



Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association

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

Winter 2004

GPNA ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION OF BOARD: JANUARY 27, 2005

We are giving early notice of this very important meeting, because we want you to mark your calendar for Thursday evening, January 27, 2005, 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. All GPNA members who are current as of this meeting are eligible to vote. Even if you have to pay 2004 dues at the Annual Meeting in order to vote, and your membership expires 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 2004 and 2005 at the Annual Meeting.

The proposed changes to our Bylaws, voted on during our Annual Picnic, were approved. Thanks to all of you who voted and made this happen, because these minor changes will be implemented to better serve you, and will allow the business of the board to run more smoothly.

The election of current and new GPNA Board members will be for 12 positions, for terms ranging from 1 to 3 years. 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!

GERSTLE PARK OPEN SPACE

California has had a terrible year for wildfires, and the open space area above Gerstle Park is a prime danger spot for potential wildfire. GPNA has long known about this problem, and we have been working for at least the last thirteen years to remove the non-native French broom that prevails in this open space area. Removing the broom prevents the dangerous buildup of drier and taller plants that could fuel a bad fire. It also eliminates some of the hidden areas used by illegal campers who often make campfires, creating yet another hazard. But we really need more help in this important endeavor! If this open space area has a fire, it could seriously endanger the homes along Upper Toyon. If you can help with clearing the French broom, call Hugo Landecker at 456-0221. If you see any signs of illegal campers, vandalism or other problems, please call Officer Mark Hedeem at the San Rafael Police Department (485-3000). It's best to leave a voice mail for him.

CHRISTMAS CAROLING EVENT

It's that time of year again- Christmas is coming right up, and we're once again lucky enough to have JULIA NORTON, of the San Rafael Singers, leading us in our annual Christmas Caroling event. Julia is a professional singer and composer, and a Gerstle Park resident. She teaches singing to individuals and groups, and is currently recruiting singers for the San Rafael Singers. This year we'll have a practice session on Tuesday, December 14. We'll meet at the Panama Hotel at 6:30 PM, and Julia will help us warm up our vocal chords and get all the lyrics in place; then, on Thursday, December 16, we'll meet again at the Panama at 6:30 for hot drinks 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 December. To join us, contact either Lynn Brandescu at lalynn3@comcast.net or 454-4132, or Julia Norton herself, at www.julianorton.com or 686-0682. This is an especially great event for kid participation, so bring them along! Please join us this year, and bring out your inner singer! It's a lot of fun, and our neighbors really enjoy this event!

HOLIDAY 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!

UPDATE ON 2020 GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan has completed the final process of public hearings before the City Council and the Mayor, and is now headed towards adoption. Final review comments will be incorporated, and then the Plan will await the stamp of approval from the State on the Housing Element. It's anticipated that the 2020 General Plan will be adopted by the end of the year. This document went through final scrutiny by neighborhood associations, the Chamber of Commerce, developers and environmental groups. Questions of priority and ambiguities, as well as complaints, were addressed. Certain refinements to the Plan concepts were added that may help Gerstle Park (and other neighborhoods as well) in our efforts to achieve meaningful policies concerning historic preservation, stricter design standards, more exact specifications regarding "mixed-use" or "live-work" development, better cooperation in retaining the character of our community, and the completion of neighborhood plans as a priority. Better management of Mahon Creek is now included in the Plan, and the door is open for continued efforts to identify traffic solutions other than signals for 1st and D St., and for 1st and C St. The City Council is now quite aware that the development along the 2nd St. corridor, particularly on the south side, is and will remain a great concern to our neighborhood. Although we were not able to achieve down-zoning (modifying zoning specifications to achieve lesser density/scale) in that area, more definite language regarding scale, transition and compatibility has been added into the Plan. Overall, however, very few concrete changes were made to the Draft Plan with regard to down-zoning, height limits on buildings, and traffic calming policies. We need continual input from residents on these issues, in order to influence the City to prioritize our concerns. As future building and development takes shape, we have to help guide our City officials to make decisions that protect our interest in preserving our great neighborhood. If you have thoughts and/or ideas on these issues, please contact Tymber Cavasian, GPNA Board Secretary, or any GPNA Board member. Your input is important, and can be useful in our continued efforts with the City. Tymber's email is tymber@distinctivebuilders.com. Don't forget to put "GPNA" or "Gerstle Park" in the subject line, please.

SAN RAFAEL GENERAL PLAN

ADDRESSES C ST. FLOODING PROBLEM

In September, several Gerstle Park residents addressed the City Council and Director of Public Works to urge that our flooding problem should be formally addressed in the San Rafael General Plan 2020. Written comments were also delivered to the Director of Community Development. As a result of our collaborative voice, the city staff recommended adding the following language to the General Plan: "Develop a Creek Management Plan for the periodic dredging and maintenance of Mahon Creek from B Street to Highway 101. Explore other feasible and cost-effective solutions to minimize or divert drainage to reduce periodic flooding on Mahon Creek." Thanks to all of you who signed the comment to the City Council or spoke at the meeting.

The area around Mahon Creek is home to the worst winter flooding within the City. A GPNA committee recently surveyed residents and homeowners to get a better understanding of the scope of the problem, and a high percentage of survey respondents indicated that flooding is a major problem for them; concerns reported include damage to property and vehicles, loss of access to property, and safety concerns. This survey has brought together an active and concerned core of Gerstle Park residents who are working to keep the City aware of the problem and hopefully lessen the frequency and severity of winter flooding.

In the upcoming flood season, be prepared. Know where storm drains are located on your street and make sure they don't become clogged with leaf litter. The Department of Public works usually offers sand and burlap sacks during the first severe winter storms. Their phone number is 485-3355.

B STREET: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR COMMUNITY

B St. is Gerstle Park's eastern boundary, and links our neighborhood to downtown. It houses the San Rafael Community Center and Albert Park, and contains some great businesses, such as Muffin Mania, the Panama Hotel, and the Bocce Court, to name just a few. However, the physical appearance of B St., especially the area between 2nd and Taylor, has sometimes been a problem.

GPNA wants to make B St. an attractive gateway to Gerstle Park, and is working with neighbors, local businesses and the City to enhance its appearance. Some of the things we've accomplished so far are: a loading zone for 7-11, to minimize trucks blocking the traffic lane and decrease the use of street parking for non-resident vehicles, additional

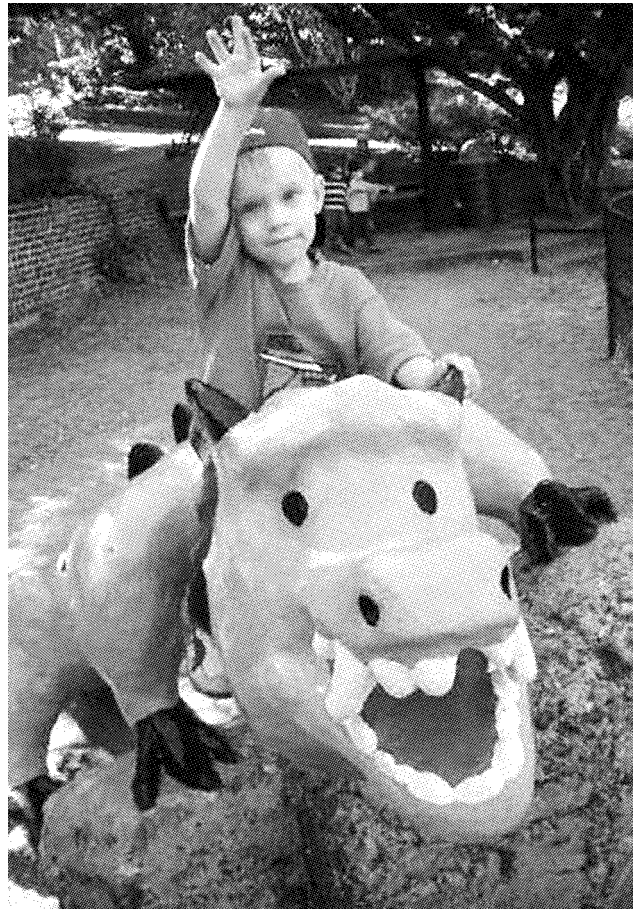
trash cans to discourage litter, and arranging for additional street trees and plantings, to make B St. look more in keeping with other streetscapes in the neighborhood.

We still have work to do with businesses, the Police Dept., etc. As this effort progresses, we will need volunteers to participate in the implementation and maintenance of these improvements. If you can help with this worthwhile community project, please contact Tymber Cavasian at 459-4337, or email her at tymber@distinctivebuilders.com, with your ideas, comments or offers to help. There's a wide range of things you can do- weed pulling, watering, trash pickup, as well as concrete cutting, planting, painting, and problem monitoring. The more community involvement, the better we will succeed!

And speaking of improvements around B St.- a note of thanks to Andrea Eneidi and her husband Mitch Shandley, for the attractive and well-maintained plantings in the curb strips along 1st St. between B and C. Andrea and Mitch hand-dug each strip to remove weed-laden topsoil, then applied soil amendment and planted drought-resistant, full-sun-tolerant plants. They then added mulch to keep down weeds and prevent water evaporation. Plants selected were purple fountain grass, New Zealand tea trees, fortnight lily, New Zealand flax, society garlic, creeping thyme, heavenly bamboo, lambs' ears, carpet rose, and blue salvia. Everything was bought locally- plantings from Home Depot, Yardbirds and Sloat Garden Center, and mulch and soil from Shamrock materials. Good work!

ANNUAL PICNIC RECAP

Thanks to all Gerstle Park residents who attended the GPNA Annual Picnic on Thursday, Sept. 16, and for the delicious dishes you all brought to the festivities! It was a pleasure to see so many longtime neighbors in attendance, as well as many new residents. We also had the good company of SRPD Sgt. Jonathan Bean and Beat One Officer Buffy Paxon, who came to thank us for the defibrillator our PD was able to purchase for the Beat One patrol car, through the generous contributions of you, our neighbors. We raffled off some wonderful prizes generously donated by merchants in our community, and reveled in the music of our own local band, Swing Fever, which many of you have enjoyed at their regular Tuesday evening gig at the Panama Hotel. Thanks to Lynn Bradescu, GPNA Board member, who paid for the band's appearance. There's nothing like live music at a picnic! And another thanks goes to Miles Chapman from Bodega Coffee, for providing enough delicious coffee to keep us going strong throughout the evening. This was a very successful and enjoyable event, and we hope that even more of you will attend next year.



GERSTLE PARK DRAGON REPAIRED!

We are delighted to report to all our neighbors that the beloved old dragon inside Gerstle Park, which had been vandalized earlier this year, has now been completely repaired. The City found a wonderful Point Reyes artist to make the necessary repairs, and he did a fantastic job! We hope you will all go by the park to pay the dragon a visit and see his new look-he's now sporting a brand-new paint job of lovely moss green. It's wonderful to have our own Gerstle Park mascot back, alive and well (so to speak). And come next spring, the neighborhood children will once again be able to enjoy playing and climbing on this treasured and historic structure.

NEIGHBORHOOD VOICES: MUFFINS AND MUCH MORE

Located right at the foot of B Street as it curves around to become Bayview, Muffin Mania has been serving delicious muffins and morning coffee since 1983- January 4th of that year, to be exact, according to a plaque outside the door. Proprietor Rocky Sullivan, a former rock-and-roll musician, and his wife, Ilona, have made their little world of well-made, tasty pastries and good coffee into a neighborhood institution. Because of their name, however, many people don't realize that they also make delicious lunches- a variety of sandwiches made with their own handmade breads, as well as hearty salads and soups, and a generous selection of beverages in addition to their addictively delicious coffee. "I'd like our full menu to be less of a local secret", Rocky says, "but we couldn't give up the name Muffin Mania. After all, we have lots of loyal muffin maniacs, some of them second-generation".

Rocky and Ilona are native New Yorkers, and Rocky has a long family history in the restaurant business. He originally joined the family restaurant tradition as a day job to finance his career as a musician, and met Ilona in 1968 while he was playing a gig very close to Woodstock, N.Y., just before that small upstate town became a legend as the site of the Woodstock festival. Upon urging from friends who lived here, the couple moved to Marin in 1976, and while Rocky made new connections in the music business and eventually formed his own band, he and Ilona began a sort of cottage industry by making muffins in their own kitchen and selling them to restaurants and delis. This became a successful wholesale business for them, but they really wanted their own bakery/restaurant, and when they saw the B St./ Bayview site for lease, they jumped at the opportunity. It had formerly been a used-furniture store, and there was enough space for 10 or 11 tables, plus room in the back for the necessary ovens and bakery racks. They bought a cozy collection of old unadorned wooden tables and chairs, and also made space for two baby highchairs, which are tucked away under a shelf featuring stuffed animals. "We like families to feel welcome here", Ilona says.

At first Rocky made muffins in the usual manner; but then, for a friend of his who was a vegan and ate no milk or eggs, he made a special line of muffins without either of those ingredients, and he and Ilona discovered that they actually preferred the taste of these "special" muffins. Since then, the majority of the muffins at Muffin Mania have been made without milk or eggs, which makes them appreciably lower in calories as well as vegan-accessible, without losing that good solid muffin taste. But there's also a variety of non-vegan baked goodies, such as scones, biscotti, cookies and chocolate soufflé cake, thanks to their 29-year-old son

Dylan, who graduated from the Culinary Institute of America in St. Helena with a specialty as a pastry chef. Dylan enjoys making special-occasion cakes and pastries, and the family's plan is to showcase his talents by adding a refrigerated display case and expanding the pastry menu to include cakes and tarts. Rocky and Ilona's other son, Jarrett, 25, named after a fellow musician, is an actor and makes his home in Los Angeles.

Rocky's show-business career is reflected in some rather individual mementos displayed on the walls of Muffin Mania- rare old posters featuring Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Janis Joplin and The Who, as well as a poster advertising the Rocky Sullivan Band, showing a provocative-looking blonde in sunglasses. "That's me, all right", Ilona laughs, "at the ripe old age of 28!"

But the most arresting feature of the décor is the mural which dominates the side and back walls. Rocky and Ilona wanted a tribute to the late music promoter Bill Graham, as well as a representation of other players from the good old days of rock-and-roll. They gave free rein to a local artist, who painted a large likeness of Graham showing him enjoying coffee and a muffin while being gently pelted with flowers from a plane high above. Rocky explains that there actually was such a flower-strewing ceremony in Golden Gate Park, after Graham's untimely death in a helicopter accident. The mural also features a fog-shrouded Golden Gate Bridge, and likenesses of Jerry Garcia, Carlos Santana and John Cipollina, a guitarist who played with Rocky, and who died of emphysema at the young age of 46.

Muffin Mania's cozy side garden adjoins the Panama Hotel, and many of the hotel's guests enjoy early morning coffee here, among the greenery that Ilona has been cultivating for many years with the help of a gardener. Providing subtle fragrances as well as pleasure for the eye are old-vine roses, daisies, mint, tomatoes, strawberries and a variety of ferns, as well as a fig tree. The setting is as welcoming and casual as a neighbor's garden, which is the way Ilona likes it. Making people feel at home among friendly surroundings comes naturally to this family, as can be seen any weekday or Saturday, morning or lunchtime, as people sip, eat and chat among the musical reminders on the walls and the delicious smells coming from the kitchen.

GPNA BLUE RIBBON AWARD

This time, our Blue Ribbon Award for neighborhood improvement goes to Maureen Zeuss, at 614 C Street, not only for the wonderful transformation she's made on her historic (1904-08) house's wooden exterior, but for being willing to do the paint job over after a hair-raising experience with color selection. After interviewing various painting contractors and taking bids, Maureen decided on Housesavers, because the price was right and because they specialize in older homes. The painters did a quality job- they stripped off 6-7 coats of old paint and sanded down to bare wood before applying a primer coat, all of which makes the paint job wear well and last longer.

Maureen wanted a cheery color, and chose a shade of yellow that looked just right- in the store. However, when the painters came with their paint spray apparatus and applied it, Maureen took a good look- and was horrified. She describes the effect as "a fluorescent day-glow yellow-green nightmare- hot and scary!" Ironically, the painting crew was proud that they had been able to apply it so quickly; but Maureen gritted her teeth and thought of the cost of doing it over, because the paint job was the last phase of her exterior update, which had included some new windows, a new wooden porch and exterior stairs, and new landscaping. "A couple of people actually liked the color", she says, "but the majority of my neighbors' opinions were more along the lines of 'What on Earth were you thinking?'" It was like a big neon sign, and I knew I had to do something- I couldn't live with it". So she called

the painters on a Saturday with the bad news, and they agreed to come back on Monday and cover it with another color, but cautioned her to choose her new color carefully.

Early Monday morning, Maureen went back to the paint store and chose small quantities of no fewer than 8 colors, and began applying them directly on the front of the house. She examined them carefully, and even took opinions from neighbors passing by. In the end, just before the painters arrived, she chose a creamy pastel green called (no kidding) "camouflage". It sprayed on beautifully, and went well with the trim she had chosen- a clean white, with corner accents of a darker green, and both upstairs and downstairs doors in a soft red-maroon. She painted the ceiling of the porch sky-blue, a Victorian and Colonial tradition popular since the mid-1800's. It was believed at that time that this color painted on the ceiling of a house's entrance would repel flies and wasps, because they would perceive it as the sky and veer away from it.

Maureen is now very happy with her new paint job, and learned not to choose a color from a chip, but always paint test patches. Congratulations to Maureen Zeuss for all her hard work- looking at her freshly painted and updated home, it was certainly worth it!

Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) Membership Application

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

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Do you wish to receive this newsletter at your home? Yes No

Would you like to be included on our mailing list? Yes No

Email Address: _____ Date: _____

New Member Renewal

Amount Enclosed*: \$ _____ *Annual donation: **\$15.00** per household (**\$10.00** seniors) - 1 voting member

Payment Type: _____ Term of membership is from January 1st to December 31st

How did you hear about GPNA? Friend Newsletter Other: _____

Welcome to GPNA!

We are changing our dues Starting January First. Seniors will now be \$ 10 and regular members will be \$15 dollars per year. If you send in your membership before the first of the year, we will honor the old rate of \$5 for seniors and \$10 per household!

POLICE CONTACT AND BEAT ONE INFORMATION

At our last Board meeting on October 7, we met with John Rohrbacher, San Rafael's Chief of Police, who gave us the names of our current Beat One officers, as well as some useful phone numbers that you all should have:

Emergency numbers:

from home: **911**

from a cell phone: **485-3393** or **453-2424**

Non-Emergency number: 485-3000

Email: www.srpd.org

Requests for home and business security

checks (performed by volunteers – for those going on vacation): Emil Bettini, SRPD Volunteer, or 485-5773.

When prompted by the menu, enter 115050, and the pound key.

Beat One Team On- Duty Schedule:

Officer Justin Graham: Mon, Tues, Wed, 5 AM- 5 Pm

Officer Bill Drolla: Thu, Fri, Sat, 5 AM- 5 Pm

Officer Charlie Metcalf: Mon, Tues, Wed, 5 PM- 5 Am

Officer Buffy Paxon: Thu, Fri, Sat, 5 PM- 5 AM

These officers will be assigned to Gerstle Park from October to March. When the new schedule comes out in March, we will print it in the following issue of this newsletter. If you wish, you can contact them via email: just type the name of the officer and then srpd.org (for instance, charliemetcalf@srpd.org). Remember, if you send a message on that officer's day off, he or she will probably not get back to you until back on duty.

When we met with Chief Rohrbacher, he emphasized that it's really important to report to the police any incidents of criminal behavior, even if you consider them to be minor crimes. If you've had a problem with mail theft, for instance, or stolen property, vandalism, etc., please report it! What may seem an isolated incident can quickly become a rash of crimes, and only by being alerted can our PD respond and apprehend those responsible.

STREET TREES

GPNA wants to remind all residents that street trees are for beautification of the neighborhood. Please DO NOT attach your yard sale signs, for rent signs, or other advertising on street trees, as this does damage to the trees.

HALLOWEEN DECORATIONS WINNERS!

- 508 D Street- Freaky Frankenstein Fest! Totally Fantastic!
- 217 Bayview- Scariest. So scary, little ones wouldn't go anywhere near it!
- 231 Bayview- Best Corpses. Dead people everywhere!
- 239 Bayview- Pumpkins O' Plenty. "Celebrity Carver"
- 21 Marin- Amazing Special Effects.
- 211 D St._ Great lights!
- 119 San Rafael Ave.- Most Inviting Cemetery.
- 15 Marin- Great Carved Pumpkins.

Other Demon Decorators Include:

- 40 Pleasant Lane
- 240 Bayview
- 101 Marin
- 206 Ross

Thanks to everyone who got into the Halloween spirit. It means a lot to the neighborhood kids, and it's fun for grownups, too!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- December 2:** Monthly Meeting - 7pm
- December 14:** Christmas Caroling Practice - 6:30pm
Meet at the Panama Hotel
- December 16:** Christmas Caroling - 6:30pm
Meet at the Panama Hotel
- December 20-25:** Holiday Decoration Judging
- January 6:** Monthly Meeting - 7pm
- January 27:** Annual Meeting - 7:30pm
at the B Street Community Center

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

- Cultural Affairs Commission - 1st Wed.
- Design Review Board - 1st & 3rd Tues.
- City Council - 1st & 3rd Mon.
- Planning Commission - 2nd & 4th Tues.
- Federation of S.R. Neighborhoods - 3rd Tues.

GPNA Quarterly Newsletter

Catch-up-with-the-new-GPNA-fiscal-year-issue 1 of 1
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Articles written by GPNA members.

Editor: Lilian Walters • Layout: Ken Goudey

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