



viewpoints

Summer 2011

Volume 42 Issue 1



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Supervisor Jacob Fails to Find Second to Protect Single-Family Zoning

The General Plan serves as San Diego County's roadmap for land-use and zoning decisions. Its update has been in the works for twelve years and is nearing completion with the final passage set for August 3, 2011.

Unfortunately, efforts by the pro-development industry have resulted in last minute wording that will effectively eliminate the protection of single-family zoning as we know it. The changes include the elimination of minimum lot sizes in favor of cluster development which will result in *Attached Developments* being allowed within traditional *Detached Single-Family Neighborhoods*, including within the community of Mt Helix.

The Supervisor stressed to the GMIA Board that she is frustrated by the lack of support needed to make this change and that she *"firmly believes that multi-family housing doesn't belong in areas zoned for single family homes."*

The GMIA Board has set up an appointment with the Supervisor in hopes of persuading her to fight harder to get the support of her colleagues to protect single family neighborhoods from the incursion of attached developments.

The Board of GMIA recommends that you contact Supervisor Jacob's office to voice your concerns about protecting Single-Family Zoning and our community character. She can be contacted via letter, fax, phone, and/or email as indicated below.

Supervisor Dianne Jacob

County Administration Center, 1600 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 531-5522 | (619) 696-7253 (fax) | dianne.jacob@sdcounty.ca.gov

Time to Renew Your Membership

Please check your mailing label for the renewal date of your membership. Memberships renew annually on July 1st, so it is time for many to update their dues. Annual membership is just \$18. Please help preserve and enhance the character and quality of our region, plus enjoy these benefits:

- Complimentary admission to our Art & Garden Tour
- Subscription to Viewpoints, our informative quarterly newsletter
- Invitations to our Annual Meeting, Neighborhood Walks and other events

When neighbors come together as a community, we can influence the proceedings of government, developers, and other external forces that affect the quality of our lives. That's why your membership in GMIA makes a difference. Please renew today and encourage your neighbors to join. ▲

GROSSMONT - MT. HELIX



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440-1607

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Viewpoints is a community newsletter published by the Grossmont – Mt. Helix Improvement Association. Letters to the Editor should be sent to P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

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

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www.gmia.net

Message from the President

How may we serve you? Each month your all-volunteer GMIA Board meets to review issues facing our community. We work with County and regional governmental entities to help resolve issues that impact our community. Some of the issues are:

- transportation systems
- traffic control
- planning and land use
- zoning & code enforcement
- crime prevention and law enforcement

In addition, we host local events to bring neighbors together and encourage community building.

After 70+ years of experience, we think we are pretty good at doing this job, but we realize there may be more we could do. We invite you, our members, to let us know how we may be of help. Plus, we welcome you to volunteer to serve on a committee along with our Board Members. Some committee members have gone on to deepen their commitment by serving on the Board. If you would like to add your voice to our efforts and are interested in learning more about our committees, please give me a call at (619) 440-1607.

With your help, GMIA will continue to be an example that illustrates the memorable words of the late Margaret Mead, *“Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”*

Thanks to our Donors

GMIA wishes to thank the following members who have gifted \$25 or more during the last quarter to support our organization and its programs:

Richard Harms & Jan Townsend	Ralph & Kathie Allen	Guy & Signa Wilcox
Wayne & Coleen DeBry	Terry & Hisako Koike	Mary Gilligan
Dr. & Mrs. Donald Rasmussen	Tajmahal Dirbas	

We also appreciate the early jump on renewals for the July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012 membership year – fully 154 of you have already renewed your membership in advance! Thank you! ▲

CERT Training

Would you like to know how to help if a community emergency occurs? The San Miguel Fire District is offering Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training. The classes will cover disaster medical assistance, fire extinguishers, earthquake preparedness, search and rescue, and disaster psychology. The new course will meet from 9 am to 1 pm beginning on July 23 and continuing each Saturday through August 20th. For information or to enroll, call 619-660-5359 or email lvillarreal@smgfire.org. ▲



Backyard Chickens Class & Tour on September 10th

We are pleased to announce that GMIA Board Member “chicken whisperer” Don Newcom will teach a morning seminar on the fine art of keeping chickens. Along with other Board Members, Don will share a wealth of information acquired in his more than 40 years of raising chickens at his Mt. Helix home. Learn everything you need to know to get started: the essentials of maintaining chicken health, coop construction, selecting and purchasing chickens, zoning considerations, and more.

Mark your calendars! (We won't have another newsletter prior to the class date.) The class will be held **Saturday, September 10th from 9:30 – 10:30** at the Casa de Oro Library community room, located at 9805 Campo Road #180, Spring Valley (between Subway and Big 5 Sporting Goods). Following the seminar, participants will receive a map for a same-day, self-guided tour to view local homeowners' chicken coops.

The class and tour are offered free by GMIA as a benefit to the community. ▲



Bothered by Air Traffic Noise?

At a recent GMIA board meeting, a resident in our community (however, not a GMIA member) came forward to ask our organization to consider air traffic noise. Our Board had a lively discussion with a wide range of opinions about this issue. Some members reported being disturbed by low flying planes and helicopters, while others did not find air traffic noise to be either excessive or bothersome. A sampling of the comments included directors noting the airfield at Gillespie has been in existence since 1946 and residents knew of the airfield when purchasing property; another director acknowledged that virtually all home videos taken on their property had air traffic noise on the soundtrack. Although our Board of Directors did not concur that air traffic noise is—or is not—a problem, we agreed that the resident's complaint and proposed solution should be reported to our membership.

If you feel air traffic noise is a problem and would like more information about a proposed solution, Bob Heider of the non-profit organization Safe Streets Now has come forward to offer assistance. Founded in 1995, Safe Streets Now uses a State of California nuisance abatement law to resolve problems that “deprive you of the quiet enjoyment of your property.” Their approach is a four-step process: documentation, notification, mediation and litigation (small claims court). An Issue Briefing by the Institute for Public Strategies noted that only 6% of cases by Safe Streets Now involved litigation, with the majority resolved by the three previous steps. Safe Streets Now has resolved a variety of nuisance issues, including air traffic noise in the Oakland area. Mr. Heider will host a 1½ hour community meeting outlining his approach for your review. To learn more about the meeting, contact helixair@cox.net.

Please note: the purpose of this article is to provide information as a community service. Your board does not have enough information to support either the claim of excessive noise or the proposed solution, nor is this article an endorsement of Safe Streets Now. ▲



Trees of Mt. Helix

Magnolia grandiflora – Southern Magnolia

by Jeff Rule

This is the sixth 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 Southern Magnolia tree featured is located in the front yard of GMIA members Ralph and Kathie Allen. The tree was planted prior to 1974, when the Allens bought their plantation-revival style home in the Horizon Hills neighborhood. What makes this Magnolia tree special to the Allens is its stately and majestic presence, as well as helping to unify the landscape since the home is sited on a slope. The Magnolia tree is evergreen and can grow to 80' tall by 60' wide. It has a moderate growth rate and takes regular watering. The Magnolia tree will shed big hard leaves constantly from late spring to early fall and does have surface roots, which can lift paved areas. The homeowner has the tree lightly trimmed about every 3 to 4 years.

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. Thank you for your interest. ▲

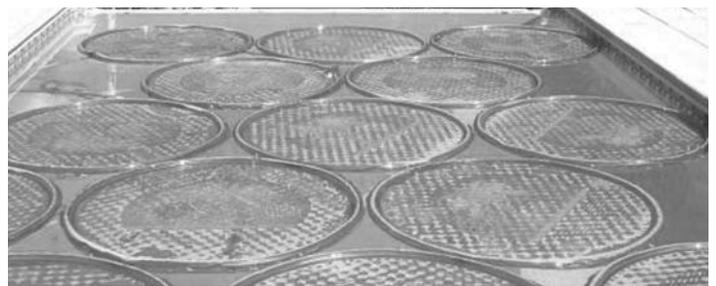
Water-Wise Tips

For the Grossmont-Mt. Helix Homeowner

How much water evaporates from a swimming pool? Research done by the Marin Municipal Water District indicates that 2-5% of the typical pool content evaporates weekly. According to www.energysavers.gov, the evaporation rate will depend on the surface area of the pool, the temperature and the relative humidity and wind. A curious fact to note: water evaporation is much greater in the fall than in the summer, when water temperatures are high and air temperatures are cold, especially at night.

Homeowners in our Grossmont-Mt. Helix community can help conserve resources by reducing water evaporation from swimming pools. Here are three methods to consider:

1. A “bubble” cover made of plastic will hold in water. In addition, use of a cover will warm the pool water and reduce the quantity of chemicals needed. Bubble covers can be manually pulled over the pool or mounted on a reel.
2. Solar rings are portable units that resemble hula-hoops covered with plastic material. Once placed on the pool surface, the rings lock together with magnets to cover the water and prevent evaporation, as well as warm the pool temperature. When swimming, solar rings can be stacked poolside.



3. A liquid silicone film can be added to pool water to reduce evaporation. According to manufacturers, the chemical forms a liquid blanket on the pool's surface to reduce evaporation.

Next time you visit a pool supply company or have a service call by a pool maintenance company, ask them for additional information about what you can do to save water. If you have other methods of conserving water, we welcome your contributions. ▲



All About Rabbits

by Pat Ryan

Any time Mt. Helix gardeners get together, the topic of rabbits is sure to be in the conversation. Cute as those cottontails are, they can be so destructive to our gardens and landscaped areas. Everyone is asking, why have they started to increase in the past 3 to 5 years? What can be done about them? What are the legal methods to control them? Do repellents work? How high does a fence need to be to keep them out?

The desert cottontail or the brush rabbit, which both weigh in at about 1¼ pounds, cause our local problem. They find plenty of cover in our dense brushy areas, wooded areas with some underbrush, or areas with piles of rocks or debris. Most cottontails and brush rabbits have a home range of up to 10 to 15 acres. Although they aren't territorial, they maintain home ranges and make habitual use of travel lanes within their range.

Breeding season begins in December and ends in June. Average litter size is 3 to 4 young; there can be up to 6 litters per year. They give birth in a shallow depression on the ground. Newborn rabbits are nearly furless, have closed eyes, and remain in the nest for several weeks.

I interviewed Vincent Lazaneo, the Urban Horticultural Advisor, from the San Diego County Farm and Home Advisors to get some local knowledge and recommendations about our rabbit situation. It was no surprise to learn that the big fires of '03 and '07 displaced much wildlife, which relocated to more urban areas. With more development the rabbits' natural predators, such as the coyote, have been pushed out. This year the early rains brought lots of vegetation early in the fall, and full reproduction "went into overdrive." When the natural vegetation starts

to dry up, the rabbits will be eyeing our yards and this fall the situation will become much worse.

Mr. Lazaneo recommended the UC Davis *Pest Notes on Rabbits* for information and management strategies. The bottom line is to fence them out. According to the website, repellents such as garlic, Shake-Away, Rabbit Scram or PlantSkyd can reduce rabbit damage, but their usefulness is limited, especially in a vegetable garden—an area that contains highly preferred rabbit foods! If you want to try repellents, apply them before damage occurs and reapply them frequently. Research has shown that repellents with putrescent whole-egg solids can reduce rabbit browsing.

There are several methods suggested for fencing out rabbits from your garden. Cottontails and brush rabbits won't jump a 2-foot fence. Poultry netting (1" chicken wire) supported by light stakes will provide adequate control. Use 36" or 48" wire and bury the bottom 6-10", bending a few inches of the bottom outward.

The Trunk Guard method provides protection for individual plants and might be more practical. Cut 24" wide poultry netting into strips 18-20" long and form them into cylinders for placement around the trunks. Bury the bottom of the cylinders 2 to 3 inches and brace them away from the trunk so rabbits can't press against the cylinder and nibble through the mesh.

Trapping is difficult and isn't recommended by the County because it creates the dilemma of what to do with the trapped animal. It is illegal to release them in other areas without a written permit and can spread disease. Although the California Fish and Game Code classify cottontails and brush rabbits as game animals, shooting is prohibited in urban and suburban locations.

A very good strategy is to have a dog or a cat patrolling your yard. And if you want to ascertain the level of your rabbit population, go out at night with a flashlight. Their eyes shine yellow or red in a flashlight beam.

Whatever method you choose to reduce rabbit damage in your garden, you can be sure those cute, pesky little cottontails are here to stay! So vigilant management is the key, and just another part of the joy of living and gardening in our beautiful, rural, Mt. Helix neighborhood.

For more information, the link for the UC Davis website mentioned is www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES. The San Diego County Farm and Home Advisors can be reached at 858-694-2845. ▲



2011 Annual Meeting Recap

by Allison Henderson

The Annual Meeting of GMIA held at the Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden was a feast for the senses. Celebrating GMIA's 73 years of service to the Grossmont-Mt. Helix community, guests strolled the 5 acre garden while munching on scrumptious appetizers, sipping fine wines, all with the lyrical sound of an acoustic guitar in the background.

But there was more than just wonderful wine and water-wise plants at our GMIA get together: the highlight of our "official" program was the presentation of this year's Al Platt Memorial Award to Art and Lynn Patoff. The Patoff's have been actively involved in community issues for nearly half a century. Whenever a problem presented itself to their neighborhood, Lynn says, "they rolled up their sleeves and just dug in and fixed it." Congratulations to Art and Lynn on a much deserved recognition of their volunteerism!

The Board of Directors of GMIA extend a special "Thank You" to Annual Meeting Chair Kay Bickley and her stalwart committee members (especially Julie Ball, Jocelyn Zimmerman, Pat Ryan and Marty Ornish) who worked so very hard to organize the event. The Garden is a new venue for our Annual Meeting and from what we hear, it was definitely a hit with our members. See more photos of the Annual Meeting at www.gmia.net. ▲

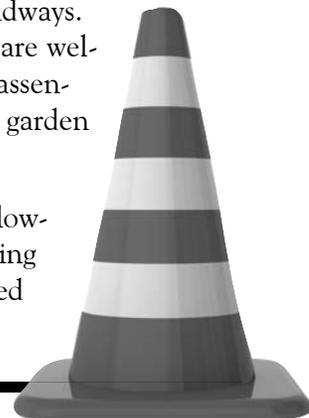
Traffic Control at the Art & Garden Tour

Jeffrey Rule, Art & Garden Curator

I would like to thank all the GMIA members and their guests for participating in our safe and memorable May Art & Garden Tour. Many of you may wonder why we have to place traffic control signs during the afternoon of our garden tour.

Each year GMIA has to apply for a Special Event Permit with the County of San Diego. Two conditions of the the permit for our event are to have insurance and a traffic control plan in effect. The barricades, no-parking signs and parking recommendation signs ensure that emergency vehicles have a minimum of 16' of clearance at all times to pass parked vehicles. That is why, in most cases, we only allow parking on one side of the street or road. According to the County, "Parking is allowed on the shoulder of the road when the shoulder is wide enough to accommodate the vehicle; the vehicle cannot park on or over the white edge stripe. The area between the yellow center stripe and the white edge stripe is the traffic lane and must be kept clear." Special event and pedestrian signs are strategically placed to notify approaching vehicles to slow down for pedestrians entering and exiting the roadways. In most cases, you are welcome to drop off passengers in front of the garden property entrance.

Thanks again for slowing down and parking in the recommended areas. ▲



2011 Art & Garden Tour

Thank you to home owners Bill Altonen & Stephanie Young, Jeff & Dawn Silva, Larry & Susan Nichols, and Gregg & Debby Hamann. Their beautiful gardens, along with work by local artists, were enjoyed by our members and guests at our annual Art & Garden Tour on May 15th. Tour participants were able to see landscapes where thirsty lawns had been removed and a variety of alternative plantings established. We offer our congratulations to GMIA Director Jeff Rule and his committee for once again organizing this terrific event. Their hard work and planning made for a perfect afternoon for all. ▲

Photos by Bob Cederdahl





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GMIA is a 70+ year old nonprofit 501(c)4 public benefit membership organization. Our mission is to preserve and enhance the character and quality of the community and foster pride in the area. We do not employ a paid staff and are served by an all-volunteer board.

Self-Help Contact List for the Unincorporated County

- Animal Control..... 619-236-4250**
- Hazardous Waste Recycling..... 877-713-2784**
- Abandoned Vehicles..... 619-401-2000**
- California Highway Patrol..... 858-637-3800**
- Code Enforcement Hotline 858-694-2705**
- Code Enforcement 858-694-3741**
- Dead Animal Pick Up..... 888-299-9905**
- Dig Alert 800-227-2600**
Locate gas lines, electrical wiring, water pipes and phone lines before you dig. Call at least two days before you dig.
- Grading Enforcement..... 858-694-3034**
- Environmental Health Code Enforcement..... 619-338-2222**
- Graffiti Removal on Roadways 858-467-4042**

- Graffiti/County Property 858-874-4040**
Dept. of Public Works
- Lemon Grove Sheriff’s Station..... 619-337-2000**
- Noise Enforcement 858-694-3741**
- Road Maintenance - Potholes..... 858-565-5262**
Dept. of Public Works
- San Diego Sheriff’s Dept..... 858-565-5200**
Non-Emergency
- San Miguel Fire District 619-670-0500**
Business & Administration
- Vector Control – Rodents, 858-694-2888**
Flies, Mosquitoes, etc.
Health Services Dept.

For those living in the city of La Mesa or city of El Cajon, please contact your city’s offices.

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