



GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Preserving the Character of Our Community

August 30, 2019

Department of Public Works
5510 Overland Avenue, Suite 410
San Diego, CA 92123

Via email to: Jennifer.Talana@sdcounty.ca.gov
DPWSpecialEvent.Permit@sdcounty.ca.gov

Regarding: County of San Diego - Special Events Ordinance Update

Dear Public Works Department:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed updates to the County's Special Events Ordinance. We understand the proposed changes will be presented to the Board of Supervisors on December 11, 2019. We have several suggestions and comments that we would like you to consider.

Grossmont - Mt. Helix Improvement Association (GMIA) is a volunteer, multi-neighborhood organization that works to preserve and enhance the quality and character of our community. 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 Road and provides community outreach and engagement.

GMIA's premier program is our Annual Art and Garden Tour. Every spring, for more than 30 years, we have showcased the diverse gardens of four to six homeowners in our community, often inspiring others to beautify their landscapes with creative ideas for water-wise gardening. The tour is free to members and run entirely by many dedicated volunteers who ensure the event goes smoothly and safely. Participants walk or drive between the showcased gardens, and if parking is limited near a home on the tour, as was the case this year, we provide a complimentary shuttle so as not to inhibit traffic or inconvenience any neighbors. We have never had a pedestrian or vehicle accident surrounding our event.

Our planning each year includes working with the County to obtain an event permit, which includes approval of our traffic plan. We have been able to obtain our permit and borrow the appropriate traffic control equipment without a fee, and we appreciate that the County has provided these services to us over the years. The GMIA Art and Garden tour, along with our other programs, returns this value to the County by promoting neighborhood beautification and volunteer investment in the safety and well-being of our community.

With this in mind, our review of the proposed changes raises the following comments and concerns:

1. The proposed changes appear to require GMIA to obtain a Special Event Traffic Operations Permit (SETOP) for our Art and Garden Tour, and to pay \$344.10 for a permit (\$646.35 if we exceed 600 participants) plus approximately \$200 to \$400 dollars for traffic control device rental. These new costs would dramatically increase the budget required to put on this event.

2. Even though our traffic plan varies little from year to year, hiring an engineer or traffic-control contractor to design and submit our traffic control plan for a SETOP would add an additional cost of at least \$1,000.
3. Neighborhood block parties that impact county roads or rights of way would be subject to the SETOP requirements and accompanying fees (approximately \$375). This, along with the 75% signature requirement, may be sufficiently burdensome to deter such community-building events, and in so doing, sacrifice the many non-tangible benefits they cultivate.
4. The requirement that each SETOP application include a completed and signed Environmental Review Questionnaire demonstrating whether there will be any environmental impact under CEQA also has the potential to excessively and unnecessarily burden volunteer groups such as GMIA.

While we understand that cost increases and budget cutbacks may necessitate some of these changes, perhaps with the longstanding success and contribution of the Art and Garden tour to the community, GMIA may be grandfathered into the new rules and listed as an exception.

Thank you again for considering our comments. Please contact me at kchedberg@cox.net or 619.994.6900 if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kathleen Hedberg', is written over a light yellow rectangular background.

Kathleen Hedberg, PE, MPH
President

cc via email: County Supervisor Dianne Jacob
dianne.jacob@sdcounty.ca.gov

Wendy Tinsley Becker
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