

## NEIGHBORLY ADVICE

# Village locals say it's a slice of the sweet life

If Hollywood had to create a set for postwar Suburbia USA, it would be Valley Village. Since then, the community has grown in sophistication, but it has not lost its family-friendly edge.

By DIANE WEDNER  
Times Staff Writer

## Beginnings

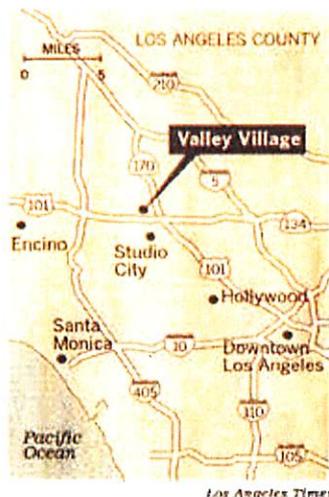
Like most of the San Fernando Valley, the area today known as Valley Village was primarily ranches at the end of the 19th century. James B. Lankershim, along with a consortium of investors, subdivided 12,000 acres of his family's vast holdings (from today's Whitsett Avenue east to the Burbank line) in 1888 and laid out a town called Toluca, which became Lankershim in 1896. The large geographic area was annexed to L.A. in 1915 and renamed North Hollywood in 1927, according to Kevin Rodrick's "The San Fernando Valley: America's Suburb."

In 1986, a group of homeowners in the area bounded by Burbank Boulevard to the north, the

Ventura Freeway to the south, the Hollywood Freeway to the east and the Tujunga Wash to the west sought permission from Los Angeles to change the neighborhood's designation to Valley Village, reclaiming a name that had been established in 1939. The City Council approved the name change in 1991.

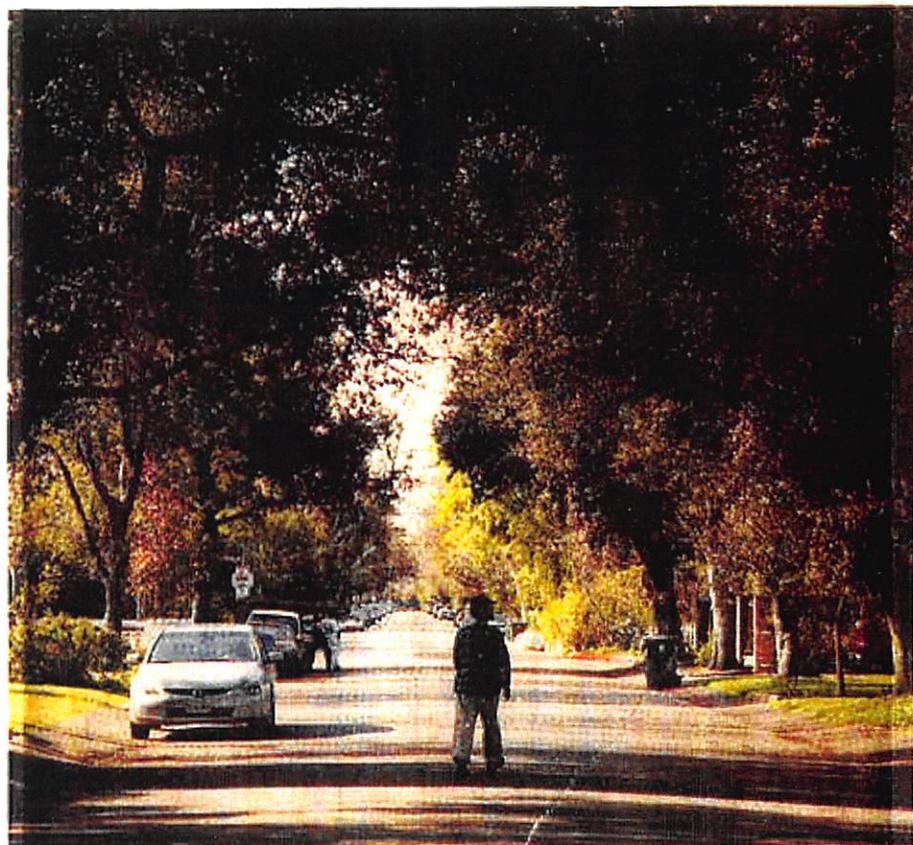
## Drawing card

Residents love the Norman Rockwell flavor of their burg, which is close to downtown L.A., the studios, Valley Village Park, excellent shopping and good schools. And Valley Villagers — many of whom are active members of the homeowners association — take pride in maintaining the charm of the homey hamlet: They organized a neighborhood-wide tree-planting project a few years ago after the city removed



the bountiful but insect-ravaged eucalyptus trees that once adorned their streets.

Ginny and Paul Hatfield, 18-year residents, love the country feel of their street, half of which has no sidewalks but plenty of mature trees. Years ago, there were organized block parties, where neighbors socialized and barbecued, Ginny Hatfield said. Nowadays, although block par-



Photographs by GLENN KOENIG

**LEAFY CANOPY:** Mature trees provide plenty of shade along Hesby Street in Valley Vi-

ties are no more, young families mingle with a number of Valley Village pioneers. The Hatfields' neighbor Alice White, 92, lived there for 59 years before moving away two weeks ago.

Others, such as 49-year-old architect Doug Humphries, chose Valley Village because it's a stone's throw from where they grew up. Ventura Boulevard's mom-and-pop stores (and national chains) and longtime Valley Village retailers, such as Dutton's Books, and Val Surf, are popular magnets for residents.

Humphries' two-bedroom house is two miles from his father's home and half a mile from his alma mater, North Hollywood High. He likes that his wife, recent immigrant Liqing Xu, has access to the new Orange Line and that a market and other shops are walking distance from their home.

#### Insider's view

Residents get a generous dose of John Philip Sousa at the neighborhood's annual Fourth of July parade. Kids and parents decorate strollers and even their dogs with red, white and blue and march to the music provided by the school band from Van Nuys' Grant High.

"It's the most kid-friendly place," said Mara Lenkov, whose two children rode flag-draped bicycles in last year's parade. "There's a great sense of community here."

#### Housing stock

Valley Village, like many of the San Fernando Valley's older neighborhoods, consists mostly of 1,700-square-foot, single-story Spanish- and ranch-style homes that typically sit on nice-size lots. Most of the 3,881 single-family homes in the 91607 ZIP Code are on residential streets; 1,073 condos and 8,213 apartment units line the main boulevards.

Unlike the good old days — about five years ago — Valley Village no longer is the place to buy

an inexpensive home. The 40 or so homes on the market in mid-January were priced from \$657,000 to \$1.65 million. Condos start at \$315,000 and climb to \$670,000. For those who don't mind diminutive living spaces, a 400-square-foot condo recently was listed for \$205,000, according to Coldwell Banker agent Ken Marker.

Some residents complain about the growing presence of developers who buy a lot on which a single house stands, raze it and jam in three new two-story homes. Despite the outcry, the community's specific plan allows such development, said Peter Sanchez, president of the Neighborhood Council Valley Village and a Valley Village Homeowners Assn. board member.

#### Report card

Valley Village is part of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Children through fifth grade attend Colfax Avenue and Burbank elementary schools, which scored 833 and 753, respectively, out of a possible 1,000 on the 2005 Academic Performance Index Growth Report. Walter Reed Middle School scored 714 and North Hollywood High School, 664.

#### Historical values

Residential resales for ZIP Code 91607:

Year	Median price
1990	\$305,000
1995	\$206,000
2000	\$324,750
2004	\$594,954
2005	\$720,000

Sources: DataQuick Information Systems; [api.cde.ca.gov](http://api.cde.ca.gov/); Ken Marker, agent, Coldwell Banker; [www.myvalleyvillage.com](http://www.myvalleyvillage.com).