

Atwater Village Historic Neighborhood Profile

Atwater Village is a quiet neighborhood with small-town charm. Located in between Glendale, bohemian Silver Lake, and a short distance away from downtown and Hollywood, it has become an increasingly desirable neighborhood for young professionals over the past two years. Situated between Los Feliz, Silver Lake, and Glendale, Atwater Village is roughly bordered by Casitas Avenue on the west, the Golden State Freeway to the east, Goodwin Avenue to the north, and Fletcher Drive to the south. It is adjacent to Griffith Park and very close to downtown.



The Tam O'Shanter Inn

Atwater, first known as Atwater Park, was a poppy field when the tract was subdivided in 1912. It was named for early pioneer Harriet Atwater Paramore, whose husband purchased the land from W.C. B. Richardson. Richardson had purchased the land in 1868 and named it Rancho Santa Eulalia. The area was originally part of Rancho San Rafael, which was governed by the Verdugos. It overlapped with what was first known as Tropic, which later became Glendale.

The first significant development in Atwater Village occurred north of what is now Chevy Chase Avenue, though it might not have been considered Atwater at the time. Subdivision began between Glendale and Silverlake, and the railroad tracks to Larga Avenue. There were only 40 homes in the area when Glendale Boulevard was extended in 1918, and the area boomed shortly thereafter with the subdivision of several tracts. Both Glendale Manor in the south and Glenhurst Terrace, which consisted of twenty-five acres from Larga Avenue to Glenhurst Avenue, were subdivided in 1921. In 1922, Boulevard Manor, Hollydale Gardens and Walnut Grove, were each subdivided.

Early homes were built for the prosperous working class, many of whom worked at the nearby Department of Water and Power substation. Many of these initial buildings remain intact today. It is also likely that some early residents worked at the Franciscan Pottery. The southern section of Atwater Village was eventually more built up than the north.

Public transportation connections facilitated the growth of Atwater. The area was served by the Pacific Electric trolley line ("Red Cars"), which took passengers to

downtown and Venice and made Atwater very accessible. In the 1950s, these public transport lines were purchased by the bus companies and replaced by freeways.

Atwater Village, today, is predominantly a mix of craftsman and revival style bungalows that were built in the 1910s and 1920s, with the exception of post-World War II houses along Perlita Avenue and a section of houses on Brunswick Avenue north of Verdant Street. Most of the bungalows and early homes throughout Atwater are relatively unaltered and there are very few apartment buildings and multi-unit structures.

Some early developers built houses to sell, sometimes in rows of lots. In other cases, individual buyers purchased lots and hired contractors to build homes. Most typical Atwater

houses were built about the same size, around 1100 square feet, with two bedrooms, one bath, floor or wall furnaces, and an ice box for ice delivery. On some streets the lots were 40 feet wide, 135 deep. On other streets, the lots are 50 feet wide, 135 deep.



Fantasy Bungalows

The size of the back yards reflected the relative prosperity of the first residents. The general uniformity of scale and the grass-and-tree parkways that separate the sidewalks from the streets make a nice setting for walking around the neighborhood.

Atwater has a number of historically significant locations and structures. Several blocks of ‘fantasy bungalows’ on Brunswick Avenue compose one of the most architecturally distinct parts of Atwater, and Los Angeles, overall. The designs of these exotic homes show the influence of silent film sets. The 1920s was a period of affluence, in which many Americans fulfilled their dreams of moving into single-family homes like these.

The commemorative fountain on Los Feliz Boulevard, at the western entrance to Atwater Village, is near where William Mulholland lived while employed by the water department. It was dedicated in 1940. Further down on Los Feliz Boulevard is a property that now houses Costco, Toys R Us, and Best Buy was the site of the Gladding, McBean/Franciscan Pottery and Tile factory. Initially built in 1901 for the Art Tile Factory, Gladding, McBean Company purchased the building in 1922 and it remained open until 1985. Through much of that period, the company was a leader in the industry,

producing some of the most commercially successful tile and ceramic wares. The pottery works was a local landmark until it was raised in 1990.

Tam O' Shanter Inn is perhaps the most well known historic site in Atwater Village. It first opened in 1922 as the Montgomery County Inn and became a popular destination over the years. The oldest structure, a relic from Atwater's rancho days, is currently used as the back of a bike shop on Los Feliz Boulevard. Other landmarks include the EATS Diner, the former Alan Wertz Candies store, which opened in 1945 inside a building that was built in 1935. Several significant bridges were built in Atwater early on, including the 1927 Fletcher Drive Bridge and the 1928 Hyperion Bridge, or Victory Memorial aqueduct.

The Southern Pacific Railroad's Glendale Station at the eastern end of Glendale/Brand Boulevard was built in 1924. It was declared a historic monument by the city of Glendale. Several other railway trestles and the remains of several former train tracks are still visible in Atwater Village.

Atwater is also adjacent to where Mickey Mouse was drafted at Walt Disney Studios on Griffith Park Boulevard and Hyperion. Another nearby entertainment industry landmark was Mack Sennett Studios on Alessandro and Glendale Boulevard, where Laurel and Hardy filmed. Several local historians feel that because of its proximity and affordability, studio and Disney employees may have lived in Atwater.

In addition to these important sites, Atwater has also been home to several notable residents. Renowned photographer Edward Weston, who lived in Glendale for part of his life, spent a great deal of time in Atwater, particularly in the home of his son on Brunswick Avenue. Portrait artist Don Bachardy grew up on Casitas Avenue in Atwater. In addition, Jimmy Hawkins, who was a young boy when he filmed "It's a Wonderful Life," is an Atwater Village resident. Frank Capra may have lived in Atwater at some point in his life.

Today, Atwater's population is approximately 13,000. The bohemian community is a diverse mix of Latino, Asian, white, Black, and gay residents. It is a middle class community of young professional, semi-professional, and skilled workers and it is currently becoming very gentrified. More affordable than Los Feliz and Silver Lake, Atwater has recently been affected by the spill over from these neighboring areas. As a result, Atwater is experiencing an influx of artists and young creative professionals. Small families and couples are moving into houses today and almost no conversion has occurred. Atwater has become a target neighborhood for young couples that are looking to start their families in a convenient location. The deep lots are appealing to couples with small children because of the front yards and large backyards.

The average single-family, 1,110 square foot home normally has two bedrooms and one bath and currently cost between \$300,000-400,000. Some additional costs for renovation should also be considered in the price of most homes. Prices have jumped over the past two to three years and they continue to rise because of the real estate boom

and the influx of young professionals. 83 homes were sold since the beginning of 2002. Realtors anticipate low turn over in the future since buyers tend to be young couples, who are primarily moving in to settle down.

The main commercial thoroughfares are Glendale Boulevard, which was the first commercial strip, and Los Feliz Boulevard. Atwater Village has a wide range of businesses, shops and eateries. These businesses help give Atwater a small-town feel. Residents enjoy the privilege of living within walking distance from several eating establishments and shops. Atwater now has two upscale Italian restaurants, a mom-and-pop Chinese Restaurant, the historic Tam O'Shanter Inn, a notable gourmet bakery cafe, and a hangout Dutch bakery that plays off the fact that Van de Kamps Bakery was Atwater-adjacent. In addition, the neighborhood has a Philipino/Latino market, a public library designed by a noteworthy architect in the 1980s, a fabric shop, and many more shops of the old-time Main Street type.

Residents in Atwater are very active participants in their community. They have established several groups, including, Friends of Atwater Village, the Atwater Village Residents' Association, the recently certified Atwater Village Neighborhood Council, Neighborhood Watch, Rotary and Lions' Clubs, and a small, growing Chamber of Commerce.

For additional information or local realtor services contact:
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