



viewpoints

FALL 2015

Volume 46 Issue 1

A Community Newsletter from the Grossmont – Mt. Helix Improvement Association

Unresponsive Officials

Dismissive responses to thoughtfully written letters, ignoring standing room only attendance by ratepayers at a Public Hearing – it was business as usual for some Board Members of Helix Water District at the Public Hearing on October 7th. As has become the norm, our elected Helix Board representatives lined up in a 3-to-2 vote to approve the unprecedented five year budget presented by staff and widely opposed by ratepayers.

How did they vote?

- ◆ Directors Joel Scalzetti and Kathleen Hedberg voted against the five year plan.
- ◆ Directors John Linden, Chuck Muse and DeAna Verbeke voted for the five year plan.



Because GMIA knows that water rates are a critical issue, we hosted our September 30th Community Forum to raise awareness of the issues and encourage attendance at the Public Hearing and submission of letters of opposition. As a result of our efforts (along with the efforts of other concerned ratepayers) over 500 opposition letters

were delivered to the District, the most ever received about an issue. Ratepayers crowded the District’s Board room for the Public Hearing.

For those who attended the Hearing, the lack of seating capacity and failure of the air conditioning made for a very uncomfortable environment. Adding to that discomfort was the District’s decision to disregard their agenda and begin with a lengthy “puff piece” detailing their operation, while seemingly ignoring the miserable conditions that audience members were experiencing.

We are not sure whether the District’s handling of the Public Hearing was a deliberate attempt to wear down the audience, or a failure to properly manage the logistics of the



Family Friendly Walk Up Mt. Helix

The perfect way to start 2016! Come celebrate the New Year with our Walk Up Mt. Helix on Saturday, January 2nd at 10:00 am. We gather at the Fire Station at 10105 Vivera and stroll as a group behind our big yellow banner to the summit. At the amphitheater enjoy live music by Jan McBride Jazz, tasty refreshments, and the beauty of our unique community. This event is free, so start your year the best way possible with this fun and healthy outdoor activity.

A special gift: GMIA Board member Mike Valley has donated 20 “pick up sticks” to be given on a first come, first served basis at the Walk. Mike wants to encourage everyone to help keep our neighborhood litter-free. Thanks Mike!

Don’t miss this opportunity to join old friends, meet new neighbors, and relish a beautiful morning in the park. As always, well behaved children and dogs are welcome. Be sure to invite your neighbors – this event is open to all (members and non-members). See you there! ▲▲



GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Officers

Susan Nichols, President
(619) 440-1607

Pat Ryan, First Vice President
(619) 248-1619

Sue Creveling, Second Vice President
(619) 971-2712

Larry Nichols, Treasurer/Membership
(619) 440-1607

Kay Bickley, Secretary
(619) 318-5260

Directors

Kathleen Hedberg	Jeff Rule
Allison Henderson	Mark Schuppert
Tom Huffman	Michael Sciulli
Dagmar Miller	Mike Valley
Don Newcom	Holly Yarris
Tom Osteen	Dave Zimmerman

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.

Editor: Susan Nichols

Design & Layout: Victoria Vinton,
Coyote Press Graphic
Communications

www.gmia.net

MISSION

GMIA is a 75+ 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.

Message from the President

Deeply rooted in our community, GMIA has helped shape our region for 78 years. By working to unite our members about issues we all care about, our organization fulfills a special role as an independent, trusted source of information and analysis.

Just as a single instrument cannot perform a symphony, GMIA's strength is our collective voice. Our robust membership helps ensure our perspective is heard as we focus on a variety of concerns. At the forefront of our efforts today are advocacy for fair water rates, improvement of the gateways to our community, and the enhancement and preservation of our neighborhood. These are big issues that affect our property values and our quality of daily life.

In this newsletter you will read about the important work we are doing to bridge the gap between the needs of our members and the governmental/local agencies that serve our community. Some of our efforts and projects require enormous stamina to stay the course and get things done. It sometimes takes months or years of follow-up to accomplish our goals. However, there's a saying I've heard that I like: "If you are tired of starting over, stop giving up." When it comes to advocating for our community, we will not give up. We are in it together — thank you for telling your neighbors about GMIA's good work, and for your ongoing support. 🌱



Thank You Donors!

Special thanks to these members who donated a gift of \$25 or greater in excess of their dues.

Dean & Judith Allen	Robert & Christine Brown	Gary & Janice Paul	Florrie Taylor
Henry & Olinda Arnold	Leo & Adrienne Culp	Brian & Judy Pike	Signa Wilcox
Chris & Wendy Becker	Charles & Gloria Eller	Rudy & Marilyn Santich	William & Adele Woolman
Gail & Lorri Bordeaux	Don & Leona Flowers	Robert & Sandra Schussler	Brent & Susan Yoder
Lou & Peggy Botte	Joanne Ling	Bill & Geri Sherlock	Timothy Young
Ron & Mary Alice Brady	Charles & Beverly Little	Josephine Swikard	

Are You Connected?

GMIA is constantly working to improve our communication with our members. To keep you informed, we mail this quarterly newsletter. However, sometimes issues or events occur outside of the timeframe for mailing. That's when we use email to connect.

If you didn't get our email invitation last month to join us for the beautiful event we co-sponsored at the Mt. Helix amphitheater – we are so sorry. We don't have a current working email address for you.

Please let us know your current email address so we can keep you in the loop. We promise never to share your contact information. We promise never to "spam" you, and of course, you can always opt out. To provide your email, contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com or call Treasurer/Membership Larry Nichols at 619-440-1607. 🌱

Grossmont-Mt. Helix Prepares for El Nino

Thanks to Supervisor Dianne Jacob whose office made this information available to GMIA.

DPW has free sandbags available at some fire stations in the unincorporated communities. Sandbags can prevent flooding, erosion and mud flows from damaging your home.



Our closest location for FREE sandbags is in Rancho San Diego at Cal Fire Station 20 located at 2249 Jamacha Road.

Our community is filled with beautiful large trees. Be sure your mature trees are properly laced so that wind can pass through the foliage; dense canopies can cause a tree to topple when buffeted by high winds. Also, the weight of huge tree canopies can cause a tree to fall when the ground becomes super saturated with rainfall. Many residents lost irreplaceable big trees due to the 1997/98 El Nino.

GMIA recommends you register your mobile phone with AlertSanDiego at ReadySanDiego.org and download the County’s no cost SD Emergency application on your Apple or Android mobile device to receive emergency notifications during regional disasters.

The San Diego County Department of Public Works has been busy getting ready:

- ◆ DPW Field crews are inspecting County road and drainage facilities and removing sedimentation, vegetation and debris that could block storm flows.
- ◆ DPW has a pre-approved list of emergency contractors and vendors that are ready to provide emergency labor, equipment and materials after major events.
- ◆ DPW Crews can instantly transition to 12 hour shifts to operate 24/7 in an emergency. ▲

New History of Mt. Helix

Local historian Jim Newland, a La Mesa resident and manager with California State Parks, has created a photographic history of our region featuring images of Mt. Helix and its neighbors, landmarks, notable events, institutions and individuals. The book is available online from the La Mesa Historical Society at www.lamesahistory.com.



Along with the Mt. Helix Park Foundation and the La Mesa Historical Society, GMIA co-sponsored a book signing and informative talk by the author on October 27th to coincide with the 90th anniversary of the Mt. Helix Park. We enjoyed hearing fascinating details about early life in our community. Thanks to all who participated that day, and to event organizers Tracey Stotz, Nichole Roberts, Susan Nichols, George Fahouris, Kathy White, and Jim Newland. Special thanks to Continental Catering for donating refreshments for the earlier VIP reception and Starbucks for donating coffee. ▲



Lighting at the Park & Ride

GMIA, with help from Supervisor Dianne Jacob, successfully petitioned Caltrans earlier this year to install a street lamp at the Park & Ride at Fuerte Drive and I-8. We were originally advised installation would take place this summer. GMIA has learned that date has been moved to the spring.

We are pleased the much needed illumination will be added to this very dark area, but wish Caltrans would have calendared the work prior to the short days and dark nights of fall and winter. ▲

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event. Either reason is unsatisfactory. Ratepayers were clearly provoked by this situation, and asked the staff to stop presenting bar graphs and pump statistics and get to the issue. The response: Presiding Officer DeAna Verbeke indicated that disgruntled attendees should leave if they didn't like it.

After the lengthy 45 minute presentation, audience members spoke (3 minutes allotted each speaker). Many, many ratepayers voiced opposition to the proposed five year budget with 3 minutes allotted each speaker. No ratepayer who spoke supported the five year plan.

After listening to the ratepayers, Director Scalzetti suggested a one year plan, but made a motion to approve a two year budget plan in lieu of the proposed five year, and the motion was seconded by Director Hedberg. GMIA thanks them for their thoughtful deliberation and attempted compromise. However, in an identical vote split 3-to-2, this more moderate planning approach was denied.

Another disturbing aspect of the Public Hearing was the action of Director Muse who publically scolded Directors Scalzetti and Hedberg for voicing their concerns about the five year plan and voting (in the minority) to oppose the plan. His conduct belittled them and thereby dismissed the ratepayers whom they represent. His lecture suggested that the proper behavior for all board members was to be publically supportive of the majority perspective regardless of their constituency's concerns.

As GMIA President Susan Nichols noted in her Public Comment at the Helix Water District Board meeting that followed the Hearing. GMIA is deeply disappointed by the dismissive attitude of the Board's elected majority and what appeared to GMIA to be a violation of board protocol. We will continue to encourage our members and the community at large to remain active and vigilant as we look to the 2016 election year. ▲



Partner Spotlight

by Vince McGrath

The Water Conservation Garden, located next to Cuyamaca College in Rancho San Diego, has been an important resource for water smart education since 1999. The Garden has recently expanded to 6 acres with the addition of our new Native Habitat Garden. For the past 3 years The Garden has partnered with GMIA for the annual dinner held at The Garden. As like minded water wise people, we want to take our relationship further by inviting members of GMIA to become members of The Water Conservation Garden, with a Limited Time \$10 savings on your membership. The benefits to you as members are as follows:

- * Subscription to garden newsletter
- * Discount in gift shop 10%
- * Invitations to members-only events
- * Free or reduced fees to garden classes
- * Opportunity to become a garden docent or volunteer
- * WCG window decal
- * Save 10-20% at the garden's 10 local partner nurseries
- * Reciprocal free admission to 250+ public gardens across America, including 30 in California
- * Your membership is also tax-deductible

This special limited offer ends December 31, 2015. Individual, \$50 now \$40, Family, \$65 now \$55. Other membership levels also available. See our web page, www.thegarden.org We are located at 12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West, El Cajon, CA 92019 Ph# 619-660-0614.

Please bring your newsletter to The Garden gift shop for the savings or download your news letter and bring the copy in order to show proof of GMIA membership. We look forward to a long relationship. ▲

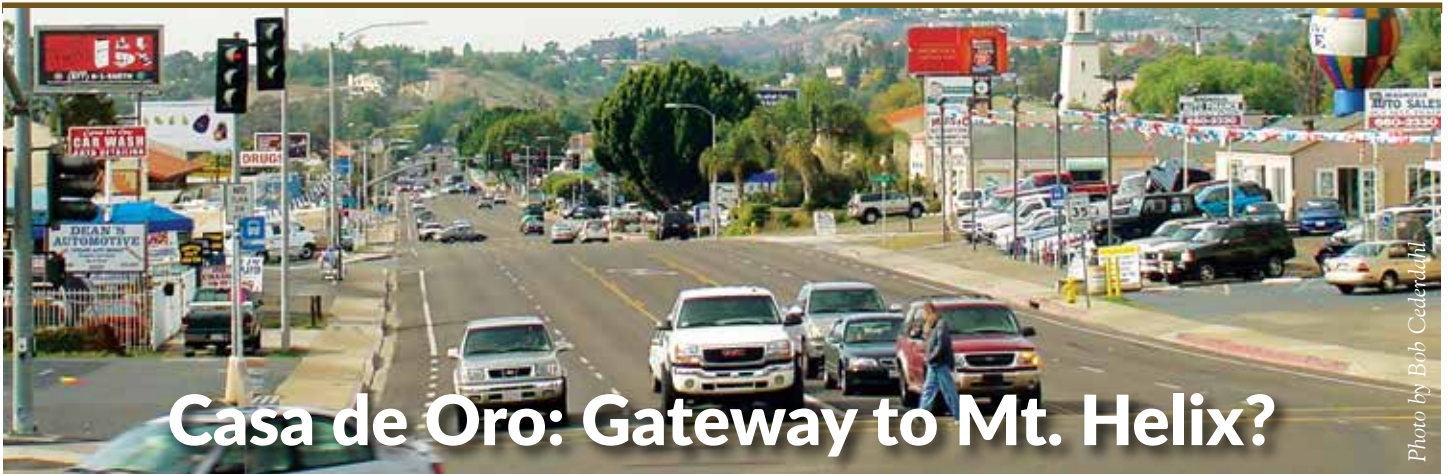
Local Drop-off for Old Paint

Good news! PaintCare Recycling locations in our own neighborhood are a free and convenient way to dispose of old paint. Your old paint is remixed into recycled paint, used as a fuel and made into other products or properly disposed. PaintCare is funded by a fee paid by paint manufacturers for each can of paint they sell in the state. Take your paint to any of these locations listed. Please note that most do not accept aerosols, leaking cans, or cans without labels. We suggest you call first because they may have reached recycle capacity on some busy days.



- ◆ Sherwin Williams, 8784 Grossmont Blvd., 619-463-1785, accepts 5 gallons
- ◆ Dunn-Edward, 5250 Jackson Drive, 619-668-5091, accepts 20 gallons
- ◆ Frazee Paint, 5349 Jackson Drive, 619-460-7710, accepts 15 gallons
- ◆ Vista Paint, 1220 N. Magnolia Avenue, 619-588-7755, accepts 100 gallons

For more information about this program, check out www.paintcare.org or call 855-724-6809. ▲



Casa de Oro: Gateway to Mt. Helix?

The Casa de Oro neighborhood lies at the southern boundary of our GMIA area. Its primary thoroughfare, Campo Road, features businesses, banks, and the Casa de Oro Library. Over the years, efforts to revitalize the area have had mixed results.

GMIA recognizes that Casa de Oro, and in particular Campo Road between Kenwood and Sweetwater Springs, is a gateway to our Grossmont-Mt. Helix community. Our members have told us they want to improve the gateways to our community. To that end, we have had two preliminary meetings of a GMIA sub-committee to determine whether or not we can help improve Casa de Oro. Our group includes board members as well as community members interested in this issue. Here's what our early exploration has identified:

- ◆ Some efforts to improve the area are already in place:
 - » Supervisor Jacob hosts a quar-

- terly meeting to promote Spring Valley Revitalization plan.
- » There is a Spring Valley Chamber of Commerce.
- » There is a Casa de Oro Business Association.
- » The San Diego County Sheriff has a storefront office on Campo Road.
- » The Valle de Oro Planning Group oversees land use for the area.
- » CVS is in discussion to acquire the former Fresh & Easy location (currently unoccupied).
- » The dilapidated building, formerly Oxbow Inn, has been razed.
- ◆ Supervisor Jacob is committed to build a new, free-standing County Library to replace the undersized strip-mall location and provide a community focus.

Estrella Park (located behind Santa Sophia Church) has never been developed because there is no source of

funds for ongoing maintenance costs.

We are flummoxed as were previous GMIA Board of Directors as we try to envision a plan of action for this region. There are no quick fixes. Among other problems, the area is not a legally partitioned area or zone. GMIA has asked Supervisor Jacob's office to check if this blighted area might qualify for a community development block grant — a federal financial aid package with very narrow guidelines given to state and local governments for use in community development. The Supervisor's staff is looking into the question, and we'll keep you posted.

So what's next? We recognize that our all-volunteer organization has very limited resources to overcome the larger issues in Casa de Oro. However, we will continue to look for solutions. Would you like to be a part of this effort? We welcome anyone in the community who is interested to partner with us. Please contact Susan Nichols 619-440-1607.



Pothole Patrol

Our Grossmont-Mt. Helix streets are crumbling! When you spot a pothole, contact GMIA Board Member Mike Valley. Mike will take the information and work the County to get those potholes filled. He's experienced and gets results.

We need to know what needs fixing – so please take the time to tell us. Mike is eager to hear from you – email yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com and he'll get your message. You may also call the County directly at 858-694-3850. Your car's tires, suspension and shocks will thank you. ▲



Plumerias on Mt. Helix

by Mike Atkinson

Plumerias not only love San Diego, they love Mt. Helix. I know. I've been growing them here for almost 20 years.

Plumerias are best known as the colorful, fragrant flower used in Hawaiian leis. And if you've been in Hawaii, or other tropical locales, you've no doubt seen the large trees covered in spectacular blooms. They are actually native to the area from southern Mexico to northern South America. They were imported into the Pacific islands. But, while they are native to a tropical climate, they adapt very well to our temperate/Mediterranean climate.

First, they love our decomposed granite, because they like rocky, fast-draining soil. (Think lava soil in Hawaii.) If you plant one in the ground, note what it needs below, and also don't plant them past June. The best protection from our cold winter nights is a well-rooted plant (at least filling a 5 gallon pot) that has time to get well-established in the ground. That takes a few months. If you grow in pots, make sure you use a well-draining soil.

Second, they love our sun. The heat in August and September can create darker, stunning blossoms, and bring out more scent. If you plant them in the ground or keep them in pots, get them in a spot that gets a lot of sun, all day if possible, at least 6-8 hours.

Now, what else do they need? Little water and some food.

Water: First, because they are deciduous, they lose their leaves over winter, and they don't need any water when they don't have leaves. (Keep that in mind if you put them in an area that has metered watering systems.) When they do have leaves, they should only be watered when the soil is dry. Typically that's around once a week. When it hits the 100s here, I may water twice a week along with some "Hawaiian showers" (spraying water on the leaves). If you grow them in pots, keep in mind that they tend to dry out faster than the ones in the ground.

When you water your plant, make it a deep soaking. But the fast-draining soil is important because they don't like wet

feet – standing water is an enemy of plumeria. If you wonder about all the rain they get in Hawaii, remember that lava soil? The rain drains away from the plant very quickly in that soil.

Food: They do like food. You can use basic fertilizers available at the home improvement stores, like Miracle Gro or Osmocote. Nurseries like Armstrong and Walter Andersen carry fertilizers more specific to plumeria. I use a lot of organics as well, such as Sul-Po-Mag, seaweed extract, worm castings, and mulch as top-dressing.

If you plant plumerias with other plants, make sure the other plants have very similar water and food needs. **Because plumerias need so little water, many plant them in drought-tolerant gardens and with succulents.**

Yes, we do have some cold temperatures in the winter on the Mount. That can be devastating to plumeria. If you have them in pots, get them under cover for winter. This helps protect them.



Curb Appeal Award Winners

by Pat Ryan

GMIA members met the call to nominate front yards that display outstanding maintenance, distinctive design and pride of ownership. From a field of nominations, our committee recognized five winners. In all cases, large areas of lawn had been removed and replanted with drought tolerant designs with many featuring bark or stones to create pathways.

Each of our winners received a framed Curb Appeal Award Certificate and an attractive lawn sign to proudly display. The awards were announced at our Annual Dinner in June, and most of the lawn signs are still in place!

Congratulations to our inaugural Curb Appeal Award winners. If you know of a yard that is a great example, send in your nominations to yourgmaineighbor@gmail.net. We plan another round of awards for 2016. ▲



Pete and Joan Caman
at 4522 Grandview Terrace



Jim Brega and John Castell
at 10096 Pandora



Jeff and Gianna Crispell
at 10010 Resmar Place



Yvone Friet
on Fuerte Drive



Another Mt. Helix Little Free Library

GMIA members Bill and Llona Hoffman invite you to check out their Little Free Library at 10320 Challenge Blvd. Their “give a book, take a book” library joins the world-wide movement to spread the joy of reading and sharing tomes. Every installation is a unique creation. Our members have built Little Free Libraries at these locations:

- ◆ 19733 Itzama Road
- ◆ 4622 Grandview Terrace
- ◆ 4424 Nabal Drive
- ◆ 10615 Snyder Road
- ◆ 10805 Melva Road
- ◆ 4837 New Ranch Road
- ◆ 9243 Lovell Lane
- ◆ 334 Horizon Hills Drive

If you have a Little Free Library, email us at yourgmaineighbor@gmail.com and we will share it with our members.

To ensure your membership is current: please look at your mailing label on this newsletter. On it you will find the renewal date of your membership. Note: if the date is June 2016 or later, your dues are paid in full. Thank you! Annual membership is just \$18 (2 years - \$36; 3 years -\$54). You may renew online at our secure website www.gmia.net or mail your payment to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

GMIA Activities Calendar 2015-2016



Clean-Up Dates for Park & Ride

Lend a hand! Join us to clean up weeds and litter at our adopted Park & Ride at Fuerte/I-8 every 3rd Saturday at 9:00 a.m.

2015
November 21st
December 19th

2016
January 16th
February 20th

Upcoming Annual Events

