



From the City Manager's Desk

a weekly report from Scott Ochoa, City of Monrovia



April 20, 2007

Huntington Drive Hotels Get Face-Lifts and New Names

In case you haven't noticed, both of Monrovia's high-rise hotels on West Huntington Drive are being significantly upgraded. Although it was ironic that both hotels would be remodeled and re-branded at the same time, Monrovia will no doubt benefit by this new level of investment in these already highly successful businesses. As you may have seen by the signage posted on the buildings, what was the Sheraton Four Points will soon be a Courtyard by Marriott, and the Holiday Inn is moving to the Doubletree reservation system. This is very exciting and certainly good news to the local high-tech business community that relies on these hotels to accommodate their business travelers.

If you have any questions about the hotel remodel projects, please feel free to contact the Community Development Department.

Old Town Lighting

As Mayor Hammond pointed out at the April 17 City Council meeting, Public Works crews have installed new lighting standards on the west side of the 400 block of South Myrtle Avenue. The concept features five-globe lights at the corners and at the mid-block crosswalks, and single-globe lights in between. As Mayor Hammond pointed out at the Council meeting, this has been an interesting experiment in "direct democracy" via phone calls and e-mails as to which level of lighting people like the most. At this point, the original lighting scheme as installed with all of the five globes still runs stronger than all of the other options. However, we have yet to get a whole lot of feedback on the new pattern that mixes the single globes and the five globes along Myrtle.

Please feel free to e-mail me or any of the City Hall staff and let us know how you feel. This has been a great project, but we are anxious to develop the greatest degree possible of consensus regarding the level of lighting on the street.

City Council Meeting Recap

The April 14 City Council meeting was a relatively short meeting, but still contained some momentous items on the agenda. We began the meeting with the recognition of a number of corporate sponsors for the Spring Egg Hunt and activities without whom the event, which was highly successful, could not have been pulled off. We are always appreciative of the level of support that Monrovia businesses give to the Community Services Department.

The City Council also proclaimed April 22 as Earth Day in Monrovia and staff presented a number of activities that will be undertaken, especially in Canyon Park to help celebrate and commemorate the legacy and importance of Earth Day. Later on in the agenda, Mayor Hammond asked for an update on the Monrovia Idea Team (MIT) initiative to help make Monrovia more "green." MITs are self-directed work groups that are given an organizational or managerial puzzle and asked to come up with any number of solutions to help improve the City's operations.

MITs are composed of a wide range of City staff from all different departments and all different levels of the organization, from executives to file clerks. As was pointed out in the staff presentation by Dan Iwata, this MIT has renamed itself from a Monrovia Idea Team to the Green Team and they have identified a number of different initiatives that the City can undertake consistent with the U.S. Conference of Mayors Environmental Accords that will put the City on a very environmental-friendly footing.

It is important to note that as these Accords are fairly ambitious, we anticipate that this endeavor will take a number of years. After all, the environmental problems that our country faces were not created in a short period of time and they will not likely be resolved in a short period of time, but will rather require a sustained effort to implement these momentous initiatives.

The Mayor also pulled forward from the agenda a detailed overview of the proposed Mayor and City Council Youth Employment Services or YES Program. At the last meeting, the Mayor talked about the demonstrated need for youth employment opportunities and their direct correlation to decreasing negative behaviors, gang affiliation, etc. Thus, the idea is if you can teach responsibility to a young person by providing them an opportunity to earn money and become an upstanding member of the community that is probably a more cost-effective use of public resources than simply throwing more money into the Police budget for gang suppression.

And, while the City of Monrovia uses the YES Program as an economic development program focused on workforce investment, we cannot ignore the positive anticipated impacts in reducing youth violence, gang activity, and drop-out prevention. The Mayor pointed out that nationally, 70% of all gang enforcement dollars goes toward suppression, and 30% goes toward intervention and prevention. However, when you look at effectiveness, that ratio is almost exactly inverted—suppression is only 30% effective whereas prevention and interjection is 70% effective. Without diminishing the level of Police Department resources today, we think that the YES Program is yet another tool on the other side of the ledger towards prevention and intervention.

The Mayor indicated that the program would effectively work along two tracks, in the middle school and freshman year in high school. Local business leaders and employers would be able to counsel young folks about opportunities that exist in the job market, much the same way that Monrovia Reads brings literacy into the classroom and demonstrates the importance of reading to young people. The second track takes place as students obtain work permits and are eligible to be employed during the summer.

The YES Program contemplates a standard of achievement in terms of minimum GPA standards and citizenship and those students who are able to maintain these standards would be invited to a one-day job college life seminar or JCL seminar. From that pool of students, all of them would be interviewed and 30 would be selected for City internships over the summer of 2007. These interns could make over the eight-week course of the internship more than \$1,792. Following a successful completion of the internship and as part of the YES Program, students would be placed with local private employers to further their work experience and prepare them for entering the job market full-time.

As Mr. Adams pointed out during the presentation, this program should be focused on those students who are “on the bubble” and for whom advancement to college is not absolutely assured. The anticipated outcome of this program is that by demonstrating opportunities to these students, post-secondary education – be it through college, union apprenticeship, technical training and certification – they come to understand and appreciate that education is the single-most determining factor in the level of their career achievements. The Mayor asked, and the Council concurred, for staff to present the YES Program as part of the City’s budget deliberations and workshops in the month of May.

Also on the Agenda, Councilman Dan Kirby who was excused from the meeting had asked for a discussion about the City's options with respect to the San Gabriel Valley Humane Society and whether it is in the City's best interest to move away from the Humane Society and reinstitute its own animal control program. Staff will be exploring that option in the coming months and will present a recommendation to the City Council in May.

Mr. Adams asked that the City staff develop a strategy for working with Cal Trans to clean up their right-of-way along the 210 Freeway as it moves through the City of Monrovia. We are currently drafting special legislation to move through Sacramento that would give the City the opportunity to go on to Cal Trans property and improve and/or maintain the land so that it is not a blighting influence on the surrounding neighborhood.

Under Administrative Reports, there were a number of items, the two most significant were the items related to the State franchising of cable and video operators in the City of Monrovia and also the amended agreement for architectural services with the firm, Gonzales Goodell to move from schematic drawings to design development and ultimately, construction drawings for the new public library.

As always, if you have any questions about any item on the agenda, please feel free to contact me directly.

And Finally...

On Thursday night, Councilmember Mary Ann Lutz, Public Information Officer Dick Singer and I were able to attend the Fourth Annual Entretrech Entrepreneurship Awards that recognized start-up technology companies in the greater Los Angeles area that are poised to become economic powerhouses in the field of life science, bioscience, and information technology. I am very pleased to report to you that Monrovia's own Prolacta Bioscience won the award for smaller start-ups with revenues under \$1 million. Elena Medo, the founder of Prolacta Bioscience, was on hand and thanked the City for all of the support that Monrovia had provided to her company and also noted that the City is a great hub of high-technology businesses.

Prolacta is an amazing company that transforms human breast milk into medically proven supplements for saving premature, at-risk babies. They have been extremely successful and at this point are working in concert with John Hopkins University, Yale Medical Center and a host of other research facilities to further their efforts to pioneer this very important area. We will have Ms. Medo at an upcoming City Council meeting to present her with honors from the City of Monrovia for this amazing achievement. Congratulations to everyone at Prolacta Bioscience.

Articles Attached

- **New 3-Wheeled Police Vehicle is Environmentally Friendly**
- **Foreclosure Pace Nears Decade High**

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting

On April 25, the Commission will meet to review a façade remodel for 614 South Myrtle Avenue and give an advisory review for an addition to a home at 254 North Mayflower Avenue.

Development Review Committee Meeting April 18 Recap

- **805 S. Shamrock Ave., DRC 2007-68 Residential Medium.** Conditional Use Permit, General Plan Amendment and Zone Change – Recommend approval for a veterinary business. Staff has been working diligently with the owner, real estate agent and potential users to restore this unique Route 66 building. This will go on to the June Planning Commission meeting.
- **429 Hurstview Ave., DRC 2007-69 Residential Low.** A large family day care facility was approved for care of fourteen (14) children (infants-12 years old)
- **604 W. Huntington Dr., DRC 2007-70 C-R/S.** Trader Joe's is expanding to the store on the west and making the appropriate modifications to the front of the building.
- **222 E. Huntington Dr., DRC 2007-71 O/RD/LM**
- **860 S. Myrtle Ave., DRC 2007-72 O/RD/LM**
- **411 W. Maple Ave., DRC 2007-75 Manufacturing**
Three new signs were approved for Worley Parson at 222 E. Huntington Drive; Scrap & Yap at 860 S. Myrtle Avenue and Rosekay Remodelers at 411 W. Maple Avenue
- **1127 Orange Ave., DRC 2007-73 Residential Low.** Advisory review of major variance for side yard encroachment which will go to the June Planning Commission meeting.
- **The Huntington Oaks Center, DRC 2007-74 C-R/S.** Approval of a new palette of colors for the Center which will be repainted soon.
- **1402 S. California Ave., DRC 2007-76 Manufacturing.** Advisory review of a 16-unit condominium live-work development on the former Collins & Sons site. This will go forward to the May Planning Commission meeting and involves a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change from Manufacturing to Planned Development.
- **306 North Bradoaks** – An oak tree was approved for removal based on extensive root tree fungus as documented in an arborist's report and City arborist confirmation.

COMMUNITY SERVICES HAPPENINGS

LIBRARY DIVISION

Upcoming Library Board Meeting-- April 26 at 7:00 pm at the Monrovia Community Center.

- Update on Library Building Project: This verbal report provides an update on the Library Building Project.
- Special Youth Services Programming Evaluation: This report updates the Library board on the Youth Services special programming.

Recommendation: For the Library Board to receive and file Administrative Report AR-2; Special Youth Services Programming Evaluation.

RECREATION DIVISION

Earth Day at Canyon Park. On Saturday April 21, the Annual Earth Day program will be held at Canyon Park from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event is a great opportunity to step back in time and see how Native Americans were able to live lightly on the earth and in harmony with nature. Participants will get a glimpse of how early Native Americans used simple natural articles and adapted them into tools, toys, and musical instruments. The City's Environmental Services Division will be on hand share information on how to preserve the earth for future generations by reducing, reusing and recycling.

FROM THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Personnel responded to **66** emergency calls from 0800 hours April 11 to 0800 hours April 18. Significant incidents include:

Animal Rescue. Personnel were dispatched to a dog that was stuck in a wrought iron fence. Upon arrival they found a large dog stuck between two pickets. Personnel used bolt cutters to free the unharmed dog.

Car Fire. Personnel responded to a reported car fire. Upon arrival they found a vehicle fully involved in fire. The fire was concentrated in the cab with little involvement to the engine area. The fire was deemed suspicious and the Police Department was notified

Power Lines Down. Personnel responded to a report of power lines down. Upon arrival they found three lines down and one large tree fire. Personnel evacuated the area with the assistance of the police department. The power lines failed due to the wind.

FIRE PREVENTION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

The Prevention Bureau attended the Canyon Park Volunteer meeting this week. They discussed the Department's brush clearance and emergency operations associated with the park.

The Brush Chipper Program begins this week. Residents who live in the fire zone have begun to use this grant-funded program. In addition, the goats continue to work in the fire zone thinning our hazardous vegetation.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Engine 101 and Squad 101 "C" crew spoke to Girl Scout Troop 507 this week. They discussed the job of a firefighter and emergency preparedness.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

The Monrovia Fire Department has taken the lead in a difficult, yet important topic to discuss, that of Firefighter Line of Duty Deaths (LODD). Monrovia Fire knows all too well the ramifications of such an event and the difficulty in responding to the needs of the fallen Firefighter's family, let alone their own needs. Monrovia Fire Department owes a big thank you for the efforts of Engineer Kirk Bates as he researched the topic of LODD and prepared an operational manual called "Taking Care of Our Own." This manual will be distributed to fire personnel in order to better prepare for the actions required during these difficult times. The manual also provides clear and concise steps in which to guide a Fire Department immediately following the LODD.

In addition to distributing this manual in-house, the Monrovia Fire Department will be making a presentation at the Los Angeles Area Fire Chief's (LAAFC) retreat next week. Certainly this manual will become an important document for other area Fire Departments and thanks to Engineer Bates' efforts, other Fire Departments will have a tool to help them better prepare for and respond to LODD events. It is certainly our hope that this manual will NEVER be needed, but if such an event does occur, we will certainly be better prepared to handle the LODD here in Monrovia.

ON THE POLICE BLOTTER

During the last seven day period, the Police Department handled 541 calls for service resulting in 113 investigations. Following are this week's highlighted issues and events:

Driving Under the Influence / Child Endangerment. On April 13 at 8:02 p.m., an officer was monitoring traffic at Kruse and Myrtle when he clocked a vehicle heading northbound Myrtle at almost 60 miles per hour. As he attempted to catch up to the vehicle, he saw it swerving back and forth around cars in front of him, then went through a solid red light at Duarte Road, almost causing a collision with cars that had to skid to a stop. The officer activated his red and blue lights and stopped the driver at Myrtle and Pomona. He determined the driver was driving under the influence with his 3-year-old daughter in the vehicle. He was charged with driving under the influence and child endangerment.

Vehicle Burglary / Robbery. On April 13 at 10:45 hours, an officer was dispatched to a business in the 1100 block of South Myrtle. The suspect of a vehicle burglary was fighting with the owner of the vehicle after being caught in the act. The officer responded and apprehended the suspect without further incident. The suspect had forced entry into the locked vehicle and removed the vehicle's stereo system. As he was leaving the scene, the owner of the vehicle arrived and told him to stop. The suspect refused and began fighting the victim for the property. The suspect also had burglary tools and some marijuana.

Methamphetamine Pipe. On April 14 at 3:54 a.m., an officer was dispatched to a business in the 700 block of West Huntington. The manager called because he saw a car parked to the rear of the building and four subjects going through the trash dumpster. Police arrived and stopped the vehicle as the subjects attempted to drive away. The officer obtained consent to search the vehicle and found a methamphetamine pipe in one of the subjects' backpacks. The subject was arrested.

Outside Assist – LAPD. On April 14 at approximately 9 a.m., Monrovia Police Department was contacted by LAPD Hollenbeck Division and notified that they had a gang homicide in their jurisdiction in the early morning hours. A pursuit ensued in Los Angeles and the suspect escaped. LAPD identified the suspect and had reason to believe that he was en route to a family member's house at an unknown address in Monrovia. A few minutes later, the suspect called Monrovia Police Department dispatch from an address in the 200 block of North Mayflower to report his car stolen. Monrovia officers went to the location and detained the suspect without incident. LAPD detectives responded and took custody of the suspect.

Battery. On April 15 at 12:25 a.m., a pregnant female hailed down an officer at Melrose and Foothill regarding being attacked inside a local bar. While he was interviewing her, a fight broke out in front of the bar with security. Additional officers were required to disburse the crowd. The female did not require medical attention and a search of the interior of the bar revealed the suspect had left the location. The investigation is continuing.

Loud Party / Shots Fired. On April 15 at 1:20 a.m., officers responded to a large party in the 800 block of West Olive on a noise complaint. Officers went to the area and spoke to the resident, who agreed to be careful with the noise and turned down the music. Officers remained in the area as a result of the previous call and saw a large crowd run from the rear of the residence. Initially, the officers thought there was a fight in progress when the crowd began to flee. An investigation revealed

that one of the party goers fired several shots either into the air or into the ground, causing the crowd to run. A check of neighboring residences and vehicles was made, but no additional evidence or damage was located. No one was injured. Investigation continuing.

Possible Arson / Vehicle Fire. On April 15 at 6:58 a.m., an officer was dispatched to the the 100 block of East Central at the request of the Monrovia Fire Department, who were attempting to extinguish a vehicle fire. The vehicle was registered in another city and was possibly an unreported stolen vehicle. Further investigation revealed the vehicle was stolen and the owner was not yet aware it was missing. Investigation continuing.

Petty Theft with a Prior. On April 16 at 7:27 p.m., an officer went to the 1600 block of South Mountain regarding a female in custody for shoplifting. The female entered the store and selected a water filtering system that she concealed in a bag. She walked around the store prior to exiting without paying for the item. She was detained outside by store security. The female admitted to having a prior arrest for shoplifting, and this was confirmed by a computer check.

Vehicle Burglary. On April 16 at 9:40 p.m., an officer responded to a business in the 100 block of West Foothill regarding a vehicle burglary. The officer contacted the victim, who told him his cell phone was stolen out of his car while he was inside the business. The victim apparently left a rear passenger window partially down.

Vehicle Burglary. On April 17 at 2:47 a.m., an officer responded to a business in the 700 block of East Huntington regarding a vehicle burglary. The officer contacted the victim, who told her she went into the business at about 2 a.m. She came out at about 2:45 a.m. and found her vehicle had been broken into. Investigation continuing.

Assault with a Deadly Weapon. On April 17 at 2.50 a.m., officers responded to a family disturbance call in the 1200 block of South Ivy. On arrival, they determined this incident involved a male subject, his sister, and his wife. They had all been drinking. The male subject and his sister got into a verbal disagreement, and his wife began to defend him, making the sister angry. The sister retrieved a kitchen knife and held it to the wife's neck, causing a minor cut on her neck. The sister was arrested and brought to the station for booking.

Outside Assist / Burglary. On April 17 at 10:18 a.m., Monrovia dispatch received a radio call from El Monte air support stating they were monitoring Irwindale Police Department and heard a possible car jacking or burglary occurred, and the suspects were in the area of California and Myrtle. The air unit located one of the suspects on Shorde in Duarte. A second suspect was seen entering a shed in a residential backyard off Camino Real. A Monrovia officer responded to Shrode and detained the first suspect. A perimeter was set up on the residence where the second suspect was seen entering the shed. The suspect was ordered out of the shed and was taken into custody. Further investigation revealed the suspects broke into a vehicle in Durate and were confronted by the vehicle owner.

Vehicle Theft. On April 17, an officer was dispatched to the 200 block of East Olive regarding a possible theft report. The victim said her ex-boyfriend was recently paroled from prison and came to her residence. The ex-boyfriend threatened her with bodily harm if she did not give him her vehicle, so the victim gave her vehicle to the suspect. She then called police. An officer responded and was able to call the suspect and talked him into bringing the vehicle back. Monrovia officers saw the vehicle driving north on Myrtle from the 210 Freeway and stopped the vehicle. The subject inside the vehicle was the uncle of the suspect, and the suspect was not inside the vehicle. Investigation continuing.

Burglary. On April 17 at 10:05 p.m., an officer went to the 400 block of East Walnut regarding a residential burglary. The victim told the officer he had walked in on a suspect inside his home. The suspect had the victim's computer and ran out the back door. An area check was made for the suspect, but he had fled the area. Investigation continuing.

Battery / Delaying and Obstructing a Peace Officer / Battery on a Peace Officer. On April 18 at 10:14 p.m., police received a call from a 14-year-old boy stating his uncle was drunk and had battered him.

A police officer arrived at the location and was talking to the boy when the uncle approached. Assisting officers arrived on scene and called for the uncle to stop and to walk toward them. The uncle went into the house and locked himself in his room. The officers entered the house and talked the uncle into coming out to speak with them. The uncle became uncooperative, non-compliant, and resistant. The uncle elbowed and kicked one of the officers in the torso. The suspect was eventually taken into custody. During the struggle, the officer sustained an abrasion near her throat and a small laceration.

Auto Theft. On April 18 at 11:40 p.m., an officer went to the 800 block of West Walnut regarding a stolen vehicle. On his arrival, the victim told him his Blue 1986 BMW was stolen from the street in front of his house. Investigation continuing.



ENGINEERING:

Street Resurfacing Project: Work has continued without interruption and is on schedule. The contractor has already started with concrete removals and repairs on Mountain Avenue and will continue to May Avenue. Once the concrete repairs are completed, pavement replacement will follow.

OPERATIONS – Environmental Services – Facilities – Parks:

Rotary Club Presentation: Our Environmental Services staff was invited to speak at the Monrovia Rotary Club's April 17 meeting in honor of Earth Day. The History of Earth Day and the environmental accomplishments that have been adopted since Earth Day's conception were presented along with helpful conservation tips for home and business.

Used Oil Block Grant Conference: To keep current on Used Oil Grant Funding, our Environmental Services staff attended the Used Oil Block Grant Conference hosted by the California Integrated Waste Management Board on April 18-19. Discussions related to Used Oil Grant Funding, grant cycle requirements, changes in grant funding process, annual reporting, and the State's auditing schedule were all presented.

Traffic Signals: Staff responded to seven intersection disruptions this week, mostly due to wind damage and Edison power outages. At each of these intersections the cycling/timing had to be checked and reset:

- Huntington & Hwy Esplanade (power loss/wind)
- Huntington & Monterey (power loss/wind)
- Huntington & California (power loss/wind)
- Foothill & Ivy (component failure)
- Foothill & Canyon (2x) (controller failure)
- Myrtle & Palm (wire damage)

The intersection at Foothill and Canyon Boulevards required complete replacement of the main controller unit due to its failure.

High Winds: The banners on Myrtle Avenue in the Old Town area were severely torn by the high winds on Thursday, April 12. Facilities Staff had to remove them and they are being returned to their

owners for repair. The winds also had Parks Staff respond to 24 tree related calls and five City trees were removed.

Graffiti: This week, Parks Staff removed or painted over 150 sq. ft. of graffiti and repainted 4 picnic tables and 2 park benches in Recreation Park which was hit the hardest.

Upcoming Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event: An HHW/E-Waste Collection Event will be held at the Northrup-Grumman Building in the City of Azusa on April 28th. For directions and event times log on to www.888CleanLA.com or call 1-888-CLEAN-LA (1-888-253-2652). Examples of household hazardous waste include paints, fertilizers, batteries and household cleaners. Examples of e-waste include computer screens, CPU's, cell phones, televisions and printers.

STREETS:

Concrete Sidewalk Rehabilitation:

335 N. May Ave.
200 Block E. Cherry
1000 Block S. California

50/50 Driveway Approach Rehabilitations:

331 and 335 N. May Ave.

Graffiti Removal:

210 Freeway and Magnolia
Stop Sign Hurstview and California
Stop Sign Genoa and Mayflower

Traffic Sign and/or Painting Installation/Replacement:

Reinstall stop sign at Lincoln and Foothill
Striping and Legend Painting of Downtown Area from Huntington Dr. to Olive Ave., and 100 East and West blocks from Huntington Dr. to Foothill Blvd.

UTILITIES:

Customer Service

- Read and recorded 2,668 water meters
- Completed 65 work orders and 1 service request
- Distributed 121 shut-off notices
- Reactivated 9 water services

Water Production

Water consumption is 48.2 millions gallons which is the normal water consumption at this time of the season.

The following weekly water samplings were completed by staff per the requirements of the Department of Health Services:

- 17 Water system sampling
- 3 Water treatment facility sampling

Utility Maintenance

- 64 water main system valves were inspected and operated
- 14 new water services were installed
- 21 underground service alert's utility location requests were completed
- 17,300 feet of sewer mains were cleaned

2006-2007 Water Main Replacement Project Update: The contractor is working on the installation and reconnection of service lines at Stedman Place and Oaks Avenue and the project is on schedule.

Have a great weekend!

FOR YOUR CALENDARS:

Sat., April 21 10:00 a.m.	Earth Day, Canyon Park
Sat., April 28, 11:00 a.m.	Relay for Life, Library Park
Sun., April 29, 11:00 a.m.	Relay for Life, Library Park
Mon., April 30, 5:00 p.m.	Monrovia Reads Cinco De Mayo event, Krikorian Theater
Tues., May 1, 7:30 p.m.	Regular Council Meeting
Tues., May 15, 7:30 p.m.	Regular Council Meeting
Sat., May 19, 7:00 a.m.	Monrovia Days Pancake Breakfast, Community Center
Sat., May 19, 9:00 a.m.	Monrovia Days Parade
Sat., May 19, 10:00 a.m.	Monrovia Days 121st Birthday Celebration, Library Park
Sat., May 19, 5:00 p.m.	Monrovia Days Celebration Evening Concerts, Bandshell

CMO ATTACHMENTS:

New 3-wheeled police vehicle is environmentally friendly

By Emanuel Parker Staff Writer
Pasadena Star-News

• Photo Gallery: [Monrovia Police T3 vehicle](#)

MONROVIA - The law has chased bad guys on foot, horseback, with wagons, cars, boats, airplanes and helicopters - now they're going after them on the T3.

And judging from public reaction, they will catch them because the sight of an officer on a T3, which resembles a horseless Roman chariot, induces smiles and laughter and renders people defenseless.

"People don't expect it. It catches them off guard," said Monrovia police Sgt. Nels Ortlund, the T3's operator. "That's so cool," said a woman who saw the T3 at Library Park. "I love it." Rowena Balyut, owner of Jenni B fashions on Lime Avenue, said, "I wonder if private citizens can buy them?"

The Monrovia Police Department has purchased one of the \$8,000, three-wheel machines from T3Motion of Irvine, said Monrovia police Capt. Jim Hunt, and may purchase one more in the future.

Initial plans call for using it Friday nights only to patrol Monrovia's street fair on Myrtle Avenue, which can attract up to 10,000 visitors.

"We'll use them at special events," he said, "anywhere there are a lot of people where they make it easier to go through a crowd." Hunt said a T3 is more mobile than an officer on foot.

"You get there fast and you're eight inches off the ground. When you patrol a parking lot you can see over the cars, and it can go up on sidewalks, down alleys and foot paths and do a 360-degree turn in place."

It has a top speed of 25 mph, but a key lets the operator limit top speed to 10 mph. It will carry a payload of up to 400 pounds.

The racy-looking T3 is also a good public relations tool, Hunt said. "It's a conversation piece and makes it easy for officers to talk to the public," he said.

"It weighs 280 pounds and has spaces to carry equipment and a backpack and it has a glove box," Ortlund said. "It's really stable." The T3 has a headlight, a siren, instrument panel, disc brakes, a mini-light bar, is non-polluting and silent.

"It will go 25 miles on one charge," Hunt said. "A charge takes three to four hours, and it has battery packs that will allow it to go 75 miles on a charge." A charge costs less than 10 cents.

USC has an old T3, he said; Burbank police have ordered one and Anaheim is trying one out around Disneyland.

But the military, security firms and companies with large spaces to patrol are the primary customers. Hunt said the Navy plans to use them on its aircraft carriers.

Monrovia police Chief Roger Johnson attended a chief's conference six months ago and saw a T3, Hunt said. "He thought it would be great for patrolling the downtown area and got approval from the City Council to purchase one," Hunt said. "The City Council was thrilled for environmental reasons."

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THE MORTGAGE MELTDOWN

Foreclosure pace nears decade high

The state's increase could soon pull down home prices and even bring a recession, some economists say.

By David Streitfeld, Times Staff Writer
April 17, 2007

Nearly 900 Californians a week are losing their homes because they can't afford to pay the mortgage — up from about 100 a week a year ago — providing fresh evidence that the housing market's troubles are nowhere near over. The surge is raising concerns that home prices will soon suffer as a result. The 11,033 foreclosures in the first three months of the year represent an 800% increase over the same period a year earlier.

In addition, 46,760 homeowners were sent default notices in the first quarter, DataQuick Information Systems reported Monday. A default notice is a warning from a lender to catch up on payments immediately or face eviction.

Foreclosures and default warnings are at their highest points in nearly a decade, the La Jolla-based real estate data tracker said. So far, the effect on home values has been muted. But as the number of move-outs, evictions and forced sales continue to increase, some economists say they will soon start to push prices down.

First to fall will be the low-income communities where marginal loans proliferated, they say. The trend will spread like a virus to more affluent neighborhoods. The most pessimistic think a housing bust will wound the economy.

"For this rise in foreclosures to be happening in the midst of a strong labor market is truly unique and scary," said analyst Christopher Thornberg of Beacon Economics. He predicts foreclosures will top out at four or five times the current level — enough, he says, to either induce a recession or at least bring the economy to the precipice.

Other experts aren't exactly optimistic but believe that the situation is more ambiguous. They say the state's low unemployment rate of 4.8% and generally healthy economy will absorb trouble, up to a point.

"My gut is the correction we are seeing is regional and very spotty," said Patrick Veling, president of Real Data Strategies in Brea.

Generally, the places with the cheapest housing in the state — including the Inland Empire and Central Valley — are faring the worst.

In Riverside and San Bernardino counties, the combined volume of foreclosures rose to 2,369 in the first quarter from 255 in the same period last year. The Central Valley, which includes Sacramento County, jumped to 3,039 from 286.

Another problem spot is San Diego County, where the 1,183 foreclosures is the highest since DataQuick began tracking this information in 1988. The county's market peaked earlier than the rest of the state.

Los Angeles County, the largest housing market in the state, is surprisingly strong. The default rate is almost 60% below the first-quarter 1996 peak, DataQuick said.

Most of the loans going into default now were made at the peak of the housing boom in 2005, when some thought the good times would continue forever and lending standards were lax. Nearly 80% of loans made in the state in May 2005 for the purpose of purchasing houses had adjustable rates, a record high.

Many of these mortgages required the borrowers to put little or no money down, and lenders took their word for whatever income they said they made.

For a moment, everything was fine. Then housing prices stopped going up — meaning that many of these borrowers did not have enough equity or income to refinance to a new loan. Others in foreclosure may be able to afford the payments, but have chosen not to make them because their homes are worth less than they paid.

Foreclosures peaked at 15,418 in the third quarter of 1996, at the tail end of the last big slowdown in the state. They bottomed out at 637 in the second quarter of 2005, as the most recent boom was cresting.

The peak for default warnings was in the first quarter of 1996, with 61,541. The 46,760 warnings reported for the first three months of this year is up 148% from the same period last year. Compared with the mid-1990s, however, the state's population and housing stock have grown modestly. The sharp rise in foreclosures has become a political issue, with Congress debating methods of aiding those underwater.

There's little precedent for the current wave of foreclosures. Traditionally, people lose their jobs, and then they lose their houses. In the early '90s, the aerospace industry's collapse triggered a broad recession. This time, the foreclosures are happening first — and fast.

"It surprises me, the speed at which all this is evolving," said Edward Leamer, director of the UCLA Anderson Forecast.

He sees plenty to worry about. For instance, the recent tightening of loan standards is, for better or worse, eliminating a lot of the fuel that powered the bottom of the market. Entry-level buyers are priced out, which means existing owners have a harder time selling their homes to move up. Eventually, everyone is vulnerable.

"The housing sector is in trouble for a considerable period," Leamer concluded, "but the rest of the economy will muddle through."

In its March housing report last week, DataQuick reported that the median price for homes sold in Southern California was up 4.6% from March 2006 despite a sharp drop in sales.

Because the houses that aren't selling tend to be the cheaper ones, that automatically pushes up the median. Housing bears say a rising median can mask a sinking market. Even taking this into account, however, the market appears healthier than one might expect.

Sales in the three lowest segments of the market plunged by about 50% in March from March 2006, according to new DataQuick statistics. Yet the median prices in those categories were, on average, unchanged from a year earlier.

"Prices are going sideways," said Veling of Real Data Strategies. He wondered whether the mood was worse than the reality, adding that the boom went on so long that people's memories are distorted. "It's been so long since we've seen a normal market that we've forgotten what it looks like," he said.

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BIG JUMP

Mortgage foreclosures surged in the first quarter. A breakdown by county and region:

	Foreclosures in 1st quarter 2007	Change from a year earlier
Ventura	203	+1,094.1%
Riverside	1,460	+913.9
San Bernardino	909	+718.9
Los Angeles	1,702	+677.2
Orange	520	+676.1
San Diego	1,183	+673.2
Southern California	6,007	+733.1
Statewide	11,033	+802.1

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Source: DataQuick Information Systems