



viewpoints

WINTER 2021

Volume 52 Issue 1

Walk to the Top

Saturday, January 8, 2022

10 a.m. at the Fire Station on Vivera Drive

Join your neighbors and friends on Saturday, January 8, for the 14th annual Walk to the Top of Mt. Helix. This family- and dog-friendly event kicks off at 10 a.m. at San Miguel Fire District Station 21 on Vivera Drive, where free parking is available.

Participants will leave in a group for the walk of about .65 miles to the summit, where GMIA has arranged for complimentary light refreshments and live music from the Jan McBride Jazz Duo. The piano and bass combo has been a perpetual favorite at the event. Cosponsor Mt. Helix Park Foundation provides our magnificent location and volunteer assistance.

GMIA vice president Pat Ryan and board member Lidia Chang are co-chairing this year's Walk to the Top. GMIA members and other community residents interested in volunteering to make this event a success, please contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com

For volunteers and trekkers alike, Walk to the Top is a great way to welcome the New Year! 🏔️

Walk to the Top

is also an opportunity to meet local nonprofit partners and learn what they are doing to benefit our community. Partners who have committed to staffing tables this year include:

Senior Gleaners

Helix Water District

Casa de Oro Alliance

Friends of the Casa de Oro Library

Rancho Helix del Oro Fire Safe Council

The Animal Pad

Mt. Helix Park Foundation

La Mesa Historical Society

Peter Pan Junior Theater

Dictionary Hill Open Space Advocates

San Miguel Fire District with Truck





GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Vacant

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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

Email us at:
yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com

MISSION

GMIA is an 83-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

When I moved to Mt. Helix in 2012, one of the things I loved about the area was the sense of community. It has a small-town feel, even though we're just a few miles away from San Diego. There's a certain pride to living in East County, and a feeling of caring about your neighbors that doesn't always exist in a larger city.

GMIA is a big part of that sense of community. Our events provide an opportunity for people in the community to get together, and we advocate for the community to make sure our voices are heard.

One of our popular GMIA events is the Succulent Swap, which was held in October. It was a great chance for the community to get together after months of pandemic isolation. Almost 200 people came to the beautiful home of Wendy and Ron Caragher to trade succulents, have a few refreshments, and perhaps check out the Caraghers' two cows.

On Jan. 8, we'll once again be sponsoring our Walk to the Top, where you can stroll up Mt. Helix with your neighbors and friends and enjoy the breathtaking view of East County at the peak.

We know we are a community that shares common concerns with neighboring communities and cities. One of our recent efforts has been to inform the commissions drawing up new federal, state and local electoral districts about our community's connection to East County.

A wide variety of proposed new districts are being considered and we are supporting proposals that align the interests of our community with those around us, such as Spring Valley, Rancho San Diego and Jamul. You can see our letters on the GMIA website under "Positions."

Would you like to be more involved with your community? GMIA has many volunteer opportunities available. It can be as easy as helping to clean up the Park and Ride at Fuerte and Severin Drives, or assisting at events like Walk to the Top. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact us at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com.

Thank you for helping to make our area a great community! 🌱

Anne Krueger



Thank You Donors!

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

Charles and Andrea Airy
Kathleen King
Paul and Janel Pehau
Sandra Matranga

Krista and Larry Powers
Gary and Cindy Rambis King
Suzanne Butler

A Safer Mt. Helix for All



Just in time for the new year, roadway improvements to Mt. Helix Drive are in place and already making a difference. A coalition of concerned residents plus GMIA, the Mt. Helix Park Foundation and the Valle de Oro Planning Group, worked alongside San Diego County project managers to resolve problems that have persisted for more than 20 years on our scenic roadway.

The San Miguel Fire Department and the San Diego-California Highway Patrol also provided crucial advice and guidance throughout the project. GMIA board representatives said county and state officials welcomed input from community groups to find solutions to the issues of vandalism, graffiti and illegal parking, which have posed longstanding safety concerns.

Not only have the road improvements helped to reduce illegal parking and littering in the area, they have also limited damage to the historic rock wall along Mt. Helix Drive. Additionally, pedestrians now feel safer enjoying the beauty of our community's most iconic site.

As we work to make our community safer, please do your part and report dangerous traffic infractions and illegal parking to the Highway Patrol Dispatch number: 858-637-3800 📞

New Zoning Laws May Impact Local Homeowners

New legislation designed to create additional housing throughout California will be taking effect on Jan. 1, 2022. The most controversial of the laws—Senate Bill 9—will modify or override existing zoning ordinances in many neighborhoods where single-family housing is standard. It appears that the law may apply to property within GMIA's boundaries.

Staff from the San Diego County's Planning & Development Services (PDS) Department are currently creating processes to implement the new laws, including applications, checklists and answers to frequently asked questions. The documents are expected to be available in January on the department's website: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds.html>

The planning department is also designing a webpage with an interactive map parcel tool allowing property owners to determine whether their property is impacted by SB-9.

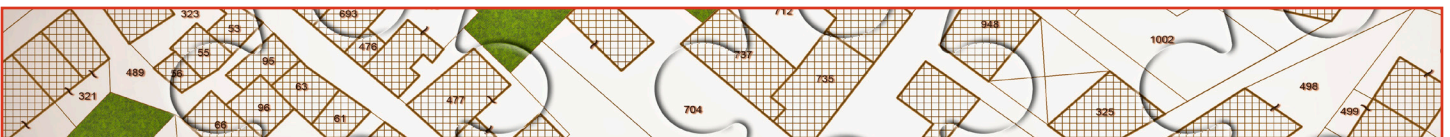
SB-9, also called the Duplex Zoning Law, will make it pos-

sible to build up to four housing units on lots previously zoned for a single-family home. Local zoning boards will be required to approve splitting single-family lots to be sold separately.

However, property owners seeking to split a lot must retain one of the housing units as their principal residence for at least three years. Currently, California homeowners are permitted to have two units on a single-family lot—a main house and a guesthouse.

Quoting research from UC Berkeley, the Los Angeles Times reported that nearly two-thirds of all residences in California are single-family homes, and as much as three-quarters of the developable land in the state is now zoned for single-family housing.

A state mapping tool that may help property owners determine the impact of SB-9 on their lot is available (using the APN #) at: <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/community-development/data-tools/index.shtml>. 📍





Drawing New Election Maps for our Community

Every 10 years, voting district lines are redrawn based on the latest census results. The changes affect all levels of government, from Congressional to state and county offices and the local school and special districts that serve a community.

With the results of the 2020 census out, that redistricting process is happening now, and it has a major effect on our GMIA community. Our voting power will influence who is elected to represent our community and the kinds of government resources we will be able to obtain.

California is one of 11 states with independent commissions set up to determine voting boundaries; in other states, this work is done by elected officials who could benefit from the way the borders are drawn. The California Citizens Redistricting Commission is currently determining election boundaries for seats in the state Assembly and Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. The San Diego County Independent Redistricting Commission is drawing the election boundaries for the five seats on the county Board of Supervisors. Both commissions have a mix of Republicans, Democrats and Independents who serve.

The commissions consider three factors when drawing up election boundaries:

- **Population:** Each district must have about the same population. In Congressional districts, that number is about 750,000. In county supervisor districts, it is about 660,000
- **Compliance with the Voting Rights Act:** Districts cannot be drawn up to dilute the voting power of

certain underrepresented groups, such as Blacks or Hispanics.

- **Community of interest:** The commissions must try to create districts that do not divide communities of interest. A community of interest is defined as a contiguous population sharing common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district so it can be effectively and fairly represented.

The GMIA Board of Directors reviewed the proposed maps and sent letters to the state and county commissions urging them to consider our area as a community of interest that should be aligned with other East County cities and communities. We noted that we share law enforcement, school and college districts and other governmental services with the cities of El Cajon and La Mesa and nearby communities including Casa de Oro, Rancho San Diego, Spring Valley, Jamul, Crest and Alpine.

You can read the full text of the letter from GMIA to the California Citizens Redistricting Commission on our website: gmia.net. Click on the Community Information tab at the top and choose Positions from the drop-down menu.

The commissioners will be reviewing all public comments when deciding how to draw new district maps. The state panel must vote on its final maps by Dec. 27, and the county commission must submit its final report by Dec. 15. We will keep you posted on what the new election boundaries will mean for GMIA. 🏔️

Board Member Profile



Lidia Chang

Stressed out with our demanding jobs and ready for a sabbatical from L.A., my husband Dave proposed that we travel around the world. He would sell his dental office and I would quit my job in corporate finance. We embarked on an 18-month adventure, which was just what we

needed to put our lives in order. Upon returning to L.A., the city no longer appealed to us. The birth of our son made it even less attractive; the congestion, the horrible traffic and the smog were not ideal for bringing up a kid. While completing my degree in design, we slowly looked around for a new home somewhere in California. We ended up buying the first house we saw in the Mt Helix area after a 14-month escrow. Thirty one years later, we love the decision.

My husband, Dave Willner, bought a small dental practice. I worked in interior and graphic design, and our stress levels went down. Our son grew up playing in the large backyard with a tree house, pool and basketball hoop, and more importantly, he obtained a quality education at our excellent local schools. Our expansive easterly mountain views con-

nected us to this beautiful region. Though I had never been a hiker before, Mt. Helix was my introduction to what became my favorite activity: hiking throughout our region, the Mammoth Lakes area and the national parks.

Throughout the years I have always been a willing participant in many GMIA events, from the Garden Tour to my favorite, the Succulent Swap. So I was happy to take my involvement a step further and join the GMIA board this year. I've found that GMIA is not just about neighbors getting together and beautiful gardens. Our association tackles very serious issues to make sure that our community continues to be an idyllic place to live.

The first week as a board member I was joining meetings and protests to prevent two sexually violent predators (SVPs) from being placed in a home in our community. This taught me something about the importance of a strong neighborhood association that can take action on the issues affecting us. GMIA and its board supported a very organized activist group of worried neighbors who came together in the wake of this impending threat. Together we stopped the placement of the SVPs and the danger they may have posed to young children attending a nearby school.

It's been a pleasure to get to know the GMIA board, a group of dedicated and effective volunteers. As a board member I would like to be the go-to person for information on planting in a hotter, drier climate. Working on the Succulent Swap has been a great start to learning about the kinds of plants that are beneficial to our beautiful community. ▲

News from the Casa de Oro Alliance

The final draft of the Campo Road Corridor Revitalization Specific Plan is scheduled to seek approval from the County Board of Supervisors in the second quarter of next year.

The Specific Plan is a multiyear, community-level plan intended to improve the urban form, quality of life and public safety along the Campo Road Commercial Corridor. The Casa de Oro Alliance received a \$500,000 grant to implement the plan.

A separate Neighborhood Reinvestment Program (NRP) grant from San Diego County has already funded

landscaping in the Casa de Oro Shopping Center as well as the placement of large decorative planters at 15 high-profile locations and the installation of creative banners on the light poles along Campo Road.

The Alliance is applying for a second NRP grant—and seeking private funds—to landscape the corner of Kenwood Drive and Campo Road and install a “Welcome to Casa de Oro” sign there.

In tandem with the Specific Plan, the Casa de Oro community is moving forward with plans for a new library at the south end of the Spring Valley Acad-

emy campus. Last year, the La Mesa-Spring Valley School Board agreed to partner with the county to replace a 6,300-square foot branch library in a strip mall along Campo Road with a new \$21 million library. The county will lease the land in Casa de Oro from the school district at a cost of \$1 a year for 99 years. Those involved in the project also envision a Boys & Girls Club on the site.

“We believe this exciting project could serve as the anchor tenant to revitalize the Casa de Oro business district,” said Bob Yarris, president of the Casa de Oro Alliance. ▲

One-stop Recycling

Waste Management of San Diego operates a buyback and recycling center at its transfer station in El Cajon. This center helps local residents in East San Diego County keep our community clean by accepting recyclables such as aluminum, glass and plastic in exchange for cash, as well as e-waste and household batteries.

925 O'Conner St.
El Cajon, CA 92020

(Located just southwest of the intersection of
Bradley and Johnson Avenues)

Hours of Operation: Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Customer Service: 1(800) DUMPSTER or 619-596-5100

Household hazardous waste and medical waste are not accepted. Refer to:

<https://www.wm.com/us/local/ca/east-san-diego-county/residential> for more information about safely disposing of hazardous household waste. ▲

REDEEMABLE ITEMS

- ◆ California Refund Value (CRV) aluminum cans
- ◆ CRV glass bottles
- ◆ CRV plastic bottles
- ◆ CRV bi-metal cans

DONATION ITEMS

- ◆ non-CRV aluminum
- ◆ non-CRV glass
- ◆ non-CRV plastic
- ◆ tin cans
- ◆ newspaper
- ◆ white ledger paper
- ◆ computer paper
- ◆ mixed paper
- ◆ corrugated cardboard

E-WASTE

- ◆ TVs, laptop computers, monitors and other cathode ray tubes (CRTs), in addition to other e-waste such as fax machines, VCRs, printers, camcorders, stereos and microwaves (free of charge to drop off with a limit of two items per visit)

OTHER

- ◆ household batteries
- ◆ fluorescent light tubes
- ◆ used motor oil (no more than 15 gallons) and oil filters
- ◆ thermostats



Calling All Gardeners!

GMIA is looking for five homes to be part of the 2022 Garden Tour on Sunday, April 24.

Nominate your own garden or a neighbor's for inclusion in this popular event by contacting:

Pat Ryan at
619-248-1619 or
patrice46@gmail.com

2022 GARDEN TOUR

One for Me, One for You

If our neighborhood gardens are looking more beautiful these days, you could be seeing the fruits of the GMIA Succulent Swap.

Hosted by Wendy and Ron Caragher at their Melva Road home, the annual event attracted nearly 200 GMIA members, guests and volunteers. On offer were dozens of varieties of succulents and cacti, and many unique bromeliads and epithelium species—some complete with growing instructions. Former GMIA board member Paul Geldbach and daughter, Greta, brought the show-stopping, 15-foot flower spike from an octopus agave.

Thanks to the Caraghers for hosting, to Mary's Donuts and Gladly Coffee for their generous donations, and to volunteers Christine Leefeldt, Mary Ellen Stepnowski, Sue Ellen Benson, Valerie Jacobs, Frances Hill and Zita Gardner for their work at the event.

GMIA board member Susan Nichols organized this year's Succulent Swap and board member Leslie Gardner designed our beautiful banners and recruited volunteer workers. Other GMIA board members involved were Pete Camana and John Richardson handling logistics; Teri Buehler, Kathleen Moen and Holly Yarris organizing and serving refreshments. 🌱

Hosts Wendy and
Ron Caragher



David and
Barbara
Mays



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 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. GMIA

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.

GMIA invites and encourages all residents in our membership area to become active members and support our efforts to ensure we will continue to enjoy our wonderful lifestyle. For more information on GMIA, please visit our website at www.GMIA.net



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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 2022 or later, your dues are paid in full, but you are welcome to renew in advance.

McKinney House Museum Tours



The McKinney House Museum, curated by the La Mesa Historical Society, is a period furnished facility available for tours and special events. The house is open Saturdays from 1 to 4 p.m. (closed holiday weekends). In 1908, Rev. Henry A. McKinney built the home for his family, whose members were active in the cultural, educational commercial and fraternal life of early La Mesa. Call 619-466-0107 for more information or to inquire about becoming a docent. 🏡

CALENDAR

Sat., Jan. 8, 2022

WALK UP MT. HELIX

Sat., Jan. 15, 2022

**Park & Ride
Cleanup**

Sun., April 24, 2022

GMIA Garden Tour