



viewpoints

Winter 2012

Volume 42 Issue 2



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Call to Action — Save Our Planning Groups *Local Communities vs. Red Tape Reduction Task Force*

GMIA has worked with the Valle de Oro Planning Group for over 30 years. In fact, most of the development in our area has been brought to our attention by members of that group that are also residents of our area. Without this link to the county, changes in zoning, variances, lot splits, inappropriate development, etc. would have occurred without our prior knowledge and our legitimate concerns and complaints would have been too late to have any effect.

So it was quite a shock to us to find on the Board of Supervisors' agenda of December 7, 2011 that a "Red Tape Reduction Task Force" (sponsored by Supervisors Horn and Roberts) was proposing to eliminate community planning groups or severely limit their ability to represent their communities. [This report is located on the San Diego County Board of Supervisors website under the December 7, 2011 agenda information. The hearing video is also available there.]

Your GMIA Board doesn't consider our planning groups as "red tape." We believe them to be an invaluable link between the community and County government.

By eliminating or severely limiting a planning group's ability to thoroughly examine and influence county land use actions, we believe the public's right to address local land use actions will be curtailed. There will be no local knowledgeable group to which we can voice our concerns. There will be no one to turn to except the county's bureaucrats on Ruffin Road in San Diego.

On February 29th at 9:00 AM, the Board of Supervisors will hear and vote on this and other Task Force recommendations. Opposition letters, e-mails, or faxes to the Supervisors prior to this meeting will help to correct this unreasonable attack on our communities. Also, your attendance at the February 29th Board meeting is important. Upon arrival, file a speaker slip (pink) opposing this Task Force Report.

Prior to this meeting, please contact:

Supervisor Greg Cox..... FAX 619-235-0644 or greg.cox@sdcounty.ca.gov

Supervisor Dianne Jacob FAX 619-696-7253 or dianne.jacob@sdcounty.ca.gov

Supervisor Pamela-Slater Price..... FAX 619-234-1559 or pam.slater@sdcounty.ca.gov

Supervisor Ron Roberts..... FAX 619-531-6262 or roberts@sdcounty.ca.gov

All are located at the County Administration Center, 1600 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92101-2470 which is also the location of the February 29th meeting. ▲



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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www.gmia.net

Message from the President

This year marks the 73rd anniversary of the Grossmont-Mt. Helix Improvement Association. Your GMIA Board of Directors has outlined an exciting calendar of community events for 2012. These community events signal the commitment of your Board to fulfill our mission: to preserve and enhance the character and quality of our area and foster pride in the community.

Our recent survey sent via email (to those who have provided email contact information) included a question asking what members would like from GMIA:

- ◆ Many respondents valued GMIA's ability to build community by offering opportunities for residents to get together at neighborhood events.
- ◆ We heard from members who appreciated our efforts to provide educational classes, tours and hikes about unique aspects of our area.

This fall we host our State of the Community Forum. Our GMIA committee is already at work to develop a vital program filled with relevant local information. We will feature an array of representatives from government, law enforcement, and other agencies who will relay the latest information about our region. We recognize that decisions made today will impact our way of life tomorrow; bringing information to our constituents is a critical role of

our organization. The GMIA State of the Community Forum will be free and open to all as a public service. Look for more details in upcoming Viewpoints.

We've just had our 5th Annual Walk Up Mt. Helix to Welcome the New Year. Next comes spring, a busy season for GMIA. Our acclaimed Art & Garden Tour (April 15) is a favorite of all our members. "Meet and Mingle", our Annual Meeting (May 19) will again take place at the magnificent Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden. Feedback from our members in 2011 was very enthusiastic about the change of venue and greater social interaction made possible by our revised casual format. In response to some requests from members who missed our detailed community update, we are organizing, as noted above, a State of Our Community Forum. Also slated for 2012, we hope to once again offer a Backyard Chickens Seminar and Tour and a Nature Hike. These popular activities were well received and members have asked us to repeat them.

Rich in natural beauty, we know our unique region is not just a place to live, but a neighborhood we care about deeply. We look forward to a productive year and invite you to be a part of our efforts.

It's Membership Renewal Time!

Now is the last chance to renew before our Annual Garden Tour in April. If your address label does not reflect "Paid thru 6/30/2012" or later, your \$18 annual dues for the current year are still outstanding. If you receive Viewpoints electronically and are uncertain as to whether your membership is current, please don't hesitate to call our Treasurer, Larry Nichols, at 619-440-1607, or email at Lsnnichols@cox.net.

There is strength in numbers; for our perspective to be clearly heard on issues such as those headlined in Viewpoints, we rely on a robust current membership. A special thanks to those members, both new and renewing, who donated amounts of \$25 or more in excess of the annual dues!

Gordon & Helen Graham	Jerry & Betty Hill
Dean & Judith Allen	Joel & Pamela Hermosillo
Vincent & Kay McGrath	Michael Kirby

GMIA Fights the Invasion of Cell Antennas Into Our Front Yards

Over the years, GMIA has discussed and researched the possibilities of having existing utility poles underground which would greatly improve the aesthetic appeal of our community and make our mountainous roads significantly safer. The responses to our requests have always been the same. There is no money to have it done.

To our dismay, not only is the utility pole blight going to remain into the foreseeable future, it may get significantly worse. There have been recent attempts by the County Planning Department to change the existing zoning ordinance, which would open the floodgates for numerous cell companies to place unlimited cell antennas and equipment boxes on new and existing utilities poles along our streets and in our front yards. Thanks to help from Supervisor Jacob, the attempts by the County Planning Department to change the zoning ordinance has been stopped for now, but that hasn't stopped the cell companies from continuing their plans.

There are two current Major Use Permit applications that will be heard by the San Diego County Planning Commission on January 20th. These Major Use Permit proposals are for ten new cell antenna and equipment box sites along our roads and in our front yards. Residents have expressed concern not only about the blight, but also about the impacts to property values and perceived health risks of these facilities being so close to our homes. The requests for these Major Use Permits are attempts to sidestep the existing zoning ordinance. GMIA has sent letters to the Commission and will have a board member present at the hearing to oppose the development of these cell antenna and equipment box sites.

Please reference the opposition letter on GMIA's web site (GMIA.net) where we will post the decisions of the planning commission and you can remain current with our continued efforts to protect the character of our community. ▲

Garden Tour Volunteers Needed

We all hate waiting in a line! Your GMIA board wants to be sure there are no delays for entry at our popular Art & Garden Tour. In response to our survey, this year GMIA will institute a new admission policy. Members in good standing will enjoy complimentary admission, and nonmembers will pay a nominal charge. We need your help to avoid bottlenecks and waiting times.

Volunteers are needed to assist with admission so we will have a stress-free event. Please consider lending a hand. As a special thank you, our volunteers will enjoy a private viewing of the participating gardens as guests at our VIP Pre-Event Art & Garden Tour and Reception on April 14, (the day preceding the actual tour). To volunteer, please contact Susan Nichols at 619-440-1607 or Lsnnichols@cox.net. Thank you! ▲

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



Membership Application: \$18

You may join or renew securely online using PayPal at www.gmia.net

☐ New ☐ Renew

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

☐ Please send *Viewpoints* via email instead of postal mail.

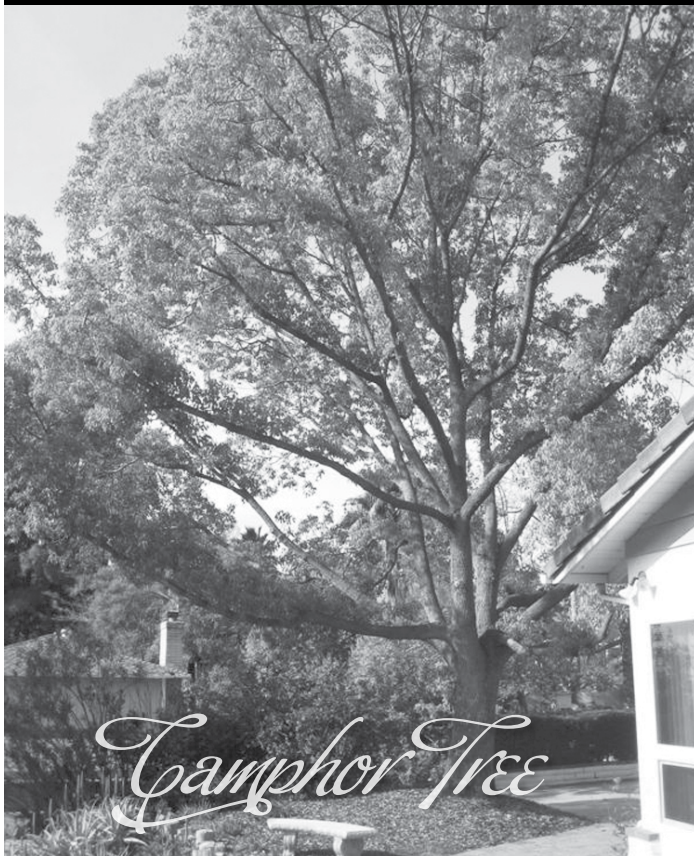
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PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

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



Trees of Mt. Helix

Cinnamomum camphora – Camphor Tree

by Jeff Rule

This continues 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 Camphor tree featured is located in the front yard of GMIA members Jim and Linda Michael. The tree was most likely planted in 1962, when the house was built. The Michaels have lived in the Grandview Drive neighborhood for over 5 years. What makes this Camphor tree special to the homeowners is its light and open structure, aromatic leaves, and the focal point it creates at the end of the driveway. The Camphor tree is an evergreen canopy tree and can grow to 50' feet tall by 60' wide. It has a slow growth rate and take regular watering. The tree drops leaves regularly throughout the year and should not be planted too close to paved areas. Surface roots can lift paved surface.

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. ▲

Garden Tour Survey Results

Wow! We heard from a lot of members responding to our email survey about our Art & Garden Tour. Our brief survey was sent to the 500+ members who have provided us with current email addresses. Of those who received our survey, 116 of you responded. Thank you! Here are the numbers:

1. Should our GMIA Tour be a members only event?
 - ◆ Yes 15.5%
 - ◆ No 77%
 - ◆ Unsure 7.5%
2. Should GMIA limit free attendance to members in good standing but charge for non-members?
 - ◆ Yes 75%
 - ◆ No 15%
 - ◆ Unsure 10%
3. Should admission be complimentary for members and the community at large?
 - ◆ Yes 28%
 - ◆ No 63%
 - ◆ Unsure 9%
4. How often do you attend the Art & Garden Tour?
 - ◆ Every year 61%
 - ◆ Often 23%
 - ◆ Rarely 9%
 - ◆ Not yet 7%

These results tell us that the majority of those who responded believe admission to our Art & Garden Tour should remain complimentary for members in good standing, and that nonmembers should continue to be admitted but pay a nominal fee to participate. Based on your input, your Art & Garden Tour Committee will now plan the logistics to accomplish this change. ▲

Get the Latest News

Our GMIA email system is up and running! Thank you to Director Allison Henderson who oversees this important Communication Committee project. If you would like to receive notices for community events and weigh in with your opinion about GMIA issues, we need your email address. Our member information is strictly confidential. Our purpose is to send event reminders, occasional opinion surveys, and emergency bulletins. We will NEVER "spam" you and we will NOT sell, rent or provide your contact information to anyone. To get the latest GMIA information, please email us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com and we will add your address to our email records. ▲

— WATER-WISE GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX HOMEOWNER —

Subsurface (Drip) Irrigation

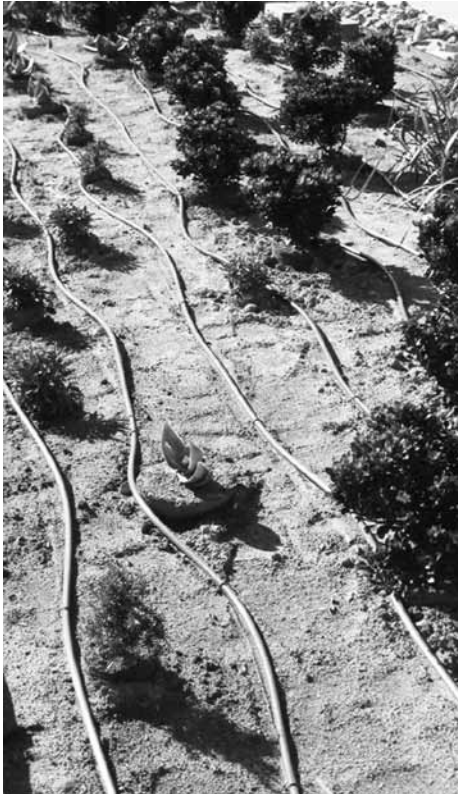
by Jeff Rule

Watering efficiently is an important consideration for residents in our community. To make the most of each drop, consider revising your irrigation system. Along with rotating head low water sprinklers, subsurface (drip) irrigation can deliver water to plants with a minimum of evaporation and runoff.

HOW SUBSURFACE IRRIGATION WORKS

When water is applied slowly from within the soil, water radiates outward from its source point moving in all directions and creating an overlapping wetting pattern beneath the ground. The dripper line can be installed subsurface prior to seeding or laying sod. In shrub and ground-cover planting areas, the dripper line can be laid on top of the soil or slightly buried (see photo). A covering of mulch will help conceal the drip line.

DRIP IRRIGATION ADVANTAGES

- ◆ The dripper line's flexibility adapts to any planting shape, solving the problem of oddly shaped and hard-to-water areas.
 - ◆ Installation methods include laying the tubing on the ground, then stapling it down and covering it with mulch or burying it up to 6" deep.
 - ◆ Subsurface drip line installation reduces vandalism and tampering.
- This article is based upon information provided by Netafim Techline products. For more details, see www.netafimusa.com/landscape. ▲
- 
- ◆ Brings fuller blooms and greater beauty with your annuals and perennials. Mature plants and shrubs grow fuller and healthier.
 - ◆ Saves water (30% to 70% when compared to sprinklers) because water is immediately available to the root zone and isn't wasted through evaporation, wind, overspray, mist or surface run-off.
 - ◆ Eliminates stains on houses and fences as well as slippery sidewalks.
 - ◆ Foliage is kept dry, reducing plant fungal diseases. Unsightly brown spots on roses and other flowers are eliminated since spray never touches the plants.

The above image is during construction from the recently completed street and landscape improvement project at Allison and Date Avenues adjacent to the La Mesa City Hall.

Two Important Community Organizations

Sometimes our residents are confused about the two nonprofit organizations that serve our Grossmont-Mt. Helix community. Here's a brief synopsis of the two groups and their unique functions:

- ◆ The mission of the Grossmont-Mt. Helix Improvement Association (GMIA) is to preserve and enhance the character and quality of our neighborhood, and to foster pride in the community. A nonprofit public benefit membership organization founded in 1938, GMIA is led by an all-volunteer board.
- ◆ The Mt. Helix Park Foundation, founded in 1999, is responsible for preserving and enhancing the Park, amphitheater and cross memorial on top of Mt. Helix. The organization is led by Executive Director Tracey Stotz (www.mthelixpark.org). ▲

Sheriff's Station Progress Report

As you drive on Campo Road near the intersection of Highways 54 and 94, you may have noticed a lot of earth moving equipment at work on the 5 acre parcel adjacent to Skyline Church. Work is progressing on our new Rancho San Diego Sheriff Station. Building construction for the 27,000 square foot structure is due to begin in Spring 2012, and occupancy is anticipated in Spring 2013. The state of the art facility will serve our community with 90-100 staff. ▲



Tips for Growing More Vibrant & Colorful Bougainvilleas

By Pat Ryan

Vibrant, and showy, the Bougainvillea is one of our area's star performers, spilling over fences and walls, climbing up trellises, and forming an eye-popping display of color nearly year-round. Virtually pest-free, hardy and disease resistant, it is also drought tolerant. A native to coastal Brazil, the Bougainvillea was discovered in 1768 in Rio de Janeiro by French naturalist Dr. Phillibert Commerçon, who named it after his close friend and ship's admiral, Louis-Antoine de Bougainville. By 1930 it had been officially named "Bougainvillea" and today includes at least 300 different varieties around the world.

What do Bougainvilleas need to thrive in our climate and produce those legendary colors?

First, for maximum bloom, they need direct sunlight for at least five hours per day and more is better. Too much shade and they will have nice vegetative growth, but little or no color. The Bougainvillea's colorful "blossoms" are, in fact, plant parts known as bracts. The actual blossoms are usually creamy white and quite inconspicuous.

Second on the list for success is regular feeding, and Bougainvilleas are heavy feeders. Walter Andersen's Nursery recommends using "Gro-Power" Rose Formula about four times a year. The experts at Bougainvillea Growers International (BGI) recommend using "Bougain" monthly during the flowering season. It is now available at Home Depot in a 2 lb. container for \$8.99. Both formulas contain less nitrogen in the right balance to intensify the color of the bracts and foliage.

Third, Bougainvilleas require very little water once established. They should dry out between thorough waterings, and every inch of root needs to be watered. Frequent light watering will promote a weak root system and prevent any major coloring on a Bougainvillea.

Since Bougainvilleas only bloom on new growth, the fourth important care technique is to prune and pinch to promote flowering. Pinching off about ½ inch from the tip of new soft growth will encourage fuller growth. The best time to prune or pinch is after the flush of color or flowering cycle is complete. Cycles are typically

four to six weeks. Prune them at any time to keep them a desired size or shape, but right after they finish a bloom period is best.

Finally, Bougainvilleas, with their very fine root system, should be planted in well-drained soils. Any fast draining soil is acceptable.

Bougainvilleas are a wonderful, trouble-free addition to any landscape, whether as large shrubs, climbing vines, ground covers, container plants or hanging baskets. New dwarf varieties are now available to fit any location.

Remember these five keys to producing those vibrant and showy plants so characteristic of our Mt. Helix neighborhood: give them maximum amounts of sunshine; fertilize regularly with the right formula; keep them on the dry side, but water thoroughly; prune and pinch regularly to shape them; and plant them in fast draining soil.

For more information on Bougainvilleas and the many varieties available, visit the BGI website at www.bgi-usa.com. ▲

Welcoming the New Year

Each year, your GMIA board selects a date for our annual Walk Up Mt. Helix to Welcome the New Year. After we pick the date (months in advance) we keep our fingers crossed, hoping for sunny weather – or at the very least, no rain. On January 7th, good fortune was ours once again as grey skies vanished, leaving blue skies and mild temperatures. More than 115 participants, along with a canine contingent, strolled from the Viviera fire station to the Mt. Helix summit. Mingling together at the amphitheater, neighbors renewed acquaintances and made new friends.

A special note of appreciation to the Mt. Helix Park Foundation for partnering with us to provide usage of the lovely park, and to Starbucks for donating coffee. Many thanks to firepersons from our local station 21 who brought their fire truck as a special treat. Kudos to our dedicated GMIA board! They pitched in to shop, set up, clean up, and organize all aspects of this event. Without our dedicated board, community events would not be possible.

The morning was all the more outstanding thanks to dazzling live jazz music by pianist Jan Conner and bass player Jeff Blanco. As their brilliant improvisations wafted throughout the park, we welcomed 2012 and thanked our lucky stars that we live in this magnificent community. ▲



Photos by Claire Rule



Walking Safely on Mt. Helix Winding Roads

By Rosemary Hewicker & Susan Nichols

Fitness experts tell us that walking is the easiest and least expensive exercise most everyone can benefit from and enjoy. No need for special equipment, no special training - just lace up your comfortable shoes and head out the front door. We are fortunate to live in a beautiful area that offers wonderful views and natural beauty to enjoy on foot.

We love our country environment and slower pace of life, but recognize we face special concerns for safely walking in our region. Narrow winding roads, no sidewalks, and no streetlights are features of our semi-rural community that are both a benefit and a challenge. Here are a few tips from our Sheriff's Sub Station in Casa de Oro to remember when walking in the Grossmont-Mt. Helix area:

- ◆ Typically, the recommended method of walking safely is to stay on the left facing traffic. However, on curving roads this can be next to impossible; if the road is narrow (as many are) facing traffic can be hazardous. For example, when heading up Mt. Helix Drive, traffic will always be behind you on this one way road. Many of us walk in a careful pattern, staying on the outside of the curve so as to be seen by cars whipping around blind curves. Use caution to cross the road as needed.
- ◆ Stay alert! Do not use earphones as they will mask the sound of approaching vehicles. A technique to consider: as you hear a car approach, glance over your shoulder to ensure the driver is hugging the middle of the lane and not endangering you, the walker. Be aware that hybrid cars may approach very quietly. Look around often.
- ◆ Our sheriff's office recommends walking in daylight hours. If you must go at night, wear white and reflective stripes. Carry a bright flashlight.

Use common sense. Remember, you may have the right-of-way, but if the auto doesn't see you, you can be ROADKILL. ▲



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GMIA is a 70+ year old nonprofit 501(c)4 public benefit membership organization. Our mission is to preserve and enhance the character and quality of the community and foster pride in the area. We do not employ a paid staff and are served by an all-volunteer board.

GMIA

Who We Are & What We Do

The Grossmont-Mt. Helix Improvement Association (GMIA) is one of the oldest and largest associations of its type in San Diego County. Formed in 1938 as a result of community concern for the lack of adequate land use planning and zoning type requirements, we are a non-profit public benefit corporation. We represent over 7,000 single-family residences with a population approximating 20,000 people. Our region includes parcels east of Bancroft Drive, south of El Cajon, generally north of SR94 and Rancho San Diego, and west of SR54/Jamacha Rd.

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 "homeowner's 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.

2012 Calendar	
April 15	Art & Garden Tour
May 19	Annual Meeting 'Meet & Mingle'
September	State of the Community Forum

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. ▲