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# The Plot Thickens

## Northern Exposure

BY THOMAS K. ARNOLD



**TOMB WITH A VIEW:** The down economy may have slowed residential building in San Diego County, but one North County subdivision, of sorts, is still on track with ambitious growth plans. The cemetery at Mission San Luis Rey in Oceanside should have room for 500 new double-burial plots and mausoleum spaces over the next few years—up from “several thousand” today, says cemetery director Terry Hawthorne. “We added the same number of plots two and a half years ago, and most of those are already filled,” she says. To spread the word, the cemetery has hired a marketing director. Even with the expansion, Hawthorne says, she expects the cemetery to be completely sold out within 10 years.

**OOPS:** An editor was fired at the *North County Times* for tinkering with an AP story about a new law in Los Angeles that requires most pet owners to spay or neuter their dogs and cats. The AP story quoted a Los Angeles councilman who “held” up a cat at a news conference. The version that ran in the North County daily said the councilman “strangled” the cat. In a front-page apology, *North County Times* editor Ken Davy said the mistake “flowed from a deeply misguided joke that made its way into print” and informed readers that the guilty editor had been fired, while an accomplice had been suspended.

**WHEN A HOUSE IS NOT A HOME:** First came You Tube; now comes [Youwalkaway.com](http://Youwalkaway.com), a Carlsbad-based Web site that helps homeowners facing foreclosure. A \$995 kit promises to keep lenders away and prevent troubled homeowners from going any further into debt. The key, the site says, lies in its name. “Unshackle yourself today from a losing investment and use our proven method to Walk Away,” it says. The site was prominently featured in a nationally syndicated story on the growing number of people who bail on their mortgages because they find themselves owing more than their home is worth.

**SPEAKING OF YOUTUBE . . .** The popular viral video site is hosting promotional clips for a bevy of North County attractions, including the Lawrence Welk Resort Theatre in Escondido. The Welk clip, featuring comic-magicians Kevin Johnson and Anthony the Magic, has logged nearly 30,000 views and five comments, three of them from the duo’s publicist. Legoland California is represented by 147 clips, while Carlsbad’s famed Flower Fields have 18, mostly submitted by fans.

**THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD:** About a year ago, when Wal-Mart announced plans to build a prototype upscale store in Carlsbad, there was hardly a murmur of protest. But now that the mammoth discount chain has actually picked a location and bought the land, a 17.6-acre site already zoned for a


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shopping center, watch out. Residents of nearby Sunny Creek and other communities are in a tizzy that the site Wal-Mart selected, on the northwest corner of El Camino Real and College Avenue, is on a street already known for its rush-hour gridlock—and within spitting distance of a proposed new high school. Normally, Carlsbad's zoning laws would prevent a big-box retailer like Wal-Mart from setting up shop. But while no plans have been submitted, the prototype reportedly has a significantly smaller footprint and could squeak in. Carlsbad resident Devonee Alfrey scoffs at the "upscale" description, calling it "kind of an oxymoron." The bottom line: "There are multiple Wal-Marts in the area, and we don't need another one," she says. "We need a grocery store, restaurants and a place to take our kids to dinner . . . El Camino Real is already a nightmare with traffic, and we are expecting more new homes and a new high school. Where are these cars going to go?"irate residents have set up a Web site, [nocarlsbadwalmart.com](http://nocarlsbadwalmart.com).

**MARCO** . . . Economic uncertainty almost led to the death of a proposed Olympic-size swimming pool in south Carlsbad, at the proposed Alga Norte Park. But in a surprise tally, the council voted to keep the pool and instead cut \$10 million worth of trimmings, mostly water-park features such as slides, a water-play structure and a "lazy river" where visitors can float on inner tubes, much like the water park in Vista. What changed the council's mind? A vocal protest by water polo teams, who are stuck sharing the pool in north Carlsbad with Carlsbad High.

**YOU WIN SOME** . . . Crime in Oceanside has dropped to its lowest level in more than 30 years, and the chief of police credits a sharp uptick in neighborhood policing and crackdowns on gangs since the fatal shooting in December 2006 of Officer Dan Bessant. Sharing the credit are 35 additional police officers who have been deployed over the past five years. Chief Frank McCoy says the overall crime rate in 2007 fell to 31.12 per thousand residents, the third consecutive yearly decrease. In 1975, the first year for which statistics are available, police reported 90 crimes per thousand residents.

**AND LOSE SOME:** The same week the Oceanside crime stats were released, the *San Diego Reader* published a cover story on the city's gangs, headlined "To live and die in Oceanside," recounting a string of gang murders and shootings around the Mesa Margarita neighborhood just outside Camp Pendleton's back gate. "There's a lot more to Oceanside than its ocean side," the story read.

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