



viewpoints

SPRING 2017

Volume 47 Issue 2

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



GMIA Art & Garden Tour May 7th | 12:00 – 5:00 pm

This year's GMIA Art & Garden Tour promises to be a stunner! Thanks to Mother Nature's mix of abundant rain combined with brilliant sunny days, every plant is jumping out of the ground. Lavish blooms and plentiful foliage will be on display at our most popular annual event.

As always, the Tour is complimentary for member households in good standing. While it is not our intention to open our event to the general public, we will accommodate non-member guests for a \$10 donation per person. Alternatively, non-members are invited to join GMIA at the Tour and enjoy complimentary admission and other benefits. Annual dues are just \$18 per household.

Inside this issue you will find our Garden Tour brochure and map. Be sure to bring this with you as you visit the five inspiring gardens in our neighborhood. Begin wherever you like. When you visit the first garden, you will receive a wrist band that will provide entry at each additional garden.

Celebrate spring! Learn what plants flourish in our Grossmont-Mt. Helix region. Meander through the gardens for a spectacular afternoon of beautiful landscape designs, water wise plantings, gorgeous outdoor "rooms" and peaceful retreats. Well behaved children are welcome. No pets please.

Friends Don't Let Friends Buy Succulents!*

GMIA Succulent Swap
Saturday – May 13th | 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
10805 Melva Road, La Mesa

Get a jump start on water-wise gardening at GMIA's 4th Annual Succulent Swap. Fill in your landscape with low water, low maintenance plants. The key word here is **FREE - FREE - FREE!**

Bring cuttings or plants to share, but don't be shy if you are just getting started and don't have any extra plants – our generous participants always bring lots and there is plenty for all. GMIA will provide coffee and light snacks to round out the morning.

Enjoy the magnificent two acre garden of GMIA members Tere Trout and Jonathan Becker. A huge thank you to Tere and Jonathan for graciously hosting this event in their inspiring low water Wonderland. Look for their huge African tortoise who can be seen wandering around property nibbling on juicy succulents.

All are welcome (no pets please); this event is open to the community. 🌱

* Quote by San Diego author
Sophy Chaffee





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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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MISSION

GMIA is a 75+ 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.

President's Message

A beloved neighbor was relocating out of state, and a new family moving in to their home. To suit the occasion, we hosted (along with two other neighbors) a **Family Friendly Driveway Happy Hour**. It turned out to be the easiest gathering we ever held and the best attended. I want to share the details with you and hope you will give it a try – a great, casual way to bring your neighbors together.

With our longer spring days, Sunday at 5:00 -7:30 pm was the perfect time. Weekend obligations were over, and long work day schedules did not conflict. Preparation for our get-together couldn't have been simpler. We put out a couple of tables, scattered a few chairs, got a box of side-walk chalk and bubbles for the littlest guests. Because we gathered in the driveway, house-cleaning before or after was not an issue (hurray!). For more fun, we set up our ancient ping pong table in the garage.

The three families who co-hosted each brought a cooler with beverages – wine, beer, soft drinks and juice boxes along with ice. We sent an email invitation to our neighbors to join us for our Family Friendly Driveway Happy Hour. Our invitation encouraged neighbors to bring finger food if they wanted to contribute. To keep it simple, we didn't bother with an RSVP.

To our delight, all our neighbors came, appetizers in hand, to celebrate our wonderful neighborhood, bid farewell to those who were moving, and welcome a new family. The simplicity of the event was paramount to everyone's enjoyment. We think another key to our success was the informal setting – guests did not feel stuck or obligated to stay, although ironically, most everyone stayed till sunset at 7:30.

Small children played with each other in the driveway – within sight of their parents but not underfoot. Older kids and teens spent their time in a ping pong marathon. Adults chatted—it was a perfect way to meet new neighbors, rekindle friendships with long-time residents, and catch up on neighborhood news.

Linking neighbors together to build community helps us shape, guide and participate in the future of our neighborhood. When we build relationships with our neighbors, we are better able to help in an emergency and better prepared to discuss problems immediately as they arise. Children are safer because they are known and watched over by neighbors who live in the area. The benefits of a neighborhood gathering are countless.

If you have a signature event for your neighborhood, please let us know. We'd love to share it with our members. If you decide to have a Family Friendly Driveway Happy Hour, we'd love to hear how it goes. Shoot us an email at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com. 🌱

Thank You Donors!

Special thanks to Tom and Donna Bloomer who donated a gift of \$25 or greater in excess of their dues.



SAN DIEGO COUNTY SERVICE There's An App for That!

Use your mobile phone to report potholes, code compliance complaints, overcharges by faulty retail price-scanners, graffiti, abandoned junker cars and other issues. The County of San Diego's new Tell Us Now! App is available for download in app stores for iPhone and Android smartphones. Snap a quick picture and add some text on your smartphone and send! The app will alert someone to clean up the mess, repair the sign or fix that error!



Please help our neighborhood and use this new customer service tool to submit complaints and questions immediately directly into County computer systems. The app will also allow customers to track the progress of their complaints as the County looks into them. The Tell Us Now! app will also give County employees more information — and photos — to use to conduct investigations.

For more info: <http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/dmpr/gfx/ap-pcenter/index.html> ▲

You're Invited!

Annual Dinner Meeting

June 25th

Mark your calendar! Join us for an evening of food, friends, and information. GMIA's Annual Dinner Meeting at the beautiful Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden is a great opportunity to get to know your neighbors and enjoy an evening under the stars. Supervisor Dianne Jacob will take questions and address issues of concern from our members.

Reserve online at www.gmia.net or return the form enclosed in this newsletter

Air Traffic Changes Over Our Neighborhood

by Dave Zimmerman

Some of our members have reported noise level variations due to changes in flight routes over our area.

As you may well already know, the FAA is altering the aircraft routes in the Southern California Metroplex area. These changes will be complete this month. This note provides a background and summarizes the changes in noise levels that residents in the GMIA area will experience due to these changes, and provides references if more information is desired. Thanks to our GMIA member Chris Roberts for alerting us about this change.

The FAA is in the process of implementing the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen). NextGen exploits improved navigational technology to increase efficiency, flight path predictability, and reduce required controller-pilot voice communication for safer and more efficient air travel and a reduction in fuel consumption and pollution.

An article in the SD Union Tribune on March 26 (<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/california/la-me-california-noise-20170321-story.html>) recently gave an overview of the effect these changes will have on the noise levels in the county. Areas in the county will experience both increases and decreases in noise. The same is true in the GMIA area although the net effect is a slight decrease in overall noise. Our website (link) provides a detailed 1km by 1km map of the modelled change in noise levels obtained from http://metroplexenvironmental.com/socal_metroplex/socal_introduction.html. To summarize that data, roughly four-fifths of our area is expected to have a decrease or no change in noise and the remainder roughly 25% more noise.

We encourage member to review the source material. If you have concerns, contact the FAA Noise Hotline at 619.400.2404 Option 6 or <http://www.san.org/Airport-Noise/Flight-Tracking>. ▲



Know Your Responsibility for DRAINAGE

by Allison Henderson

Be aware that even if not one drop of water from your property drifts onto a neighboring property, you could be named in a suit if you're anywhere close to a flooded property. How do I know this? Our insurance company had to fork over \$7500 to my neighbor who sued the County and 20 neighboring homeowners for the \$100,000+ property damage he incurred during storms of 2014. As our lawyer stated, there were no facts to support that his flood damage was our fault, but this isn't necessarily an issue of 'facts'. He had flood damage; defense costs being what they are, we were advised to settle the case as the cheapest way to resolution.

This may be a surprise: on Mt. Helix, in most cases, drainage is the responsibility of the homeowner – not the County. This is not an article to solve your flooding issues, only to apprise you of your responsibility and possible liability for potential problems.

Does water roll off your property onto someone else's property? If you live on or even near a private road, on or near a slope, on or near a bottom - you may have liability in a flooding event. Mt Helix is chock full of private roads, creeks and gullies, rolling slopes and

hillsides, so you could be responsible for flood damage to your own and neighboring homes. Based on my recent experience, here are some things to consider before a flood event:

Flood insurance for damages to yours or neighboring properties is not typically included under homeowner's insurance. Check with your agent to consider this coverage, which must be purchased as a separate rider for your policy.

Private roads and easements may have 'maintenance agreements' attached to the deeds. What are your responsibilities for the drains under or near any private roads nearby your house? Investigate!

Slopes and bottoms: If you are on a slope, water flowing from above and to the properties below will probably be your responsibility. According to our attorney, you may have liability if your house is located within four houses or so of flood damage no matter where the water comes from. You can't mess with the flow of the water even to protect your home without County approval. If

you're unsure, investigate! And, for goodness sake, use sandbags in major rain events.

Maintenance has to be done to any and all drains. Chat with your immediate neighbors about what should be done to keep your drains clear and flowing. Get professional advice if you're unsure, and budget for needed drainage fixes.

My personal opinion: our property taxes could never be raised high enough to provide the kind of foresight, infrastructure improvements and upkeep that our neighborhood requires. We all have to step up.

We learned about the legal duty of drainage issues the hard way. Please take the time to consider the drainage on your property, talk with your neighbors, and take every step to eliminate excess water flow. We may all just be a downpour away from an expensive problem. ▲

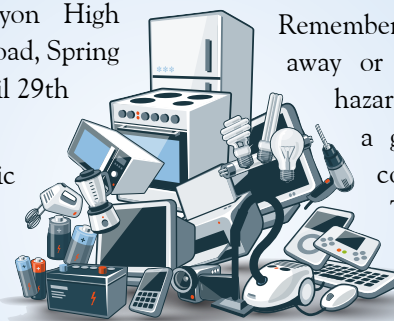
Spring Cleaning

Clean out your cupboards and bring your Household Hazardous Waste, Electronic Waste & Unwanted Medication to Steele Canyon High School (12440 Campo Road, Spring Valley) on Saturday, April 29th from 9:00am – 2:00pm.

Products containing toxic chemicals used to maintain your residence can be safely disposed of at this event at no charge. Leave products

in their existing containers if possible and make sure the lids are on tight so containers will not leak. Be sure to transport containers in the trunk or in the back of your vehicle away from passengers and pets; do not transport

over 15 gallons or 125 pounds at one time. Unwanted medication will also be collected.



Remember, it is illegal to throw away or abandon household hazardous waste, so this is a great opportunity to come clean and **PUT TOXIC WASTE IN ITS PLACE.**

This collection event is a community service sponsored by the County of San Diego – Department of Environmental Health in partnership with the County Sheriff's Department and the Drug Enforcement Agency.



Racing Pigeons

by Mary Curran Downey

The flock circles and swoops as one, banking left then right, circling our neighborhood around Heavenly Way. Like a synchronized aerial ballet, the racing pigeons are on the move, showing a hint of the amazing long-distance flying that will take them hundreds of miles from their Mt. Helix home.

Their owner, Sam Fikhman, is a life-long fan of the sport, training his first pigeons as a boy of 9. They're a lot of work, he admits, "but if you like all the activity, it's very enjoyable."

His daily routine during racing season has him up before sunrise to give the flock an early morning workout and they are out again at dusk for another training session. In between, there are cages to clean, birds to feed and always, preparation for the next race.

Although raising and racing pigeons is very popular in Europe – it's the national sport of Belgium – there are more modest but nonetheless very enthusiastic clubs all across the United States. Fikhman is a member of the San Diego Homing Pigeon Club, which hosts the San Diego Classic each year, a race that draws participants from this country as well as from Mexico and Canada.

Like Fikhman, Club President Steve Miner starting racing as a boy. "I was born into it," he said. "My father raced and my brother in Idaho and I still race. It's in my blood."

Miner has created a bird breeding and training site on his Bonita property that is home to several champions, including the #1 Ace pigeon in a race of 300 to 500 birds in the United States in 2010 and a female racer with three consecutive victories in 2016.

The former high school math teacher and coach explains that the process of training a bird to race is one of small, deliberate steps. Once the birds that he breeds are weaned, he lets them fly over his property for several weeks when they are hungry and they return to their loft for a specially mixed feed that Miner has created for them.



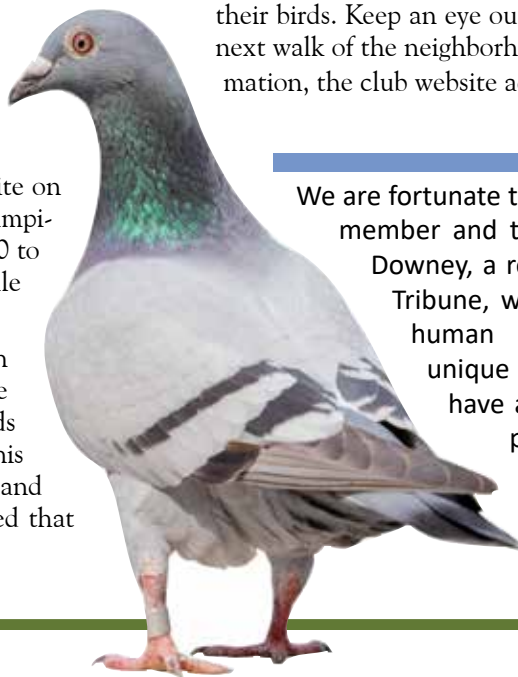
Steve Miner

At three months, they are taken five miles from their loft, then the distance is expanded to 10 miles. The birds will be released in a variety of locations, including Mt. Miguel High School, Grossmont College and along Scripps Poway Parkway in North County and then find their way home. When the birds return to the loft and walk over a computerized pad, a small band on one leg records their return and calculates their speed and the distance flown. In a local race, up to 3,000 birds from all over the county are released together to fly back to their individual lofts. It's not unusual for their speeds to reach 50 to 55 m.p.h. Although race lengths vary, the birds can find their way home from as far away as 400 miles. How in the world do they do that?

"I have no idea," Miner grins. "There are some theories that the sun helps them navigate but no one really knows for sure."

Not all birds make the journey home safely. Electrical wires and natural predators like hawks and falcons take their toll. About half of all birds in longer races are lost.

Still, in spite of the loss, the work and the painstaking training, both Miner and Fikhman clearly love the sport – and their birds. Keep an eye out for the winged acrobats on your next walk of the neighborhood. And if you'd like more information, the club website address is www.sdpigeonclub.com.



We are fortunate to feature this article by GMIA member and talented author Mary Curran Downey, a retired reporter for the Union Tribune, who has volunteered to write human interest stories about our unique region. Thanks Mary! If you have a topic or suggestion for her, please send a message to: yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com.



Water Wise Training for Landscapers/ Gardeners

Free professional training in both English and Spanish is now available for “Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper Certification.” The 20 hour program (4 class sessions) is designed to educate landscapers/gardeners to reduce landscape water use. Classes are offered in El Cajon, National City, and San Diego and lunch is provided.

We encourage GMIA members to pass this information on to workers; the program is currently free but a fee may be charged in the future.

For more information or to print this info in Spanish, go to Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper professional certificate training at:

<http://www.qwel.net/curriculum/download/#qwelspanish>

Valle de Oro Community Planning Group (VDO) Update

by Mark Schuppert

The VDO (Planning Group) is an elected board of fifteen members who serve as an advisory panel to San Diego County regarding land use issues in the Valle de Oro Community. Mt Helix is part of the larger VDO community.

ESTRELLA PARK

The planned development of a community park on Estrella Drive, north of Santa Sophia Church in Casa de Oro has been stalled for more than a decade due to the lack of funding. Funding for park development, operations, and maintenance is typically collected through development fees and supplemental property taxes. However, the built-out characteristics of the community have limited the income generated through development fees, and the GMIA is not part of a special assessment district for parks.

For the past two years, Planning Group Board Members Lori Myers and Josan Feathers have revived the Planning Group's efforts to gain traction on the park's development. The biggest hurdle is securing funding for the park's maintenance and operations. Our Planning Group is working with Supervisor Jacob to help find alternative funding sources. Supervisor Jacob will be presenting a “Parks Initiative” at the March 22nd Board of Supervisor's Meeting. If passed, the Initiative will establish a \$15M annuity fund to be earmarked for the operations and maintenance of new and existing County Parks. The Parks Initiative will likely have been heard by the time this Newsletter is received, but we will keep you updated on the park's development status in future newsletters.

CASA DE ORO REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The Casa de Oro Alliance is leading the efforts in requesting funding from the County to assist in establishing a redevelopment plan for the Campo Road corridor. This plan would provide new guidance for land uses along the corridor that would create a better defined community center. The plan would also reduce the red tape and costs for targeted redevelopments that would help spur the area's revitalization.

Planning Group Chairman David Johnston and Board Member Mark Schuppert have participated in steering committee meetings with the Casa de Oro Alliance. The Alliance will be making a formal presentation to our Planning Group at the May 2nd meeting which will then be presented to Supervisor Jacob. Our Planning Group meetings are held at 7:00 PM on the first Tuesday of every month at the Otay Water District Offices on Sweetwater Springs Boulevard. The public is always invited and we encourage you to attend.

For Planning Group information, contact the 2017 Chairman, David Johnston. He can be reached at (619) 977-6497. 🌱

Membership Envelope

We are sending a membership renewal envelope to all our members. Please check your membership expiration date next to your mailing address on this newsletter. (You may also renew online at www.gmia.net). If your dues are current, please pass the envelope on to a neighbor and encourage them to join. Thanks!

ARCHITECTURE & HISTORY OF THE GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX COMMUNITY

Grossmont's First Spanish Revival Estate ❖ **McCleave Home / Sparhawk Residence** ❖

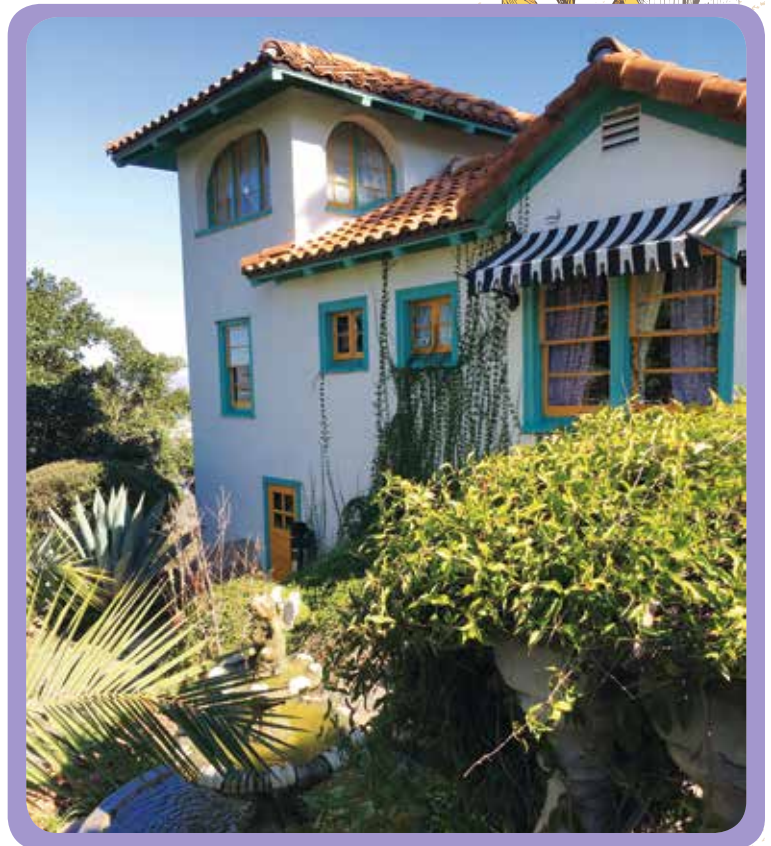
by Wendy Tinsley Becker

This 100-year-old home is historically and architecturally significant as an early example of the Spanish Revival aesthetic in the Grossmont Park land subdivision. The property represents an intact cultural landscape developed over a century. We are pleased to include the home in this year's Garden Tour to celebrate its centennial!

Nestled between Sierra Vista Avenue to the south and El Granito Drive to the north, development of the 9488 El Granito Avenue property dates to 1917 when the existing Spanish Revival style home was built for Edward McCleave, a retired Lieutenant Colonel. The McCleave family maintained ownership of the home through 1989 when the current owners, Rick and Cheri Sparhawk purchased it.

One of the earliest Spanish Revival style properties developed in the Grossmont Park land tract, the residence was built at the height of the style's popularity, and in a natural setting and climate suitable for the aesthetic. Consistent with the style, extant character-defining features of the home include: red clay tile roofs, balconies, smooth stucco exterior walls painted white, arched openings, thick wall dimensions, colorful tile work, ornamental vents and grille work at windows and doors, mission-form parapets at exterior walls, and a courtyard and outdoor areas that provide an extension of living space. The Spanish Revival aesthetic is a direct extension of Spanish Colonialism and the Mission system developed in present-day Florida and the southwestern United States from 1565 through the 1830s, including the Mission San Diego de Alcalá.

Buildings constructed for the Panama-California Exposition held in San Diego's Balboa Park in 1915 were entrenched in the aesthetic precedents observed in the Iberian Peninsula, the Spanish Revival style and related California Mission and Mediterranean Revival styles. They blended the architecture of the Mediterranean, Italian, Spanish and Moorish traditions with the architecture of early settlement patterns in California and other southwestern states as well as Florida; all regions where Spanish Colonial building occurred. These revival styles, embodied in the buildings constructed as part of San Diego's 1915 Panama-California Exposition, sought to convey the feelings and associations of the era of California's early Spanish settlement by utilizing Spanish and Mexican forms and decorative motifs, and became known as the Spanish Revival style of architecture. ▲



To ensure your membership is current: please look at your mailing label on this newsletter. On it you will find the renewal date of your membership. Note: if the date is June 2017 or later, your dues are paid in full. Thank you! Annual membership is just \$18 (2 years - \$36; 3 years -\$54). You may renew online at our secure website www.gmia.net or mail your payment to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751. Note: if the date is June 2017 or later, your dues are paid in full, but you are welcome to renew in advance.



Garden Tour Volunteers Needed

Would you like to help GMIA on the day of our Art & Garden Tour? We are in need of a limited number of additional volunteers to help with guest check in, traffic control, and garden monitors. Our garden tour volunteers typically work a 2.5 hour shift and are invited to our special Pre-Event Tour and Reception held one day earlier on May 6th so that they may enjoy the participating gardens. If you can lend a hand, please contact Sue Creveling, Volunteer Coordinator, at 619-971-2712 or screv@yahoo.com. 🌱

CALENDAR

