



Bixby Knolls Neighborhood Association

A History Through July 2021

The BKNA is a loosely organized entirely voluntary entity that grew to its present proportions from a modest start. At present, it covers 205 single family households, not including any accessory dwelling units (ADUs) over garages, etc. The Association is led by a Steering Committee, a small group (typically 10-12) of volunteers who meet monthly to plan meetings, events and decide how to proceed with all manner of neighborhood issues.

The BKNA grew out of a long-standing Community Watch (CW) that encompassed a small group of households mostly located in the 800-900 block of East Cartagena St. By the early 2000s the watch group had become essentially inactive. About 2011, Cynthia Johnson (814 E. Cartagena St.), who had led the CW for many years and was becoming elderly, approached Alan Zimmerman (4200 Olive Ave.) and Stuart Galloway (820 Cartagena St.) to ask if they would take over. Both Alan and Stuart agreed. Because Stuart was still working, and Alan was retired they decided Alan would be the Community Watch lead with Stuart as back-up. They set about to re-energize the CW.

Their first action was to add the houses at the four compass points of the Cartagena junctions with Olive and California, to “enclose” our watch area. In addition, they invited about four households on both sides of Olive and Myrtle avenues north of Cartagena. This initial expansion resulted in a CW group of 32 residences that was officially called the “Olive and Cartagena Street Community Watch”.

Initially the CW actions consisted of maintaining a relationship with the Long Beach Police Department North Division and communicating LBPD notices and information releases to the households within the recently expanded CW. However, even with the expansion it was clear that it would be best to have a larger CW coverage.

Both Alan and Stuart recognized that the best way for a CW to be effective in providing safety and security for its members was to increase their interaction with each other, get to know each other and form a strong sense of community. Therefore, in addition to holding meetings it was decided to organize other events through which people could meet and get to know each other as well as obtain information about the neighborhood.

In July of 2013 the first Block Party took place on the last weekend of July. A city permit was obtained to block off Myrtle Ave. from Tehachapi Dr. to Cartagena St. Food, music, decoration, and games were provided. Neighbors were asked to bring potluck food contributions. In addition to each of the 32 CW households, another 35 households on Olive and Myrtle up to Tehachapi were invited. Each invited household was requested to make a small monetary contribution to cover costs. The Block Party was very successful, and one has been held every year on the last weekend of July until 2020. City officials were invited, and many have said that it is one of the best block parties in Long Beach. No party was held in 2020 or 2021 because of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

During preparations for the 2013 Party, the Steering Committee decided to invite each household in a considerably expanded area. Thus, the CW (later to become the BKNA) grew to its present size. The current boundaries are Claiborne Dr. on the north, Cartagena St. on the south, Lime Ave. on the west and California Ave. (see map attached dated February 27, 2022). This is considered appropriate and manageable.

By July 2014, the CW registered with the city as a Neighborhood Association and became the BKNA. This allowed us to tap valuable city resources such as the Neighborhood Resource Center. In January 2017 we established our official email address (bknalongbeach@outlook.com).

Around this time, the BKNA began holding community meetings, usually quarterly, at residents' houses. Like the block party, these events are well attended, impressing our guest speakers with the turnout and interest shown by our members. As the meetings began to get a little larger, in October 2015 we started holding them at the Expo Arts Center on Atlantic but found that attendance started to fall a little, so by February 2018 we again relied on the generosity of our fellow residents to host meetings in their homes. Due to pandemic restrictions, no meetings were held after January 2020 until July 2021.

The BKNA continues to be based on the mission of building community spirit through providing information, activities and projects that make our neighborhood a better and more enjoyable place to live. Over the years we have done this through several ways:

- Successfully lobbied the LB 8th Council District to have a 4-way stop sign installed at the intersection of Cartagena and Olive (Dec 2013).
- We held two tree plantings (2015 and 2018) in conjunction with the city and Port of LB resulting in over 70 new parkway trees.
- Worked with the 8th District (2013 and 2017) to get the city to remove many tree stumps that had existed for several years.
- Successfully lobbied the 8th District to refurbish the historical lamp posts (2015)
- Purchased new Community Watch Signs and worked with the 8th District to have the city replace the old, faded ones and install the new ones on street signs (2016).
- Purchased and installed Community Watch Signs at strategic places throughout the neighborhood on resident's private property (2016)
- Coordinated with the Port of LB for BKNA exclusive Boat Harbor Cruises (2017, 2018 and 2019)
- Held cooking classes at Chef Tech on Atlantic Ave (2018 and 2019).
- Collected Gift Cards to be distributed by LB Homeless Services during the annual Homeless Count (Jan 2020)
- BKNA sellout of Helen Borgers Theatre for LB Shakespeare Company's performance of Hamlet (Jan 2020)
- As early as 2015 we began to focus on Emergency Preparation Initiatives:
 - Several Steering Committee members graduated from Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training (Oct 2016), and we encouraged residents to do the same.
 - Began to become familiar with the concept of Map Your Neighborhood (MYN) and how it could be employed by us. The Steering Committee received its first informal MYN training (Nov 2015)
 - The association also undertook to bulk-purchase emergency preparedness kits, and quite a few neighbors took advantage of that (Dec 2017).
 - MYN is a simple, structured approach for coordinating with small groups of neighbors to inform them of how they can work together to take care of each other in the event of a major emergency when local, regional and statewide resources and services may be disrupted for a significant period. For practical reasons, our neighborhood has been divided into ten zones, each of approximately twenty households, with seminars being held in each zone. This remains incomplete to date, but seven zones have had at least one seminar. The BKNA has worked with the LB Department of Disaster Preparedness

& Emergency Communications to rollout MYN. We understand we are the first large scale implementation of the program within the city.

We are very fortunate to have neighbors who exhibit their support by volunteering their time and efforts to make these things happen. This reflects the very tight-knit community spirit that the BKNA exists to promote. Our organization received special recognition and an "Award of Magnificence" from 8th District Councilmember Al Austin at the "Celebrate the 8th" ceremony in March 2014.