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Midtown Residents Association Neighborhood Newsletter

WINTER 2009

Visit our web site at <http://www.midtownresidents.org/>

FROM THE INCOMING CHAIR: *Sheri Furman*

First, many thanks to our outgoing chair, Peggy Kenny, for her excellent stewardship of our organization in 2008. Many of you know me, but for those that don't, here's a brief bio. I've lived in Midtown for 33 years, first at what was then Palo Alto West on West Bayshore (when the drive-in was still functioning) and for the past 30 years on Greer Road. I joined the Midtown Residents Association in 1995, first working on the newsletter and then developing our website. I really got active during the Matadero Creek Remediation Project in the late 90s and since then I have worked on traffic and development issues, as well as serving as both vice-chair and chair of the MRA. I'm delighted to be once again helping to ensure we have a strong neighborhood organization and working to help keep you informed about what's going on in Midtown and Palo Alto.

Last year we told you about three areas MRA was becoming more involved in, so an update on those follows:

- **A Greener MRA** – We participate in the Community Environmental Action Partnership (CEAP) that helps homeowners and businesses reduce their carbon footprint. Our steering committee is looking at ways we can “green” the association, including more electronic communications, and less paper. Look for reusable/biodegradable materials at our social events. We are also forming a Neighborhood Green Team to discuss and implement green practices in Midtown. Interested in this topic? Please contact our “green” coordinator, Jeb Eddy, at jeb@mac.com.
- **Civic Engagement** – Another major city council initiative is civic engagement. MRA is a major participant in Palo Alto Neighborhoods (PAN) and through that organization we conducted a city-wide survey to gauge people's interest in civic engagement. What we found is that people who want to be engaged are and those who aren't are too busy with other things. We, representing the association, continue to be engaged and encourage you to participate in whatever small way works best for you, be it writing to Council or attending an MRA meeting.
- **Know Your Neighbors / Be Prepared** – MRA vice-chair Annette Ashton continued to lead the effort to develop and train block coordinators to interact with residents of their block and neighborhood, as well as serve as a communication node and report the conditions of the block during an emergency. Midtown now has about 30 block and 3 neighborhood coordinators. For more see www.paneighborhoods.org/ep.

How We Kept You Informed in 2008

In addition to our weekly enews, we held several meetings and socials last year.

February 19	Stanford's plan for renovating/rebuilding.
March 18	Plans for Cubberley.
June 17	VTA's new Route 88 Service.
August 5	National Night Out dessert potluck and evening to strengthen neighborhood spirit and unity.
August 28	Oregon Expressway Project details and alternatives. http://www.oregonexpressway.info
September 14	Ninth Annual Midtown Ice Cream Social.
December 2	Review of the plans for final phase of Greer Park.

Community Efforts

Members of the steering committee also worked on Alma Plaza, the City website redesign committee, the Housing Element Technical Advisory Group, completing Greer Park and getting public art installed, bathroom location and design at Seale Park, the Community Action Partnership (CEAP) committee, and Palo Alto Neighborhoods (PAN).

School Developments – How Reopening Garland Affects Midtown by Kerry Kenny

As we all know, along with wonderful parks, great community resources and charming neighborhoods, one of Palo Alto's greatest assets is the high quality of our schools. Our families are privileged to enjoy the comfort that they can send their children off to any Palo Alto school and know that they will come out with a tremendous foundation of knowledge and experiences to better their own futures. The surest way to continue our children's quality of education in our city schools is to keep our residents involved and informed of all developments and changes in the school system. As such Midtown residents need to get involved in the upcoming discussions regarding some important changes ahead for our schools.

As some of you have probably already heard, the PAUSD is facing a serious overcrowding problem in the school system, especially as they project numbers into the future. The most immediate solution the district has to deal with the issue is the planned re-opening of Garland Elementary School. This is the property currently occupied by the private Stratford School at 870 California Ave., behind Jordan Middle School. It is wonderful that the district is being proactive in taking this land back for our students, but it means that there are some important decisions to be made regarding populating the school in order to best alleviate the increasing demands on schools like Palo Verde, Addison and El Carmelo. The district currently has building plans under consideration for the new campus, and these are progressing through the review processes, but in addition the district will need to re-draw the various school boundaries.

Therefore this is an incredibly important time for residents to get involved and be heard on any and all school boundary concerns. For example, now is the time to address tracking issues that arise for many residents, when a child attends Palo Verde or El Carmelo, and then is sent to JLS, while many of their classmates go on to Jordan, and then they all end up back at Palo Alto High School. These students should have the opportunity to stay together, so boundaries for all level of school K-12 should be adequately addressed.

Also of concern for our residents is that the neighborhood elementary school for many of us will change with the opening of Garland in as early as 2010. Our students will be asked to populate the new campus. As Superintendent Kevin Skelly said in Palo Alto Online January 30, 2009, "It is going to happen. You're going to have to cross Oregon." Sending young children across a street like Oregon Expressway will require strong safety measures in place, like the bike boulevard currently in the City's comprehensive plan for Ross Rd and other crosswalk improvements. Given the upcoming plans for the Oregon Expressway project paid for by the County, now is the time to address these very real concerns.

Since we must be included in this process, the MRA would like to make everyone aware of some important upcoming School Board Meeting dates which have boundaries currently on the agenda. The first is April 28th where the Board plans to hear information gathered by staff. This means we want to be sure that our concerns are heard prior to this meeting so that they can be included in any recommendations. Please feel free to email any concerns and comments to kerrykennyaz@yahoo.com. These will then be compiled and forwarded to School Board.

Also for your information you can email any School Board member by going to www.pausd.org and clicking on "Board of Ed". You can also access all school Board minutes at this site. Additionally, there is an agenda item for discussion regarding the recommendations set for the May 12th meeting, with a plan for action on a plan at the May 26th meeting. As you can see this is all happening now. These dates are tentative, but keep on eye on the e-news for any updates on these meetings and agendas. Let's work together to keep our schools strong and our kids safe!

California High Speed Rail Project

The deadline for comments on the scope of the EIR for the proposed High-Speed Rail segment between San Francisco and San Jose has been extended to April 6th. You can submit written comments to:

Deputy Director Dan Leavitt, ATTN: San Francisco to San Jose HST Project EIR/EIS
California High-Speed Rail Authority
925 L St., Suite 1425, Sacramento, CA 95814

--or--

email comments to comments@hsr.ca.gov with the subject line San Francisco to San Jose HST

Project website: www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/library/

Palo Alto website: www.cityofpaloalto.org/cahsr

Palo Alto Yahoo group: groups.yahoo.com/group/Palo_Alto_HSR/ (you need a Yahoo address to join)

MARCH MRA MEETINGS

We're Almost There! Planned Renovations for Greer and Seale Parks

== Tuesday March 11, Emerson School Auditorium, 2800 W. Bayshore Road at 6:15PM ==

MRA and the Palo Alto Community Services Division are co-sponsoring a second public meeting on planned developments at these parks. Join the Midtown Residents Association and Palo Alto staff and share your perspectives. Doors open at 6:15pm for you to review plans and chat with MRA steering Committee and staff.

6:30 - 7:15 PM: Seale Park bathrooms will be discussed. Public input will be on bathroom location and design.

7:30 - 8:30 PM: Greer Park Improvements: Design of the Remaining Corner and Children's Playground. City recommendations from the first public meeting can be viewed on the MRA web site www.midtownresidents.org.

Crime Update and Preparing your Neighborhood for a Disaster

== Tuesday March 17, Friends Meeting Hall, 957 Colorado (between Greer and Louis) at 7:00PM ==

This topic received the most interest in the 2009 Midtown. To this end, keynote speakers will be:

- Acting Police Chief Dennis Burns, who will address current crime events, perceptions and current perspectives of the Police Department.
- Police Officer and Homeland Security Coordinator Ken Dueker, who will address preparing our neighborhood - Midtown - for a Disaster.

Updates will also be provided on the 2009 Survey and the renovations at Greer and Seale Parks.

Be Involved in the Oregon Expressway Project

by Liz Kniss, President, Santa Clara Board of Supervisors

This week, the County Roads Department has released new plans for improving intersections along Oregon Expressway. Of course, whatever happens on Oregon Expressway affects the daily lives of those of us who live in Palo Alto. Last year, I stated the five principles that guide my approach to Oregon Expressway:

1. Improving pedestrian and bike safety should be the highest priority;
2. Be especially mindful of pedestrian and bike routes to our schools;
3. Improve safety and access for the disabled;
4. Avoid removing trees; and
5. Do nothing to divide north and south Palo Alto.

The County Roads Department listened to Palo Alto residents in earlier community meetings last year. The new plans contain an option for Middlefield Road that does not require any tree removal or road widening. The new plans are very bike-friendly and pedestrian-friendly. I think that you will appreciate that, especially with the coming re-opening of Garland School.

There will be a Community Meeting in Palo Alto on March 4. The new plans will then go to your Planning and Transportation Commission, and then to your City Council for approval. Although Oregon is a County Expressway, the County's agreement with Palo Alto requires that the City of Palo Alto agree to any significant change to Oregon Expressway. Let me repeat: the County will make no changes to Oregon Expressway until the Palo Alto City Council agrees.

I urge you to please stay involved in the process. We want to hear from you.

Comprehensive Plan Amendment *by Sheri Furman*

Planning staff is currently working with the Planning & Transportation Commission to develop a work plan to amend the existing Comprehensive Plan and extend it through 2020. The focus of the amendment is to ensure that sufficient public services are available to serve new housing development and that sufficient land for neighborhood-serving retail uses is preserved. For more information, see <http://www.paloaltocomplan2020.org/>.

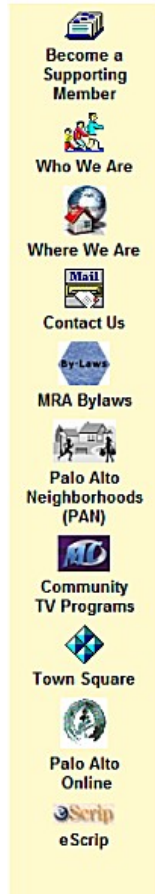
MRA Website – Keeping Informed is Just a Click Away *by Sheri Furman*

Missed the latest enews or newsletter? Want to know what's happening around town in the next few weeks? Need to know the hours of a shop in Midtown? Need to know what earthquake supplies to buy? It's all there on the MRA website. www.midtownresidents.org



Welcome to the Midtown Residents Association

Join or visit the PaloAltoMidtown group at
groups.yahoo.com/group/PaloAltoMidtown



Click an icon for detailed information



Midtown News Update

February 12, 2009 **NEW** [Subscribe to enews](#)

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Midtown Items of Interest

- ◆ GREER PARK: View the proposed [Concept Plans](#). Send [comments](#).
 - ◆ [Comment](#) on Oregon Expressway Pedestrian Walkway Improvements. See the [draft document](#) and [Oregon Pedestrian Route Map](#). **NEW**
 - ◆ [Sign up](#) for Palo Alto CANS | Request a [Parcel Report](#)
 - ◆ Making Your Home Energy Efficient/Green Remodeling – See our [Green Resources](#) site.
 - ◆ How Much Housing Is Being Built? See [Elaine's List](#)
- [More items...](#)

← Midtown goings-on



Events and Meetings

Click the calendar icon to view our events calendar

MARCH 17: **MRA GENERAL MEETING** **NEW** Friends Meeting Hall, 7:00pm
Topics will be Crime, Citizen Outreach from PAPD, and Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness

[Photos](#) from the September 14 MRA Ice Cream Social
[More events...](#)

← Find what's going on



City Concerns

Palo Alto High Speed Rail [website](#) **NEW**
Monthly Planning & Transportation [Issues of Interest](#) | Destination Palo Alto [website](#)
Stanford Shopping Center / Medical Center [Project](#) | Police Building [Reports](#)
[PAUSD School Capacity](#) | [Planning for Enrollment Growth](#)
[City Council Meetings](#) | Council & Commissions [Reports & Agendas](#) |

← City issues



Emergency Preparedness Resources

This link takes you to the PAN Emergency Preparedness web site.

← Get Prepared



Visit Midtown Businesses

Also Schools and Places of Worship

← Look up local businesses



MRA Newsletters

Fall 2008 [word](#) [pdf](#)

← Newsletters back to 1995

Stormwater rebates make it easier to go green *provided by Joe Teresi, City of Palo Alto Public Works*

The City of Palo Alto is committed to sustainable development by promoting the use of green building products, methods, and design in residential and commercial building projects. One important aspect of “green” development is the inclusion of site design techniques that reduce stormwater runoff and pollution. Some runoff reduction measures also help conserve water through the harvesting and reuse of rainwater. Water savings are becoming even more critical as we face potential water rationing due to the extended drought conditions. If you are planning a new home or business or considering a remodel of your present facility, the City of Palo Alto wants to make it easier for you to go green.

The Storm Drain Utility is offering rebates to Palo Alto residents and businesses for installation of the following stormwater runoff reduction measures:

- **Rain barrels** (\$50 rebate per barrel)
- **Permeable pavement** (\$1.50 rebate per square foot – up to \$1,000)
- **Cisterns** (15 cents rebate per gallon – up to \$1,000)
- **Green roofs** (\$1.50 rebate per square foot – up to \$1,000)

For more information, including eligibility requirements, application forms, and helpful design tips, see our web site at <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/stormwater> or call (650) 329-2151.

Get the Latest Midtown News by Email or Let Us Know if Your Email Has Changed

If you are not receiving enews updates about events of importance to Midtown, and you would like to, just send your email address, name and phone to MidtownNews@att.net. If your email has changed, let us know. Send your new address to our enews editor at MidtownNews@att.net.

You can also share your thoughts on our listserv at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PaloAltoMidtown>. Send messages to the group by emailing PaloAltoMidtown@yahoogroups.com.

Make a Difference in Your Neighborhood

- Help us reach all the households in Midtown with these updates! Ask your neighbors if they subscribe, and if not, forward this message and encourage them to send an email with their contact information to MidtownNews@att.net.
- We're also still looking for more Block Preparedness Coordinators who can help our neighborhood be more prepared when an emergency or natural disaster strikes. Contact Annette at ashtonannette@gmail.com.
- Working with our steering committee on issues that matter to you and help make good things happen in our neighborhood. Contact Sheri Furman at sheri11@earthlink.net.

Top 5 Reasons to Support Your Midtown Residents Association *by Jill Matzke*

MRA can only be successful with the continued support of our residents! Please renew your \$15 supporting membership (last renewal date is shown on your newsletter). Here are the top 5 reasons to do this.

- ⑤ To keep the information flowing - MRA produces not only this newsletter, but weekly email updates, website information and informative events for our neighborhood.
- ④ To help keep Midtown safe and healthy - from disaster preparedness to crime alerts and traffic safety, MRA maintains important liaisons and programs to promote a safe Midtown.
- ③ To help keep Midtown clean, beautiful and fun - MRA advocates for park improvements and public art, and also sponsors our popular Ice Cream Social in addition to supporting other community events.
- ② To assure that Midtown resident concerns are addressed - MRA maintains committee memberships and regular communication with local government officials and facilitates community input on a wide range of issues.

And most important:

- ① To keep our Midtown community strong!

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 ===

Upcoming Events and Meetings

- **Oregon Expressway Project Community Meeting – March 4**
Jordan Middle School Cafeteria — 750 North California — 7:00 PM
- **Changes Coming to Greer and Seale Parks – March 11**
Emerson School Auditorium — 2800 W. Bayshore Road — 6:15 PM
- **Preparing As a Neighborhood for a Disaster – March 17**
Friends Meeting Hall — 957 Colorado — 7:00 PM
- **National Night Out – early August**
- **Tenth Annual MRA Ice Cream Social – September 13**

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.

Printing of this newsletter made possible by the kind donation of Midtown Realty.



Midtown Residents Association
824 Moreno
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,