



viewpoints

Winter 2008

Volume 38 Issue 3



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Neighborhood Walk up the Mountain

Our first ever Neighborhood Walk to the Mt. Helix Nature Park was a tremendous success. Nearly 200 neighbors enjoyed a mid-morning stroll to the amphitheater where pastries, hot coffee and lively entertainment awaited. The Odyssey Guitar Duo from Grossmont College played while neighbors mingled and noshed. We also marveled at 9th grader Miles Ornish's demonstration of Extreme Unicycling. What a sight to see a unicyclist bounding down the steps of the amphitheater!

This awesome event was organized by board member and event planner extraordinaire Susan Nichols. Next time you see her, give her a "thumbs up" for a job well done. Many thanks also go out to the numerous GMIA neighbors who enthusiastically volunteered to hang 2500 door hangers to advertise both the walk and our organization, assist with parking, and help coordinate the event. Our hardworking community volunteers included Everett Fenex, Oksana Smith, Becky Koskinen, Doug Coffey, Lila Taylor, Dagmar Miller, Pam Hoy, Tony Gaipa, Dara Hembury, Carole Caparas, Sydney Harmon, Marty Ornish, students from Grossmont High School Interact Club, and students from Steele Canyon Key Club.

We are grateful to Starbucks Casa de Oro who donated delicious hot coffee and Vons Rancho San Diego for providing donuts and supplies. A special thanks to Souplantation in La Mesa for their generous donation of tasty muffins.

Many of you donated cash to help offset event expenses and for that, we heartily thank you! Although our refreshments and entertainment were donated, rental costs to utilize the amphitheater, provide a porta-potti, and advertise our event were a significant budget item for our small non-profit organization, so we appreciate your help with extra funding. ▲



GROSSMONT - MT. HELIX



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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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Allison Henderson

President's Corner

Community spirit was evident in the turnout for our first ever walk to the Nature Park on Mt Helix. This event was really about neighbors meeting other neighbors in our area's most distinctive venue. As you know, there is no "city hall" in Mt Helix which can make it hard to feel connected to a particular community. Our group has been in existence in the Grossmont and Mt. Helix area for 70 years now and we continually strive to find new ways to encourage a sense of community in our neighborhood.

While GMIA is your strongest advocate for maintaining our unique semi-rural neighborhood (see the article on the chicken ranch development), join us at events such as our annual dinner and garden tour wherein neighbors come together and socialize. Stay tuned for more info on our 70th Annual Dinner Meeting!

As you will read in this month's newsletter, there are many ways to get involved in your community. For example, the Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol is looking for more volunteers. Read about the incredible job they do and I guarantee you will be inspired to help them out. Also, after reading the article about the "triangle park" near the Brigantine, we encourage you to help maintain that small piece of beauty.

Whether GMIA is discussing the huge development at the old Hooper Chicken Ranch or the landscaping of the little triangle park, fighting to preserve the community character of our area is no small task. Believe it or not, developers and public officials need us to continually (and forcefully!) explain why our area should remain semi-rural, with large parcels and lots of space for animals and trees.

Please check our website in the near future for more information on the latest development issues facing our neighborhood. We will need EVERYONE to chime in to let the "powers that be" know how strongly we feel about maintaining our community's semi-rural neighborhood!

Thanks to the over 50 neighbors who recently joined GMIA and thanks to all of our members for your continued support! ▲

**Al Platt
Memorial Award
Call for Nominations!**

If you would like to nominate a GMIA member you feel is deserving of this award for exceptional volunteerism, please contact GMIA through the "Award Link" on our gmia.net website.

"Chicken Ranch" Project Rushed Forward by County Staff

As many of you already know, the chicken ranch is on 26.86 acres located on Fuerte Drive just east of Damon Lane. On the west side, lots average about .67 acres; and on the east and northeast, about 1.5 acres. Overall, this is truly our most rural area in Mt. Helix.

When the community plan for our area was adopted, GMIA and the Valle de Oro Planning Group insisted that these properties should remain rural and not be connected to the sewer. Even when Rancho San Diego was built, the Spring Valley Sewer District (SVSD) was stopped at the northern edge of the new development, and instructions that the sewer would not be extended farther were inserted into the community plan.

Now, this developer has attempted to sidestep our community plan by proposing to connect to the Otay Sewer District (on the southern boundary of the property where Otay has no other sewer lines) and then Otay will run a short line through the nature park and connect to the Spring Valley Sewer District at the end of Calle Albara in Rancho San Diego. This sleight of hand approach attempts to avoid the direct link with the SVSD and nullify the meaning of no SVSD north of Rancho San Diego. Only by linking to the sewer is this developer

able to increase the density on his property to allow lot sizes averaging .55-acre and propose 40 homes.

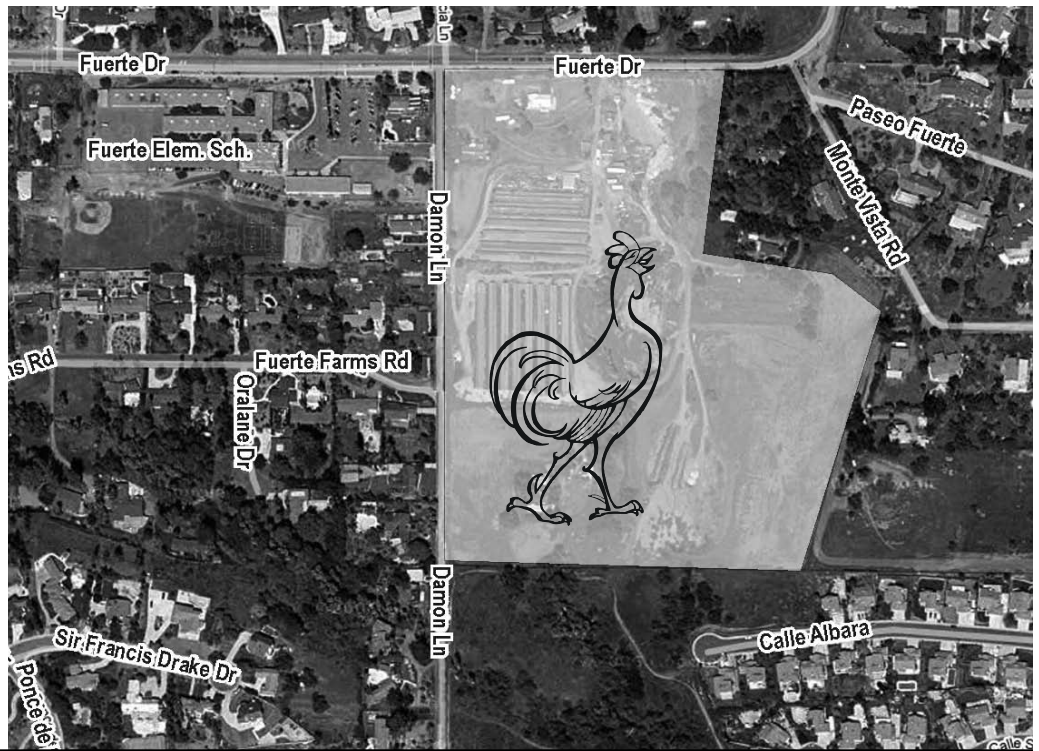
Knowing about the sewer connection issue, the school traffic chaos, and many additional problems, we question how county staff could go forward with a mitigated negative declaration for this project. The traffic problems and the destruction of our community character need to be addressed. By not requiring a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR), the county has allowed this developer to ignore the many problems that already exist and the many problems that will be exacerbated by his project. Paying fees to a governmental agency does not solve the problems in our neighborhoods nor does it guarantee that those fees will be used locally.

The planning group, after public hearings on this matter, identified ten elements of the environmental review that should be changed to "Potentially Significant Impact." Just the failure to accurately and truthfully address the nonconformance with Valle de Oro Community Plan goals and policies is sufficient rationale for requiring an Environmental Impact Report.

Without an EIR, the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, who must decide the fate of this project, will

See **RANCH** on page 4

...the proposed two dwelling units per acre density, and lot sizes smaller than the surrounding community, are not compatible with or an improvement to the rural estate character of the immediate residential neighborhood.



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not have sufficient information on alternative projects for this site. Such alternatives should be either “no project” or a project that does not require sewer extension into the site and is based on 1-acre-minimum net lot sizes compatible with the existing development to the east and northeast.

From closely examining the grading plans, both GMIA and the Planning Group discovered that in order to have all lots in this project drain to the new sewer system, a 16-foot high manufactured fill slope will be constructed at the southwest corner. This slope will tower over the entry to the Damon Lane Nature Park and existing residences facing onto Damon Lane. Also, the project’s lots bounding Damon Lane will not face the street, but turn their backsides to the existing community.

Rather than integrating the project into the Mt. Helix rural community this design turns itself inward with no possible assurances that future project homeowners will adequately maintain the appearance of the backside of their property (out-of-sight, out-of-mind).

This property has a creek/drainage area that traverses the property from north to south eventually feeding into the Nature Park. Because the project design places this sensitive wetland resource within the boundaries of individual lots, proper care and maintenance cannot be guaranteed, and it has been our experience in similar situations that the natural resources will eventually be destroyed by the various homeowners on whose property they exist. The proposed mitigations do not consider that this project design will not protect the resources from future degradation or destruction by individual property owners.

Our community plan includes the following goals:

- Preserve, maintain, and enhance distinct community identities within the Valle do Oro planning area by encouraging quality design and appropriate land use patterns.
- Allow only the construction of new units that are compatible with or an improvement to the immediate residential neighborhood character.

No matter what the developer says, the proposed 2-dwelling units per acre density, and lot sizes smaller than the surrounding community, are not compatible with or an improvement to the rural estate character of the

immediate residential neighborhood. This project site is the logical transition from .67-acre average, non-sewered rural lots, to the larger ranch-style properties. This is not the time to throw out the rural ambiance we have developed over many, many years just to help someone make a lot of extra bucks! We welcome newcomers to our community; but they just have to play by our long-established rules.

If you want to maintain the rural nature of our community, you must contact Supervisor Dianne Jacob to voice your concerns.

Supervisor Dianne Jacob
County Administration Center
1600 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92101.
Phone: 619-531-5522 • Fax: 619-696-7253

The official project designation is: GPA03-006, TM5343RPL3, R03-017, Fuerte Ranch Estates. ▲

Water Pressure Alert!

by Tim Carpenter

Like most people, you likely don’t realize that the water pressure inside your home could be dangerously high. The county supply can be as much as twice the safe level of 70-80PSI (pounds per square inch) that it should be inside your home. This is what causes ice-maker, dispenser, and water-treatment system lines to rupture. It even causes some types of toilet flush systems to start leaking. If you have not had your inside water pressure checked, you may be surprised!



Homes typically have a pressure-reduction valve (made of brass) on the outside line just at the point of entry. These devices will start failing to reduce pressure after 3-5 years. The rubber baffle inside weakens over time primarily from chlorine, much like the stopper in your toilet. If you’re handy with a pipe-wrench you can replace this easily yourself, or have your plumber do it.

The part is readily available at home-center or plumbing supply stores for about \$165. Imagine the cost of water repairs by procrastinating on this easy fix!

Grossmont Triangle Park

by Eli Schneider

As you may know, for years John Mead and others in the neighborhood have taken care of Grossmont Triangle Park. About one year ago, David and I took over the maintenance responsibilities to give John a needed rest in his "golden years."

We have given the triangle a facelift by putting in new grass, bark, rock border and painted the utility box. Several other changes were made but are not quite as noticeable. For example, we replaced two timers, two valves, reconfigured sprinkler lines and replaced sprinkler heads. We hope you have noticed and like the changes. We did a fair amount of the labor ourselves, but hired some help for the valve replacements, sprinkler lines and sod installation. The total cost for materials and labor was about \$1200, which we were happy to cover.

We then dropped flyers in the mailboxes on El Granito, Dillon Dr., Mesa Terrace, Mesa Vista Ave,

Mollywoods, Sierra Vista, Valle Vista, Wister Dr., Virginian Lane and Grossmont Drive requesting contributions to help with the water bill and maintenance. 39 generous neighbors made contributions which have been deposited in the Helix water account. In addition, 14 families agreed to volunteer their time to clean up the triangle by mowing and blowing.

If you have not already done so and are interested in contributing towards the maintenance, please make your check payable to the Helix Water District, and send it to our address below (or drop it in the box), and we'll take care of making sure it gets deposited in the correct account. If you are able to volunteer one or two times a year to help with the upkeep, please email Eli Schneider at ers@yslaw.com and you'll be put on the schedule/calendar.

Thanks so much for helping us keep the Grossmont Triangle looking great. ▲

Need advice to rid your garden of rabbits? Have skunks made your home their residence?

Want to provide a sanctuary for local bird life? For assistance and information to help with all these issues and more, contact our helpful local non-profit organization, Project Wildlife.

Project Wildlife's informative website (www.projectwildlife.org) is chockful of information. Rabbits eating your garden? Project Wildlife recommends fertilizing your garden with Blood Meal, a product found at garden centers and nurseries. (Apparently, it smells like predators to rabbits.) Has Fido had an unfortunate encounter with a skunk? Try the Project Wildlife skunk smell remedy: 1 quart 3% peroxide, ¼ cup of baking soda, and one tablespoon liquid hand soap; mix all three ingredients together and shampoo your dog thoroughly keeping the solution out of eyes, nose and mouth. Let the solution soak in for 5 minutes and rinse well. For other tips and to learn more about the critters that share our neighborhood, check out their website.



Who do you call when you find sick, injured or orphaned wildlife? The Project Wildlife Hotline at (619) 225-9202 is available round-the-clock. Detailed recorded information will be provided, and your call will be returned by an experienced volunteer. The volunteer will determine if the animal should be transported to one of their care centers located though out our county. Emergency first aid, long term treatment, and veterinary care are provided at the care centers. Each year Project Wildlife gives a second chance to over 11,000 wild creatures. All types of wild land animals and birds are rehabilitated and released back into their natural habitat.

We all take pleasure in our lush Grossmont-Mt. Helix landscape and the opportunity to live in harmony with native wildlife. Years of enjoyment will be yours when you incorporate simple ideas to live in balance with our furry and feathered friends. Thank you Project Wildlife for providing us with information and resources. ▲

Free Shade Trees

Saving energy's a breeze with free shade trees from the Cool Communities Shade Tree Program a partnership between SDG&E and the Center for Sustainable Energy. Qualified homeowners can receive a variety of free trees by filling out a form and attending a lecture given by a certified arborist.

Log on to the San Diego Regional Energy office (sdreo.org) and follow the Cool Communities Shade Tree program links or call the California Center for Sustainable Energy at 858-244-1177. ▲



| Helpful Telephone Numbers | County of San Diego | City of La Mesa | City of El Cajon |
|--|--|---|--|
| ROADS Resurfacing, closures, potholes, etc. | Department of Public Works 858-694-2212 or www.co.san-diego.ca.us Dept. of Public Works section online road service request | 619-667-1450 | 619-441-1658 |
| GRAFFITI REMOVAL | 858-467-4042 | | |
| JUNK & DEBRIS | 858-495-5143 | | |
| WEED ABATEMENT Fire Prevention Services | 619-562-1058 | | |
| LAND USE Zoning violations & 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's Dept (Lemon Grove) 619-337-2000 | 911 if Emergency or La Mesa Police Dept. 619-667-1400 | 911 if Emergency or El Cajon Police Dept. 619-579-3311 |
| ANIMAL SITUATIONS Animal Control | 619-236-2341 | 619-667-1436 | 619-441-1580 |
| HAZARDOUS MATERIAL DISPOSAL | 1-877-713-2784 for guidance and information 619-598-5100 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 |
| Useful Websites | San Diego County Government | | |
| www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/index.html | This site will give you information for planning and land use in the unincorporated county. Just click on the subject you want: Code/Zoning (for enforcement), Zoning Ordinance, etc. | | |
| www.sdcl.org | This site will give you information about our county libraries. | | |

To report a crime in progress, call 9-1-1.

R.S.V.P. is There For You!

Our Sheriff's Station in Lemon Grove wants you to know about the Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol or RSVP. This group of senior citizens is providing a vital service to our community by assisting the Sheriff's department with traffic control, crime prevention, parking enforcement, free vacation home checks, and of utmost importance, the "you are not alone" program (YANA).

Did you know that there are seniors in our neighborhood who are not only disabled and hence, homebound, but whose families have essentially abandoned them? Volunteers from RSVP make daily phone calls to ensure they are okay. If the senior doesn't answer, RSVP will go directly to the house to determine the status. Volunteers will also conduct personal weekly visits. During the recent holidays, over 40 gift baskets were delivered to seniors who were home alone. According to Rose Kurupas, the administrative sargeant for the Lemon Grove Sheriff Station, these holiday visits are incredibly emotional for both the volunteers and the homebound senior.



To participate in RSVP, volunteers must be 50 years of age or older, have a valid California driver's license and auto insurance, be subject to a thorough background investigation, and attend a formal training academy. The Lemon Grove station currently has 23 volunteers with the oldest being 90 years young! RSVP is looking for eager volunteers so please call (619) 337-2072 for more information.

The YANA program is operated by the Sheriff's department but receives funding from the Spring Valley Chamber of Commerce. To donate to this incredible cause, please make checks payable to the "YANA Program" and mail them to the Spring Valley Chamber

of Commerce, 3322 Sweetwater Springs Blvd., #202, Spring Valley, CA 91977-3142 or call the Chamber for more information at 670-9902.

To take advantage of the free vacation home check, the homeowner must go to the Lemon Grove station and fill out a form. The RSVP will then drive by the residence once a day and check to make sure doors and windows are secure. What a great program to help your peace of mind when you are away! ▲

Fire Safety and Prevention Event

Saturday, April 12th
at the firestation on Vivera

Co-sponsored by the San Miguel Fire Department and the Mt. Helix Park Foundation.

For more information, please visit the Park's website at

www.mthelixpark.org

Join GMIA and help strengthen your influence and keep in touch with current events and issues facing the association and the community. With your membership, you will receive a quarterly newsletter (*Viewpoints*) and notification of special member events.



Membership Application: \$15

I am making an additional donation of \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

I (We) would like to receive *Viewpoints* via email.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/ST/ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

Make check payable & mail to: Grossmont - Mt. Helix Improvement Association, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751



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About GMIA . . . and What We Do

The Grossmont- Mt. Helix Improvement Association (GMIA) is one of the oldest and largest association of its type in San Diego County. It was formed in 1938 as a result of community concern for the lack of adequate land use planning and zoning type requirements. It is a non-profit public benefit corporation that represents thousands of families residing in the large unincorporated area of the County that is east of Bancroft Drive, south of El Cajon, generally north of SR94 and Rancho San Diego, and west of SR54/Jamacha Rd. The GMIA area contains over 7,000 single-family residences with a population approximating 20,000 people.

The primary mission of GMIA is to work on behalf of all GMIA community members to ensure that the quality and character of our community is preserved and enhanced. Unlike a typical "homeowners association," GMIA does not own any property or facilities, nor is it responsible for any property maintenance. GMIA is served by an elected, unpaid Board of Directors and has no paid officers or employees. The GMIA Board works with County and regional governmental entities to help resolve issues that impact our community such as transportation systems, traffic control, planning and land use, zoning, code enforcement, as well as crime prevention and law enforcement.

GMIA invites and encourages all residents in our membership area to become active members and to support the efforts of the GMIA Board to preserve and enhance the character and lifestyle that are currently enjoyed in our wonderful community. For more information on GMIA, please visit our website at www.GMIA.net. ▲



Save the Date!

GMIA's annual garden tour takes place Sunday, May 4th and the annual dinner meeting is on Monday, May 12th. Check out www.gmia.net for more information as both dates approach.

Do you know of a Showcase Garden? If you or someone you know would like to showcase your garden on one of our annual garden tours, please email Susan Nichols, our Garden Tour Coordinator at lsnichols@cox.net. ▲