



# viewpoints

SUMMER 2016

Volume 46 Issue 3

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

## You're Invited! GMIA Annual Dinner Meeting

- ◆ Phil's BBQ
- ◆ Ballast Point Beer
- ◆ Wine and soft drinks
- ◆ Live music
- ◆ A great opportunity to meet and mingle with your neighbors!
- ◆ Enjoy the beautiful Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden (docent-led tours available)
- ◆ Plus an informative Q&A with Supervisor Dianne Jacob to address community concerns



**DATE:** June 26th • **TIME:** 5:30 -8:00 pm

**WHERE:** Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden

**COST:** Just \$12 per member, \$20 for non-members

Please show your support for our community and join us for our annual get-together. At our event, you will enjoy an informal buffet dinner, hear an update about what's going on in our neighborhood, and have an opportunity to ask our County Supervisor Dianne Jacob about issues or concerns.

A special shout-out to Chairperson Holly Yarris for master-minding all the details, and to former Chair Kay Bickley who is a great resource for our event committee and continues to be a steadfast volunteer. Thank you to Ballast Point Beer for generously providing their award-winning brew and to GMIA member Steve Rotsart for reaching out on behalf of GMIA to request this donation.

Our Board of Directors and volunteers all pitch in to plan, set-up, serve and produce this event. It's a big job to organize this dinner for our more than 200 attendees. Please consider lending a hand by volunteering to help with day-of-the-event logistics. We would be grateful! Contact GMIA Volunteer Coordinator Sue Creveling at [screv@yahoo.com](mailto:screv@yahoo.com) or 619-971-2712. ▲

## Annual Memberships Due

Please check the mailing label on this newsletter. You will find the expiration date of your membership. As an all-volunteer organization, GMIA does not have the resources to send an invoice/renewal statement. We count on you, our members, to ensure your dues are paid current.

If the date shown is prior to June 2017, your membership payment is NOW DUE.

Our annual dues are just \$18 per year (\$36 – 2 years, \$54 – 3 years). We have worked hard to keep our membership dues low but we rely on your support to maintain our organization. Some of the expenditures to operate GMIA include insurance, graphic design, printing and mailing of our newsletter, website management, and event expenses. That's why we appreciate your support and dues payment.

If you have any questions about your membership, please contact Larry Nichols, Treasurer at 619-440-1607 or [Lsnnichols@cox.net](mailto:Lsnnichols@cox.net). Thank you for your membership! ▲





GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX  
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

### Officers

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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

Paul Geldbach	Jeff Rule
Kathleen Hedberg	Michael Sciulli
Allison Henderson	Elizabeth Smith-Chavez
Tom Huffman	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.*

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**yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com**

### 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

- ✱ Do you value our Art & Garden Tour, Succulent Swap, and Walk Up Mt. Helix?
- ✱ Do our newsletter and Community Forums update you about issues facing our region?
- ✱ When you have a concern about our community, where do you turn?



GMIA is the oldest community organization in our area. We hope you find value in our efforts and that your \$18 yearly investment yields a meaningful return. Membership renewal is very important because there is strength in numbers! Here are a few recent examples of what your support accomplished to protect land use, preserve community character, and improve our neighborhood:

- ✱ Along with other concerned residents, we advocated to stop commercial development at Lemon Avenue/ Bancroft
- ✱ We coordinated with the Department of Public Works to repair long-standing damage to the historic rock wall lining Mt. Helix Drive
- ✱ We worked with the Department of Public Works to install signage prohibiting an informal used car lot on the corner of Grandview/ Resmar
- ✱ GMIA partnered with Caltrans to clean up, plant and maintain (ongoing) the Park & Ride at Fuerte/ I-8, and succeeded in having lighting installed at the Park & Ride
- ✱ We adopted & maintain the monument signage at Fuerte/ Grossmont Dr.
- ✱ We worked with residents and the Valle de Oro Planning group to oppose the "Chicken Ranch" development
- ✱ GMIA successfully made a case for a new library in Casa de Oro (ongoing)
- ✱ Our organization spearheaded a campaign to stop fire fees for homeowners
- ✱ We advocated for fair water rates with Helix Water District (ongoing)
- ✱ Along with the Valle de Oro Planning Group and other concerned residents, GMIA advocated to stop a bar opening at the corner of Fuerte Drive/ Avocado Drive
- ✱ We successfully petitioned for undergrounding utilities on Fuerte Drive, project to be completed in 2020
- ✱ We host five events annually: Walk Up Mt. Helix to Welcome the New Year, Art & Garden Tour, Succulent Swap, Community Forum, & Annual Dinner

We appreciate our members who renew their support year in and year out to ensure that GMIA remains strong, pro-active, and able to sustain our activities. Because our membership is from July 1st to June 30th, it is time to send in your dues unless you have prepaid multiple years. (We are all volunteers and our database is limited; we are unable to prorate dues, so please accept our apologies for any misunderstanding that may arise from our process.) The back page of this newsletter shows your membership expiration date. If you have questions, please contact Larry Nichols, Treasurer/Membership at Lsnnichols@cox.net or 619-440-1607.

Throughout our 78 year history, GMIA has been at the forefront of efforts to help our region. While most of San Diego County has been sliced-and-diced with tracts of cookie-cutter houses built without regard to natural topography, our community remains an oasis. Ever wonder why? It's in part because of the efforts of GMIA that our meandering tree-lined roads, houses on large lots, and low-density, semi-rural environment have withstood the pressure of development. Your support helps us maintain our wonderful neighborhood, along with the unique life style we all enjoy. Please pass this newsletter on to a neighbor and encourage them to join. Thank you for your membership. 🌱

*Susan Nichols*





## Helix Water Board Election Committee for Change

As water rate payers, we are penalized with higher rates when we don't conserve water, and we are penalized with higher rates when we do conserve. What's wrong with this picture? A lot.

If you were as displeased as many of us were by the October 2015 Helix Water Public Hearing, where a five year plan for potential rate hikes of 70% for water was passed, we invite you to join our Helix Water Board Election Committee for Change. The Committee was formed several months ago by concerned rate-payers determined to make a difference with the election this fall for seats at the Helix Water Board.

We plan on making that difference by 1) identifying candidates for the election that we believe will be able to unseat the incumbents and actually represent the ratepayers, and by 2) providing support for those candidates to insure their likely success.

The Committee comprises community members served by Helix Water including Mt Helix, Lemon Grove, Spring Valley, La Mesa and El Cajon. Like our GMIA members, they recognize that the current Board majority (3 to 2 for most decisions)

See **WATER** on page 5



## Lighting Finally Installed at Park & Ride

Getting out of your car in a very dark parking lot can be scary and unsafe. Our members asked GMIA to help with this concern at the Fuerte/Severin-I-8 Park & Ride. We are thrilled to report that after a two year effort, we are finally successful. In May, Caltrans built two solar light installations to brighten up this well utilized lot.

GMIA planted, cleaned up, and maintains the Park & Ride, thanks to Supervisor Dianne Jacob who opened doors for us to forge a partnership with Caltrans. Just three years ago it was a weed strewn, trash-filled barren lot with shaggy palm trees and an abandoned dumpster. With Dianne's help, and a whole lot of elbow grease, we have improved this entrance to our community.

For the third year, GMIA received the Caltrans Adopt-A-Highway Volunteer of the Year Award. GMIA volunteers and Board members provide monthly maintenance — picking up trash, removing weeds — at the Park & Ride. We welcome your help; please see the calendar on the back of this newsletter for upcoming clean-up dates.

## New Captain at RSD Sheriff Station

Our local sheriff's department recently hosted a "Coffee with the Sheriff" and GMIA was there. We heard from Captain Marco Garmo who is in charge of our Rancho San Diego Station. Captain Garmo, a graduate of Monte Vista High School, chose a career in law enforcement after being robbed at gunpoint at age twelve while helping his father at their family owned retail store. As a "local", Captain Garmo knows our region and meets monthly with Supervisor Jacob.

Captain Garmo asked us to get the word out to the community — we are



all the eyes and ears of law enforcement and should call to report all suspicious activity immediately. Your call will ensure there is a record which empowers law enforcement. For emergencies call 911. For non-emergency situations, call (858) 565-5200. With only nine deputies per shift to cover an area from La Mesa to the Cleveland National Forest and to the border, non-emergency responses may sometimes be slow. However, your call is very important so please be sure to report any suspicious activity.

Our community, like many others, is experiencing a rash of car break-ins. Don't be the next victim! Whenever possible, clean out your garage and park your car securely in it. 🌱



## FUERTE SCHOOL NEWS Recycling Bin for Neighborhood

by Allison Henderson

**F**uerte Elementary School started a neighborhood recycling program in cooperation with OneEarth Recycling, a full-service recycling program owned by Josh Turchin, a Fuerte dad. Mr. Turchin helped launch this program to teach kids about the importance of recycling. The Fuerte bin is a pilot program which locates recycling bins on school grounds, thereby making recycling more accessible to the neighborhood. OneEarth hopes that each recycling bin, once filled, will give back hundreds of dollars to the PTA.

**WHAT:** Please separate and bag clean plastic and glass bottles and aluminum cans marked CRV. Because items enter the bin via a chute, please bag the items in a tie-able plastic bag to minimize breakage.

**WHERE:** The recycling bin is located just behind the gate in front of the traffic circle (near the other trash dumpsters). Note that this gate is closed during school hours.

**WHY:** All proceeds from recycled items benefit Fuerte PTA

For more info: 619-456-0078, [info@recycle4life.com](mailto:info@recycle4life.com). 🌱

This article is a result of GMIA's partnership with the Fuerte Elementary School PTO. Our organization is actively working to inform younger families about GMIA. We all love our wonderful community and GMIA wants to ensure it remains a great family-friendly place to raise kids.

## The Business of Group Homes in Our Residential Neighborhoods

**THE ISSUE:** Group homes housing up to six residents for drug/alcohol rehab or developmentally disabled clients are moving into our community. Attracted by our large homes on large lots, these facilities are licensed to operate by the State without consideration of the effects on our single family neighborhoods. Surrounding homeowners have no say about these businesses operating in neighborhoods zoned as residential.

**WHY NOW:** Governor Brown has mandated that the State of California transition from institutional housing facilities to community-based residential locations.

**ACTION TO DATE:** Changes are needed at the state level. Dianne Jacob sent letters to every state senator and assembly person from San Diego asking them to propose a state law to "place restrictions on where and how many group homes can be placed into a community and return local land use authority back to the County and cities." She has also asked that "a system be in place to provide notification to residents and local jurisdictions when one of these group homes is placed into a community."

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** GMIA encourages members to support Supervisor Jacob's campaign to protect our community. Please write/call/email our elected state officials to make them aware of your stand on this issue. Here is contact information:

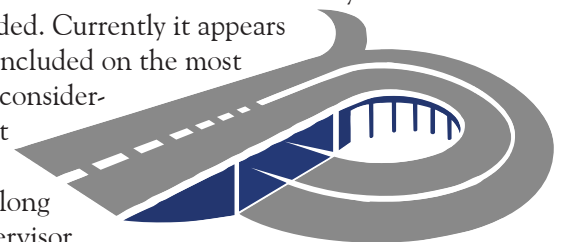
Senator Joel Anderson  
Thirty-Eighth Senate District  
State Capital, Room 5052  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
619-596-3136  
[District38.cssrc.us](mailto:District38.cssrc.us)

Assemblymember Brian Jones  
Seventy-First Assembly District  
State Capitol, Room 3141  
Sacramento, CA 94249  
619-441-2311  
[ad71.asmrc.org](mailto:ad71.asmrc.org)

## Hwy 94/125 Connector a Moving Target

The fate of our missing link, the connector between State Route 94 West and State Route 125 North, lies with SANDAG and their decision to fund the project. GMIA has been advocating for this stretch of road for decades because we believe it will help relieve traffic on our surface streets, particularly Bancroft Avenue and Fuerte Drive. GMIA, at the suggestion of Supervisor Dianne Jacob, attended a SANDAG meeting on March 25th to represent our community.

GMIA asked SANDAG to include this overdue connector as they continue to refine their list of projects to be funded. Currently it appears that while the 94/125 connector is included on the most recent ballot proposal SANDAG is considering, it is important to note that most funding is slated for projects in the city of San Diego, bike lanes, and along the I-5 corridor. We appreciate Supervisor Jacob's efforts to remind the other members of SANDAG about the importance of projects in her region. 🌱





## Bad Behavior by Vacation Renters

GMIA is working with residents on a Mt. Helix street to seek a remedy for a vacation rental property that has disrupted the peace and quiet of their neighborhood. On their cul de sac, a large luxury view home is used as a vacation rental for parties. Bad behavior on the part of the renters is often the norm. Drug and alcohol use in the roadway, public nudity, nighttime trespassers on private property, enormous speakers blasting music in outdoor spaces, upwards of 100 cars parked on their hillside street – the list goes on.

The residents have frequently complained to the owner, who lives elsewhere and openly states she is running the rental as a business. They have called the sheriff but have had no relief from the problems that continue. This terrible situation on their street could happen to any of us in the Grossmont-Mt. Helix region where large attractive homes, views, and amenities are the hallmark of many neighborhoods.

Here's what's been done to date: GMIA has arranged for a meeting of residents with Supervisor Jacob. We are also bringing residents together with the sheriff's Crime Prevention Specialist Officer Jose Ortiz and Leo Wilson of Safe Streets Now. Empowering residents to use a civil court process to rid their neighborhood of nuisance problems, Safe Streets Now's staff will guide the residents through a proven four-step "abatement process" of documentation, notification, negotiation and litigation. Cases are quickly and successfully resolved by negotiation—95% of the time. The program is funded by the Department of Justice and available to residents at no charge. We'll keep you posted.

For more information about Safe Streets Now, contact Leo Wilson at (619) 822-5103. For info or help with crime prevention, contact Officer Jose Ortiz at the Rancho San Diego station (619) 660-7011.

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typically "rubber stamps" all recommendations made by staff.

We meet on the last Thursday of every month, with our next meeting scheduled for June 30th at 6:30 pm, in a meeting room at Faith Chapel, 9400 Campo Road, in the Children's Center at the rear of their campus.

Again – you are invited to join us, and we will fill you in on our progress to date. Please contact Larry Nichols to confirm your attendance or for more information: 619-440-1607 or Lsnnichols@cox.net.

The impact of water rates on our community character is huge. As ratepayers, we have done our part, tightened our belts and made significant changes. The Helix Board of Directors must do their part and represent us – the ratepayers- who elected them. ▲

## Tell Us About Your Drainage Issues

The rains of December 2014/15 impacted many homes in our neighborhood. We have heard quite a few stories of major debris clogging culverts, flooded homes, garages and backyards. We would like to know how you dealt with the issues. County? State? Feds? Homeowner's Insurance? Please send us as detailed a note with information you'd like to share to: yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com. Please include a contact number. ▲



## Inspiring Art & Garden Tour

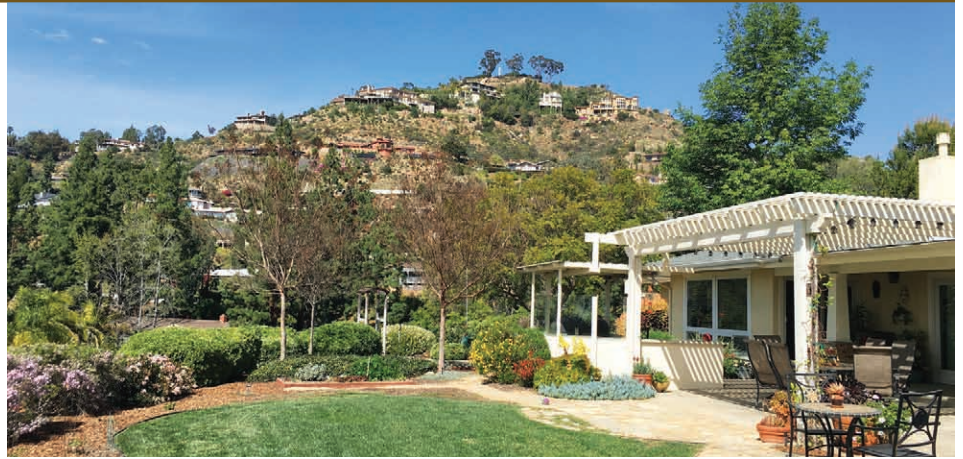
We couldn't have asked for more!

- ❶ Picture-perfect weather was Mother Nature's gift to GMIA
- ❷ Five inspiring gardens to explore
- ❸ Cheerful volunteers to lend a hand

More than 400 members and guests attended this year's tour. GMIA has no paid staff or paid officers, so organizing our signature event is a monumental task undertaken by our Board of Directors. Special thanks to our hard-working Art & Garden Tour Committee: Jeff Rule and Pat Ryan - Co-Directors, Kay Bickley - Artist Liaison, Sue Creveling - Volunteer Coordinator, and Pat Ryan - Producer/Author for our tour brochure.

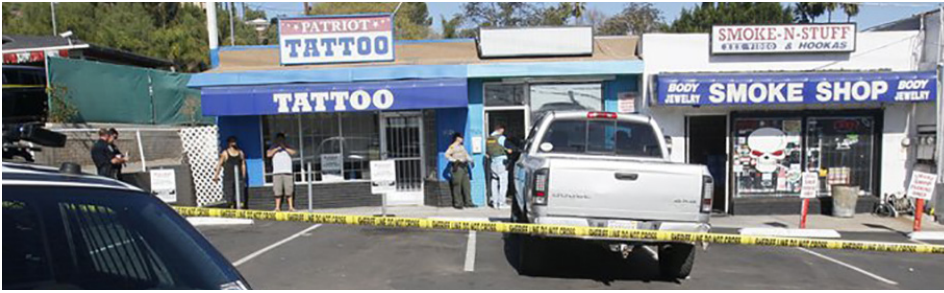
GMIA appreciates our many volunteers who helped with registration and other event logistics. Thanks to Beverly Little, Peggy Materese, Jocelyn Zimmerman, Paulette Newcom, Andrea Goicoechea, Joan O'Steen, Mary Tanquary, Barbara Sciulli, Kristine Anderson, Craig Anderson, Vince McGrath, Kay McGrath, Susan Yoder, Brent Yoder, Laura Tosatto, Mark Creveling, Susan Conklin, Colleen Olsen, Diane Bernal, Linda Craddock, and Doug Ryan.

It goes without saying that we couldn't have a tour without generous garden owners. We are deeply grateful to Pete & Joan Camana, Jeff & Giana Crispell, Dr. Stephen & Barbara Barnes, Paul & Mary Russo, and Mary Ann Stepanowski & Tom Clark for allowing us to view their exceptional outdoor spaces. 🌱





## Casa de Oro Community Alliance Progress Report



**E**nergized and highly motivated, this grassroots organization continues to move forward to improve the blighted Casa de Oro neighborhood on our southern boundary. The Casa de Oro Community Alliance is a group of residents, parents, schools, business owners and managers, local churches, non-profit organizations, planning group members, and other stakeholders committed to revitalizing the business district that runs along Campo Road in Casa de Oro. More than 150 people have attended meetings.

Chaired by capable GMIA member Bob Yarris and supported by the experienced staff of the Institute for Public Strategies, the Casa de Oro Community Alliance has formed five "Action Teams" to address a number of long-standing issues:

◆ Policy Development

- ◆ Beautification and Community Event Planning
- ◆ Crime Prevention
- ◆ Media Advocacy
- ◆ Business Promotion/Participation/Development

An important focus for the Alliance is the high concentration of adult businesses in the neighborhood: liquor stores, "smoke" shops, vape lounges, hookah bars, and illegal marijuana dispensaries. The proliferation of these

businesses brings with it a myriad of related problems while displacing other types of businesses that would be a better fit for the community. Alliance volunteers are receiving training to bring about change through policy solutions.

Kicking off beautification efforts is the Alliance's Community Clean-Up followed by a BBQ on June 11, from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. Volunteers will spruce up the region as a first step of a determined plan to restore the community to the family-friendly, clean and safe neighborhood it was in years past.

The Casa de Oro Community Alliance welcomes new members at their meeting on the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 pm. Meetings are held at Faith Chapel, 9400 Campo Road, Upstairs Room 212-214, Spring Valley, 91977. The next meeting is June 23rd. ▲

### Casa de Oro Community Clean Up

Please support this community effort and lend a hand. Register to help at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/casa-de-oro-community-clean-up-tickets-25328420989>

For more information contact Carol Wright 619-787-2959 or BINSWRIGHT2COX.NET, or [casadeorocommunityalliance@gmail.com](mailto:casadeorocommunityalliance@gmail.com), 619-719-2145.

<https://www.facebook.com/CasadeOroCommunityAlliance>

## NOMINATE A BEAUTIFUL FRONT YARD

### GMIA Curb Appeal Award Nomination Form (Deadline June 12, 2016)

Location (Address) \_\_\_\_\_

Homeowner's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Person nominating (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

Please return to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751. You may also go online to nominate at [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net)


To ensure your membership is current: please look at your mailing label on this newsletter. On it you will find the expiration date of your membership. Annual membership is just \$18 (2 years - \$36; 3 years -\$54). You may renew online at our secure web-site [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net) or mail your payment to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

## Fire Station Improvement Project

**G**MIA is spearheading a new Improvement Project to design and install a fire-resistant, drought tolerant demonstration garden at our fire station on Vivera Drive.

Many of us routinely pass by the fire station as we walk the winding road that leads to the summit of Mt. Helix. While we all appreciate the decision of the staff to stop irrigating the lawn (a measure many of us also did to conserve water at our residences), we'd like a more appealing landscape for the community and the hardworking firefighters to enjoy. Our Board decided that landscape design and installation is a project that will benefit our neighborhood.

We are in partnership with the Mt. Helix Park Foundation and CalFire for this undertaking. The Park Foundation, through the Yawkey Trust, owns the land upon which the fire station is sited. Their Garden Club is enthused about joining us for this facelift.

We envision a low-water garden highlighted with fire retardant plants and perhaps a bench, bird bath, name tags for the plants, and some quiet paths to stroll may be included in the design. A planting plan and project timeline will be developed over the summer, and we hope to start installation in the fall. We will invite you to roll up your sleeves and join us for a planting party. Stay tuned for more info. 



## CALENDAR

See **WATER** on page 5

**Sat., June 18, July  
16, August 20  
Park&Ride Cleanup**

**Sun., June 26th  
Annual  
Dinner**

**Thur., June 30th  
Helix Water Com-  
mittee Meeting**