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Midtown Residents Association Neighborhood Newsletter

SPRING 2011

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MRA's 2010 Accomplishments by Sheri Furman

MRA's biggest accomplishments in 2010 were in the areas of Midtown parks and emergency preparedness.

After more than 25 years, and several neighborhood meetings, work was finally completed on the last portion of Greer Park, dedicated as Scott Meadow honoring the efforts begun by Charles and the late Jean Scott in the 70s when they formed the original residents association. Seale Park is getting bathrooms this spring, again after several neighborhood meetings were held to provide input.

We now have 4 Neighborhood Preparedness Coordinators and over 30 Block Preparedness Coordinators. Our vice-chair, Annette Ashton, has been spearheading this effort for years and the City Council formally recognized it by again making emergency preparedness a Council priority this year.

Your 2011 Priorities for MRA by Sheri Furman

Based on our annual survey, following are the areas you requested we give the most attention in the coming year.

- Neighborhood Preparedness
 - Crime watch
 - Emergency/Disaster Preparedness
 - Block Coordinator program
- Information on local issues / Keep informed of local news
- City of Palo Alto Budget
- Traffic
 - Traffic slowing/enforcement
 - Bicycle paths/ Bicycle friendly streets / Keep bicycles off the sidewalk
 - Improving Middlefield / Colorado safety
- Preserve neighborhood quality

Green Happenings: New Battery-Powered Kid on the Block

By Jeb Eddy

One of the new next-generation advanced hybrid electric cars, a Chevy Volt, has arrived -- in Midtown. The owner is Alan Marcum, who has been writing a blog about his tests and trips ever since he got his Volt on Feb 21st: <http://www.ammmusings.RhinoAviation.com> (yes, that is three "m"s in a row).

This car, or one with close to its capabilities, will be the next one that my wife and I buy when we decide that our 1979 VW Beetle has finished its life in our loving hands. It is nice to know that people like Alan, and Midtowner Greg Bell (who will get his Nissan Leaf within a matter of months -- he already has his charger installed), can share their trail-breaking experiences.

To see a map of charging stations and people volunteering their homes to enable EV owners to refill their batteries, check out the new iPhone app "PlugShare" at the Apple apps website. There is an impressive cluster in the bay area.

MAY 1: SAFETY FAIRE – Preparedness Beyond 72 Hours

Children's events, food, vendors selling supplies, a chance to discuss emergency preparedness and safety at over 25 booths, Mobile Emergency Operations Center and other emergency vehicles.

Stanford Shopping Center, Parking Lot north of PF Chang's – 12:00 – 4:00pm

Palo Alto Police Department Meeting on Crime

By Rohana K. Gunawardena, Midtown Area 3, Block Preparedness Coordinator (BPC)

I attended the Palo Alto Police Department meeting on the recent spike in crime held on Wednesday 01/19/2011; you may have read the report in the local papers. There was a lot of input from the police and a lengthy Q&A session. Here is a summary of items discussed, including steps to make you and your family safer. Do keep in mind the total number of robberies in Palo Alto is low, 38 in 2010, so you do not need to live in fear of an attack at any minute, but at the same time do take sensible precautions to protect yourself.



Meeting Focus

- Burglary vs. Robbery: The meeting focused on robbery, which is the taking of property from a person by force, and not burglary, the taking of property by forced entry to a building.
- Annual Trend: The number of robberies is not up significantly based on the 5 year trend; 2010 actually had fewer robberies than 2007 and 2008. The big difference is the use of firearms in robberies recently.
- Location: The location of robberies has been spread all over Palo Alto and is not focused in one area, e.g., close to 101.
- Police Actions: PAPD is stepping up street patrols in a combination of marked and unmarked cars, focusing on the times and days when incidents are most likely.
- Reporting: If you see something suspicious do not hesitate to call PAPD on 911. PAPD appreciates all information and would rather check on a false report than get a late report or no report at all. Knowing your neighbors and your neighborhood will help you spot something unusual. If you have any tips on the recent crimes, PAPD has an anonymous tip line by e-mail paloalto@tipnow.org or text 650-383-8984.

Home Safety

- Criminals stay away from well-lit areas. If you do not have front yard lighting, look at installing a motion detector or static lighting.
- Do lock your front door at all times, even when you are at home.
- If you have a burglar alarm, turn it on when you leave. Most homeowners do not activate their alarm even if it is installed.
- Host a neighborhood watch meeting for your block & place a neighborhood watch sticker visibly in your front door or window. To do so, contact your BPC or epvolunteers@panighborhoods.org.

How to behave if you are attacked

- Hand over your valuables; it is not worth getting killed for your money.
- Make a mental note of the person's clothes, height, gender and other appearance.
- Call PAPD on 911 as soon as possible.
- Do not chase the attacker.

If you do see someone on the street, keep the following in mind

- Walk with confidence.
- Look at the person, do not look at the ground or away, let them know you have seen them.
- Make a mental note of the person's clothes, height, gender and other appearance.
- Do look behind you once the person has passed in case they turn around.
- Be aware of your environment at all times; don't walk and talk on your phone.

If you come home late at night

- Call ahead to anyone at home to come out and meet you.
- Drive around the block to check everything is OK.
- Call PAPD on 911 if you feel unsafe leaving your car to enter your home.
- Be aware of your surroundings when you enter your drive way or garage.
- Do make use of the panic alarm on your car.

Parks in Midtown – An Update *by Annette Ashton*

In 2001 the Midtown Residents Association (MRA) had two goals for Midtown Parks – complete Greer Park and install a bathroom in Seale Park. Finally, by late March of 2011, both of these longstanding goals will have been achieved.

GREER PARK: On December 11, 2011, MRA celebrated the dedication of the last undeveloped portion of Greer Park (1.5 acres), now named Scott Meadow, in memory of Jean and Charles Scott. They were tireless in their devotion to the park – from creation to completion. The park started as a drive-in theatre and a field of 6-foot-high weeds. It now boasts playing fields, basketball courts, a skate park, children's play-ground, dog park and even a hard-fought-for restroom. Jean wanted the final section complete for her children, then after many years, for her grandchildren to enjoy. Read the full story at http://www.paloaltoonline.com/weekly/story.php?story_id=14084. We also celebrated the installation of the Jean Flores sculpture "Filaree" at the Amarillo entrance to Greer Park.



The development of Scott Meadow is not yet complete. The Palo Alto Rotary Club will install gazebos over the picnic tables in Scott Meadow in late July/August with funding from the City of Palo Alto & Palo Alto Rotary Club.



SEALE PARK: Bathrooms are on their way! The first sign of progress was the orange tree protection fences. The city then dug trenches for utilities. After that was completed, the prefabricated unit was placed in the park. MRA is planning a celebration in April. We hope you will join us, when city officials will officially inaugurate the facility with the "first flush." This bathroom will have a locked bulletin board on one side. MRA will announce the protocol for getting messages posted in a future MRA Enews.

GREER PARK ART: "From Sea to Shining Sea" created by Joan Zalenski

The piece was created for a sculpture fair in the East Bay around the early 1980s, when Joan lived in the Bay Area. Leon Kaplan, then Director of Arts and Culture, for the City, was familiar with her work and asked her if she would loan this piece for Greer Park; a few years later, the City purchased the piece. Joan was in the forefront of environmental art in the 80's and is quite proud of her work in Palo Alto. City of Palo Alto Public Art Commissioner Terry Acebo Davis adds there was once a grove of Eucalyptus trees concealing the art piece. When the park was renovated, it ended up quite visible. See more of her work at www.joanzalenski.com.



The piece was part of the City of Palo Alto Public Art collection, but it never had a plaque identifying it as such. Due to discussion about this art at the Greer Park Phase IV ceremony, the Art Commission voted in February of 2011 to approve the funding to honor Joan's work at Greer Park. A plaque, similar to the one gracing Gene Flores's "Filaree", will be installed.

At the Greer Park dedication ceremony in December, Mark Weiss described "From Sea to Shining Sea" as a piece that blurs the division between utility and creativity, between the road and the park. He thinks it fits with the city collection of painted electrical boxes, the famous trompe l'oeil murals by Greg Brown downtown, and Jim Burch's recent "real faces" ad campaign on (and for) the City Shuttle.

Eat, Play, Live – Local: Support your Neighborhood through MRA

By Jill Matzke, Membership Chair (contact: jillmatzke@yahoo.com)

We all enjoy the great quality of life in Midtown. MRA is dedicated to making sure we maintain that quality and we would like to invite you to join us in that effort. With only a few hours of time each month or a even just a few hours once in a while, you could make a positive difference in our neighborhood. We are especially interested in volunteers to help in the following areas:

Topic	Where we need help	Time Involved
Traffic Chair	Represent Midtown concerns regarding traffic issues. Contact our local government officials and staff in order to solve problems and provide input when new projects are proposed. Attend meetings, send letters.	Monthly, or occasionally for specific issues
Business Liaison	Coordinate with our local businesses to mutual benefit. Visit business owners, ask how we can help them, ask them to publicize and support our events. Attend meetings to keep up with their concerns.	Occasionally, especially when we or they have events planned.
Events & Programs	Help organize, promote and manage Midtown events, such as our Annual Ice Cream Social.	Varies
Membership	Promote MRA events, including distribution of flyers and signs. Help organize our member database and encourage more of our neighbors to support us through annual dues.	From a one-time commitment up to a few hours per month
Trees	Notify city staff when a tree in your neighborhood is threatened by construction or other damage. Identify places where trees should be planted, and request plantings from Canopy and city staff	Occasionally
Neighborhood improvement	Photograph or note things you like in other places, or don't like in Midtown (signs, trees, art, sidewalks, street configurations, etc.) and send them to city staff, requesting improvements for Midtown.	Occasionally
Green Team	Just getting started. Collect examples (e.g., photos), share knowledge, and encourage local green actions.	One time to regularly

I'D LIKE TO HELP SUPPORT MRA

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (home) _____ (cell) _____

Email _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____ Add me to enews (email required) Yes

Areas I'd like to become involved in:

- Traffic
 Schools
 Events
 Membership
 Parks
 Public Art
 Working with Midtown Merchants
 Newsletter
 Zoning/Developments

==== Send your \$15 membership payment to Sylvia Gartner, 824 Moreno, Palo Alto 94303 ====

Development Center “Blueprint for Change” Report from February General Meeting

by Sheri Furman

Last year, the City Manager launched the Blueprint for Development Center Change project to streamline and modernize the City of Palo Alto’s permit process, focusing on improving customer satisfaction and process efficiency.

Deputy City Manager Steve Emslie and Director of Economic Development Tommy Fehrenbach presented the project at the February MRA General Meeting.

The project’s mission is to “achieve a more holistic restructuring effort that better integrates development review and permitting services and coordinates the activities of all the staff providing them.” Efforts include:

- Getting rid of unnecessary regulation
- Establishing a customer service culture with predictability and clear standards
- Improving efficiency to minimize costs and delays
- Ensuring contractors follow regulations
- Better assisting homeowners through the permitting process with consistent advice and providing access to the right staff for information
- Providing a central point of contact and in house advocate for certain projects
- Ensuring all staff interacting with customers is physically located at the Development Center

A pilot project will be carried out from February through June to try out the new ideas, using a tiered approach based on the complexity of a project.

Other ideas being explored include an online permitting process for simple projects and implementing an appointment system.

From March through September, a Performance Measurement Program for customer service will also be implemented.

Because the Development Center is fee-supported, consideration is being given to adopting a funding approach that will set fees at the actual cost of providing services, as well as creating a Special Revenue Fund separate from the General Fund.



Sketch courtesy of Geri Mc Gilvray

Read more about the project at

http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/depts/pln/development_center/dc_blueprint/default.asp.

For more information, contact the System Improvement Manager, Yvonne Sheets-Saucedo, at yvonne.sheets-saucedo@cityofpaloalto.org.

What Do We Have In Place To Response To Emergencies/Disasters In Midtown?

by Annette Ashton

- If your block or street has a Block Preparedness Coordinator (BPC) and they are safe and well, then they will start walking their blocks to identify injuries and damages. During this assessment phase, your BPC will also be checking in on residents who have "special needs" or are elderly and want to be checked in on.
- BPCs are trained to communicate neighborhood "incidents" through emergency network channels to reach the first responders. They will be receiving updates from the City during an emergency and will prioritize who to help based on critical incidents.
- If your block or street does not have a BPC, you should find out where the closest BPC is or simply, sign up to be one for your block or street. If you cannot volunteer, recruit one for your block.

NOTE: The next series of training for a BPC will be on April 23rd on the Cubberley Campus - Foothill Auditorium.

For a flyer, directions, and class descriptions, see www.paneighborhoods.org/ep.

Con-Tree-Versy

by Peggy Kenney

With all the uproar over the California Avenue tree removals, we might consider our local urban forest here in Midtown. The city has undertaken development of an Urban Forest Master Plan. The first activity was a survey of residents' feelings about trees.

From Jan. 13 – Feb. 1, 600 residents responded to the survey. Some of the highlights (source: Survey Results and Analysis - <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=26236>):

- The majority of respondents indicated that Palo Alto would benefit from more trees.
- The three highest-ranked actions that the City should take are to:
- Encourage the planting of more drought-tolerant trees (drought is viewed as the greatest threat to Palo Alto trees)
- Provide more tree maintenance
- Plant more trees
- Although the majority of respondents indicated that they think the city should plant more trees overall, they indicated that the number of trees in their own yards is "okay as is."
- The majority of respondents indicated that the city "needs improvement" in managing street trees, but "does a good job" managing trees in parks, open space and near power lines
- The majority of respondents indicated that the City "needs improvement" in making good choices about tree removal and informing residents about tree regulations.

Several comments mentioned that Midtown and the area south of Oregon generally needs more trees. An aerial view of Palo Alto shows much more tree canopy north of Oregon than in our part of the city. Because trees provide many important services (cleaning the air, calming traffic, dispersing strong winds, water management, and enhancing property value, to mention only a few), Midtown residents need to let our officials know we want additional trees planted here. City staff has made clear that they respond to citizen demands. When it comes to trees, as with other city services, the principle is "don't ask, don't get." Please contact city staff to let them know we need trees, or when you see a tree being damaged.

Contact the Arborist: Phone: 650-496-5953, Fax: 650-852-9289. Email: pwd@cityofpaloalto.org. Please copy me on any emails you send: peggywrites@yahoo.com. Thanks for helping to "green" Midtown!

Something Souper is Happening on Cowper Street

It all started in April 2009 when a couple that was new to the neighborhood wanted to connect with others who are interested in local, organic food, gardening, composting and other ways of making healthy meals and relying less on petrochemicals for producing and transporting food. It's a very casual, come-as-you-are gathering where the neighbors take turns hosting in a different house each month.

The idea is to have a simple soup and salad based on what's in season at the farmer's market. It's not a pot-luck. One family does all the work for one gathering, then they attend the rest of year and don't have to worry about preparing something (although many times people bring bread, wine, appetizers). There are vegans, meat-eaters, vegetarians, families with young kids, families with teens, singles, empty-nesters. There is a core group of members based in the 2700 block of Cowper and some extended members who live nearby. They have about 30 people now on their list and we want to keep it to a size that can fit in most folks homes. So although they're not looking for new members, they would be happy to share some tips with you if you want to start a Soup Group on your block.

So, if you have a garden or like organic food or shop at the Farmer's Market or belong to a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture -- a group of people who sign up to get weekly boxes of produce from a farm) or are interested in living sustainably or you don't know what that is but you like the idea of having a strong neighborhood community, think about starting your own Soup Group.



Left to Right: Kori Shaw, Heather Sorensen, Eva Chu, David Hsiao

Safety Faire

Sunday, May 1, 2011

Stanford Shopping Center, Noon - 4pm

Learn how to prepare for disruptive events:

Earthquake, Storms & Floods, Fire,
Crime Safety & Terror, Pandemic Influenza

SPEAKERS

Jim Keene, Palo Alto City
Manager
Sid Espinosa, Palo Alto Mayor
Dr. Enoch Choi, PAMF:
Pandemic Influenza
Dr. Eric Weiss, Stanford
Hospital: Emergency
Medicine
Bill Daley, Hohbach-Lewin,
Inc: Seismic Retrofitting

EXHIBITORS

American Institute of
Architects
American Red Cross, Silicon
Valley Chapter
Anderson Niswander
Construction Co.
ARES/RACES Ham radio
AT&T
HabitatCare
KZSU, Stanford University
Radio

EMERGENCY RESPONSE VEHICLES

Palo Alto Mobile Emergency
Operations Center (MEOC)
New Palo Alto Fire Truck
Palo Alto CERT Trailer
Palo Alto Police Department
vehicles
Red Cross Kitchen
Stanford Blood Mobile
Woodside Fire Dept. Smoke
Trailer

Lucile Packard Children's
Hospital
Palo Alto Airport/LifeFlight
Palo Alto CERT
Palo Alto Medical
Foundation
Palo Alto Neighborhoods
Palo Alto Rangers
Palo Alto Unified School
District
Santa Clara Valley Transit

***Free gift to the first
300 families!***

***Win raffle items for
kids and adults:***

Emergency kit
Pizza coupons
B&R Ice Cream Cake
Monterey Bay Aquarium Tickets
Tesla Corporate Jacket
and more!

Authority
Santa Clara Valley Water
District
Stanford Blood Center
Stanford Hospital
Stanford University School
of Medicine
State Farm
US Geological Survey

Upcoming Events and Meetings

- **May 1: Safety Faire**
Preparedness Beyond 72 Hours
Stanford Shopping Center, parking Lot north of PF Chang's — 12:00 – 4:00pm
- **Seale Park "First Flush" Party – May**
Seale Park – Date and time to be announced in enews and on website
- **13th Annual MRA Ice Cream Social – September 18**
Hoover Park — 2901 Cowper — 1:00-4:00 PM

Please let us know (MidtownNews@att.net)
if you would like to receive our periodic electronic enews
and/or if you have a new email.

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Midtown Residents Association
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Palo Alto, CA 94303

Your financial support enables us to pay for the modest expenses of MRA: postage, events, etc.

Please note the date on your label on this newsletter is the date you last paid or sent a check.

To join or renew online: go to our web site www.MidtownResidents.org and click the left icon "Become a Member".

If by check (\$15): make your check out to MRA, and send to our treasurer Sylvia Gartner, at 824 Moreno, Palo Alto,