



# viewpoints

Winter 2011

Volume 41 Issue 3



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## Upcoming Art & Garden Tour

Sunday, May 15

Noon to 4 pm

## Cell Towers Proposed For Mt. Helix

The Mt. Helix Park Foundation is proposing to lease space on their three-acre eastern property (located below the entrance road) to Verizon and AT&T for placement of camouflaged cell towers. As of this writing, the first proposal was for placing twenty 6' x 1' panel antennas on a 37' tall faux eucalyptus tree and other antennas within a fiberglass boulder resembling existing boulders. The equipment cabinets would be housed in a rock building with a gable roof. Other alternatives, such as two lower trees and more faux boulders, are being considered.

According to the cell phone representative, these towers could replace some of the cell towers that have been proposed for power poles within the road right-of-way in many of our neighborhoods.

Given the height of the mountain, these cell sites could substantially increase coverage for these two carriers. Your GMIA board will closely follow the placement and design of these towers to determine if they can be adequately concealed.

But the question remains: Can these panel antennas be camouflaged so thoroughly that the historic views of the mountain will not be degraded? This proposal has been submitted to the county as a Major Use Permit. Hearings will be scheduled in the near future and the public will have an opportunity to view the designs and voice opinions. Those living close to the project will receive notices from the county. For everyone else, the hearing information will be noticed on our web site ([gmia.net](http://gmia.net)) and in the Union-Tribune. ▲

## Q & A: Helix Water District

Just turn on the tap, and out it comes. Clean running water is something most of us take for granted. However, when you consider that, according to the World Water Council, one in six people worldwide lack access to safe drinking water, it is easy to recognize that our water delivery system is a marvel.

Although water is often in the news, most of us have no idea of the intricate delivery system that provides this resource to us. In this article are condensed answers to GMIA's questions to the Helix Water District regarding this essential commodity.



Full text of Joe Young's (System Operation Manager for Helix Water District) responses are available on our web site, [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net).

### Questions about the water

**GMIA:** How many gallons and how many customers does Helix Water District serve?

**JDY:** Helix currently delivers an average of 28.3 million gallons each day to 263,000 customers through 55,600 metered connections. Three years ago we averaged 36.9 million gallons per

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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Design & Layout: Victoria Vinton,  
Coyote Press Graphic  
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Printing: Best Printing  
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**www.gmia.net**

## Message from the President

**W**hy build community? Because getting to know our neighbors matters. I am convinced that we all want supportive, caring communities, invigorated neighborhoods, and a better world. The first step is getting to know one another.

Building community is an essential component of GMIA. Our local events foster friendships and give neighbors an opportunity to meet one another. We celebrated the New Year with our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk Up Mt. Helix on January 8th. In the spring, hundreds of our members will experience our acclaimed Art and Garden Tour. Plus, our Annual Meeting Committee is busy planning an all-new event with the lively theme of “Meet and Mingle.”

We know our unique region is *not just a place to live*, but a neighborhood we care about deeply. Social and medical research tells us that a sense of belonging is an important factor for physical, psychological and social well-being. In fact, isolation has been shown to be a significant health risk.

Joining together also helps us all in another important way. When neighbors come together as a community, we can influence the proceedings of government, developers, and other external forces that affect the quality of our lives. That's why your membership in GMIA makes a difference.

Please share this newsletter with your neighbors. Encourage them to join GMIA. With your support, we can preserve and enhance the character of our community, because... it's not just a place to live.

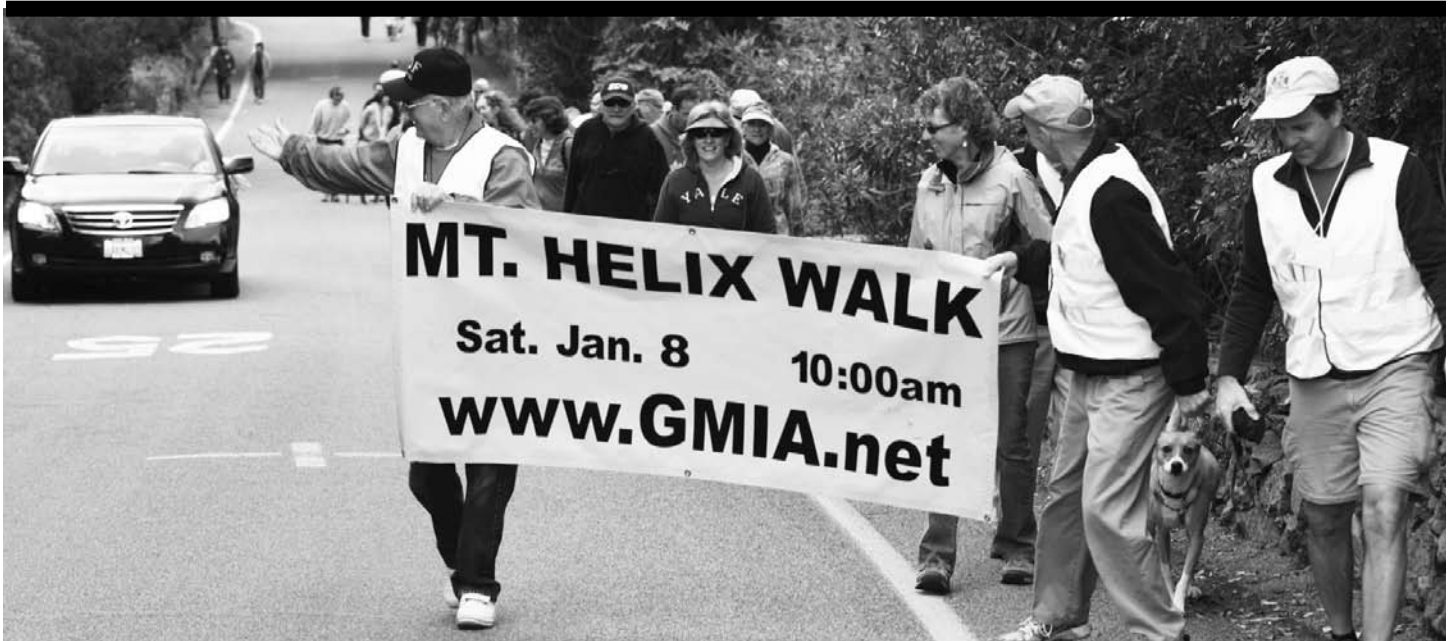
## Receive Viewpoints and Notice of Events By Email

**H**urray! With the help of GMIA board member Dave Zimmerman, GMIA is at last able to send members our newsletter, Viewpoints, via email. If you would like to “go green” and receive Viewpoints on your computer, please let us know. You may send us a message using the “contact” form at [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net).

For this Viewpoints issue, we used both email and postal mail for members who have previously requested Viewpoints via email.

In addition, we are now able to notify members who provide us with their email addresses about GMIA events and important issues as they come up. We experienced some of the proverbial “technical difficulties” with our first try to announce our Mt. Helix Walk, but we are working hard to perfect our system. ▲

GMIA is a 70+ year old nonprofit 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.



## 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk up Mt. Helix

Neighbors gathered together to welcome the New Year at GMIA's popular community event. Participants, including many well-behaved dogs of every shape and size, assembled at our local fire station and strolled to the amphitheater. Good fortune provided us with dry weather, some moments of brilliant sunshine, and clean crisp air.

It was a morning made special by simple pleasures. We relished the beauty of our area, the opportunity to gather with friends, and the chance to meet new neighbors. This event helps remind us of how our hamlet is so unique, and how important it is to celebrate our community.

Thanks to our donors who provided refreshments: Starbucks (coffee), Souplantation (muffins), and a special thanks to GMIA board member Val O'Connor for her generous donation of dozens of yummy fresh donuts. Thanks also to all our GMIA board members who worked hard to ensure a great event, and to the Mt. Helix Park Foundation who partnered with us. ▲





## Water-Wise Tips

### Drought Tolerant Plants a Perfect Match for Mt. Helix Gardens

With the increased cost of water, residents are all looking for ways to maintain the beauty of our landscapes while conserving water. Fortunately, our Mt. Helix area provides the perfect climate for a wide variety of drought tolerant plants to flourish. In addition to lowering our water bills, they reduce water use, are attractive plants with less maintenance, provide wildlife habitat, discourage plant disease, and have deeper roots to help stabilize slopes and control runoff.

Some good suggestions for plant choices that are widely planted in our area are Rockrose, Bougainvillea, Lavender, Rosemary, Thyme, Westringia, Ceanothus, Deergrass, Cleveland Sage, Coyote Bush, Pomegranate, California Buckeye, Crape Myrtle, Arbutus 'Marina', Olives, Palo Verde, Toyon, Western Redbud and Coast Live Oak. Many have fire-resistant characteristics, are good for slopes and attract butterflies, birds and bees. ▲

driveway. The picture in the left column shows a young five-gallon plant with olives and rock roses along a fence. Just three years later, in the photo below, it has reached its spread of at least 9 feet wide and 4 feet tall, enveloping the fence.



Another variety of Westringia is "Wynnable Gem" which has a lavender blossom and tends to grow with a taller and more open form. Both look great with other Mediterranean shrubs and trees as companions, such as Lavender, Salvias, Rosemary, and Olives.

### Successful Care and Maintenance of Low-Water Use Plants

When it's time to plant, make sure to leave enough room around the plants for future growth. The beauty of many of these plants is in their mature form, so don't overcrowd them. For example, the future spread of Westringia is 4-6 feet wide on each side, so plant centers will need to be at least 8 feet apart. Here's where the mulch will come in handy to hold down the weeds and keep in the moisture while the plants mature and get established. Keep mulch away from tree trunks and shrub bases to avoid stem rot. Try to avoid watering in the heat of the day. If you have problems with gophers, plant with wire cages made just for gopher control (available at Simpson's or Walter Anderson's) or fashion your own out of chicken wire.

Here's what UC Extension advises for getting your low-water use plants off to a good start: "Train your plants to use less water: when first establishing low-water use plants, water as needed to keep the root system moist but not saturated for the first year or so until the plants become established. As your plants mature, decrease the frequency and increase the depth of irrigation. They will benefit from deep,



### Westringia Featured Drought Tolerant Plant

Westringia fruticosa is commonly called Coast Rosemary and is not so well known in our area, but bears consideration for our neighborhood. This spreading evergreen shrub is a native of the coast of New South Wales. In cultivation here in California it grows to 4-6 feet tall with an amazing spread of 6-12 feet. It can be grown as a dense rounded shrub or be sheared for a more formal look. The gray-green leaves look similar to rosemary and the small white flowers bloom along the branches year-round in our climate. With occasional summer watering it is a useful and long-lived plant in the landscape.

The Ryan family on Vista de la Cruz successfully grew Westringia extensively to landscape a wide strip along a

## Trees of Mt. Helix

### *Carya illinoensis* – Pecan Tree

This is the fifth 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 Pecan tree featured is located along the street and in the front yard of GMIA members, Lou and Sharon Osberg. The tree was existing when the Osbergs bought the 1958 ranch style home in 1976. The Osbergs have lived in the Carmichael and Fletcher Drives neighborhood for over the past 34 years. What makes this Pecan tree special to the Osbergs is its graceful shape, size, and shade qualities. The Pecan tree is deciduous and fast growing to 70' feet tall. In the past years, the tree has provided around 150 lbs. of nuts. The homeowner has had the tree trimmed three times over the past 30 years.

If you have a tree that you would like to share with fellow members, please call Jeffrey Rule (Director) at (619) 466-0362, and he can schedule a site visit. Thank you for your interest. ▲



## Spring Walk in March

Due to popular request, GMIA's next member event will be our 3rd Annual Spring Walk. We are busy working on the details. The date and location will be posted on our website and emailed to our members. If you would like to receive notice of this and other events, please let us know. Use the "contact us" form on [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net) to provide us with your email address. GMIA will never share your contact information. Our goal is to keep our members informed. ▲

## Over 65?

33% of adults over age 65 fall each year. These falls are the leading cause of death from injury and most fatal falls occur at home. Also, most falls occur in the bathroom. This is according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. If you or someone you care for is in this age group, please remember to:

- ◆ Have your healthcare provider check your meds.
- ◆ Have your vision checked regularly
- ◆ Begin a regular exercise program. Exercise helps improve balance and strength.
- ◆ Make your home safer. Get rid of trip hazards (throw rugs, obtrusive electrical cords), increase lighting, put grab bars in the bathroom, etc. The more a home is modified to accommodate the older adult, the longer one can age in place. ("Costco Connection", Jan. 2011)

## Stop Unwanted Catalogs

Did you know that 19 billion catalogs are mailed to American consumers – 170 per household each year? To reduce the number of catalog mailings to your address, go to Catalog Choice (<http://www.catalogchoice.org>), a free service that is endorsed by the National Wildlife Federation and the Natural Resources Defense Council. ▲

## Free Personalized Energy Report

Microsoft has a free service called Hohm, [www.microsoft-hohm.com](http://www.microsoft-hohm.com), that will create a personalized energy report for you with tips on how to save energy, home improvement suggestions, project pricing, and estimates on how long it will take to earn back your investments. It also shows how your energy use compares to other homes in your area. By being aware of your energy consumption habits, you'll make smarter energy use decisions. ▲



## Mt. Helix Web Sites

For hometown happenings, check out:

[www.mounthelix.patch.com](http://www.mounthelix.patch.com)  
and  
[www.lamesatoday.com](http://www.lamesatoday.com)

These independent websites have all the latest local news, reviews, and information about our community. Story and photos of our Mt. Helix Walk are on both websites. Look for outstanding photos by our own talented GMIA member, Claire Rule, posted on Patch. ▲

## Membership Renewals

Please check your mailing label on this newsletter to ensure your membership dues are current. Annual dues are just \$18. You may pay your dues online with our secure website using PayPal at [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net) or mail a check to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

GMIA would like to thank our members who have generously donated additional funds to support our efforts. As an all-volunteer, non-profit membership organization with limited resources, we greatly appreciate your gifts. Thanks for donations from \$25 to \$100 received this quarter from:

Gail Andrade	Tarbell & Vina Martin
Tom & Judy Moore	Alfred Pagano & Susan Tyler
Leo & Beverly Papas	David & Sandra Polster
Guy & Signa Wilcox	

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day, which represents a 23% reduction in consumption our customers have managed through their conservation efforts.

**GMIA: What are the sources of our water (where does it originate)?**

**JDY:** Helix imports about 90% of our water supply from our wholesalers, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) and the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA). MWD is the wholesaler for all of Southern California, bringing the water thousands of miles from the Colorado River system and from the Northern California State Water Project system. MWD then sells that supply to the SDCWA which in turn wholesales it to Helix and the other 22 member agencies in San Diego County. The 10% of our supply that comes from local sources originates in the Upper San Diego River and at Lake Cuyamaca.

**GMIA: How is water quality ensured?**

**JDY:** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the California Dept. of Public Health sets standards for drinking water to make sure it is safe to drink. To ensure compliance with these standards, Helix performs chemical and biological tests continuously as the water is treated and on samples taken from the distribution system. Over 1,000 tests are performed every week at our R.M. Levy Water Treatment Plant in Lakeside to assure compliance with all water quality standards.

## Questions about the delivery system

**GMIA: Describe the delivery system from the reservoir to our taps.**

**JDY:** Our distribution system includes over 720 miles of pipeline ranging in size from 4" to 84" in diameter. The 50-square-mile service area is divided into 17 separate pressure zones supplied by 25 pump stations and 25 storage tanks. Water storage tanks can be as small as 73,000 gallons (top of Mt. Helix) up to 30 million gallons (Grossmont Reservoir at Harry Griffin Park), with an average size of 1.65 million gallons. Pump stations range from just a few hundred gallons per minute (Helix #3 pump station) to the 45 million gallon per day H. Ball pump station in Lakeside. The Mt. Helix area requires six separate pressure zones to cover the wide range of elevation that must

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be served. The pump stations are required to increase the water pressure and boost the supply into the higher elevation areas.

The water system relies more and more on technology to operate these days. Pump stations, storage tanks, automatically controlled valves and other system appurtenances all communicate with each other through wireless technology. Pump stations are turned on and off automatically as needed by an associated tank level signal. Valves are opened and closed automatically based on system pressures and other variables communicated wirelessly from related water system facilities. All of this data is monitored in real-time by treatment plant and system operators to assure all operational parameters are within acceptable limits.

**GMIA: Tell us about Helix Water District crews and their responsibilities to maintain daily operations and perform emergency repairs.**

**JDY:** System operators are responsible for transporting the water from the Treatment Plant to the distribution service areas and monitoring the operation of all of the pump stations and storage tanks on a continuous basis. Construction and valve crews are always on call 24 hours a day to respond to pipeline breaks when they occur. These repair crews respond at any hour of the day or night to isolate the system, excavate the pipeline, and repair or replace it usually within 24 hours of the leak being reported. Helix prides itself in responding quickly to emergencies and restoring normal water service to customers in a very timely manner. ▲

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slow, and less frequent watering – water only as needed to keep plants healthy. Avoid water logging the root system of these plants. Many traditional landscape plants can perform acceptably on less water also, so you can achieve water savings without removing many of your existing plants. Note that if plants are changed but irrigation practices are not, then water savings will not be realized.”

Be sure to visit the Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College where various drought-tolerant-themed gardens are on display along with interactive compost, irrigation and turf exhibits. Refer to the last issue of Viewpoints for information on obtaining mulch at Miramar Landfill. With all the winter rains we have had, this is the perfect time to get your drought tolerant plants off to a good start! ▲



## Start Smart Program

**T**een driver fatal crashes were down nationally by 33% in the past six years but locally there were still about 35 fatal crashes in the past two years.

California's provisional licenses are definitely helping to keep that number down and the Sheriff's Department has a program called "Start Smart" that will provide additional education for your new drivers.

This program is a two-hour course attended by both the teen driver and parents. What the course mainly teaches is consequences – what happens when a new driver has distractions from cell phones and friends, inclement weather problems, and the responsibilities and consequences of driving thousands of pounds of metal at high speed.

For information on the monthly classes, call your nearest sheriff's substation (Lemon Grove, 619-337-2000). ▲

## Non Emergency E-Crime Reporting

**N**on-emergency crimes that do not require a deputy's response can now be reported on the internet. Residents who live in unincorporated areas may use the E-Crime Report system for harassing phone calls, lost property, theft, vandalism, and vehicle burglary. The sheriff's website to report a non-emergency crime is [www.sdsheriff.net/ecrimereport/emailvalidation.aspx](http://www.sdsheriff.net/ecrimereport/emailvalidation.aspx). Stolen vehicles, boats, lost or stolen passport, driver licenses or other government identification cannot be reported online. If you experience any of these crimes and non-emergency crimes other than the ones previously listed, contact the sheriff's dispatch center at (858) 565-5200.

We encourage members to report any criminal activity to ensure accurate crime statistics for enforcement purposes for our region.

***If you have an emergency call 911. ▲***



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## Save the Date for our Annual Meeting!

Our Event Committee is excited to announce our all-new Annual Meeting will take place May 28th in the early evening at the magnificent Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden. This beautiful venue will be our site to “Meet & Mingle.”

Plans are in the works to include wine tasting, substantial appetizers, and a great opportunity to get to know one another.

Please mark your calendars and tell your neighbors. ▲