



# viewpoints

Summer – Fall 2009

Volume 40 Issue 1



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## Annual Dinner Meeting Recap

Our 71<sup>st</sup> annual dinner meeting was held May 11<sup>th</sup> at the La Mesa Community Center. The dinner, provided by Abbey Catering, was enjoyed by 116 members and guests. The theme this year was “Roads and Safety Throughout Mt. Helix” and a panel consisting of Supervisor Jacob, Capt. Chambers (Sheriff’s Dept.), Brian Pennings (CHP), and a representative from the Department of Public Works answered questions and gave summaries of the status of our roads, crime statistics for our area, and problems with enforcing the speed limits.

### Highlights included:

- The 94/125 interchange is at the top of SANDAG’s “to do” list. (The cost will be \$90-150 million and they now have only \$60 million.)
- The crime statistics in our area are down and a new Sheriff’s station in Rancho San Diego is in the planning stages.

See **MEETING** on page 5



Photos by Bob Cederdahl



## GROSSMONT - MT. HELIX



## IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Diane Bernal	Susan Nichols
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Allison Henderson	Jack Phillips
Rosemary Hewicker	Jeff Rule
Dagmar Miller	Oksana Smith
	Mike Valley

**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**

## Helix Water Rates Update

The Helix Water District proposed a five-tier pricing structure that would have resulted in unfair rate increases to large lot owners and most of us in the Grossmont/Mt Helix community. The proposed rate increases were touted to equal about 21 percent, but typical increases for our community would have approached 40 percent. The Board of GMIA was concerned about the unfair pricing and its potential impact to our community and therefore sponsored a public forum to address the proposed rate structure.

The May 14th forum was attended by Helix Water District Board Members Kathleen Hedberg and DeAna Verbeke, who represent our area, and by about 150 local residents. The representatives listened to our concerns and addressed numerous questions. Due to the efforts of the GMIA board and many of you, and with support from our representatives, the Water District elected to scrap the unfair five-tier pricing system and replace it with one that charges relatively equal rate increases to all users.

The newly proposed rate structure will be mailed by the Water District on or about June 26th with a public hearing set for August 19th. If passed, water bills in our area should increase by about 23 to 24 percent assuming no change in water usage. However, we are in the third year of a drought and GMIA strongly encourages everyone to practice water conservation and reduce your water consumption. ▲

## Alternative Plans for Fuerte Drive

A very high collision rate on Fuerte Drive between Calavo and LaRueda has prompted the County Department of Public Works (DPW) to develop proposals intended to improve traffic safety through this road segment. Three initial designs involving widening and realignment of Fuerte and the Fuerte/ Alzeda intersection have been found unacceptable by the local community and the Valle de Oro Planning Group.

DPW is now working on an alternative approach involving improved state-of-the-art warning signs and pavement markings and a minor realignment of the Alzeda intersection.

As soon as the plans for this new alternative are mailed to the local neighborhood community, the Valle de Oro Planning Group will conduct another public hearing on this issue. ▲

## GMIA Website Glitch

The contact form on our web site had an unexplained glitch in May and early June that prevented us from receiving your e-mail questions and comments. By the time you receive this Viewpoints, it should be back on line. Please resubmit your questions and comments and we'll get back to you ASAP. ▲

## Trees of Mt. Helix

### *Peppermint Tree, or Australian Willow Myrtle (Agonis flexuosa)*

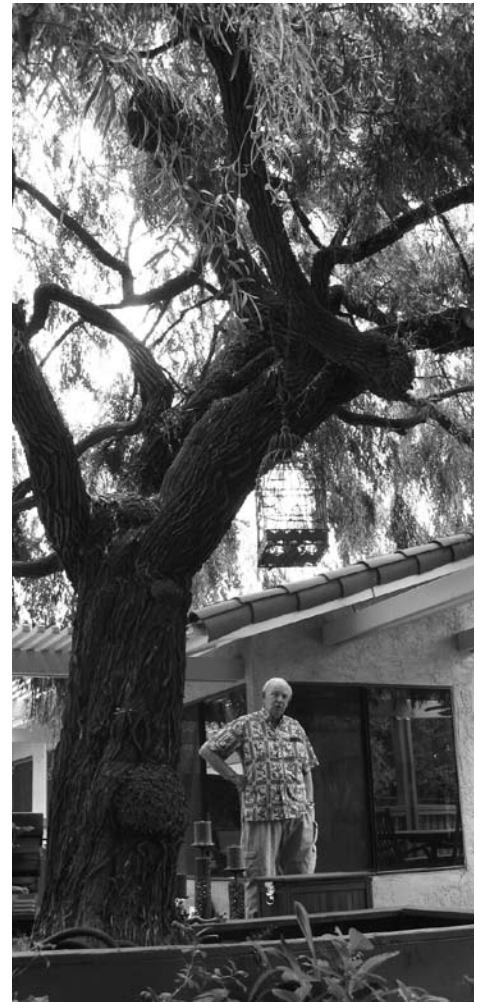
This is the first of a series of articles about interesting trees within the GMIA area. Members are encouraged to share their favorite or special tree with others through these articles.

The peppermint tree featured is located in the backyard of GMIA members, Ted and Judy Mackay. The tree was originally planted 30 years ago when the house was built. It was 6' high at the time it was planted, and 30 years later it has grown to a 35' tall by 35' wide graceful weeping shade tree. The narrow, willow-like leaves smell like peppermint when crushed, and small white flowers bloom on the tree in late spring. The leaf fronds canopy over the crown of the tree and have been trimmed to walk underneath. All the deadwood has been taken out of this space around the crown so that the filtered sunlight highlights the reddish-brown and deeply furrowed bark

of the branches. In turn the branches bend and curve into unique patterns. This scene is a focal view in the garden. The skirt of the canopy defines a patch of shadowed ground that includes parts of the patio, garden, and dining deck.

At night the Mackays also enjoy this scene using floodlights pointed into the crown. The scene is then available to outside or inside diners through their windows. The tree is within 15' of the pool and is not considered a messy tree, nor its roots invasive. The crown has been trimmed twice in 30 years. The peppermint tree will freeze at 25 degrees, so plant this tree out of low lying areas that experience freezing conditions.

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. ▲



## Grossmont - Mt. Helix Community Plant Exchange

Have extra plants that seeded themselves too freely? Would you like to add new and different plants to your garden without spending a cent? This fall, GMIA will host our first-ever Plant Exchange. Here's the idea: cultivate extra plants now to trade with neighbors. GMIA Boardmembers will bring a variety of their personal "overstock" to get things rolling. Our goal is to provide a no-cost way to beautify our community and bring neighbors together.

The Plant Exchange will be in the Fall. The date and location will be announced later. If you are interested in participating, would like to help or have any suggestions, please contact us at [info@gmia.net](mailto:info@gmia.net). ▲



Visit us at [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net)

## Chicken Ranch Update

The 40-unit project proposed for the chicken ranch property east of Fuerte Elementary School was finally heard by the Planning Commission on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. (This project was initially filed with the county in 2003.) After testimony from 24 residents, GMIA Board members, and the Valle de Oro Planning Group, the commissioners asked numerous questions of the developer and county staff and seemed genuinely concerned about the negative impacts and the basic incompatibility that this proposed project would bring to the surrounding neighborhood. The outcome was a 5-2 vote denying the project. However, the final decision will be up to the Board of Supervisors. That meeting is scheduled for July 22<sup>nd</sup>.

It is important to note that the applicant has requested that the July 22<sup>nd</sup> hearing be postponed to allow County staff and the County Planning Commission to evaluate modifications to the project which Reynolds Communities will propose.

This could benefit our community and the applicant if the modifications include a change to 1.0 dwelling per acre and a project that does not require extension of the public sewer into this area.

Contact Director Phillips at 619-670-0986 for the latest information. ▲

## New Fire District Tax Assessment

### *Exercise Your Right to Vote!*

In April, our Board of Directors joined with the Spring Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Casa de Oro Business Association in opposing the proposed new fire district tax assessment. The board felt that property owners should be provided the opposing arguments on this issue because none would be included with the mailed ballot. Whatever your personal choice, we encourage you to exercise your right to vote.



## Are You Safer "Hands-Free"?

An increasing number of states require drivers to use hands-free units while driving and talking on the phone. Additional states are establishing laws against talking on the phone at all.

Whatever the law, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) says the safest thing to do is to make your phone call upon arriving at your destination.

Early evidence of the dangers of hands-free phone use shows that just talking on the phone reduces activity in the part of the brain responsible for driving by 37 percent. Experts say this is even worse for teenagers, who at most focus 50 percent of their attention on the road.

*Based on a winter 2008 goodneighbor Magazine article sourced from IIHS and a study by Carnegie Mellon University. ▲*

## The "Coping" Diet

### Breakfast

- 1 grapefruit
- 1 slice whole wheat toast
- 1 cup skim milk

### Lunch

- 1 small portion lean, steamed chicken
- 1 cup spinach
- 1 cup herbal tea
- 3 Hershey's Kisses®

### Afternoon Snack

- The rest of the Hershey's Kisses® in the bag
- 1 tub of Haagen-Dazs® Ice Cream & Chocolate Chips

### Dinner

- 4 glasses of wine (red or white)
- 2 loaves of garlic bread
- 1 family size supreme pizza
- 3 Snickers® bars

### Late Night Snack

- 1 whole Sara Lee® Cheesecake

**Remember, stressed spelled backwards is desserts. ▲**

## Mt. Helix Park Foundation Fundraiser

A fundraising event, "The HeART of Mt. Helix," will be held Saturday, August 15th, at the Mt. Helix Park Amphitheatre from 5:30 to 10:00 p.m. The event features delectable cuisine, wine tasting and artisan beers, performing artists, as well as a silent and live auction to support the Park foundation.

As part of the program, GMIA is being honored as one of two Home Town Heroes.

If you wish to attend the event, please contact Tracey Stotz, Executive Director (619-588-4901) for more information. (Mt. Helix Park Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization.) ▲



**MEETING**, continued from page 1

- Fuerte Drive will not be widened or straightened; DPW will work with the community to find alternate methods to make it safer.
- If you witness egregious traffic violations please call the CHP dispatch at 858-637-3800. Describe the violation (time and location), have a description of the vehicle and the license number, and be willing to press charges. These violators will get a visit from an officer.

As part of the business meeting, six directors of the board were elected for a 3-year term: Brian Arnold, Diane Bernal, Allison Henderson, Vern Neff, Mark Schuppert, and Mike Valley.

Also, the annual Al Platt Award for outstanding community service was presented to John Mead, a former president of GMIA and a member of the organization for many years. ▲

### HELP INCREASE OUR MEMBERSHIP!

**Please use the convenient Membership Renewal envelope provided in this newsletter to renew your membership in GMIA today. Give the form below to area friends or neighbors who are not GMIA members. You can print additional forms from the GMIA website: [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net). THANK YOU!**

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



## 2009 ART & GARDEN TOUR

Each spring, GMIA members enjoy our inspirational Art & Garden Tour. The event is a wonderful way to view great design ideas and identify plants that adapt well to our local environmental conditions. We thank hosts Bryan & Jora Vess, Russell & Liz Vieira, Jackie & Michael Sciulli, and Sarah & Lee Rogers. These homeowners generously opened their gardens for over 500 GMIA members and their guests. A special thank you to Don Newcom, volunteer extraordinaire, for his help with this year's tour. Boardmember Jeff Rule curated our art, Boardmember Susan Nichols directed the tour, and Boardmember Allison Henderson assisted with set up/logistics on tour day.

Plans are already underway for next year's tour. As always, we welcome your volunteer participation. If you would like to help with the tour, have or know of an interesting garden, please contact us at [info@gmia.net](mailto:info@gmia.net). ■

Photos by Bob Cederdahl





Garden owners, l to r: Sarah & Lee Rogers, Jackie & Michael Sciulli, Jora & Bryan Vess, Liz & Russ Vieira



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## It's Membership Renewal Time!

Over the past 71 years, GMIA has been doing the many necessary things that have kept our community the rare jewel that it is. Without your help and membership, this organization would wither and its influence would become non-existent. If you have new

neighbors, please welcome them to the neighborhood and tell them about GMIA and what it has done and will do for our community. (A GMIA membership would make a nice housewarming gift.)

Check the address label for your "PAID TO" date. If you're in arrears, now is the time to pay up! (For tax time, just remember that GMIA is a 501.c.4 organization and your dues are not deductible.) ■

## About GMIA ...and What We Do

**T**he Grossmont- Mt. Helix Improvement Association (GMIA) is one of the oldest and largest associations 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](http://www.GMIA.net) ■