

Cheviot Hills

The greatest neighborhood in the world



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Love is in the air

By BEN LEE

It's February and you know what that means: everywhere you turn, symbols of romance are aggressively front and center. Heart shaped chocolates, bunches of red roses, cards, teddy bears, Cupids, cards and candies. Valentine's Day is everywhere! I think when you've been in a relationship for a very long time, you tend to take a different attitude toward this holiday. I like to think your commitment is celebrated daily, not just one day out of the year.

I am a fervent fan of romance and have been known to sweep a certain someone off her feet on more than one occasion, but Valentine's Day for my wife and I has never been a big deal. Sure, back when we were in our early 20s and first started dating, we fully embraced the occasion in a nod to our burgeoning relationship. To give some

historical perspective, our first Valentine's Day was spent dining at The Gardens of Taxco (It's not "hot" but "spiiiiiiicy!") and then seeing a concert (Soul Coughing at the El Rey. What ever happened to them?).

Twenty or so Valentine's Days later, we're still acknowledging the day but it's different. Last year, Lilli made meatloaf with a heart made out of ketchup on top. And it was delicious! The boys like any excuse to devour a lot of chocolate and everyone's happy. For us, it's romantic to drop the three of them at school and then take a long walk around the neighborhood. It's romantic to offer to dig through the trash to look for a son's retainer so the other doesn't have to. We don't need one day of the year to tell us to bring each other trinkets when it's sweet enough on the other 364 mornings to bring each other coffee instead.

Therefore, it's a relief that on



Valentine's Day, long gone is the pressure to figure out reservations for over priced menus and to embrace, instead, the gestures that come from knowing each other now half our lives. But, just in case there's any doubt that, despite my distaste for the commercialization of this particular holiday, that I am indeed a true romantic ... let me take this opportunity to solidify my

commitment to Romeo-worthy gestures.

Since the skywriter was busy, publishing a sentiment for 6,000 friends, neighbors and strangers reading this newspaper will have to suffice. Lilli: my love, my life, my wife and forever girlfriend, you are my world and I love you today, on Valentine's Day and every day in between.

Cheviot Hills

From ALL agents in ALL companies

Single Family Homes Sold November 2012 – January 2013

Compared with November 2013 – January 2014

	Jan 2014	Dec 2013	Nov 2013	Average
Number of Sales	3	5	3	4
Average Days on Market	52	22	80	51
Low Price	\$1,520,000	\$899,000	\$900,000	\$1,106,333
Median Price	\$1,800,000	\$1,508,000	\$1,303,000	\$1,537,000
High Price	\$2,095,000	\$1,710,000	\$1,800,000	\$1,868,333
Average Price per Sq Ft.	\$892	\$599	\$579	\$690
	Jan 2013	Dec 2012	Nov 2012	Average
Number of Sales	4	9	3	5
Average Days on Market	70	76	31	59
Low Price	\$650,000	\$718,001	\$850,000	\$739,334
Median Price	\$992,500	\$1,395,000	\$1,346,000	\$1,244,500
High Price	\$2,351,000	\$2,850,000	\$1,650,000	\$2,283,667
Average Price per Sq Ft.	\$678	\$578	\$435	\$564

Beverlywood – NEW LISTING!



Open Super Bowl Sunday, February 2nd 12-3pm

9720 Beverlywood Street – Offered at \$1,099,000

A warm, comfortable, extremely livable home in Beverlywood, this three bedroom, two bath home has many enviable features: A newly remodeled kitchen with stainless steel appliances and granite countertops that overlooks the living room, creating an effortless flow and vast extension of space. Hardwood floors extend from room to room. French doors allow for light to stream in as well as a view of the rustic inspired backyard complete with towering privacy hedges, mature fruit trees, lawn, enormous deck and pergola. Back inside, the Italian Travertine fireplace keeps the cozy family room warm. The very bright master bedroom boasts two big closets (one being an oversized walk-in) as well as sliding doors that lead out to the backyard. A brand new, tastefully redecorated bathroom offers a fir ceiling above and more Travertine tile below. Additional highlights include: a new roof, new windows, air conditioning, a separate laundry area with ample cabinetry, storage space and granite countertop for folding. Conveniently located a hop, skip and jump from the neighborhood park and award winning Castle Heights Elementary School, this much loved home is ready to move into today.

Beverlywood – NEW LISTING!



Open Super Bowl Sunday, February 2nd 12-2pm

3354 S. Beverly Drive – Offered at \$899,000

Sleek, architecturally significant home built in 2005. Enter through a private, peaceful limestone and gravel Zen-garden into a beautifully designed home featuring an airy open-floor plan with hardwood white oak floors and soaring 10+ ft ceilings. Living room and dining areas flow seamlessly creating a vast space. Both areas are warmed by a wood burning fireplace and brightened with designer recessed lighting. Gourmet chef's kitchen has a prep sink in the center island and stylish limestone counters with excellent storage capabilities as well as stainless steel appliances. Three light and bright bedrooms upstairs all feature luxurious wool carpeting and an abundance of windows. Master suite with fireplace, sitting area, and spacious master bath with double vanities and spa tub. Additional home features include: carbon charcoal water filtration system, CAT 5 wiring throughout, and 3-zone HVAC system. Located within the award winning Castle Heights School district. Culver City adjacent in walking distance to farmer's market and Main Street restaurants; close to light rail for easy access to downtown and ultimately Santa Monica pier. Super condo alternative!

COMING SOON!



10259 Monte Mar Drive – Cheviot Hills
Offered at \$4,399,000

LEASED!



2766 Forrester Drive – Cheviot Hills
Offered at \$7,999/month

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My featured listings

Beverlywood – ACTIVE!



2313 Duxbury Circle – Offered at \$2,295,000

This is the street you would love to move on to. Quiet, idyllic and backdrop to many newly constructed homes, this tree-lined street is progress personified. Here sits the delightful 2313 Duxbury Circle in Beverlywood: a 1950's 3 bedroom/2.5 bath traditional style family home with charm to spare. Situated on a 10,600+ square foot sized lot, this sweet house could be modified to further enhance its already lovely presence or it could be moved in to immediately in its' as-is condition. The artistic details are unique to homes of this era: intricately carved crown moldings, elegant wainscoting, bay windows and two hearty fireplaces. There is ample closet space including an enormous walk-in closet in the master suite. The expansive backyard (that includes a covered patio, pretty rustic views and a large, flat grassy area) is visible from many rooms inside the house. Sunlight streams in from the backyard and into the living and dining spaces thanks to the multitude of windows and doors leading out. The bedrooms and bathrooms are generously sized and in addition to the separate laundry room off of the kitchen, this house also offers a beautiful living room, formal dining room and ultra cozy family room/den. Nestled in the coveted and award winning Castle Heights Elementary school district, this is an extremely warm and inviting home that will not be on the market for long.

SOLD - Over Asking!



2734 Veteran Avenue – West LA
Offered at \$649,000

SOLD - Over Asking!



3036 Danalda Drive – Cheviot Hills
Offered at \$1,799,000

Cheviot Hills' trees

Everywhere you turn, especially this time of year, it's hard not to be stuck by the beauty of the many varieties of trees in Cheviot Hills. However, when it comes to neighbors and trees near their common lot line, sometimes there can be conflict. According to attorney and former Cheviot Hills resident Michael Harris, Esq., the following rules apply to settle any differences:

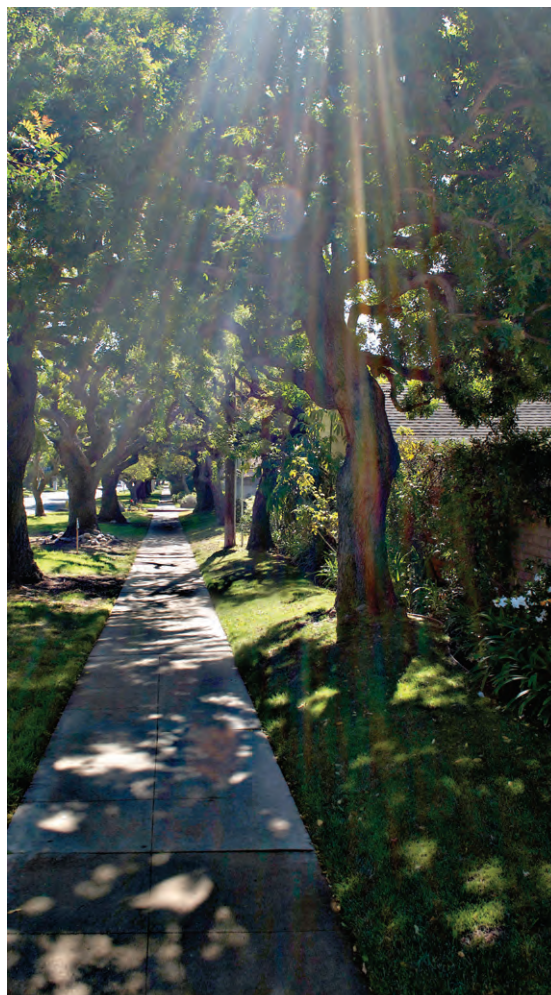
1. If a tree trunk is partly on the land of two neighboring lots, then the tree belongs to both of them.

2. The owner of land onto which a tree projects may cut off or trim overhanging branches with or without the consent or the tree's owner.

3. A landowner may not cut the roots of a neighbor's tree even if the roots encroach on the landowner's lot, if the root cutting would cause a foreseeable death or serious injury to the tree.

4. Absent a specific right in a recorded declaration of condition, covenants and restrictions, landowners may not be compelled to trim trees to preserve or to enhance the view of a neighboring lot.

Just a reminder, probably a good idea to seek professional legal advice before taking tree matters into your own hands.



A call for action to improve our parks

By JOANNA TAITZ

Before I was a mom I could never have imagined how important a park playground could be to a child.

For our kids, parks are a place to discover, meet friends, master skills, and of course, exert all that energy! We are lucky to live so close to one of the city's busiest parks, Cheviot Hills Recreation Center and also to one of the sweetest neighborhood parks, Irving Schacter Park. However, the playgrounds at both of these parks are very outdated and based on my inquiries so far neither is currently scheduled for major improvements. These parks both need: softer play surfaces, shade structures, modern equipment, more seating, and an overall facelift.

While Cheviot is always teeming with activity, the playground is disproportionately quiet — it simply doesn't have much to offer. A park of that size and importance needs to also cater to our youngest citizens and their caregivers! This park brings the city significant revenue from film/TV shoots year round, yet these monies do not go directly back to the park.

Schacter is packed with people on a daily basis — both weekdays and weekends. The daily ratio of visitors

per square foot must be amongst the highest in the city. Yet it does not have a clean drinking fountain or restrooms for its visitors.

As you well know, home prices in our neighborhood are higher than ever. With each sale, especially of the newly developed homes, the city is making thousands if not tens of thousands more in property taxes than ever before.

Please help me to let the Los Angeles Parks Commissioners know that these two parks should be a priority. E-mails can be sent to: rap.commissioners@lacity.org. Even if extremely brief, a simple note can help raise awareness of the needs of our neighborhood.

Funds for park development can also be generated privately — I believe that an investment in our specific parks could generate tremendous goodwill for the studios that flank our area (Fox and Sony), or for those driving major development in Century City like Westfield.

If you are a decision maker in one of these organizations and would like to help drive this effort please e-mail me at joannab411@yahoo.com.

Key considerations for unwed couples buying a home

Married couples represent the majority of homebuyers, but more couples are teaming up to buy a home before they get hitched. If they ever do.

Data from the National Association of Realtors show that, on average, married couples accounted for 61.6 percent all homebuyers from 2001 to 2011. By comparison, unmarried couples made up an average 7.5 percent.

Although still a small slice of homebuyers, some unwed couples see positives to buying a home together before getting married.

Teresa Hung, a customs broker in Baltimore, decided to put off getting married in 2012. Instead she chose to buy a home with her boyfriend, James Woody, a retail executive. The couple wanted to take advantage of still-affordable home prices — rather than splurge on a wedding and continue paying rent for months or years.

"I did want the wedding and all that," said Hung, 29. "It definitely wasn't an easy decision."

Here are some tips unwed couples should follow when they commit to buying a home:

1. SWAP FINANCIAL HISTORY

Before considering buying a home with your significant other, share all of your key financial statements. That includes bank accounts, credit cards, student loans, retirement accounts and so on. Also share credit reports and FICO scores.

You'll need to know of any credit blemishes that could prevent you from obtaining the lowest rate on a home loan, or other potential red flags, such as a high debt-to-income ratio.

2. AGREE ON WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD

Before you hit the first open house, determine how much each person can contribute, especially if you opt to apply for a home loan together. Bankrate Inc. offers online calculators to help estimate how much you can afford based on your income and expenses.

One rule of thumb: a house payment shouldn't be more than 28 percent to 30 percent of a buyer's monthly income.

With an unwed couple, particularly if one person earns a lot more than the other, other approaches may be a better fit.

John Porter and his partner, Horacio Alonso, are in the market to buy a home in Miami together. The couple has already made it a point to benchmark how much home they can afford based on a percentage of their individual income.

"Our incomes are not equal," said Porter, co-founder of an organic cocktail mixers company.

He said splitting the costs of the home evenly would not be fair. As a result, the couple decided to base each person's contribution on 30 percent of their individual earnings, Porter said.

3. SIGN A CONTRACT

Even if a falling out seems unimaginable, couples should enlist an attorney and draw up a purchase contract before buying a home.

Such a pact should outline details of how much each person is contributing, whether it's money, taking on a loan or paying to cover maintenance and other costs.

"It has to be very clear who is putting the money in, who is going to do the improvements, so they have a good understanding of ownership," said Monica Rebella, a certified public accountant in Tustin, Calif.

The pact also can set how the couple wants to split any equity gained in the home, for example.

The contract details can help sort out how much of a financial interest each person has in the home in the event of a split, which could lead the home to be sold or one person offering to buy out the other.

Such agreements don't have any effect if the couple remains together, notes Jordan Clarke, an agent in San Diego with real estate brokerage Redfin.

"Many different things can happen after the relationship dissolves," Clarke said. "It's much better to think about it when heads are cool and everything is great in a relationship."

4. UNDERSTAND OWNERSHIP OPTIONS

Homebuyers have a couple of options on how to assign ownership on the title to the home. Specifics can vary by state, but generally the title can list one person as the sole owner, or more than one person.

Unwed homebuyers generally hold title as "joint tenants" or as "tenants in common."

The "joint tenants" option designates equal ownership interest. If a couple specifies right of survivorship to the title, then the interest in the home is transferred to the other person on the title in the event the other dies.

With a "tenants in common" title, the homeowners spell out what percentage of the property each holds. That approach is more common with a group of investors buying a property together because it clarifies how much each investor gets from the sale of the property. It also lets each person sell their stake in the property.

5. REVIEW TAX IMPLICATIONS

One of the perks of homeownership is being able to deduct mortgage interest payments in your tax return.

In the case of an unwed couple filing separate income tax returns, the IRS will allow both to take their home mortgage interest deduction as long as they each have a vested interest in the property, said Mark J. Kohler, a tax lawyer and CPA.

A vested interest could be simply being on the title, or being a guarantor on the mortgage, akin to being a co-signer.

For more details, check out the IRS website: www.irs.gov.

6. RESET WEDDING EXPECTATIONS

Owning a home can come with unexpected expenses that make it hard to save money for a lavish wedding and honeymoon.

Hung, who is not yet engaged, said the biggest shock of homeownership came when her home's value was reassessed, resulting in an increase in her property taxes.

"It really does set your plans back," she said. "I thought within a year we would hopefully be able to afford a wedding, but it's not as quick as we thought."

— ASSOCIATED PRESS