

A Community
Newsletter
from the
Grossmont –
Mt. Helix
Improvement
Association



viewpoints

Fall 2010

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General Plan Update and Community Plans Threatened

After working on the County's General Plan for twelve years, the update of the plan will come before the County Board of Supervisors October 20th at 9 AM. During this extensive update process, the Valle de Oro Planning Group has managed to keep our Mt. Helix area relatively free from adverse changes.

However, in the last few weeks, a coalition headed by several San Diego Realtors Associations, the Building Industry Association, and others has issued a white paper that takes issue with the very existence of unique community plans for our diverse unincorporated communities and the idea of community or neighborhood compatibility being required in new development.

The paper insists that clustering of housing into small, non-conforming lots should be a developer's right (result could be townhouse condominiums on Mt. Helix).

Adherence to our community plan has made our Mt. Helix community what it is today. Now, just imagine condos as infill development in our neighborhoods. If "anything goes" in future development, then our property values will probably go, too.

This coalition believes that some of the work on the new General Plan may be salvageable, but extensive rewriting should occur. According to them, twelve years of work by the planning groups as a "grass roots" effort to improve the General Plan and have Community Plans more reflect the

needs and wants of each community, should be scrapped and the rewrite by this "Special Interest" Group should be accepted. Their lobbying of the Board of Supervisors is intense as the final decision is in the Board's hands.

We encourage our members to get involved in this developing threat to our unique community. Please attend the Board of Supervisors' hearing on October 20th to support the Valle de Oro Community Plan for our area.

For further information, contact Jack Phillips (619)670-0986 or to receive a copy of the real estate/development industry white paper, please contact county staff: Eric Lardy at (858)694-2457 or Devon Muto at (858)694-3016. ▲

GMIA Endorses Incumbent DeAna Verbeke for Helix Water District

DeAna is a Mt. Helix resident who knows first hand the typical water needs of a large property owner. She has been supportive of GMIA's fight against unfair pricing and contributed to the defeat of the proposed Five-Tier System in 2009. DeAna continues to listen to her constituents and has tried to keep our rate increases down. GMIA endorses DeAna Verbeke for another term as a Helix Water District Board Member and encourages you to support her at the polls.

GROSSMONT - MT. HELIX



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This newsletter reflects the efforts of your entire Board of Directors.

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www.gmia.net

Message from the President

When my husband Larry and I moved into our home on Mt. Helix in 1987, we were nearly the youngest folks on the block. In those days, most of the neighbors had built their homes in the 1950's or '60's, and aged right along with their houses. Today, vibrant younger families now inhabit many of those homes. And the good news is, like the original owners, they are also here to stay.

Unlike the transient neighborhoods in other areas of San Diego County, our hamlet is filled with folks who move in, fall in love with the area, and stay for decades. We get to know our neighbors, form deep friendships, and build the bond of community.

Friends who live in other parts of San Diego County are amazed to hear us describe our area. Like a village from a gentler time, people walk, know the neighbors, celebrate holidays together, bring meals for families in times of crisis, help each other as we are able. We are a community in the best sense of the word. I know many of you feel the same connection in your corner of Grossmont-Mt. Helix.

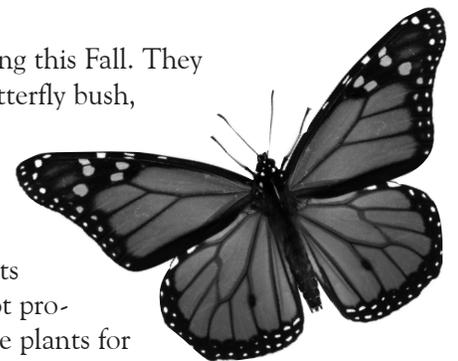
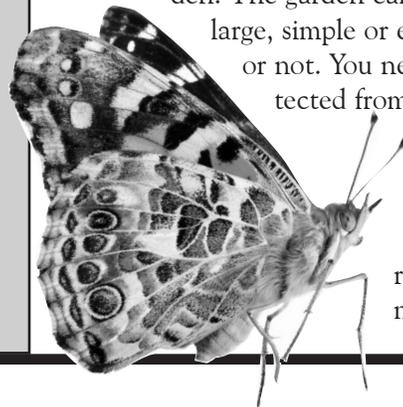
As long-term residents, we GMIA members have planted deep roots. Because we plan to stay, we are vigilant stewards of this, our unique region. We know we must protect our semi-rural way of life in the midst of urban development. We recognize that decisions made today will impact our way of life tomorrow.

Who advocates on our behalf? We have no mayor or city council. It is GMIA who speaks for us, and has for over 70 years. Along with the Valle de Oro Planning Board, GMIA is dedicated to preserving the character and quality of our community. Please encourage your neighbors to join GMIA. We need your help to maintain strong membership — vital to ensure our voice is heard. ▲

Susan Nichols

Monarchs and Painted Ladies

Think about butterflies as you're planting this Fall. They are attracted to plants such as the butterfly bush, lantana, marigolds and pincushion flower. You'll need flowers with flat surfaces or short nectar tubes for your butterfly garden. The garden can be small or large, simple or elaborate, in pots or not. You need a sunny spot protected from the wind, have plants for



the caterpillars to feed on (e.g. fennel, passion vine, columbine, and butterfly weed), a bit of moisture, some woody shrubs or small structures for the chrysalis, and a smooth rock for butterfly sunning. Then sit back next summer and enjoy your beautiful visitors.

New Feature Column

Look for our new *Water-Wise Tips for the Grossmont-Mt. Helix Homeowner* as a regular feature in Viewpoints. GMIA focuses on local solutions and resources for our members. We provide in-depth information to help residents maintain the character and quality of our community. Using limited water resources wisely will help ensure our neighborhoods flourish. Upcoming topics include:

- ◆ Do-it-yourself advice to convert existing irrigation systems to be more efficient
- ◆ How to reduce costly evaporation of swimming pool systems
- ◆ Front lawn alternative landscapes – inspiring designs here in our neighborhood
- ◆ The pros and cons of digging a well for irrigation.

We welcome your conservation ideas or comments. Please contact us at www.gmia.net. ▲

Fall, the Planting Season

According to the U-T (Sept. 18), our water rates will continue to rise each year for the foreseeable future. With lawns and exotic (non-native) plants, about 50%-60% of our water use goes to landscaping. If you've cut back as much as you can inside the house, the next step is to replace the lawn and the exotics with drought-tolerant plants, ground cover, trees, and hardscape. The best time to do this is NOW, in the Fall, so the winter rains will water all the new plantings.

Check out the Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College for ideas, the names of the various plants and trees, and what these plants actually look like. Many of your neighbors have changed their landscaping, so there are many on-the-ground examples. Also, mulch, mulch, mulch. (See Water-Wise Tips) ▲

Water-Wise Tips for the Grossmont-Mt. Helix Homeowner

Best Bargain

For the best bargain in San Diego County, go to the Miramar Landfill for compost, mulch and wood chips. These recycled materials are clean, pasteurized to help prevent weeds, and incredibly inexpensive.

Mulch is a terrific way to help your soil retain moisture, reduce water use, plus insulate tender roots from extremes of hot or cold temperatures. Need to keep weeds down in an area without landscape? A bed of mulch provides a tidy, finished look for little cost. Gardening experts recommend a 3" thick layer of mulch for optimum benefit.

Miramar Landfill Info

Miramar Landfill sells a cubic yard of mulch for only \$5. A cubic yard of wood chips is just \$15. (One cubic yard is equal to about six 32 gallon trash cans – roughly a pickup truck bed filled and mounded.)

Located in Kearny Mesa at 5180 Convoy Street, San Diego, CA 92111, the Landfill is just north of Highway 52. They are open 7 days a week from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm and are closed some holidays. Call (858) 492-6100 to confirm hours and product availability.

More information is available at:
www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/miramar

How to Pick Up Mulch

- ◆ When you enter Miramar Landfill, you will stop and pay at the entrance booth. Staff can show you samples of mulch and bark if you're not sure which product you want. Only cash and checks are accepted, no debit or credit cards. Make checks payable to "City Treasurer." Be sure to get a receipt for your transaction.
- ◆ After paying, you will drive about ½ mile within the property. The road will bear left.
- ◆ Turn left when you see signage and the giant piles of recycled materials. You will find another booth where staff will check your receipt, direct you to the mulch mound, and send a loader to fill up your vehicle. Put on your particle mask when you park next to the mound – the loading process is extremely dusty.
- ◆ Amazingly, the helpful staff will use a skip-loader to load your vehicle for free! It is a good idea to bring a shovel to spread the load if needed; no tools are available. Please note you must cover your load before leaving the dump.

GMIA encourages all our residents to conserve water supplies and beautify our community by spreading inexpensive mulch. We are so fortunate to have this low-cost resource available to us as San Diego County residents.

Trees of Mt. Helix

Pinus radiata – Monterey Pine



This is the fourth of a series of articles about interesting trees within the GMIA area. Members are encouraged to share their favorite or special tree with others through these articles.

The Monterey Pine featured is located along the street and in the front yard of GMIA member, Marion Eggertsen. The original 10' tall tree was

planted in the early 1970's. The Eggertsens have lived in the Mt. Helix and Vivera Drives neighborhood for over the past 50 years. What makes this pine tree so unique is that this species of pine has been decimated in the last several decades by numerous pests and diseases, and this tree is still standing today. The homeowner is careful to have the tree lightly trimmed during the winter months and has done so a dozen times over the past 40 years. The Monterey Pine was widely planted in San Diego County in the last 50 years and is fast growing to 80-100' feet tall and 25-35' wide. I would not recommend planting this specie of pine tree today, due to its pest and disease problems, but use Aleppo or Torrey Pines instead.

If you have a tree that you would like to share with fellow members, please call Jeffrey Rule (Director) at (619) 466-0362, and he can schedule a site visit. For members who have already contacted me, I will be scheduling visits in the upcoming months. Thank you for your interest. ▲

Are You Prepared For Fire Season?

A massive fire in our area is just unthinkable, but it is always a possibility. If we plan ahead, we can reduce that possibility. We need to have a defensible space around our homes and open areas where firefighters can operate to protect our homes whether the emergency is a wildfire or a localized fire.

- ◆ If you live on a large lot, clear highly flammable vegetation from 100' around structures. For smaller lots, clear at least 30'. Plant fire-resistant vegetation in that first 30'. Trees can remain, but all flammable plants beneath them should be removed.
- ◆ Trim tree branches to 6' above the ground and at least 10' away from chimneys. Trim tree branches that overhang the roof. Install spark arrestors on chimneys.
- ◆ Clear roadways and driveways to allow for large emergency vehicles. Have a 15' high driveway clearance for fire engines.
- ◆ Don't store firewood within 50' of your home. Remove dead or dying vegetation.
- ◆ Remove all build-up of needles and leaves from your roof and gutters.
- ◆ Have your address numbers clearly visible from the road. Make sure roads are clearly marked.
- ◆ Replace wood shingles with Class A fire-resistant roofing.

If the unthinkable ever happens, have an evacuation plan in place:

- ◆ Make a list of the important things to take with you during an evacuation and keep it handy. Don't forget your prescriptions, glasses, important documents, photos, pets, a child's favorite toy, computers. Know where these things are located and make them quickly accessible.
- ◆ Prepare an Emergency Supply Kit: 3-day supply of water, non-perishable food, clothes, blankets, flashlights with extra batteries, toilet supplies, and special items for infants, seniors and the disabled. Know where the kit is stored.
- ◆ Have a predetermined meeting place for family members as all of the family may not be home.
- ◆ Know your main and secondary escape routes.
- ◆ Have an out-of-state or out-of-area contact.

This evacuation plan can do double duty for fire as well as earthquake emergencies. ▲



Helix Water District Update

Your November bill should reflect the most recent rate increase by the Water District. The rate increase equals about 8% if you use very little water or closer to 12% if you have a large family or large lot. Including last year's increase, the rates for most of us (greater than 28 units) equal nearly 35% over what they were two years ago. Hopefully, future increases will be more palatable.

The District is studying the potential of water budgets for domestic households with less punitive rates for owners of large lots who practice reasonable water conservation.

There will be a workshop at the District Offices on this topic Wednesday, 11:00 a.m. on October 27th. GMIA will continue with its efforts toward an equitable rate structure.▲

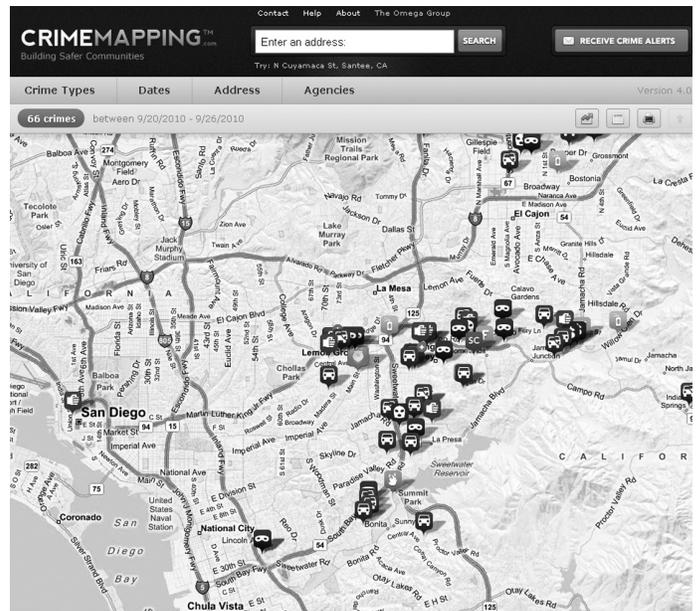
Membership Renewals

For those members preferring an electronic means for remitting annual dues, we are pleased to announce that our link to PAYPAL is again operational! See www.gmia.net to renew your membership.

GMIA thanks the several hundred members who have already mailed in their dues for the 7/1/2010 – 6/30/2011 year. Please look at your address label for your membership expiration date. If you have any questions, please contact our Treasurer, Larry Nichols, at 619-440-1607.

A special thanks to those members sending in additional contributions to fund our projects and activities. GMIA is fortunate to receive \$1,500 – 2,000 every year from this support alone. Honorable mention for gifts from \$25-100 goes to the following:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Donald & Maxine Asbury | Lynne Martin |
| Richard & Charlene Ayers | Don & Jennifer Melucci |
| Rupert & Barbara Blackmun | Paul & Janel Pehau |
| Ronald & Mary Alice Brady | Ralph & Marcia Peterson |
| Kenneth Bullock | Judy & Brian Pike |
| Ruth Devin | Garyanne Prince |
| Tajmahal Dirbas | Fletcher & Marcy Thornton |
| Roger & Ann Graham | Terry & Roberta Tidmore |
| Steven & Doreann Gibson | Paul Wells |
| Mercille Jach | Oscar & Dorothy Wissell |
| Terry & Hisako Koike | Patricia Yuengling |



Crime Mapping Website To Keep Neighborhoods Informed

To obtain crime information in your neighborhood and crime prevention tips, the Sheriff's Department has introduced a crime mapping website at www.crimemapping.com. This site displays up-to-date crime reports and allows you to receive automated email alerts about crimes within a specific radius from your home address. The Sheriff's other web site for crime maps, crime statistics, and 10 most wanted is www.arjis.org.

Help Keep Our Neighbors Alive — On Fuerte, Drive 35!

Our neighbors living on Fuerte Drive have continual problems with the speeding traffic. As you drive on Fuerte, just imagine trying to safely get into or out of a driveway. At rush hours, this is practically impossible. We've asked the Highway Patrol for more speed enforcement, but that happens only sporadically. To slow this traffic down we're going to have to do it ourselves. Our best bet is to set the pace on Fuerte Drive. If all members of GMIA drive 35 mph, we may be able to slow the traffic. Your help with this safety issue is vital.

Fall Sweetwater River Nature Walk

GMIA is pleased to partner with the San Diego Audobon Society for our inaugural Fall Sweetwater River Nature Walk on Saturday, October 23rd from 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Our Nature Walk will be conducted by Audobon volunteers Judy McIntosh and Jeanne Raimond. Judy brings 20 years of birding experience and Jeanne will provide information about the local coastal sage scrub of the area. We hope to see migratory birds visiting our area on their way south.

Participants will meet at 8:30 in the western end of the Rancho San Diego (Target) shopping center parking lot next to Hooleys Restaurant. Look for the GMIA banner. Wear shoes for hiking, sunscreen, dress in layers, and bring binoculars as we anticipate birds will be in the trees. Due to numerous car break-ins, we do not recommend parking at the trailhead next to the old metal bridge.

In order to have a more meaningful, personal experience, this Nature Walk will be limited to 30 participants. Please reserve online at www.gmia.net to ensure your spot. Should we have additional interest, we will try to schedule another walk at a later date. For questions, call Susan Nichols at 619-440-1607. ▲

