

# Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association

P.O. Box 150644 • SAN RAFAEL • CALIFORNIA • 94915-0644 • [HTTP://WWW.GERSTLEPARK.COM](http://www.gerstlepark.com)

## **GPNA ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION OF BOARD: JANUARY 26, 2006**

We are giving early notice of this very important meeting, because we want you to mark your calendar for Thursday evening, January 26, 2006 at 7:30 p.m., and plan to attend GPNA's Annual Meeting at the B Street Community Center. As usual, refreshments will be served, and we will review the year's activities and accomplishments as well as the major issues facing the neighborhood.

Your new GPNA Board members will be elected at this meeting. Please bring your concerns and your ideas on ways we can make our neighborhood a better place to live in. All GPNA members who are current as of this meeting will be eligible to vote. Even if you have to pay 2005 dues at the Annual Meeting in order to vote, and your membership expires on January 31, please rest assured that your modest dues will have supported the activities of GPNA in the previous year! Also, if you wish, you can pay your dues for both 2005 and 2006 at the Annual Meeting.

The election of new GPNA Board members will be for 3-year terms. Nominations for Board members can be taken from the floor during the meeting.

We look forward to seeing you at this important Annual Meeting! Whether you are a homeowner or a renter, your participation in GPNA is the best way you can insure that your interests are being addressed. Our Board members want to do a good job in representing you, but they need to hear from you to in order to do so!

**Please note: There are current vacancies on the GPNA Board of Directors. We want to hear from neighborhood residents who are interested in working with us to keep our lovely neighborhood a great place to live in. We invite such residents to volunteer to be on the Board. What's required? Commitment to neighborhood improvement, attendance at our meetings on the first Thursday of each month at 7 PM, and participation in our fun events. If you want to make a difference in the future of Gerstle Park, please join us! You'll enrich your life as well as the lives of all your neighbors.**

## **CHRISTMAS HOME DECORATING CONTEST**

The GPNA annual contest for best Christmas home decorations is one of the most fun-filled and rewarding events of the whole

year. We'll be searching all through Gerstle Park during the week before Christmas, to select the holiday decorated homes that will receive our annual decoration awards. Please let us know about any homes that you think merit an award, even if they're off the beaten track- up a hill, or around that last bend. A lovely, well-designed display of lit-up holiday cheer always deserves consideration, even if it's hidden away on a less-traveled street and contents itself with lighting up the mood of its immediate neighbors! This year, we will be giving awards for decorations with a definite "theme"- so put on your designer hat, and start planning early for your own home decorating theme! Our neighbors always come up with some spectacular displays of holiday cheer, and we know this year will be no exception!

## **CHRISTMAS CAROLING EVENT**

It's that time of year again- Christmas is coming right up, and once again we're lucky enough to have **JULIA NORTON** leading us in our annual Christmas Caroling event! Julia is a professional singer, music teacher and composer, and a Gerstle Park resident. She is currently recruiting singers for her own group, **The San Rafael Singers**. This year we'll have a **practice session on Tuesday, December 13th**. We'll meet at the B Street Community Center at 6:30 PM, and Julia will help us warm up our vocal chords and get all the lyrics in place; then, on **Monday, December 19th**, we'll meet at the Panama Hotel at 6:30 PM for hot cider and cookies, and proceed to walk through the neighborhood, caroling as we go. Last year was a hit, and we're hoping for even more participants this time. To join us, contact either Lynn Bradescu at {lalynn3@comcast.net}, or 454-4132, or Julia Norton herself, at [www.julianorton.com](http://www.julianorton.com) or 686-0682. This is an especially great event for kid participation, so bring them along and bring out your inner singer! It's a lot of fun, and our neighbors really enjoy this event!

Please note: In case of rain on December 19th, we'll meet for the caroling the next night, Tuesday, December 20th, at the same time.

## **UPDATE: LINCOLN/MISSION CONDOMINIUM PROJECT**

This is a proposed 36- unit condominium on the northwest corner of Lincoln and Mission. Even though the project is not within the boundaries of our neighborhood, GPNA collaborated with the San Rafael Federation of Neighborhoods and the Lincoln Hills Neighborhood

**(continued, Page 2)**

**(Condo Project - Continued)**

Association to appeal to the City Council because of the Planning Commission's approval of the project. We supported the appeal because this project is based on numerous understudied and erroneous conclusions about its impact on traffic, historical preservation, and general appearance. Also, this condominium project is representative of a series of upcoming similar projects; how they are evaluated and ultimately approved or denied will greatly impact the quality of life in our own neighborhood.

On Oct. 17th, the San Rafael City Council held a public hearing on the appeal. By the time of the hearing, the citizen effort opposing the project had gained a great deal of support city-wide, and many people showed up. The City Council voted unanimously to grant the appeal and to require an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to study the proposed project's impact on its surroundings, as well as proposals of mitigation measures. This process should take approximately 4-6 months, after which time additional public hearings will be held to address the findings of the EIR and to look further at the merits of the project.

As the Council considers this project, it's critical that we continue to tell them what we think! If you want to stay in the loop, please email [tymber@distinctivebuilders.com](mailto:tymber@distinctivebuilders.com) or call Tymber at 415-459-4337.

If GPNA and other concerned San Rafael residents hadn't made this appeal happen, an oversized monster of a building would now be under construction at the corner of Lincoln and Mission. This shows what a grass roots group effort can do! Many of our neighbors participated in the effort to win this initial success. Through two continuances, they still kept coming to the scheduled hearings. Thank you! Your continued interest will help ensure that during the next steps all the relevant issues are scrutinized, and that the City Council respects our concerns about development impact when they next vote on this project, and others as well.

**CHARACTER ASSASSINATION MUST STOP!**

Neighborhood character should always be considered in the planning of any new development. Unfortunately, San Rafael's city planners don't have a very good track record when it comes to this issue. Gerstle Park has a large concentration of irreplaceable vintage homes that grace our streets and define our neighborhood character. However, we are seeing more and more of them slip away each year, because for a long time City Hall has disregarded the historical character of our neighborhood architecture. If this

continues, we can expect an increasing number of older structures to be modified or demolished in favor of more modern architecture.

In the past, City Hall hasn't shown much interest in a strong architectural preservation policy; however, they may now be rethinking this issue. We have certainly given them the message that we treasure our neighborhood's beautiful vintage houses and want them preserved, but we need a strong citizen effort to prevent the City from destroying the historical flavor of Gerstle Park.

**GPNA needs volunteers to start a historical preservation effort.**

To garner interest, we plan to write several articles in subsequent newsletters about the history of some of our older neighborhood homes. Anyone who knows some history about one of our older neighborhood homes is invited to contribute. We plan to get the City Council to adopt an effective Historical Preservation Ordinance for San Rafael, and to explore the possibility of a Historic District within our neighborhood. We also want them to update the existing Historical/Architectural Survey with regard to our neighborhood. If you love our beautiful older homes and don't want to see them destroyed, please join this volunteer effort! Email our Board President, Chandra Murphy, at [murphdtm@yahoo.com](mailto:murphdtm@yahoo.com), or call her at 482-8033.

**And a special P.S.** - while we're on the subject of preserving our lovely neighborhood, we shouldn't forget the numerous beautiful trees that grace our properties and give us shade. Please *do not* drive nails into our neighborhood trees- over time this does a lot of damage! Nailing up signs should be done only to poles, and there are many to choose from on our streets. Please help to preserve our neighborhood trees. Thank you!

**ANNUAL PICNIC UPDATE**

GPNA held our Annual Picnic inside the upper redwood grove in Gerstle Park on the evening of September 15th. Everyone who attended enjoyed music by our own neighborhood musical group, Swing Fever. There were plenty of hot dogs and yes, we did have veggie dogs for those so inclined. Thanks to everyone who brought a side dish, salad or dessert to share. The highlight of these picnics is just neighbors getting together to renew acquaintances, enjoy themselves and each other, and make new friends. This year we had wonderful weather for the picnic, and raffled off several prizes. Thanks to picnic chairman Hugo Landecker, and to the many neighborhood volunteers who made this event a success.

*Speeders are often responsible people like our neighbors, friends and family who want safe, quiet neighborhoods just as much as we do. Let's support each other in a joint commitment to make Gerstle Park safer for the entire neighborhood!*

## GET INVOLVED AND IMPROVE TRAFFIC SAFETY

The truth is that most motorists find themselves speeding at one time or another, even if they have *no intent* to speed. Also, it's likely that many of the speeders in Gerstle Park *live in the neighborhood*, since many local residents tend to speed up due to the familiarity of their surroundings. Additionally, outsiders use our local neighborhood streets as short cuts to bypass frequently used streets, creating more congestion in our neighborhood.



At our first Neighborhood Traffic Meeting in June, the Traffic Committee discussed things residents can do to lessen traffic problems by using the *Three E's of Traffic Calming: Education, Enforcement and Engineering*. Through the efforts of the Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association's Traffic Committee, our neighborhood is beginning right now with *Education*, encouraging more police *Enforcement* and proactively requesting *Engineering* solutions from the city. While there's a long list of objectives being researched and implemented by the Traffic Committee,

**there are things each of us can do right now to help!**

Turn Over, PLEASE!

## *Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association Traffic Committee*

### As a Driver....

1. **Don't rush! Slow down**, be organized, and leave earlier if you need to. Studies indicate that slowing down on residential streets has very little effect on the time it takes to complete your journey, and greatly reduces safety risks. Slowing down also increases the time it takes to react to the unexpected, such as a child darting out from behind a parked car. Make a conscious effort to obey the speed limit in residential neighborhoods - because it's safer, **and it's also the law**. Remind neighbors and other drivers you ride with to do the same.



2. **Avoid using neighborhood streets as short cuts** - within our neighborhood and elsewhere, too. Taking short cuts down residential streets disrupts the quality of life in neighborhoods, and increases noise, pollution and safety risks.
3. **Observe the rules of the road**. Lowering your speed is the key, and when you take your time it's easier to make full stops, yield the right-of-way, be vigilant about cross walks, yield to pedestrians, and be courteous to bikes.
4. **Think about your driving habits**, and learn to **adopt a different attitude**. You should always expect the unexpected on residential streets, and remember that pedestrians have the right-of-way, whether or not they are in a crosswalk. Children, the disabled and the elderly may have less predictable or slower responses and habits, and drivers need to accommodate them graciously!
5. **Be conscious about your particular vehicle**. Larger vehicles typically have more tire hum, which is reduced at lower speeds; quick acceleration after a stop and running your engine at higher rpm's are both loud and disruptive in quiet neighborhoods.
6. **Leave your car at home** whenever possible, and encourage your family and friends to do the same. Ride the bus, get on your bicycle, or just walk, any of which reduces traffic volume and speeding in your neighborhood. And of course, you will be rewarded with the great health benefits that accompany exercise.



### As a Neighbor....Take the Initiative

1. If there are potential problem areas along your street, let either the GPNA Traffic Committee ([www.gerstlepark.com](http://www.gerstlepark.com)) or the City Department of Public Works (415 485-3375) know! Examples of problems might include damaged or missing signs, potholes, landscape that blocks visibility, etc.
2. **Report problems** of speeding or other driving offenses to the San Rafael Police Department. Their general number is 415-485-3000, and Parking Services should be contacted for parking issues at 415 458-5333. Let them know when the problem is more prevalent or habitual, so that their patrols can be focused and more effective. Ask for more traffic patrols. It will be helpful if you let the GPNA Traffic Committee know of your results, as we are working directly with the SRPD's Traffic Sergeant.
3. **Please report large trucks, buses or commercial traffic using neighborhood streets directly to the GPNA Traffic Committee**. Contact [Tymber@gerstlepark.com](mailto:Tymber@gerstlepark.com) or call 415-459-4337.
4. **Volunteer** to help the Traffic Committee. Call or email Dan Miller, Committee Chair, at [dan.miller@gerstlepark.com](mailto:dan.miller@gerstlepark.com) or 415.256-9819

## THE EFFORT TO SAVE LOCH LOMOND MARINA: UNIQUE ASSET OR HEADED FOR FAILURE?

Have you noticed those “Save Loch Lomond Marina” signs around town? The Loch Lomond Marina is currently under redevelopment, with plans that include expanding its commercial uses and adding a lot of housing. Housing was never allowed or planned for on this site until the most recent General Plan 2020, which was adopted last year, changed allowable land uses in San Rafael. The previous General Plan designations would have inspired the property owner to manage, or sell to someone interested in managing, a prosperous Marina and all that goes with it; but the new designations have encouraged the present property owner to overdevelop the site with uses that compete with each other and are not compatible. The site presents a unique problem—and perhaps a unique opportunity. That’s why people from many areas of San Rafael are concerned about how the planning process moves forward.

Even though Loch Lomond isn’t in our neighborhood, we would definitely be impacted by the traffic that overdevelopment would generate. From our neighborhood, Loch Lomond is one of the closest access points to the Bay. Under the current proposal, fishermen, hikers, windsurfers and cyclists, as well as local residents and marina tenants, would all be affected. There are innumerable discrepancies in the current planning process, and hopefully the Environmental Impact Report (due out Nov/Dec) will effectively sort these out and set realistic priorities for the site. Right now, the design doesn’t provide adequate space for the competing proposed uses to co-exist.

The present proposal calls for a great deal of construction; the lives of waterfowl and other species of animals using this area as a habitat will be greatly disrupted, possibly permanently. If the planned development proceeds, there will be more demands than ever on the site, by boaters, homeowners, birds and other animals, users of public recreational areas, children, pets, shoppers, shop-keepers, etc. There’s also the issue of areas likely to flood during rainy season. The numerous environmental issues cannot be kept separate from issues of design. The site must function well and meet the priorities laid out in the General Plan, or no matter how good it looks it will be a failure, and a loss to San Rafael.

While there may be space for housing on the site, how much is viable or wise can only be determined *after* ensuring that a robust Marina exists, and includes all the related marina-supporting businesses and parking needed to ensure its prosperity, *after* improving neighborhood commercial interests that help local residents avoid coming into

downtown for basic needs, and *after* providing for much-needed recreational areas. This latter issue is especially important, since this area is grossly underserved with actual parks for area residents, while it is required to maintain public Bay access. Planning should also include restoration and care of dwindling wetlands that support local wildlife.

Whether or not we agree on how realistic it is to accomplish this ambitious blend of uses, we must review design with all of this in mind. The utmost care and scrutiny must be taken to ensure that competing uses function harmoniously, and very careful thought and vision has to go into realistically assessing actual usage and needs.

Housing advocates are hitting local residents with the NIMBY label; however, name-calling hardly makes a case for developing this site poorly. In fact, local neighbors to the site may have a very accurate handle on the likely impacts that need scrutinizing. The developers are doing what developers usually do, namely making sure the project is profitable for them. It’s the City’s responsibility, therefore, to ensure that this process works out for the long-term good of San Rafael. However, since it was the City that opened the door for this development, residents need to stay especially vigilant to make sure their concerns are addressed and harmonious uses sustained.

These are hard problems concerning land use, environmentally sensitive habitats, and public access conflicts, and they need to be discussed and planned for properly before the number of acres set aside for development can be fairly and realistically determined. Several of your GPNA representatives are working with other local organizations to protect all our interests. We will keep you posted on this vital issue.

**HALLOWE'EN DECORATING CONTEST WINNERS!**

Here's the list of decorated houses which we thought best exemplified the spirit of Halloween. We want to thank EVERYONE who got into the spirit and decked their homes! This is a wonderful traditional holiday for kids of all ages. As usual, it was hard for us to choose winners- but we had to, or our choices wouldn't have made it into this issue! So here's our list for the best in each category:

**Grand prize Winner**

231 Bayview - **\$50 Dollar Gift Certificate to Panama Hotel**

**Best Pumpkins (with a tie for first place)**

First Place: 15 Marin Street - **2-ticket movie combo at Century Theatre**

First Place: 239 Bayview - **2-ticket movie combo at Century Theatre**

Second Place: 101 Marin Street

**Creepiest**

First Place: 362 Clorinda - **2-ticket movie combo at Century Theatre**

Second Place: 217 Bayview

Third Place: 40 Pleasant Lane

**Most Original**

First Place: 508 D Street - **2-ticket movie combo at Century Theatre**

Second Place: 538 D Street

Third Place: 39 Pleasant Lane

**Honorable Mention**

3 Madrona: Mini- Ghost Flock!

4 Octavia: Happy Pumpkin Patch!

146 San Rafael Ave: Dead body parts, great lights, and eyeballs galore!

325 C Street: Very spooky - great skeletons!

222 Bayview: Very social spot with hot cider!

341 Clorinda: Graveyard with lots of dead things!

Once again, our thanks to all of the decorated homes, for your creative holiday spirit!

**FLOOD SEASON IS APPROACHING!**

During most of the year, Mahon Creek is barely noticeable as it trickles through the northeast corner of our neighborhood. But in the winter things can change dramatically. In addition to draining through the entire Gerstle Park neighborhood, Mahon Creek's watershed includes the Sun Valley and Fairhills neighborhoods, as well as most of the downtown area. When winter storms coincide with high tides, Mahon Creek is apt to overflow its banks and flood low elevation sections such as First Street and B, C and D Streets. Flooding is a serious safety concern, not only for residents whose homes lie adjacent to the creek, but also for other Gerstle Park residents who are unable to use these streets when they're flooded. The GPNA Mahon Creek Committee recently met for a second time with Andrew Preston and Scott Schneider from the San Rafael Department of Public Works to address the problems posed by the upcoming rainy season. As mentioned in a

previous newsletter, the DPW is working with us on several long term improvements for this situation. In the meantime, here are a few things that you can do as winter approaches, in order to help yourself and the neighborhood prepare:

- 1. Keep storm drains clear.** Rake and dispose of any leaves in front of your property, including the planting strips in the public right of way.
- 2. Park cars at least ten inches from the curb,** especially on hills, so that water flow is not obstructed.
- 3. Do not drive through flooded areas.** This exacerbates flooding problems and is not safe.
- 4. If you notice flooding problems, call the DPW** at (415) 485-3355 (voice mail) or go to <http://www.sanrafaelpublicworks.org/contactus.htm> to report problems.

If you would like additional information about GPNA's Friends of Mahon Creek or want to be added to our email list, please contact MaryAnn Nardo at 457-9247.

**2005-2006 CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**December 1:** Monthly Meeting - 7PM\*

**December 15:** Christmas Caroling

**December 20-30:** Holiday Decorating Contest

**January 5:** Monthly Meeting - 7PM\*

**January 26:** Annual Meeting

**COMMUNITY MEETINGS**

Cultural Affairs Commission - 1st Wednesday


Design Review Board - 1st & 3rd Tuesdays

City Council - 1st & 3rd Mondays

Planning Commission - 2nd & 4th Tuesdays

Fed. of S.R. Neighborhoods - 3rd Tuesday

\* Guests are Welcome! If you desire to address the GPNA Board of Directors, wish to attend a meeting or need more information on Gerstle Park Events or Community Meetings, below, please contact Chandra Murphy at 415-482-8033 or Tymber Cavasian via email: [tymber@gerstlepark.com](mailto:tymber@gerstlepark.com)



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