

A Community Newsletter

from the
**Grossmont –
Mt. Helix
Improvement
Association**



viewpoints

March 2003

Volume 33, Issue 4



In This Issue:

PLANNING & LAND USE...

See page 3

- The new Kaiser Medical Facility at Fury & Avocado is almost ready
- Do you care who's elected to the Valle de Oro Community Planning Group?

TRAFFIC...See page 7

- A community group seeks to "calm" traffic
- Stop Lights, Stop Signs: where they are (and aren't)

CODE ENFORCEMENT...

See page 9

- The house on Fuerte Dr.: Hopeful resolution for this complicated issue!
- The appearance of the Casa de Oro area

IN & AROUND OUR COMMUNITY...See page 2

- New retirement community now in business
- Developer purchasing the chicken ranch
- Special Guest Speaker for the GMIA Annual Meeting
- A new Starbucks!
- Of major concern: crime is up in our community!
- Can we confirm that Fuerte Drive is beautiful?

Density

LAND USE

**San Diego County
Board of Supervisors**

**San Diego County
Planning Commission**

ZONING

**San Diego County
General Plan 2020**

**Valle de Oro Community
Planning Group**

PLANNING

What Do The Above Words Mean to You?

Do you keep up with the Planning and Land Use process that goes on in unincorporated San Diego County? Do you realize that the continued quality of community life we experience is highly dependent on that Planning and Land Use process? For example, the San Diego County Government is currently updating the County General Plan—the master planning document that is the baseline for all land use in the unincorporated areas of San Diego County.

Did you know that the update project called GP2020 forecasts the approved definition of parameters, requirements, and numerical constraints/allocations for elements of our rural and urbanized communities, such as development, preservation, density, and infrastructure?

Have you had, or do you have, any input to the process from which GP2020 update is evolving? Do you know what provisions are contained in GP2020 for that vacant lot or vacant parcel in your part of our GMIA community? If you had the opportunity to tell the County Government what you think the requirements should be in GP2020 for our GMIA community, what would be your input? Do you know who does make official input to the GP2020 update?

If you feel a little uncertain regarding your knowledge about Planning & Land Use and your ability to answer some of these questions, we strongly encourage you to read the article on Planning & Land Use under the "Do You Know About ...?" section of this newsletter starting on page 3. ■

GROSSMONT - MT. HELIX



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A Letter from the President

I hope life is going well for all GMIA members and their families as well as for all GMIA community residents. It is hard to believe that another calendar year has rolled off the books and into history, and here we are well into its successor, 2003. There are many issues and topics covered in this issue of our GMIA newsletter, and we hope it proves to be both interesting and informative to all our members and readers. Not the least is the important topic of planning and land use, probably one of the most critical parameters in the preservation of our quality of life as residents in the GMIA community. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to read the special section "Do You Know About . . ." which addresses the planning and land use process in this issue of our newsletter. I hope reading this article motivates our members to become more cognizant and even proactive regarding the planning and land use process that critically impacts and affects our GMIA community, hopefully to the extent that you will become involved to some degree.

Planning and land use is one of those things sort of like the Balance of Payments at the national level – someone has to worry about it, and if you don't, someone else will, and you may not end up liking the results!

You will also find an extra amount of information regarding several community projects that are asking for volunteers to help – the mHANDS traffic calming group, the Highway 94 Landscaping Project, the Fuerte Scenic Highway Project, as well as the Casa de Oro Business Association, are all seeking additional volunteers. Don't wait to be asked; jump in and volunteer! The success of many, many projects in our community is critically dependent on the efforts of the volunteer services of community members. Until we find that elusive band of good fairies who are assigned the task of accomplishing all of our community projects, we will still have to depend on the efforts of our community volunteers – how about you being one of them? ■

Happenings...In and Around Our Community

Starbucks Is Coming To Casa De Oro!

The construction and refurbishment you see going on at the commercial unit in the strip mall east of the Blockbuster store, is the makings of a soon-to-be Starbucks coffee shop—a much welcome addition to the area in the perception of many of our coffee aficionado community members. Yea!



New Retirement Community Now In Business

If you haven't noticed, there is a brand new retirement community in the Rancho San Diego area. This new facility, La Vida Real, appears to be a cut well above the average for this type facility. Located at 22588 Via Rancho San Diego, just across from the new library,



Do You Know About...?

Another in a series of educational articles for our members

The Planning & Land Use Process

Many GMIA members and community residents are aware of the continuous planning and land use process going on for the entire San Diego County, including the large unincorporated GMIA membership area. However, the details of this process, the decisions made, and the impacts on our GMIA and surrounding communities are perhaps not always clearly understood by many of our members and community residents.

As often cited in previous issues of this newsletter, the interests of our GMIA community in the planning and land use process are vested in the elected members of the Valle de Oro Community Planning Group (VDO). That local planning group represents about 40,000 people in the eastern unincorporated part of the County, including those of us who reside in the GMIA membership area. Obviously, one of the most important aspects of the current planning and land use process is how and for what the remaining vacant land in the VDO planning area is going to be used. In the GMIA membership boundary area, there is really only one large parcel of land remaining for development. That parcel, located at the intersection of Fuerte Drive and Damon Lane, is commonly referred to as the “chicken ranch” since a large chicken ranch has been operated on the land. It is planned for agriculture and one dwelling unit per 2 acres for estate type residences on current County land use maps. It is now surrounded by prime developed residential properties, and this large undeveloped parcel approximating 25+

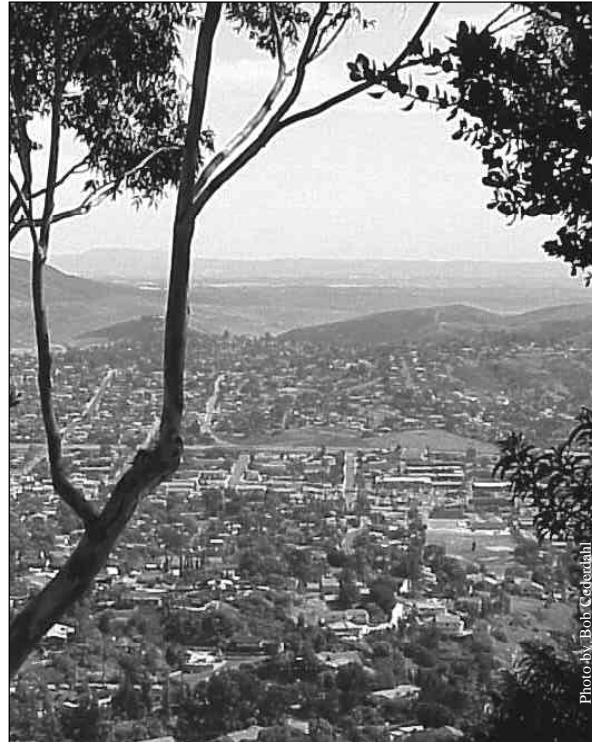


Photo by Bob Cepeda

acres is in the process of being purchased by a developer, Reynolds Communities. It is anticipated that residential development will soon be proposed for this land. Your VDO planning group and GMIA will be watching any land use proposal for this undeveloped parcel with keen interest.

General Plan 2020

Future land use is now being considered County-wide in what is known as General Plan 2020 (GP2020). This draft document now prescribes a plan for land use through the year 2020 in terms of commercial, residential with density factors, and green space/preserve areas. Most community residents have heard the term “Smart Growth,” which in current vernacular means the same as density (or “intensity” in professional planning terminology). Translated to

current practice and land use planning philosophy, Smart Growth primarily means higher density (more dwellings per acre) in existing urban and suburban communities: increased density for undeveloped residential parcels, and retroactive “upzoning” for already developed parcels (to allow more dwellings than currently exist on developed parcels). In the overall land use planning for San Diego County, there is a somewhat anomalous position being taken in that in the completely rural outlying areas, many large parcels are being subjected to retroactive “downzoning” (for example, a 40 acre parcel previously designated for 1 dwelling per 4 acres, may now be downzoned to 1 dwelling per 40 acres); this philosophy is understandably causing much

consternation to land owners who have been holding large parcels of land for many years in anticipation of future development.

Some sections of our GMIA community and the greater VDO area of responsibility, have long been developed, some even before current zoning ordinances were enacted. Some of the Casa de Oro area falls into that category. When something has been developed before a new zoning ordinance is enacted, that building or facility is allowed to remain in use as originally developed (referred to as being “grandfathered in”), and retroactive zoning restrictions are not applied. This means that a commercial building or lot in Casa de Oro that was grandfathered in or permitted under early zoning requirements is allowed continued use, as long as the use purpose is not changed (but a

PLANNING, continued from page 3

commercial building or lot is allowed a change in tenants as long as the general commercial use is not changed - i.e., a used car lot can be established in place of a former plumbing shop). There is not much the VDO, GMIA or the County can do to alter this type situation, unless changes are proposed that require building permits. In Casa de Oro, building permits trigger Community Site Plan Review.

VDO Reviews the Plan

A major review of all land in the unincorporated portions of San Diego County is in process, with the objective of updating the County General Plan. Each local planning group has reviewed the section of GP2020 for its planning area, and made advisory recommendations regarding the plan for its local area. VDO has completed this task and provided input to the San Diego County Planning Commission. VDO has taken the position that the existing General Plan reflects the desired and appropriate planning and land use for the VDO planning area, and should not be changed. Since GMIA has a highly vested interest in the planning structure of the VDO section of GP2020, your GMIA Board of Directors stays in tune with the content of GP2020 for the VDO and surrounding planning areas. To that end, at the most recent Hearing before the County Planning Commission at which the various local planning groups made their presentations regarding recommendations for changes or status quo for GP2020, a GMIA position statement was made to the County Planning Commission endorsing the VDO recommendation that the VDO section of GP2020 should not be changed. The GMIA endorsement was stated as follows:

1. *The Grossmont-Mt. Helix area is a combination of highly urban development adjacent to semi-rural and estate residential areas.*

2. *We estimate that it is 98% built-out and our members are pleased with the quality of life it provides.*
3. *There are exceptions:*
 - a. *Traffic on our thoroughfares such as Avocado Boulevard and Fuerte Drive is congested to the point of being dangerous for our residents.*
 - b. *The urban area of Casa de Oro has no developed parks to serve the many apartment complexes there.*
 - c. *Crime appears to be on the increase.*
4. *All indications are that build-out of our area and surrounding communities has pushed our County infrastructure and services to their extreme limits.*

5. *Because our roads and County services are highly stressed, no increases in development intensity should be added to our Mt. Helix/Casa de Oro area in this GP 2020 process.*
6. *We understand that the Valle de Oro Community Plan map meets that standard and we recommend that it be approved without allowing increases in development intensity.*

Your GMIA Board encourages all GMIA members to take a more focused interest in the planning and land use process that is so vital to the preservation of the quality of life we enjoy and desire to continue for our community. Keep in mind this is not about being “anti-business”, particularly anti-building and construction industry. Most of us who reside in our wonderful GMIA community obviously own a business or work for a business as a means of livelihood. In fact there are numerous owners of building contractor and subcontractor firms residing in our community.

However, the majority of our community members, including most of the owners of building industry firms, want to preserve the premium nature of our GMIA residential community, and not have our way of life impacted by unwarranted high-density residential development. Such previous proposals as that for 650 apartment type dwelling units on 40+ acres of vacant land right in the middle of prime residential properties is something none of us want to see.

Therefore, we urge you to be proactive and keep up with the various issues involved in the final development of our community area, and be supportive of the VDO and urge them to continue the fine accomplishments they have made on behalf of our community to date. (Readers are also encouraged to read the separate article in this issue about VDO recent elections). ■

The Valle de Oro Community Planning Area encompasses approximately nineteen square miles of the unincorporated portion of the County of San Diego. The Planning Area is located to the south of the City of El Cajon and to the east of the city of La Mesa. Several neighborhoods are located within Valle de Oro. Those include: Casa de Oro, Mount Helix, Vista Grande Hills and Rancho San Diego.

-Valle de Oro Community Plan,
San Diego County General Plan
adopted August 25, 1977
and amended March 6, 1996

Mt. Helix Park

New Anti-Parking Barrier. If you haven't trekked up to the Park recently, you haven't noticed the latest addition: installation of a post and chain anti-parking barrier along both sides of the southwest part of the road around the Park. Although it may strike some community members as less than attractive, this installation was recommended by law enforcement agencies, and installed by the County. It was designed and implemented as a major attempt to thwart the illegal parking along the historic wall with attendant illegal drinking and drug use. If it does the job and illegal parking becomes a non-issue, this installation will be removed.

Plans To Improve And Beautify The Lower Parking Lot. The Mt. Helix Park Foundation has just announced a new project to improve and beautify the lower parking lot for attendees to events at Mt. Helix Park. This large parking area, 3+ acres, was included in the private Yawkey Trust that established the Park for public use and enjoyment in 1929. The original 3+ acre integral parcel was unfortunately cut up into 3 segments by the County when they re-routed County roads through the private parcel. The small dirt lot on the north side of Vivera and the area south of Pin-



nacle Lane, are all part of the original parcel. The fire station was sited by the County on the largest segment. The Foundation has now implemented a project to smooth out and improve all 3 segments of the parking lot, including new landscaping and irrigation systems, as well as an attractive rail fence to delineate the property boundaries. Since this parcel is located in one of our prime residential areas, community members are encouraged to volunteer to help with this project. The Foundation can be contacted by email through the website, or by calling (619) 588-0491.

There Is A New Expanded Website For The Park! A much needed and very complete website has now been designed and implemented for Mt. Helix Park and the Mt. Helix Park Founda-

tion. This new website now contains descriptions, history, and the necessary application process for use of the Park. It contains a lot of good pictures – even one showing the first wedding performed at the Park in 1926 that united Ruth and Milt Jackson in marriage. We encourage you to go the website and browse through the whole thing – should prove highly enjoyable and informative. The website address is www.mthelixpark.org.

The Park Is Closed To The Public At Night. In view of the heightened security climate throughout the U.S. and in recognition that vandalism, crime, and drug dealing are still problems at the Park after the gates are closed ½ hour after sunset each day, and in cooperation with law enforcement agencies, the Foundation has confirmed the policy that the Park is closed to the public at night after the gates are locked. This applies to pedestrian as well as vehicle traffic and extends from when the gates are locked at night until they are opened in the morning ½ hour before sunrise. This policy is now being enforced by both the CHP and the Sheriff's Department. Permitted use of the Park at night for authorized events is still allowed by application to the Foundation. ■

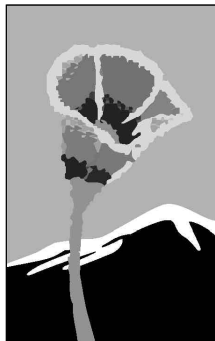
Helpful Telephone Numbers	County of San Diego	City of La Mesa	City of El Cajon
ROADS Resurfacing, closures, potholes, etc.	Department of Public Works 1-877-684-8000 or www.co.san-diego.ca.us Dept. of Public Works section online road service request	619-667-1450	619-441-1658
LAND USE Zoning violations and other illegal land use	Code Enforcement 619-441-4264	Code Enforcement 619-667-1177	Code Enforcement 619-441-1716
LAW ENFORCEMENT	911 if Emergency or Sheriff Dept. (Lemon Grove) 619-337-2000	911 if Emergency or La Mesa Police Department 619-667-1400	911 if Emergency or El Cajon Police 619-579-3311
ANIMAL SITUATIONS Animal Control	619-236-2341	619-667-1436	619-441-1580
HAZARDOUS MATERIAL DISPOSAL	877-713-2784 for guidance & information 619-596-5100 to make an appt. for disposal	619-287-5696 to make an appt. for disposal	619-596-5100 to make an appt. for disposal
GENERAL INFORMATION For categories not listed above	858-694-3900	619-436-6611	619-441-1776

HAPPENINGS, continued from page 2

La Vida Real appears to be a very nice and attractive addition to our community.

Can We Confirm That Fuerte Drive Is Beautiful?

Most of us who drive along Fuerte Drive recognize that it is a very beautiful roadway. Despite the heavy traffic currently experienced on this community



roadway, we still see beauty along this traffic corridor. That being the case, please be aware that there is a movement underway to have Fuerte Drive designated as a "Scenic Highway". There appears to be justification for, and benefits to be derived from, this objective.

If you are interested in more information on this movement, please contact community member Mary Sweeney: email her at mymthelixhome@hotmail.com, or call her at (619) 593-1721. You can also find more information on the Scenic Highway Program by checking the

following website: www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/scenic_hwy.htm.

The Chicken Ranch Is Being Purchased By A Developer!

Already noted elsewhere in this issue, the last large (approximating 25+ acres) vacant parcel in our GMIA membership area (at the intersection of Fuerte Drive and Damon Lane) has now been sold to a developer, Reynolds Communities. Many of our community members are already watching for the next move on this property with keen interest. We encourage all GMIA members to stay tuned in to happenings with this property, since it is located in one of our prime residential areas.

Of Major Concern: Crime Is Up In Our Community!

Although not widely publicized in the print or TV media, there has been an alarming and unfortunate increase in the amount of crime experienced in our community. Almost unheard of a decade ago, there have been multiple reports of break-ins and forced entries in our GMIA community. GMIA members and all community residents should be aware of this trend and take precautions accordingly. Your GMIA Board is working with law enforcement officials to quantify this issue, and will give you a more extensive report in the next issue of our newsletter. In the meantime,

ensure that all doors and windows are locked when you leave your house, and avoid situations that afford "crimes of opportunity", such as leaving your garage door in the open position.

Need Information About GMIA?

Although we have an ample supply of beautiful brochures, and stacks of application form/remittance envelopes for use in mailings to new homeowners or in response to inquiries about our GMIA organization, most of our members do not retain such material. Such material is available to all members at our Annual Dinner Meeting, but still many of you end up without hardcopy information to pass along to friends and neighbors in your discussions with them about GMIA.

Do not fear- help is now available! Your GMIA has a permanent website on which is posted all the information one needs to know to fully understand the purposes and goals of GMIA, including a membership application form. This website also contains the latest issues of the GMIA newsletter. So, members never need be at loss for a source of information regarding our GMIA organization – just refer interested friends and neighbors to our website: www.gmia.net. ■

**Special Speaker for the GMIA Annual Meeting**

As everyone knows, at our Annual Dinner Meeting we take an appropriate amount of time to cover what has been going on in our GMIA community as well as the overall progress and financial status of our GMIA organization. Then we traditionally cap the evening with a special guest speaker addressing a subject of interest to our membership. To that end, we want to advise you that we will be honored to present...

DR. RICHARD LEDERER

as our guest speaker at this year's Annual Dinner Meeting on May 12. If you have never had the pleasure of hearing him speak you are in for a treat! Richard Lederer is the author of more than 3,000 books and articles about language and humor, including his best selling *Anguished English* series. Dr. Lederer's syndicated column, "Looking at Language," appears in newspapers and magazines throughout the United States. He has been elected International Punster of the Year and been profiled in magazines

as diverse as *The New Yorker*, *People*, and the *National Enquirer*. He is language columnist for *The Toastmaster*, *Pages*, and the *Farmers' Almanac* and co-hosts a weekly one-hour radio show, "A Way With Words," on KPBS public radio.

Don't miss the next GMIA Annual Dinner Meeting on May 12, 2003! Mark your calendar now for this important community event (a separate announcement will come to you in the mail in the next few weeks). ■

Traffic in Our Community



Community Group Seeks Ways To Calm Traffic On Our Community Roadways

A group of community members have formed an ad hoc association with the objective of working to find ways and influence government entities to “calm” the traffic on our community roadways. Initially focused in the area of Calavo and Fuerte Drives, residents have formed a community group known as “mHANDS” (Mt. Helix Associated Neighbors Developing Safe Streets). This active group has several objectives, including informing other community residents and soliciting their support in trying to reduce traffic speed and congestion, particularly at dangerous locations such as Calavo and Fuerte.

Hazardous traffic conditions are caused by the current inordinate amount of traffic being experienced on our community roadways. The efforts of the mHANDS community group are articulated in phrases such as “Mt. Helix residents banding together to take back their streets from speeding motorists.” They are working with your GMIA Board of Directors, the VDO Community Planning Group, the CHP, and other formal entities to achieve their objectives. They are indeed working on a serious community issue, and all GMIA members and community residents are encouraged to support their efforts.

There appears to be much substance in the efforts of mHANDS. They have already achieved significant accomplishments, including the closure of the Avocado access onto Calavo Drive, installation of “candlestick” markers at intersections, raising the awareness level of many community residents, and hosting meetings to discuss specific issues. If you desire more information on the mHANDS association, and/or would like to join with them in working to accomplish their objectives, please call Diane Bernal at 619-442-4815 or Donna LaFreniere at 619-749-4211.

Stop Signs and Stop Lights: A Way Of Life!

The increased traffic on our community roadways has been radically significant in the last decade. As oft reported and confirmed in this newsletter, most of the extra traffic is the result of accelerated build out of East County without parallel or advance establishment of the required traffic flow infrastructure. The missing 94/125 transition ramps are a prime example of traffic infrastructure deficiencies. Thus, commuter traffic from the newer East County commercial and residential developments seek access to and from SR94 and I8 using our community roadways, including but not limited to Fuerte Drive.

New traffic control stop signs and stop lights are on the increase. As traffic has continued to increase and be constituted by a significant number of “commuters” using our community roadways for transit only, this has resulted in an increasing number of unsafe intersection situations. The stop light at Fuerte and Grandview was considered necessary and installed several years ago, as was the stop light at Fury and Avocado. With the development of the new Kaiser Medical Facility at Fuerte and Avocado, there will not be a new stop light at Avocado and Louisa, but there will be a center “pocket” turn lane into the Kaiser parking lot entry/exit (opposite Louisa Ave.). A new U-Turn capability will also be installed for northbound traffic at the stop light for Fury and Avocado. Additionally, a stop light at Challenge and Avocado has been placed on the County’s priority list.

Many of the intersections of our once casual traffic roadways have already been fitted with All-Way stop signs: Calavo and Challenge, Nabal and Challenge, Resmar Road and Resmar Way, etc. It appears there may be a need for more such All-Way stop signs at other once-sleepy community intersections. The latest proposal comes from the residents around the intersection of Grandview and Resmar Road. The traffic speed and accident rates at this intersection appear to warrant installation of an All-Way stop sign at this intersection. More requests are unfortunately in the cards. Many of us regret to see the proliferation of traffic control devices, but the safety of our community residents (and the public in general) drives this trend. ■

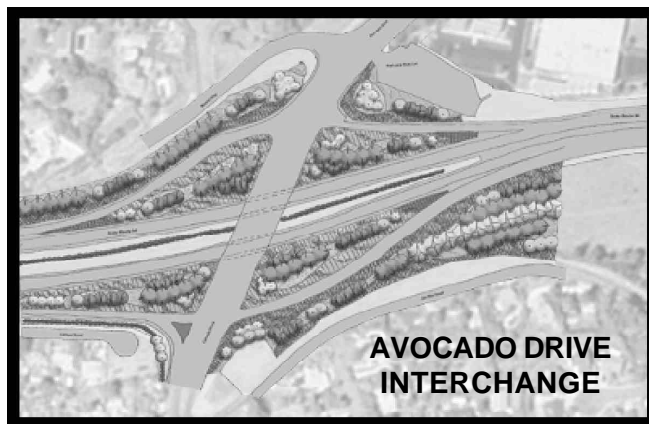


Let's All Pitch In to Beautify Highway 94 Right-of-Way!

The Highway 94 freeway, on the southern boundary of our GMIA membership area, is in reality the southern gateway to our community. To that end, all GMIA community residents should be interested and involved in the status and plans for this vital traffic infrastructure component.

As you drive the section of Highway 94 along the southern boundary of our community, it is obvious that this major roadway strikes one as appearing rather "barren" at this stage. This condition has not gone without notice by community members as well as government entities. Cognizance of the less-than-attractive appearance of Highway 94 in our area has finally resulted in a major project to improve the appearance of this traffic artery in our area.

The genesis of a project for landscaping the Highway 94 right-of-way in our area, was the focus provided by our County Supervisor Dianne Jacob. Recognizing that something needed to be done about the appearance of this highway right-of-way, Dianne encouraged community leaders and CALTRANS officials to form a committee to work on a new Highway 94 Landscaping Project. This resulted in



the formation of an ad hoc committee composed of: Dianne and her staff; representatives from GMIA, the VDO and Spring Valley Planning Groups, and CALTRANS; and several community volunteers. This ad hoc committee has been at work several months, including the conduct of several public forums to present progress reports and gain input from other

community members. The Committee's efforts have resulted in a tentative landscape plan for the Highway 94 right-of-way area basically from just west of Kenwood Drive to the area just east of Avocado Boulevard.



The ad hoc Highway 94 Landscaping Project Committee has made it very clear that all interested community members are welcome to help on this project. If you are interested in working on this community project, there is still ample opportunity to help in the planning stage, and much VOLUNTEER help will be needed when the project starts

Landscape Architect Maps of the Proposed Improvements

the implementation stage. To volunteer, or get more information about this project, please call Ginny March at (619) 469-8465. Don't be left out – get involved in this vital community project now! ■

Code Enforcement

Issues With A Residential Property On Fuerte Drive

By now many of us in the Grossmont – Mt. Helix area have either heard about or read the November Union Tribune article regarding the problems that neighbors have experienced with the many obvious code violations (multiple tenants) and disturbances that have been associated with the residence at 10270 Fuerte Drive. The problems with this property have been numerous. They have included a significant number of excess noise and disturbance complaints, building code violations/citations, and law enforcement actions. Area neighbors have responded with a barrage of complaints to County Code Enforcement, State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, Sheriff's Department and County Supervisor Dianne Jacob.

The difficulties in finding solutions to the problems associated with this residence have been three fold: (1) how to restore peace in a neighborhood without violating the rights of those

who are viewed as part of the problem; (2) the authority limitations of the respective County and State agencies; and (3) the general lack of coordination among the various agencies.

Fortunately for community residents and the public in general, on January 10, 2003, Supervisor Dianne Jacob was able to bring together all of the appropriate County agencies and neighborhood representatives to discuss the problems associated with this residence and plan a coordinated course of action to help solve them. As a result of this meeting, a primary course of action was designed and implemented. As it turns out, this residential property is still titled in the names of a deceased couple for whom no Probate action had ever been initiated by the heirs for almost two years. To overcome this situation the County stepped forward and presented a plan whereby the County Public Administrator's office would file a request to the San Diego

Probate Court to be appointed the Executor of the Estate. That request was heard before the Probate Court on February 10 and approved. The plan now is for the Public Administrator, acting as the Executor of the Estate, to remove the multiple tenants from the residence, sell the house, and distribute the proceeds to the heirs after all claims and fines have been paid. Unless the Probate Court Ruling is appealed, this should be the end to this serious problem in our residential community.

Neighborhood problems such as this typically emerge over time, they usually never get better on their own, and they require time and energy to resolve. The important lessons for us to learn from this situation are that to resolve such problems we must be willing to speak out, become involved and not give up until we have a resolution – the property owners who have worked hard and persevered to resolve this situation are good community role models for us all.

Perceived Appearance of the Casa De Oro Area

From time to time members of your GMIA Board hear various complaints about the perceived less-than-attractive appearance of the general Casa de Oro area. The nature of the comments and complaints vary, but one oft cited theme alludes to the many used car lots in Casa de Oro. Quite often criticism is aimed at GMIA and our local VDO planning group for their apparent inattention and inaction to this perceived problem.

In objectively analyzing this situation, one must recognize the nature of our County zoning ordinances and/or the lack of applicability thereof. At the risk of being redundant to the information contained in another article in this newsletter, the following conditions and understandings must be part of any analysis of the Casa de Oro situation:

- Some sections of our GMIA community and the greater VDO

area of responsibility have been developed before current zoning ordinances were enacted. Several areas of Casa de Oro fall into that category.

- When something has been developed before a new zoning ordinance is enacted, that building or facility is allowed to remain in use as originally developed (referred to as being "grandfathered in"), and retroactive zoning restrictions are not applied. One can observe many examples of this situation in our community.
- Any commercial building or lot in Casa de Oro that was grandfathered in or permitted under early zoning requirements is allowed continued use, as long as the use purpose is not changed (but a commercial building or lot is allowed a change in tenants as long as the general commercial use is not changed —

i.e., a used car lot can be established in place of a former plumbing shop). There is not much the VDO, GMIA or the County can do to alter this type situation, unless building permits are required.

Having said all of that, we urge all GMIA members to be very watchful and report any perceived zoning code violations. Your GMIA Board itself is still pursuing proper code enforcement regarding the former fire station property in Casa de Oro, but that situation has thus far proved to be quite a challenge and the desired level of success not yet achieved. If you have any ideas or would like to help in some type improvement program for the Casa de Oro area, we recommend that you contact Gloria Goodman, President of the Casa de Oro Business Association, at phone number (619) 469-9276, and offer your help. ■

Planning & Land Use



The New Kaiser Permanente Medical Clinic

As you have noticed, the Kaiser Permanente Clinic at the corner of Fury Lane and Avocado Boulevard is only a few months away from completion. It will house doctors' offices, a lab, and a pharmacy, and hopefully the positive addition of a new clinic in the community will outweigh the perceived traffic problems at that intersection. There was much discussion with neighbors

on Nabal and Louisa as well as the office of County Supervisor Dianne Jacob about the traffic tie-ups that could occur. After all the dust had settled, the Board of Supervisors allowed Kaiser full access with the addition of a left turn pocket into the facility from southbound Avocado and a U-Turn pocket from northbound to southbound Avocado at the Fury intersection. There also will be a traffic

warning light on southbound Avocado near Nabal. All of this is with the understanding that the traffic situation will be monitored for six months after the facility opens and, if need be, changes will be made at that time.

Additionally, a traffic signal at Challenge has been placed on the County's priority list and Kaiser has contributed \$9,500 toward its cost.

New Cellular Antenna Facility Ordinance

The County is currently working toward the implementation of a new amendment to the Zoning Ordinance relating to wireless telecommunications facilities, more commonly referred to as cellular antenna facilities. The County Planning Commission has already held several hearings on this amendment, and it is now being prepared for County Board of Supervisors review, hearing and approval.

The stated purpose of this amendment is to provide incentives to

place cellular antenna facilities in commercial and industrial zones and to allow the telecommunications industry a faster and more clearly defined process for obtaining permitting approval for their desired installations. However, as good as this might sound, the proposed permitting approval process also makes it easier to locate cellular antenna facilities in residential neighborhoods. Some of the issues of concern regarding this amendment relate to:

- ◆ Impacts on surrounding property values
- ◆ Increases in visual blight
- ◆ Electromagnetic radiation risks
- ◆ Size of above ground support equipment
- ◆ By-right installation of equipment in roadside utility easements
- ◆ Limitations on property owners' rights of appeal

Although some of these issues are very controversial, there continues to be concerns regarding them among property owners. No one can say that our communities have not benefited to some degree as a result of the cellular telephone revolution, but this gain has not been without a price, all of which has yet to be tallied.

Continued next page

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Your GMIA Board of Directors currently believes that the best course of action for the residents of our community is to:

- ◆ Be alert to any cellular antenna sites that are proposed for your area.
- ◆ Become active in your neighborhood in expressing your views for or against such sites.
- ◆ Become participants in any project review actions at the local Planning Group level, as well as at County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors hearings.

It is currently too early to tell whether or not the ultimate provisions of this amendment will provide sufficient protection for property owners and support their right of appeal to the Board of Supervisors. However, regardless of its final provisions, as members of our community we must stay actively involved in issues such as this. If we fail to do so we will be placing the character of our community in the hands of those whose sole purpose is commercial enterprise, not community preservation.

Recent Elections For The Valle De Oro Planning Group: What Happened On The Way To The Election?

Now that the dust has settled on the results of the November 5, 2002 election, your GMIA Board believes that it is appropriate to provide our members with a perspective on GMIA's involvement.

First it is important to note that GMIA is a non-profit benefit corporation whose Articles of Incorporation define its purposes. These Articles charge GMIA with the responsibility to cooperate with any government agencies, private enterprise officials and/or public utility leaders whose activities have an impact on area

residents and property. They also direct GMIA to keep informed regarding matters affecting property rights and property owners and to communicate such information when appropriate to do so. As such, GMIA generates and distributes a periodic informational newsletter, announcements of various events and special notifications dealing with matters of community interest such as candidate endorsements and recommendations on important ballot issues.

For this election the only candidates that required GMIA review and endorsement were those involved with the Valle de Oro Community Planning Group (VDO). Thus, prior to the election, GMIA's Election Endorsement Committee sent informational questionnaires to each VDO candidate, evaluated all received responses and considered their qualifications and history of involvement in our community. Unfortunately, many of the candidates failed to respond and thus could not be considered. From those who chose to respond, GMIA selected what were believed to be the best candidates – those who had proven their support for our GMIA community and whose qualifications were appropriate for the office they were seeking. As has been done for many elections, GMIA then prepared and mailed a brief candidate endorsement list.

In a normal election, GMIA's activities would be limited simply to the mailing of the candidate endorsement information. However, this election was far from normal. A few weeks prior to the November 5 election an organization identified as "The East County Citizens for Responsible Planning Slate" put forth an entire replacement slate of candidates for the VDO election, none of whom had been endorsed by GMIA. As part of their campaign they committed thousands of dollars to carry out a complete takeover of the VDO election, including the hiring of a professional campaign consultant.

Unfortunately, much of the campaign material produced and distributed by this counter group was not a true representation of the issues or the activities of VDO and generated many concerns among our members. In particular some of our members questioned why so much money was being spent to takeover an election involving non-paid positions that have historically been filled by candidates who raise no election money. Some even wondered if this counter effort was motivated by special interests, whose long-term objectives were personal and not consistent with the best interests of our community. Others seemed inclined to believe the campaign material generated by the counter group, because they had nothing with which to compare it, and subsequently became concerned about GMIA's endorsements.

When GMIA became aware of this unprecedented situation, it was too late to publish any clarifying election information. Although some efforts were made to email as many members, neighbors and friends as possible to create an awareness of the truth of what was happening, this approach was not 100% successful.

The real point of this article is not to decry the details of an election that has already passed, but rather to inform our GMIA membership of the true situation behind the VDO election. Truth in political campaigns is sometimes our most illusive reality. However, without it there can be no integrity and confidence in what is being done by GMIA or any other organization who becomes involved in the election process. Your GMIA Board of Directors exists to serve the best interests of our organization's membership and continues to be committed to endorsing only candidates it truly believes will serve the best long-term interests of our community – this is what GMIA did in this election and will continue to do in future elections. ■



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Calendar of Events

2003	
Sunday, April 20, 6:30 a.m. Easter Sunrise Service Mt. Helix Park	Shuttle starts at 5:30 a.m. Pastries and beverages served starting 5:45 a.m. Sponsor: Foothills United Methodist Church
Sunday, May 4, Noon to 4 p.m. GMIA Annual Art & Garden Tour	A detailed announcement will be mailed to all GMIA members Sponsor: GMIA
Monday, May 12, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. GMIA Annual Dinner Meeting La Mesa Community Center	Sponsor: GMIA Dinner is served at 6:00 p.m. Reservation form will be mailed to all GMIA members
Sunday, December 14, 7 – 8:30 p.m. Annual "Caroling on Mt. Helix" Mt. Helix Park	Sponsor: Mt. Helix Park Foundation No Shuttle – walk up by candlelight starting at 6:45 p.m.
PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW FOR THESE IMPORTANT EVENTS!	