

NO. 156  
March 2026

# Cheviot Hills

The greatest neighborhood in the world



BEN LEE

BENLEEPROPERTIES.COM  
(310) 704-6580



CalRE # 01808926

# AN INSPIRATIONAL NEIGHBOR

By Ben Lee

I had the unique opportunity recently to attend an event behind the storied gates of Vista del Mar on Motor Avenue in Cheviot Hills. Vista del Mar is one of those places in the neighborhood that everyone seems to know about while at the same time remains somewhat of a mystery. The event I attended took place in the theater on campus and the audience was comprised mostly of neighbors (read more about that on the back page of this newsletter). At the conclusion of the production, a handful of us were milling about and the underlying question among us was: ‘What is this place??’

If you’ve never gone to Vista del Mar, you might be surprised to find how enormous, vast and green it is. It feels like a small village comprised of buildings of various sizes connected by roads and pathways and peppered with sloping hillsides, grassy parks and pastoral recreational spaces. VDM has been a neighbor in this community for over 100 years yet most of us have never set foot on the property. Other than attending one Homeowners’ Association meeting, I had never been there before either and I certainly knew nothing of its interesting origin story nor much if anything about what goes on there today. Suffice it to say that after a few hours of research, I’m a bit more educated and now count myself as a fan of the work and humbled by the services that are provided for Los Angeles’s families in need.

Here is a bit of the history behind Vista del Mar: It has made a few transformations over the years but got its start as the Jewish Orphans Home in Boyle Heights, an answer to the question of how to house the growing number of homeless and destitute Jewish children in 1908. They were gathered and put into a large building while awaiting the possibility of adoption.

In 1909, however, President



Theodore Roosevelt presided over a conference that determined children were better off in a private home environment vs the more institutionalized idea of orphanages. This led to the creation of the Foster Care Program since it was deemed that children would thrive better with the individualized care that would come from parents, even if only on a somewhat temporary basis. With Foster Care being such a new idea, there would inevitably be too many children than available homes in which to be placed. A compromise of sorts would be introduced: an orphanage but instead of their current traditional state of operation, a “cottage plan,” would be utilized. This was a new type of orphanage that offered smaller buildings that less children could share instead of dozens of them crowding into one dormitory-like structure. Separate structures would be needed to house the infirmary, school and offices and of course, young residents. Such a facility required an ample amount of space and in 1922, a large and vacant swath of land in West Los Angeles. Real estate developer Thomas Hughes owned 22 acres situated in between two of the movie studios and he called it, “Vista Del Mar.”

What was once known as the Jewish Orphans Home changed its name to Vista Del Mar and was reconfigured to fit into this new plot of land. There were five two-story cottages for the children plus additional cottages for staff. There was a separate building

called the Health Cottage for kids who were exposed to communicable diseases which even had its own separate school so the healthy and sick populations of children wouldn’t have to mix. The home benefited from being situated between the two movie studios (Fox and MGM) in that often costumes were donated for the kids to put on shows and studio heads served on the Board of Directors, keeping the home afloat financially during the Great Depression. Prior to World War II, many Jewish children fleeing the Nazis entered this country and came to VDM for refuge. Many children were left orphaned after the war and VDM kept these boys and girls safe, housed, educated and fed too.

In the 1950s, the superintendent in charge recognized that the mental needs of children were changing. It wasn’t enough to just provide a place for them to live, but it was imperative to offer psychological and social help, as well. Even though the impending construction of the 10 freeway eliminated four acres from the campus, a whole new cottage was opened to tend to the needs of the children whose serious mental difficulties rendered them unable to cohabitate with the others. This new facility included a social worker, psychiatrist and full time teacher. VDM even adapted its name to reflect the expanding nature of what it was now able to provide. Its new title: Vista Del Mar Child Care Service.

Another significant real estate developer, George Konheim, became

chairman of VDMCCS in the 1970s and oversaw the demolition of the old, outdated cottages and built new ones in the hopes of making the structures safer and more efficiently spaced for increasing numbers of kids and staff. This project was made possible thanks to the hefty donations courtesy of Ruth and Elliot Handler (you may not recognize their names, however surely you know of the Barbie Doll they invented and marketed!).

Always evolving and adapting to the times, Vista Del Mar merged with a handful of other businesses in the field in order to keep up with the changing mental and physical needs of the children who come through its doors. Today, the home still serves a vital purpose for the needs of children, teens and their families. It offers a residential program as well as outpatient services focusing on mental health, academics, emotional issues, vocational training and substance abuse. There is a massive gym, swimming pool, tennis courts and a beautiful theater in which I had the pleasure of taking in a show last month.

Tucked behind gates on Motor, we’ve driven past this place thousands of times, not really knowing how impactful it has been to countless generations of children needing shelter, help, education and care. It’s been at this location for over the last 100 years, the facility has housed and helped thousands of children and is still helping parents of all races, religions and sexual orientations with the dream of starting a family through adoption.

So, the next time you drive past this historic entity in Cheviot Hills and wonder what goes on behind the gates, I hope you’ve gained a bit more knowledge of its history and all the good it has done for children and families in this community as well as the greater Los Angeles area. Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services, you are not just an inspirational institution but also a terrific neighbor.

# My featured listings

## Encino – FOR SALE OR LEASE!



**NEW CONSTRUCTION**

**16879 Mooncrest Dr -**  
\$5,395,000 or \$24,495 p/mo.

5 Beds / 8 Bath, 5,900 Sq. Ft. 10,890 Sq. Ft. Lot

A dazzling, brand new construction on a quarter acre lot south of Ventura Boulevard, this impeccably designed 5 bedroom/8 bathroom home is luxury living at its finest. This 5,900 square ft home has everything a discerning buyer could want: vast, spacious living spaces; open floor plan, natural light, elegant landscaping and enormous backyard with BBQ. The chef's kitchen offers top-of-the-line appliances and an abundance of space for entertaining. In addition to the elegant bedrooms and bathrooms, there is also a state-of-the-art theater, great room, living room, office and elevator to visit each floor with convenient ease. Additional amenities include: 3 fireplaces, designer light fixtures/chandelier, basement gym and bar, solar roof panels (paid off, no cost to buyer), electric water heaters and two laundry rooms. A certified Smart Home that offers Control 4 throughout, this isn't just a magnificent estate but a true architectural achievement. Also available for lease.

## Cheviot Hills - FOR LEASE!



**2890 Forrester Drive – \$25,000 p/mo.**  
4 Bed / 5 Bath 4,438 Sq. Ft., 7,204 Sq. Ft. Lot

Like Brand New, Recently Remodeled! Built in 2007, a Luxurious Contemporary/Modern Mediterranean home located in Cheviot Hills on the coveted Forrester Dr. Grand foyer with rolling staircase, skylight, & soaring ceilings. Spacious living room with fireplace opens to the cozy den/office which leads to a grassy, well maintained & fenced side yard. The back yard provides several options for al-fresco dining and entertaining no matter the time of year. Private and elegant formal dining room with ample built-in storage space. Sleek and modern kitchen features custom cabinetry, stone counters, new appliances & center island. Off the kitchen is the expansive family room, leading to a sprawling patio. Upstairs are 4 BDs, including an expansive master. One Bedroom has its own en-suite bath and other 2 bedrooms share a dual bath with a double vanity & oversized spa tub. The master features an amazing walk-in closet with a center storage unit, & an impressive spa like master bath perfect for relaxation. Downstairs is subterranean 2 car garage aside Maid's Room. Available March 15th.

## Beverlywood - COMING SOON!



**1716 S. Durango Ave. –**

4 Bed / 3 Bath 2,811 Sq. Ft., 7,110 Sq. Ft. Lot

Affectionately known as, "Casa Azul," this move-in ready home effortlessly combines the charming aesthetics of an authentic 1930s Spanish style home with the updated style and needs of today's active family. Hardwood floors, rounded archways, built-in home-office nooks, picturesque Bay window, exposed beams and brick gas fireplace are just a few of the original architectural features that make this home feel so warm. A recent expansion and comprehensive remodel allowed for additional space and modernization. Adding to the home's original formal living and dining rooms, new construction created an enormous Great Room with impossibly high vaulted ceiling and chef's kitchen complete with Caesarstone countertops, stainless top-of-the-line appliances, oversized central island with second sink, ample prep space, new backsplash and designer pendants. Each of the bedrooms are basked in natural light with generous walk-in closets and the bathrooms have each been remodeled in a simple yet classic fashion. A two car detached garage, fresh landscaping in the front yard and a stone's throw to award winning Canfield Elementary School and the shops/restaurants/religious institutions of Pico/Robertson, this much-treasured home is not to be missed.

## Beverlywood – IN ESCROW!



**9124 Beverlywood St. - \$1,795,000**  
3 Beds / 2 Bath, 1,513 Sq. Ft.

## Cheviot Hills - SOLD!



**3388 Manning Ct – \$2,999,000**  
4 Bed / 3 Bath 2,388 Sq. Ft., 7,204 Sq. Ft. Lot

## Rancho Park – SOLD!



**2831 Malcolm Avenue - \$3,795,000**  
4 Beds / 5 Bath, 3450 Sq. Ft., 6324 Sq. Ft. Lot

## Sherman Oaks – SOLD!



**3421 Castlewoods Place -**  
\$1,995,000  
4 Beds / 3 Bath, 2815 Sq. Ft.

## Cheviot Hills – SOLD!



**2700 Anchor Avenue -**  
\$2,995,000  
4 Beds / 3 Bath, 3426 Sq. Ft.

## Cheviot Hills – SOLD!



**10422 Lorenzo -**  
\$7,995,000  
6 Beds / 8 Bath

# Cheviot Hills happenings

## MARIA'S RAFFLE

Thank you to all those who participated in our \$50 gift card to everyone's favorite neighborhood Italian restaurant, Maria's! We had an overwhelming response (clearly

this neighborhood is in dire need of moderately priced family restaurants!) and the lucky winner is: Sylvia Ortiz. Congratulations! Please see below for what we're giving away in March!

## FIRESTORM



By Ben Lee

I had the pleasure of meeting author, MSNBC/NOW reporter and native-born Los Angelino Jacob Soboroff last month at a book signing and moderated talk at Temple Isaiah. Jacob has written a compelling narrative from his experience covering the worst fires to hit our city, from the unique perspective of having been born and raised in the Palisades while currently living with his family in the Alta Dena vicinity. He covered the fires as it was his professional duty however, he brought a personal perspective to his reports given he knew every detail of Palisades Village and its surrounding areas. Meanwhile, there was no refuge from the fires

due to the fact that while he was in the middle of the harrowing flames and toxic ash in the Palisades, his wife and kids were being evacuated from his home near Pasadena. He was truly in the center of it all and his book, Firestorm, is a first-person account of a once-in-a-lifetime experience that will likely serve as a reference tool for generations to come who want to really know what it was like when the fires began in January, 2025. I have four signed copies of this gripping book to give away- please send me an email if you would like one: ben@benleproperties.com and write BOOK in the subject line. We will choose four names at random at the end of the month and send you a copy.

## HARMONY IN THE HILLS

By Ben Lee

It was a very special evening seeing so many friends and neighbors who gathered together at "Harmony in the Hills," an evening of star-studded Broadway performances that benefited Vista del Mar on Motor. Founded by Tony Award nominated actor and producer Rory O'Malley, the show featured Broadway hits sung by Josh Gad and Idina Menzel among a host of others including Joey McIntyre, Tyrone Huntley and the young musicians of the A Cappella group: Squad

Harmonix. While the guests were amazed to be in the presence of such international talent, there was equal surprise that such a beautiful theater exists right in our own backyard. About 50,000 dollars was raised that night to benefit Vista Del Mar's Therapeutic Arts Program, a vital component that helps the children and young adults receiving treatment on this historic campus. To make an additional donation or learn more about future Harmony in the Hills events, visit their website: [harmonyinthehills.com](http://harmonyinthehills.com)



## NEXT LADIES' WINE NIGHT

By Lilli Lee

Our next Ladies' Wine Night will be held at Shelley Blumenfeld's house in Cheviot Hills on April 23. These gatherings have become so popular, we're going to have to limit the amount of RSVPs to attend so please reach out ASAP if you'd like to be included. These are fun, casual get-togethers and a fantastic way

to meet new neighbors while reconnecting with ones you may not have seen in a while. If you've never been, you're in for a treat so please reach out to: [lillijlee@yahoo.com](mailto:lillijlee@yahoo.com) to get the invite with all the information. If you are interested in hosting an upcoming Wine Night, please let me know. We need a few hosts for summer and fall and I promise, it's easy!