of Material: Infographic

Westdale, in the heart of Los Angeles' bustling Westside, is a quiet, tree-lined residential development built for families seeking a peaceful sense of community. Construction began just as returning World War II GIs were looking for homes. Streets with commercial development and low-density apartment units ring the neighborhood.

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Roots

Citrus orchards and bean fields dominated the area known as Steven's Ranch until it was purchased by developer Paul W. Trousdale.

In 1947, he built the first tract of 450 single-story homes, offering five floor plans. Two additional tracts were soon added, which boosted the number of homes to about 900. Homes were priced from \$14,500 for the first tract, with prices rising to \$16,500 as the final phases sold out.

Streets were lined with distinctive trees that remain today, including liquid amber, pines and purple-blossomed jacarandas.

Original resident Natalie Fisher calls it "small-town living on the Westside."

Fisher, who has lived in the community since her home was built in 1951, recalls the days when the local Alta Dena milkman brought dairy products to her door and the Helms Bakery truck came by with fresh bread and baked goods.

The community offered a feeling of security. "We didn't lock our doors for years," she said.

Drawing cards

An active homeowners association works to ensure that the neighborhood remains low density and maintains its residential character. Ron Wynn, a board member of the Westdale Homeowners Assn. and a resident since boyhood, is among involved participants. "We really look out for each other," he said, "including our new neighbor welcome committee, which brings a goodie basket to welcome residents to the neighborhood."

Location, location

A block west of the 405 Freeway, and bounded by National Boulevard on the north, Sawtelle Boulevard on the east, Palms Boulevard on the south and Inglewood Boulevard on the west, Westdale also has quick access

to the 10 Freeway.

Within the Westdale community, non-through streets appeal to families and keep residential areas from becoming commuter shortcuts. It's just a few blocks from the front door of any Westdale home to schools, parks, banks and shopping.

Good news, bad news

Rising prices are making it more challenging for the next generation to afford homes. Fixers start at \$675,000.

The newly improved Mar Vista Recreation Center provides residents with a spot for family events and recreational activities. But some residents are concerned that use by people outside the community is increasing traffic.

On the market

Only three homes were for sale last week. Listings include a traditional three-bedroom home for \$799,000 and a completely remodeled contemporary for \$975,000. Most Westdale lots are 5,500 to 7,500 square feet, with homes generally 1,500 to 1,800 square feet in size.

Report card

Westdale residents are served by the Los Angeles Unified School District, with Mar Vista Elementary, Webster Middle School and Venice High School available for students in the area. Mar Vista Elementary scored 822 on the 2003 Academic Performance Index; Webster Middle School scored 557; and Venice High, 608.

Historical values

Single-family detached resales:

Year...Median Price

1990...\$525,000

1995...\$334,500

2000...\$517,500

2003...\$680,000

2004*...\$875,000

*Year to date

Sources: DataQuick Information Systems, api.cde.ca.gov; www.themls.com; www.westdalehoa.org; Los Angeles Unified School District Facilities Services.

GRAPHIC: MAP: Westdale

CREDIT: Los Angeles Times

PHOTO: A DOG'S LIFE: Mar Vista Park has plenty of room to play.

PHOTO: APARTMENT LIVING: Westdale includes low-density complexes along Barrington Avenue.

PHOTO: THEN AND NOW: Some of the tract homes in Westdale retain their original character, whereas others have been remodeled.

PHOTOGRAPHER: Photographs by Brian Vander Brug Los Angeles Times

PHOTO: (K1) HOOFING IT: Stores and banks are nearby in Westdale.

PHOTOGRAPHER: Brian Vander Brug Los Angeles Times

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