

## Uhills Community FAQs

The University Hills listserv is a great resource for residents to discuss life on the Hill. While ICHA does not officially monitor the listserv, it does recognize its value as a forum for residents. In that spirit, managers from various ICHA departments have compiled answers to some frequently asked questions raised on the listserv and forwarded to the Homeowners Representative Board (HRB). ICHA always encourages direct communication with ICHA Management if you should have a question or do not understand an operation or procedure. Please contact the appropriate department/individual from the [ICHA Contacts list](#).

### **How is my monthly resident billing statement broken down?**

Monthly statements from ICHA are either mailed or electronically delivered to all property owners. The statement is comprised of five or six components:

- The **Maintenance Assessment** is the charge for homeowner contributions for common area maintenance, including lighting, landscaping, parks, trees, pool operating costs and reserve funding for long-term maintenance projects. [Click here](#) for general maintenance assessment details summarized by property type.
- The **Ground Rent Assessment** is the fee option selected at the time of purchase. [Click here](#) for details.
- There are three itemized utility fees posted each month as well: a **Water Service Fee**, a **Water Use Fee**, and a **Sewer Use Fee**. Water and sewer use and charges are based on your water consumption and are passed directly from UCI, the provider of these utilities.
- If you are in a home where your front-yard landscaping is managed by ICHA, there is an additional landscaping fee.

### **I would like more transparency about fee increases.**

Homeowners are sent copies of the Uhills operating budget every year and the budgets are posted [on the ICHA website](#) affording any interested person to compare year to year expenses. These budgets and support documents are shared with the HRB in detail. For questions concerning the annual budgets, please contact the ICHA Accounting Department at [ichaacctg@icha.uci.edu](mailto:ichaacctg@icha.uci.edu). Specific questions concerning property assets, landscaping, trees, home sales and rental should be directed to the appropriate ICHA departments.

### **How can I replace my current mailbox with a locking model?**

Mail theft from private on-street mailboxes peaked several years back. This activity resulted in the ability of a homeowner to replace their “dog-house” style box with a USPS and community-approved lockable box. The process has been streamlined for easy architectural approval. Please [click here](#) for details. Contact Community Management (contact emails are above) for assistance. It is worth noting that the UCI Police Department solved the previous mail theft problem by lifting a fingerprint from a discarded mailbox package and catching the thief in a stakeout late at night. A resident’s Ring video footage confirmed the vehicle and individual. Since this episode, mailbox theft has dropped significantly. Package theft off stoops and doorsteps has declined as well, but still occurs occasionally. Please always report any parcel or mail theft to the UCI PD at (949) 824-5223.

**I have concerns with the ICHA Rodent Control Operation.**

ICHA maintains a set number of secured and evenly-distributed rodent control stations across the Hill. One quarter of the stations are currently set with traps and are serviced once per week (four times per month). The remaining stations are set with a Vitamin D-based rodenticide once a month that the EPA and manufacturers note has no impact on mammals or birds who might ingest a dead or dying rodent (anticoagulant bait use on the Hill was discontinued over ten years ago). ICHA's four-year projected rodent control operation is targeting the reduction of rodenticide each year and increasing the number of snap trap locations. Data tracking the number of snap-caught rodents is being collected and measured against the amount of rodenticide being consumed. Stats appear to suggest a greater number of rodents are being eradicated by the rodenticide vs. snapping. Management is coordinating with Orange County Vector Control, UC Agriculture and Natural Resources, UCI Facilities and the City of Irvine. For more information, [click here](#).

Simultaneously, ICHA is working with [the HOOT Group](#) (Help Our Owls Thrive) with the installation of Owl Nesting Boxes across the community (3 of approximately 10 boxes have been installed to date). HOOT and ICHA share a focused goal to reduce the number of rodents in our environment. Please contact Andrew Herndon if you have additional interests.

**I have concerns about lighting.**

Over the past nine to twelve months, ICHA's contract lighting representative has not performed up to expected standards. A new lighting service, Eclipse Lighting and Electric, has been retained and improvements are underway. General common-area lighting has and is being addressed. Townhome lighting upgrades to LED components will be completed in March. For questions, contact Ron Reid at [ron.reid@icha.uci.edu](mailto:ron.reid@icha.uci.edu)

**Why are the pools so dirty?**

The community pools are one of the major recreational amenities serving University Hills. There is consistent heavy use, particularly during the warmer months of the year as well as with "lappers" who use the facilities year round. With the growth of UHills and increased use of the pools, spas and waders, maintenance services have been increased year-round to three times per week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday). Unusual wind events can impact water quality. However, timely attention generally returns the water to standard use conditions within a day or two. All University Hills pools are on an automated filtration and chemical feed systems which balance acid, chlorine and water stabilizers on a 24/7 schedule. UCI's Environmental Health and Safety Department is the inspector of record and it reviews the pool water quality and safety requirements on a regular basis. If a resident notices an irregularity involving the pools after business hours, please call Pool Pro Professionals at (562) 824-7534. They respond generally within several hours or sooner when contacted. The [Answer Network Emergency Answering Service](#) is also available on the ICHA website and via monthly postings. Answer Network refers emergency calls to the Pool Pros and to ICHA as necessary. Ron Reid, ICHA Director of Asset Management, is responsible for the oversight of the pool and custodial contractors and the general facility conditions. He can be reached at 824-2432 or via email at [ron.reid@icha.uci.edu](mailto:ron.reid@icha.uci.edu)

**Gabrielino sports field is not attractive.**

The Gabrielino Community Park Sports Field is a multi-purpose field venue accommodating many different uses. There are no user restrictions aside from signage that prioritizes resident use over non-residents. The field is generally closed after rain. However, both residents and non-residents have had to be asked to leave the field when signs indicate it has been closed. Field closed conditions are often ignored. General turf maintenance, fertilizing, mowing, aerating, weed control and fine grading occurs weekly, quarterly and on a demand basis. Rodent control has been challenging this past year, but as of December 2021, Management has an upper hand on the burrowing creatures. Turf maintenance is problematic as ICHA strives to maintain the community with organic chemistry and maintenance methods as preferred by the HRB. Invasive grasses are difficult if not impossible to remove and are now generally included as part of the base turf pallet. The new electric mowing machines are helping as their height-adjusting capabilities allow better control in maintaining the hybrid Bermuda turf. Andrew Herndon, VP of Community Development, oversees the maintenance of the facility with O'Connell Landscape. He can be reached at 824-4068 or via email at [andrew.herndon@icha.uci.edu](mailto:andrew.herndon@icha.uci.edu)

**I think that Gabrielino Field has really degraded. The soccer goals are rusted out, the nets are filled with holes, and one of the goals has a detached crossbar.**

Ron Reid, Director of Asset Management, is responsible for park equipment and facilities. Multiple factors, including weather, use, irrigation, manufacturers product availability and budget come into play in facility operations and management. Athletic equipment is repaired whenever possible and ultimately replaced as needed. At present, soccer equipment at Gabrielino Community Park has been repaired, new nets have been installed and the crossbar re-connected.

**Roots in the field turf are dangerous.**

O'Connell Landscape has recently completed root grinding and removal of the Cottonwood tree roots from adjacent slopes. The tree roots in question were predominantly located near the fence line at the perimeter of the field and not within the field play areas. New trees within the turf were added within the last several years. A sophisticated trenching design was included to guide roots from running along the turf surface where they are attracted to water.

**Schubert Court is missing landscaping.**

Multiple housing properties are located on Schubert Court. Pointing out specific addresses is always helpful in resolving issues, especially landscaping ones. O'Connell Landscape generally follows a maintenance schedule that rotates around the community. Routine inspections result in ongoing removals, select pruning and replacements. Some Townhome residents install private plantings in common areas. O'Connell will not address the non-thematic additions and Management is charged with approaching the owners to resolve the situations. We always value input from neighbors, so we can address concerns in a timely manner. If any resident has a specific concern, we encourage you to snap a photo of the specific issue and forward it to our attention (Community Development contacts listed above).

**What happens to the honeybees that sometimes settle in Uhills irrigation boxes?**

ICHA is pleased to inform the community that almost every bee colony that takes up residence on the Hill in common areas is captured alive and relocated to an apiary in rural Orange County. This year, some of the hives were used to pollenate fruit trees in Central California. Fresh honey will be available this year at the Earth Day Celebration as an extension of this successful service.

**Leaves on Gabrielino Drive sidewalk-Vista Bonita to California Avenue.**

The Gabrielino Drive parkway and slope area between Vista Bonita Drive and California Avenue hosts multiple varieties of evergreen trees; Oaks, Peppers, Tristanias, Alders and others. Seasonal leaf drop from these trees falls to the walkway and are gathered or blown clear. There are periods when some leaf litter is present as each tree sheds old leaves at different times of the year so there is clearly leaf litter present, but it is not objectional nor dangerous.

**Too much attention to the Community Center landscaping.**

A complaint was fielded that O'Connell Landscaping was performing weekly maintenance at the community center at the expense of other areas. This is not the case. The crew "lunches" in the parking lot every day but does not service the CC every week. It is however important to note that the Community Center is the nucleus facility serving many residents casually and under contract. It is extremely important that the facility always reflects a well-managed and aesthetically pleasing look.

**Weed growth along Gabrielino Drive.**

Inspection shows limited if any weeds. An organic weed spraying program activated over a year ago has been successful in keeping weeds generally under control. Seasonal weed growth is always a challenge, especially in the warmer month.

**Missing plant material in Gabrielino Parkway.**

Due in part to shortcutting to the local bus stop, some rosemary groundcover has been beaten down and ultimately removed. The parkway has been mulched and maintained neatly with native feather grass, rosemary, roses, shrubbery and trees. Not every square foot of soil fosters planting material. Mulching with green waste-generated material is a very efficient method.

**Why is there so much dog waste along sections of Gabrielino Drive?**

The Gabrielino parkway is a heavily traveled path to the two dog parks near California Avenue. This may explain the presence of excess fecal droppings. Cleaning up dog waste is the responsibility of dog owners, not ICHA or the landscape contractors. We ask that all dog owners exhibit responsible behavior and clean up after their pets.

**Lack of new landscape personnel and dues increase.**

A moonlighting gardener's statement to a resident that ICHA is not adding additional grounds personnel is inaccurate. Over the past three years, three-plus workers have been added to the crew. New Area-11 parks and other properties have required additional worker coverage. At the same time, the cost of fuel, water, electricity, labor, insurance, organic chemistry, health care, fertilizer, tree trimming, vehicles and equipment have all increased (converting landscaping equipment to electric represents a doubling or in some cases a tripling of cost. Electric battery charging stations are now situated at ten locations across the Hill to maintain efficiency in utilizing electric blowers, string eaters, hedgers, mowers and other equipment).

**Concern with landscaping aesthetics in general.**

Some folks complain about weed invasion within turf and plants like Morning Glory taking over shrub vegetation. At the HRB's request, ICHA has attempted to manage without the use of various herbicides and pesticides. Following closely to "Non-Toxic Irvine" standards comes with significant challenges. Although beautiful, some plants like Morning Glory have been

introduced into the common areas from private gardens resulting in rampant overgrowth that is nearly impossible to control without chemistry. Irrigation is a constant challenge with over 100 acres of landscape being served. Hundreds of thousands of cubic feet of reclaimed water are utilized monthly and pass through miles of mainline pipe, lateral lines, valves, controllers, and thousands of irrigation heads and drip tubing. It is also obvious that some plant materials do not last forever and ultimately require replacement. Maturing trees require regular pruning, and some are showing signs of decline, requiring management and removal, which costs thousands of dollars, sometimes per tree. Management attempts to perform all pruning (close to 900 trees this year) doing its best to respect nesting birds and resident interest in wildlife and aesthetics within the community. Biologists have been retained to inspect and ensure no nesting birds are harmed. When residents have concerns with the landscaping, we appreciate them contacting Community Development with details so that matters can be addressed in a timely manner.

### **How many dog parks are there in University Hills?**

There are three existing dog parks in University Hills. The Petite Paws and Indy 500 dog parks are located along California Avenue, between Gabrielino Drive and Twain Street. The newest park is located between Gateway Park and the Miramonte Rental Townhomes. The Miramonte dog park is soon to receive a name in a competition to be held in early April. All parks contain natural turf surfaces that are routinely flushed with irrigation. All park users are reminded to obey posted regulations, and most importantly, clean up after pets at all times. Hours of operation and related noise have been issues in the past. Furniture placement over irrigation heads causes areas of the parks to become overly irrigated; please be aware of furniture placement. Gate hardware has recently been upgraded to improve security, and lighting will soon be upgraded by converting to LED lights.

For questions about the dog parks, please contact the University Hills dog park liaisons:

- Indy 500 dog park: Nancy Aguilar-Roca [nmaguila@uci.edu](mailto:nmaguila@uci.edu)
- Petite Paws dog park: Deborah Shaka [deborah.shaka@gmail.com](mailto:deborah.shaka@gmail.com)

*We thank all residents for their input. Please refer to the contact links in the introduction paragraph above for questions. Please know that ICHA staff are committed to maintaining a consistently high standard of community management using the most sustainable and cost-effective methods possible.*