



viewpoints

SUMMER 2020

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

GMIA Working to Enhance Community Character and Sense of Place

GMIA is dedicated to promoting and preserving the semi-rural lifestyle that attracted so many of us to make Grossmont-Mt. Helix our home. For the past year, GMIA's signage committee has been working with Roy Davis, a local architect and GMIA member, and our elected officials to design and propose two new community portals. We are pleased to report there is interest from Supervisor Dianne Jacob in this project.



While it is far from approved and funded, the project would place monuments at the intersections of Avocado Avenue and Fuerte Drive, and Severin and Fuerte Drives. The exact appearance of these monuments is still being determined, but the conceptual design is closely matched to the character and history of our region and incorporates rockwork like that in Mt. Helix Park.

In the coming months, the GMIA signage committee will submit a final request to Supervisor Jacob to fund this neighborhood improvement project. If approved and budgeted, we can look forward to promoting the character of GMIA's region, while enhancing the sense of "place" that continues to draw people to the way of life we have come to love and respect. 🌱



Successful GMIA Gateway Project

In 2014, GMIA members identified improvement of our community gateways as a priority. The intersection at Avocado Boulevard and Fuerte Drive was cited as a foremost location in need of an upgrade. Since that time, GMIA has been diligently pursuing improvement of the area and at Fuerte and Calavo Drives to eliminate the delineators ("candlesticks").

It took five years to identify a way to fund the improvement, but at long last, the Department of Public Works has designed the project, secured an approved bid and issued a contract for work to begin at the end of May or early June. We want to give a big thank you to Supervisor Dianne Jacob and her staff, who worked with us to identify a way to fund the improvement.

Replacement will be an elevated median complete with a rock finish to provide a safer, more attractive divider between the northbound and southbound traffic at Avocado Boulevard and Fuerte Drive. The project is anticipated to take 120 days. 🌱



Annual Dinner Postponed



We know that many of our members look forward to the annual GMIA dinner, which had been scheduled for June 7 at the Water Conservation Garden. Because of the current health crisis, we have had to postpone the event to a as yet undetermined date. We hope that you are safe and healthy and can use this time at home to work in your gardens. We look forward to coming together as a community again when it is safe to do so.



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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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MISSION

GMIA is an 82-year-old non-profit 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.

President's Message

We are very fortunate to have a GREAT GMIA board who has continued to work through the ongoing pandemic crisis. We've met virtually via Zoom for board functions, and worked in virtual meetings with County Supervisor Dianne Jacob and staff to conduct GMIA business as usual. Read the articles in this newsletter to see the many ways GMIA has had an effect on our community.



However, I am sad to say that two of our hardworking GMIA Board Members, Kay Bickley and Paul Geldbach, have resigned from their positions. I want to say a huge Thank You to both of them as they have been great assets to our GMIA Board. Throughout the years, they've provided thoughtful insight about community concerns and helped us work toward solutions that benefit our region. Kay Bickley has been on the Board for 15 years, serving as our Board Secretary from 2010 to 2019. Kay has been a tremendous volunteer, stepping in to help, plan and assist at every event. She has truly been a gem and she will be missed.

Paul, a Board Member since 2016, has been instrumental in organizing logistics for our events, providing manpower with enormous energy and great cheer. His seamless planning coordinated the myriad details to ensure a great experience for our members including everything from installing banners, to working with the County event permit process, to securing needed furnishings and supplies. He has also been an inspiration with his own beautiful garden and was a perfect leader for the Succulent Swap and co-leader for the Walk Up Mt. Helix event. Thank you immensely to both Kay and Paul for your community service.

We have all been affected by the coronavirus in one way or another. For GMIA, our popular community events have had to be postponed. Thank you to all our members who have been following the County suggestions and mandates, such as shelter in place, social distancing and mask guidelines, and for those essential and health care workers who have gone to work every day on our behalf. Thank you to those who check in on neighbors and who wave to greet walkers strolling our streets. Your actions help us remember we are all in this together, and we will get through this together.

So, in closing, as you know: we have postponed the Annual Art and Garden Tour, Succulent Swap and Annual Meeting with hope that the next message you get from us will announce future dates. But in the meantime, thank you for your engagement and membership. Please share and forward this newsletter to a neighbor and encourage them to join.

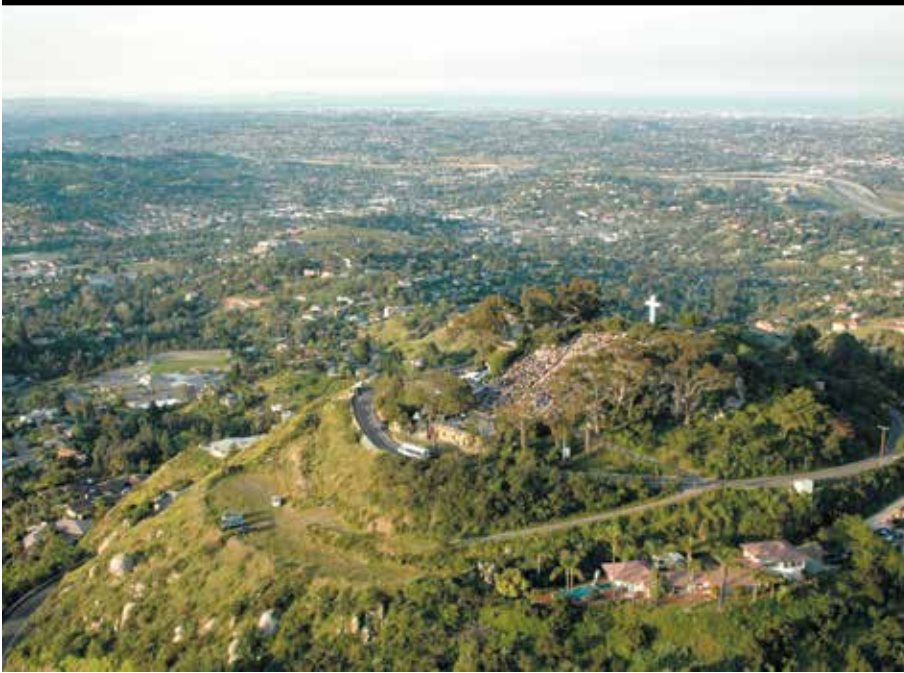
Take care and be safe. 🌱

Thank You Donors!

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

Ken Bullock
Keith Clements
Carl and Joan Ecklund
Bob and Amy Hargrove

John Kolb
Boris Kandkhorov and Zoya Maksumova
George and Penne Roach
Robert and Holly Yarris



GMIA & The Mt. Helix Park Foundation

Working Together With Residents on Mt. Helix Drive

by: Krista Bishop Powers, Exec. Dir., Mt. Helix Park Foundation

Mt. Helix Drive has always been an important walking artery to our community summit, nature preserve, and green space. The road is a part of my family memories from walks as a little girl to now pushing a stroller up with my own two boys in tow. I know how important this road is to our community.

Since I became Executive Director of the Mt. Helix Park Foundation about a year ago, my evenings often end with a call to the California Highway Patrol about cars illegally parked along Mt. Helix Drive.

- The CHP urges the community to call their nonemergency line when we see cars illegally parked, and to call the Sheriff's Department nonemergency number to report illegal activity.
- To get more resources, the community **MUST CALL**.
- The numbers are: CHP nonemergency 858.637.3800 and Sheriff nonemergency 858.565.5200.

Several residents have told me they would like to form a community action group to help with the needs along Mt. Helix Drive. As we navigate the new normal, this might be

a few conference or video calls, and then the meetings will be held at the Mt. Helix Park office once meetings resume in person.

I urge you to join our community action group for Mt. Helix Drive. The county currently has our ear and is looking at every option from speed-calming measures to a safe, protected minimalist natural-looking barrier, possibly rope and wood connected, walking lane up Mt. Helix Drive from the Fire Station. It would be wide enough for a stroller and still permit the legal width of the road for fire trucks. Most importantly, it would make it impossible for people to illegally park along Mt. Helix Drive. Although a project like this might take years, we have encouragement from Supervisor Dianne Jacob and a community letter-writing campaign may be effective in moving the project along.

Additionally, I want to thank from the bottom of my heart our daily walkers who have trash bags and pickers to remove the litter along the road from the illegally parked vehicles. Imagine what the road would look like without these angels!

Please email me at KPowers@MtHelixPark.org if you have input and/or would like to be part of our neighborhood action group with GMIA. 🌱

Board Member Profile: Dave Zimmerman

When Dave Zimmerman and his wife, Jocelyn, bought their house in Mt. Helix in 1983, they knew they had found their home – even with all the work they had to do to make the house a home.

“The house had been on the market for over two years, and it suffered from deferred maintenance,” Zimmerman said. “The bank wouldn’t give us the loan until we fixed it up. We spent a frantic two months painting and cleaning up the house. We put in a lot of sweat equity.”

Zimmerman, an engineer at Raytheon Technologies, joined the GMIA board in 2010 and is now the first vice president.

“Doing something for the community is paramount for me,” Zimmerman said. “It’s such a wonderful group of people on the board. I’ve never seen a board that is as proactive and all-supportive as this one.”

Zimmerman also served for four years on the Valle de Oro planning group, until he recently resigned because



of health issues. His motivation for the serving on the planning group is the same.

“I’m just doing what I can to help,” he said. “It’s not a matter of influencing people or accruing power. It’s a great community and a great board.”

Zimmerman grew up as the son of a diplomat and lived in exotic foreign cities as a child. He was born in Istanbul, and was posted with his family in Ankara, Turkey; Tangier, Morocco; Tunis, Tunisia; and Lagos, Nigeria.

“It was a terrific upbringing,” he said. “I saw that there were perfectly valid ways to solve problems, no matter the culture.”

Zimmerman got his undergraduate degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, then got his master’s degree at UC San Diego. It was while he was renting a room in La Jolla that he met his future wife – who was his landlord.

The Zimmermans will be celebrating their 41st anniversary on May 20. ▲

Pickup Sticks One Way That GMIA Is Being Neighborly

GMIA is helping our neighbors keep our streets and walkways clean of trash and litter. One way to do that is to use a GMIA-provided FREE pickup stick to pick up trash along our streets and walkways, making them clean, beautiful and welcoming.

At GMIA’s Walk Up Mt. Helix this year, the pickup sticks were made available for FREE and were widely appreciated. GMIA is launching a bigger campaign and is now offering the Pickup Sticks for FREE with the taker promising to be a “good neighbor” in our neighborhoods. As Mr. Rogers of TV and movie fame said, “Won’t you be my neighbor?”

Mike Valley and Paul Geldbach, funders and GMIA backers of this project, invite you to take part. Contact Mike for more information at smokeylamesa@gmail.com or 619-997-9366.



Anna Hedberg with pickup stick



Fury Lane and Calle Verde vehicle accident

Meeting with County Supervisor Dianne Jacob

In response to concerns about traffic from some GMIA members, a GMIA committee held a Zoom meeting with County Supervisor Dianne Jacob, County Public Works Department staff and El Cajon Office California Highway Patrol Captain Curtis Fouyer on April 9. The following two items were discussed.

on our meeting and further suggestion by GMIA, the County agreed to install the missing signs and as well as paint 35 MPH on the road to further emphasize the need to follow the speed limit.

Within a week after our meeting, the signs were installed and the street was painted. Fouyer said the CHP would also increase their presence to deter speeding. We also discussed a future sign campaign, suggesting “Slow down, this is your neighborhood” signs. We hope these added touches will remind drivers that Fuerte Drive is a neighborhood street, not a freeway.



Speeding on Fuerte Drive

Fuerte Drive has been an issue for many years, with speeding and numerous accidents. With the increased congestion on State Route 125 North, many drivers use Fuerte Drive as a shortcut from Avocado Boulevard.

A review by the County Traffic Engineering Department of Fuerte Drive from Chase Avenue to Severin Drive determined that eight speed limit signs were warranted and that two were missing. Based

Traffic Concerns on Fury Lane

GMIA also raised concerns about a stop sign that was installed in July 2019 at Fury Lane and Calle Verde (see photo above). The traffic on Fury Lane is often busy and at times it has been dangerous for vehicles trying to enter Fury Lane from Calle Verde. The county installed a three-way stop sign to address the issue.

The three-way stop worked when cars stopped, but created a worse problem when they did not. Several months after the installation, GMIA suggested adding warning signs, which were installed. However, accidents are still occurring.

To our surprise, the County Traffic Department was already aware of the problem and has begun designing a traffic signal to be installed this fall. GMIA supports this recommended improvement in reducing the accidents at this intersection. ▲



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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. Family 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 in the attached envelope to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

Note: if the date is June 2020 or later, your dues are paid in full, but you are welcome to renew in advance of the July 1 expiration.

Online Classes at the Water Conservation Garden

Although the Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College is closed during the pandemic, you can still get online advice and learn more about how to take care of your garden. The Garden is offering:

- Online landscape consultations, with a video/phone conference call with professional landscape designers and architects. You can get suggestions on what to do with a unique space, how to budget appropriately for your project, and discuss a layout for a garden redesign.
- Online irrigation consultations are also available through a video-call consultation. You can get professional guidance in a step-by-step approach on how to get your home's irrigation system running efficiently from Tiffany Faulstich, landscape architect and president of Botanicon.

To sign up, go to thegarden.org.

