

[Jan 23, 2023](#) copywrite [LATimes.com](#)

<https://www.latimes.com/california/newsletter/2024-01-23/the-town-where-nobody-knows-your-address-because-nobody-has-one-essential-california>

The town where nobody knows your address (because nobody has one)



Carmel-by-the-Sea residents use creative names instead of addresses to identify their homes. (Genaro Molina / Los Angeles Times)

BY [RYAN FONSECA](#) STAFF WRITER

JAN. 23, 2024 6:30 AM PT

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Show more sharing options](#)

Good morning. It's **Tuesday, Jan. 23**. Here's what you need to know to start your day.

- The town where nobody knows your address (because nobody has one)
- [CSU and faculty reach surprise tentative agreement](#), ending massive strike
- [9 L.A. happenings to pull up to](#) now that you've fully settled into the January flow
- And here's [today's e-newspaper](#)

Newsletter

The town where nobody knows your address (because nobody has one)

The city has a whole prepositional phrase attached to its name. Clint Eastwood was [once elected its mayor](#). It's an affluent town nestled along the Monterey Peninsula — a place that may be the most beautiful slice of the Golden State.

As if that's not enough to distinguish Carmel-by-the-Sea, there's one more feature (well, lack thereof) that makes the town unique: It has no street addresses. Postal workers don't deliver mail; residents go into the post office to pick it up.

ADVERTISING

Times reporter Hailey Branson-Potts [recently visited the town](#) and saw firsthand how easy it is to get lost trying to find someone's home. In lieu of a set of numbers that can be located via smartphone, residents give a street name and describe features of their homes — the color of shingles, the proximity of fire hydrants — to help visitors and delivery workers navigate to their front doors. A compass might come in handy for some. Many locals have named their homes like one might a boat, posting signs to show they live at Faux Chateau, Go Away or Thisisit (or the neighboring Thisisnt).

[State fire code](#) mandates that all homes have and display addresses. But that's never been enforced in Carmel-by-the-Sea, according to a former fire official.

Residents Hailey spoke to seemed to agree that the lack of addresses is inconvenient — where they differ is on whether that's a whimsical point of pride or an outdated liability.

Retired software engineer Bill Woo is in the liability camp. He recounted his ordeal trying to prove his house was real so he could get his V.A. health insurance. And he worries that in an emergency, first responders might not be able to find his home in time.

“For more than 100 years, the townsfolk fought to keep it that way, once threatening to secede from California if it imposed addresses,” Hailey wrote. “Serendipitous run-ins with neighbors at the post box, they said, were an essential part of their small-town identity. But now, tradition is running up against Amazon and Instacart and mail-order medications.”

Some are willing to deal with deliveries that never arrive and confusion with cable providers to preserve a sense of quaintness and a desire to not be easily found. But others want to see their community on the same map as everyone else. That’s why city leaders have formed a committee that could recommend that houses and businesses be formally numbered.

ADVERTISING

“I don’t think anybody comes to Carmel visiting because we don’t have street addresses,” Councilwoman Karen Ferlito told Hailey. “Yes, it’s a nice little story. But times have changed since this was a tiny little village with a few artists who met at the post office.”

But for others, the addressless city helps provide its tight-knit feel that they appreciate.

“We’re small enough we can be a real community,” longtime resident Karyl Hall told Hailey. “Yeah, it would be more convenient. But it’s one more way in which we become ordinary.”

You can read more about the street (address) battle raging in Carmel-by-the-Sea in [Hailey’s latest story](#).