

October 2008

Volume 2, Issue 1

Coming Soon: ICO's 3rd Annual Meeting

Check you inbox, or your mail slot, for information about ICO's 3rd Annual Meeting, coming soon to First Congregational Church.

We will, as in years past, celebrate the diversity and vibrancy that is at the core of our work. Member congregations are encouraged to bring at least two dishes that are emblematic of their culultural heritage, with enough made to serve 30 people. We are also looking for donations and gift baskets to feature both in our raffle and in our silent auction. Finally, and most importantly, we are looking for you. We need volunteers for set-up and clean-up, to manage the auction and raffle, and to coordinate donations and food.

And, above all, we are looking for you to come and join us as we celebrate ICO's gifts.

So, join us for food, fellowship and fun. Contact your local ICO leader, or us at the ICO office. Please call (562) 984-2727, or email us at info@greaterlongbeachico.org to be part of the annual meeting. And don't forget to visit our website, www.greaterlongbeachico.org, for more information and updates.

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Residents Fill Silverado Park Center to Protest Rail Yard Expansion Plans

More than 100 neighborhood residents filled the Silverado Park Community Center on Thursday, September 25, to protest the planned development of huge new railyards on Long Beach's west side. If built, the Union Pacific (UP) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railyards will more than triple the volume of trucking activity in the community and dump some 3 million trucks annually on neighborhoods streets.

The meeting was co-sponsored by the Westside Neighborhood Association and Greater Long Beach ICO. Andrea Hricko of USC spoke about the health effects of the pollution generated by truck, ship and train activity at the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles and the railyards. Angelo Logan of East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice talked about the yards' impact on local communities. Community residents James Larson, Suzanne Arnold and Nora Ortiz also spoke about the impact on schools, children's health, heightened rates of asthma and cardio-pulmonary and respiratory disease, and the local quality of life.

UP and BNSF already operate the dirtiest rail yards in the state, and have been cited by experts and monitoring organizations as among the leading contributors to the

region's poor air quality. Notwithstanding this, the rail yards have launched a relentless public relations campaign pledging that the new or expanded yards will be "green" and will have minimal impact on the local quality of life.



Part of the crowd listens to the presentations at the Silverado Park community meeting

The Silverado Park community meeting was convened to counter the hype and launch the "Don't Be

Fooled by the Railroad Con" campaign. As has been documented, the area's toxic air quality causes 3,700 premature deaths annually. Furthermore, notwithstanding their claims, the railroads' actions tell a different story. The UP recently rejected an offer from the Joint Powers Authority to contribute \$8 million to clean up the west Long Beach site. And westsiders remember the UP's promise 22 years ago that the Intermodal Container Transfer Facility would operate only during weekday business hours, a far cry from the 24/7 facility they know so well today. Recognizing the hardship the area's poor air quality imposes on children, the South Coast Air Quality Management District recently committed \$1.1 million in funds generated through fines on local oil refineries for air filters in classrooms at West Long Beach schools.

Next steps in the battle the stop the railyard expansion include delivering postcards to Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaragossa and Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster. Hundreds of postcards were distributed at the community meeting, and more are available at the ICO offices. Signed postcards can be dropped off at ICO or at St. Lucy's Catholic Church, 2344 Cato Avenue, Long Beach. If you want to get more involved, please contact us to for commitment cards that list several suggestions for further action.