



The current situation at Bowdoin and Temescal is fraught with danger for students and drivers alike. Image courtesy of Doug Suisman



Internationally-known architect Doug Suisman has designed an entrance to Palisades High School, at the corner of Bowdoin Street and Temescal Canyon Road, closer to the original architect's 1960 vision. Image courtesy of Doug Suisman

PaliHi Beautification Underway

By SUE PASCOE
Newsletter Editor

Restoring the front of Palisades High School to its original architectural vision, was not what internationally-recognized architect Doug Suisman had in mind when he attended a school booster club meeting for new parents last September. The Santa Monica Canyon resident remembers that club president Dick Held

asked if anyone had any expertise in selecting plants to go around a bronze dolphin statue. "That's how it started," said Suisman, who has worked on national and international projects, and most recently finished the design and upgrade of the La Brea Tar Pits. The intended site for the dolphin was the corner under the digital sign. Suisman, who drops his daughter off near the corner of Temescal Canyon and Bowdoin every morning, nixed this location.

"That intersection is so dangerous," Suisman said. "Every morning 1,000 students squeeze through a bottleneck that is three and a half feet between traffic and a fire hydrant, and the flashing message light is a distraction to motorists."

Suisman, who has an undergraduate degree from Yale and a master's from Columbia, began searching for a more suitable site, and in the process came up with a plan that totally redesigned the corner, removing the sign and making the location ADA-accessible, safer and visually closer to what the original architects might have envisioned more than 50 years ago.

He enlisted local historian Randy Young, who supplied him with photos of the early canyon, the construction of the high school and its opening in 1961.

Scouring the early blueprints, Suisman found that architects had envisioned natural colors that seemed to blend with the mountains to the north and the ocean to the south. "When the school opened, the colors were monochrome. The architects liked the natural colors," he said, noting the legacy colors reflect the mountains, canyon and sea. "The history is inspiring instructive and helpful."

"This high school was photographed by [noted architectural photographer] Julius Shulman, who captured mid-century modern buildings," said Suisman. "How many high schools have this kind of mountain backdrop and architecture?"

Based on a Greg Gong water color in the main office, it became obvious to Suisman the original creators designed the campus with an axial view point from the mountains

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Fisher House Flourishes; Lou Cozolino Was Key

By SUE PASCOE
Newsletter Editor

Many Americans give up on endeavors because they say, "What does it matter? What can one person do?" It is a testament to Palisadian Louis Cozolino that he persevered.

Thanks to Cozolino's persistence and vision, a family member who comes to see a veteran in the VA hospital has a place to stay at the Fisher House (south of the hospital and adjacent to the 405). Before the house was finished, hotel costs in Los Angeles were so prohibitive that some visitors had to sleep in their cars in order to be close to loved ones.

"When a veteran has an illness, it affects the entire family," said Fisher House Manager Sharon Hudson. She added, "Patients are concerned about their family, and once they

know they don't have to worry about them, it helps them to concentrate on healing."

The West L.A. Fisher House, which resembles an upscale hotel, has 21 suites with private baths plus a spacious living room. There is also a laundry, a large kitchen and a family room with a large screen television. Each suite has a computer, DVD and television.)

Even though reporters are not allowed to speak to guests, one young mother wanted to share her experience.

Over the past few years, her father had been treated at the VA hospital and she and her two small children had come from Montana on several occasions to be with him. The Fisher House enabled her to be close to her dad and let her preschool and elementary children see their grandpa. Without the facility, she would not have been able to visit

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Beautification Underway

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to the sea. He then spent nearly four months developing a design that reverts to the architects' intent in front of Mercer Hall and the main office, but also redesigns the now de facto entry at Temescal and Bowdoin.

Near the main office, landscaping that was overgrown and obscured the Santa Monica Mountains has been replaced with drought-tolerant species that will remain low.

Dealing with the tunnel that leads to the football stadium presented another challenge. "It has the feel of a freeway underpass," Suisman said, noting that the railing was galvanized steel, giving it a harsh industrial feel. It has now been painted.

"Lift up the undervalued," is how Suisman describes the focus of a piece of student art that was largely ignored on the wall directly opposite the tunnel. "This has ceramic tiles with shells that capture the idea of mountains and water. It is very sophisticated." The white paint that had served as a backdrop took the focus away from the art and has been replaced with a deep gray.

A pair of orange trees on the lower level



The area near the main office and Mercer Hall has been repainted, replanted and softened with legacy colors.

Image courtesy of Doug Suisman

provide a green background and a panel on either wall will explore the history of the high school and the early canyon. Benches will be placed near the orange trees, completing a mini-art gallery space for reflection.

The dolphin statue, donated by Dick Held, will be placed near the flagpole, replacing a dolphin-water fountain that was discovered once overgrown plants were removed. The cement fountain will be relocated to a new site.

Suisman has already donated almost

\$50,000 worth of pro bono time for the designs and the upgrade. He thanks the PaliHi Booster Club for donating \$17,000 to make the first half of the project possible.

"They have been really supportive and critical to making this happen," he said. "This couldn't have been done without Dave Riccardi's enthusiastic support and the decisive help at critical moments from Principal Dr. Pam Magee."

Suisman worked with parent Lisa On-

odera Spence in transforming the Canyon Elementary campus several years ago, and called her when this project came up.

"She drew up the plant list and got estimates at three nurseries," Suisman said. "Lisa's husband is working in Northern Ireland and she is over there until school starts." The two have worked out a system by communicating via iPad. Suisman showed her plants and sites and she points out locations. The entry by the main office will be finished by the beginning of school.

The more costly project, which will enhance student safety and beautify the corner of Bowdoin and Temescal, is projected to cost \$125,000. It will involve removing the digital sign, widening the sidewalk, adding pedestrian lighting (rather than a harsh roadway light), landscaping and low benches in the area that was a handball court and is now largely underutilized.

"We want to transform the corner from a dangerous entrance and an eyesore and bring back the view obscured by benches and fences and the sign," Suisman said. "You should be able to sit here and look all the way down Temescal and see the water."

To contribute, contact: Palihighboosterclub.com or send a check to Palisades High School Booster Club, P.O. Box 223, Pacific Palisades, CA. 90272