

Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association

P.O. Box 150644 • San Rafael • California • 94915-0644 • <http://www.gerstlepark.com>



Quarterly Newsletter

Winter 2007

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Holidays to Everyone! In August I mentioned that I was still learning this job. Now, in October, I can say that I finally feel up to speed on all that is pertinent to our neighborhood, with just three months until it is time to install a new Board! Hmmm!? Most Board Member terms are three years and as a term expires, the Board member has a choice to step down or to join again. In general, the Board's mission is to *enhance the character and livability of our neighborhood*. Yet each Board is unique as new Members infuse their passion for what matters most to them into our community.

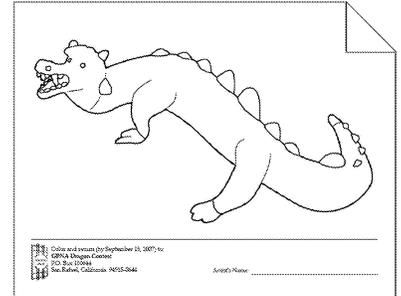
One passion I have is the importance of treating Board and committee members well. I always try to thank them, acknowledge them and give them the respect they deserve. These are people who serve our community in so many ways, on a completely volunteer basis. Often, they are dealing with unpleasant or challenging matters plus having to take flak from some of our more opinionated neighbors. This can be very disheartening. As the Board and our committees work to enhance our neighborhood, we are always interested in your suggestions and input, but please try to remember we are all doing this because we care and when we are able - without compensation of any sort! (Which is why I advocate having some fun!)

As we prepare to bring on new Board members, I look to the current and previous members to mentor the newcomers and help them understand the issues and pass on what they've learned. We are seeking new Board members; positive and productive people with good communication skills who want to get involved. As the Board continues to evolve, so does our neighborhood. Our community is a better place to live because of the Board. I have learned much about what the Boards of the past have fought for on our behalf and met the folks who started things like the Garage Sale and Picnic. Thank you, thank you to all of them for all of that good work!

Our Annual Meeting will be on January 24th, from 6:00-8:00 pm at the B Street Community Center (mark your calendar!). As with last year, there will be pizza and beverages. Please come to the meeting. I would love for former Board members, all of our Ambassadors and our wonderful members to attend. I would personally like to acknowledge all of you! The Board is up to some great stuff. Consider becoming a Board member and bringing your unique contribution to our community.

DRAGON CONTEST WINNER

Congratulations to Carrie Souza of Ross Street for winning the Dragon Painting Contest! Carrie's Dragon is purple with lime green and turquoise spots, and two flowers on one leg! The Dragon will be repainted in the spring to match her winning entry. The new design and colors will surely brighten the Dragon and the park! As the winner of our contest, Carrie will also receive movie passes. Runners up will get gift certificates for a scoop at Double Rainbow!



Runners up in the contest are:

Eden Ballard, Emma Heidin, and Kathleen Waterbury

Honorable mention goes to the 'No More War' entry by **Craig Whately**

The Board would like to thank everyone who submitted an entry in this year's contest. It was a difficult decision given all of the beautiful and creative entries. We hope everyone enjoys the newly painted dragon this spring!

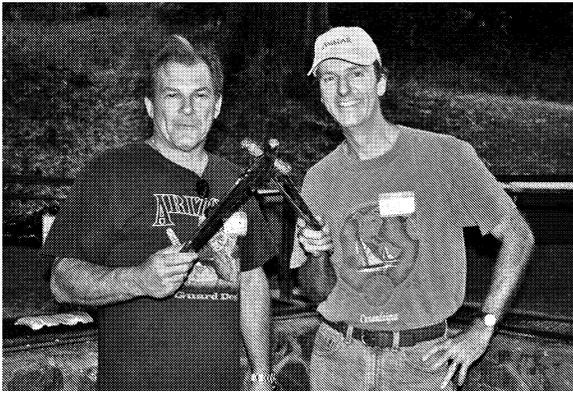


HOLIDAY CAROLING

December 22nd, 6:30p.m. Meet at the Panama Hotel!

GET READY MARIN CAMPAIGN

To help residents prepare for a disaster, the county created the Get Ready Marin campaign. The website serves as a guide to the resources available and a personal preparation guide. We need to be ready to take care of ourselves for 72 hours in the event of a severe earthquake, fire or flood. Preparedness training is offered throughout Marin. Visit the website at: www.getreadymarin.org, or call 458-5002 to learn about the next training in San Rafael. The GPNM will fully reimburse members attending the CERT (formerly DART) course. For more information about that, contact info@gerstlepark.com or call 485-3488.



ANNUAL PICNIC

The Gerstle Park annual picnic is into its 30s now and we continued the tradition in September. To draw in more of the neighborhood, it was on a Sunday this time and attendees had the opportunity to meet many neighbors. The rock band, *Void Where Prohibited* cranked the music while we socialized, held a raffle with great prizes, admired all the dragon painting entries, and ate very well thanks to the contributions the attendees brought. A good time was had by all. (Next year we will be hiring a slightly quieter band!)



GPNA NETWORKING SOCIAL MIXER

The GPNA Networking Social is a new event, started this year. This fun and successful gathering took place three times in 2007 at the Panama Hotel. Owner Dan Miller has been tremendously generous by opening his restaurant/hotel for GPNA members to mingle, pitch their businesses and discuss our neighborhood. Attendees also enjoyed Dan's appetizers and hotel tours.

THIEVES IN GERSTLE PARK

While we enjoy our special neighborhood, unfortunately, we are not immune from crime, as a recent surge in auto break-ins shows us. Angelo Douvos, a Gerstle Park resident had the misfortune of experiencing this twice. He volunteered to write about his experience as well as provide tips on how to protect your car.

What do you do when, first thing in the morning, you go out to your car that's parked on the street in front of your house, only to find the front end panel, the tail light assembly, and the stereo gone? I know just what to do; I've been through it before. You go back inside the house, treat yourself for shock and exasperation with at least 15 minutes of meditation, call the police, and then call your insurance company.

My car was stolen last year from in front of my Clorinda Avenue house; it turned up in Richmond a few days later. Neighbors across the street from me had their car stolen not too long ago.

In August, my car was stripped while parked in front of my house and directly under a bright streetlight. I think the light helped the thieves see what they were doing. Also that night, my neighbor's car was broken into, a stereo was stolen from another car, and, as a garbage truck driver relates it, a nearby car was left on blocks with all four wheels gone.

Professional thieves look for easy marks and the auto parts they desire. My 1994 Acura provided \$2,000 of such parts. What can you do to protect your cars? First of all, neighbors watching the neighborhood are a powerful deterrent. Do not hesitate to call the police if you see suspicious activity. There are many preventative options available including alarms, steering wheel clubs, and the LoJack, which emits an inaudible signal that the police can track. Other ideas include a red blinking light for your dashboard; install a camera at the appropriate place; and an extreme option would be to build underground parking with a mean pit bull stationed inside your car and an ill-tempered armed guard nearby. If readers have other suggestions, let me know. Good luck.

GPNA CALENDAR

December 6	Thursday	Monthly Board Meeting*
December 22	Saturday	Holiday Caroling
January 3	Thursday	Monthly Board Meeting*
January 24	Thursday	GPNA Annual Meeting

* Guests are welcome! If you desire to address the GPNA Board of Directors or wish to attend a meeting, please contact: info@gerstlepark.com

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT: WHAT IS IT AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT ME?

With the recent fires in Southern California, it seems a good time to review our local vegetation management ordinance and what we can do to prevent a similar disaster from happening here. Most fires spread by flying sparks landing on flammable material. To minimize our fire risks, the City of San Rafael adopted the current ordinance in August of this year and it applies to any home that falls within what is called the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI).

The ordinance's objective is to create a defensible space around each structure by reducing the fuel load, keeping the fire on the ground and slowing it down. This will give our fire and emergency personnel time to respond and to give your structure a fighting chance in the interim. The ordinance requires that very specific actions be taken if your property falls within the WUI. Every street in Gerstle Park is on the WUI list with the exception of:

San Rafael Ave	Frances St	Ivy Ln	Taylor St	
Elford St	Treanor St	Alvina Ave	Marin St	Welch St

There are some individual addresses also excluded from the WUI. To find out if your address is one of those, check the link at the bottom of this article.

The ordinance calls for 100 feet of defensible space around any structure. If your home is on the WUI list and there is only 30 feet from your home to your property line, it is the responsibility of the adjacent home/land owner to make sure that their property complies with the ordinance for the remainder of the distance (which in this case would be 70 feet).

While it is a good idea for every home regardless of location to have defensible space around it, if your home is on the WUI list, you are required by law to comply with the vegetation management ordinance. There is extensive information about vegetation management, defensible space and the ordinance itself on the City of San Rafael's web site and is also available as a handout at SRFD Station 1 (1039 C Street). Here are a few highlights of what defensible space means:

- ◆ Cut all dry grasses to 3" and then remove cuttings
- ◆ Remove combustible vegetation on the ground within 10 feet of any road used for vehicle traffic
- ◆ Remove dead wood from the ground that is less than 3" in diameter
- ◆ Maintain firewood away from structures so it is twice the distance away as the height of the pile
- ◆ Limb trees from the ground up to a maximum of 10' (but not more than 1/3 height of tree)
- ◆ Remove dead trees
- ◆ Cut back trees 10–15 feet from chimney remove all juniper and/or bamboo within 15 feet of your home (by 2011 you must remove it within 100'). Adjacent parcel owners must clear balance of footage from your property line to the 100' requirements.

The San Rafael Fire Department has created a three-year plan with a priority list for neighborhoods and Gerstle Park is slated for 2008. However, the ordinance is in effect now and they will be responding to any calls alerting them to particularly egregious properties. The fire department will come out and perform a free assessment of your property upon appointment (call 485-3488). When Gerstle Park rises to the top of the priority list sometime in 2008, the fire department will go door-to-door handing out packets of information and letters will be sent as well, informing the homeowners of their need to comply. Look for information in the IJ, on the city's web site and also from the GPNA.

While there is too much information to impart here, hopefully this has been helpful. For more information, contact the SRFD Vegetation Management Program at 485-3488 or visit their web site at:

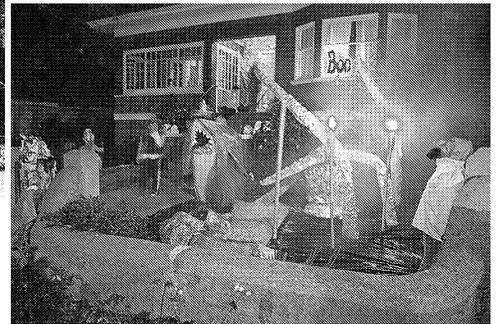
http://www.cityofsanrafael.org/Government/Fire/Vegetation_Management_Program.htm

GERSTLE PARK HALLOWEEN

What a fabulous Halloween in Gerstle Park! We had so many wonderfully decorated houses and creative new ideas. The spookiness, hauntings, and beautifully carved pumpkins set the scene that young and old enjoyed. We had giant spiders, jelly fish, live animation, skeletons and beautiful lights. There were too many outstanding creations for the Board to pick one winner, so we have chosen our Top 12 list and each winner will receive a \$25 gift certificate to the Panama Hotel. Many thanks to everyone who decorated maintaining our frightening reputation! (If your home is way off the beaten path and we missed you, please make sure to alert us next year - we'll come check it out!)

Gerstle Park's Top 12 Halloween Homes:

- 222 Bayview 508 D
- 51 Woods 362 Clorinda
- 40 Pleasant 217 Bayview
- 231 Bayview 239 Bayview
- 101 Marin 51 Clorinda
- 538 D 39 Pleasant



GPNA MEMBER BENEFITS

There are many benefits to joining your neighborhood association, here are just a few:

- ◆ Kept informed of matters pertaining to our neighborhood including development, events and crime.
- ◆ Increase mass of Association providing more power to affect outcomes when dealing with the city.
- ◆ Able to attend neighborhood networking meetings
- ◆ Receive quarterly newsletter by mail.
- ◆ Build up funds to improve our community: paint signs, clean-ups, enhance events, etc.
- ◆ Discounted participation fee for Garage Sale
- ◆ 100% Reimbursement for CERT Training (We need experts in the 'hood!)

Please join us by filling out the membership form below and submitting it in the enclosed envelope.

2008 Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) Membership Form

Please complete the information below and return with your check to:
GPNA, P.O. Box 150644, San Rafael, CA 94915-0644

Membership Year Runs from January 1st through December 31st

Individual: One Voting Member: \$15.00 (\$10.00 Seniors Age 65 or Older)

Household: Two Voting Members: \$20.00 (\$15.00 Seniors)

New Member ◆ Renewal

Gerstle Park T-SHIRTS: Child & Adult \$15ea. _____ / _____
Quantity Size

Additional Donation: \$ _____ Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____ Date: _____

Do you wish to receive our quarterly newsletter via email instead of home delivery? Yes ◆ No

Are you interested in volunteering? Yes ◆ No