

Gerstle Park

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Fall 2011



Neighborhood Picnic - Western Cookout.

Mark your calendars! The GPNA Annual Neighborhood Picnic is on Saturday, September 10th. Hot dogs, burgers, chili, buns, the fixings & entertainment are supplied by GPNA. Neighborhood members are encouraged to round out the menu with potluck items of fruit, salads, side dishes and desserts. See below for suggested food items by last name.

Event: GPNA Annual Picnic

Date: Saturday September 10th

Time: Noon to 2:30PM

A-L: Bring fruit or deserts

M-Z: Bring a salad or small side dish

Location: Gerstle Park Playground.

The Neighborhood Picnic is yet another free GPNA neighborhood event. The event is hosted each year by the GPNA Board and volunteers.



Short School Update

The refurbishing of Short School is complete. Parents who wish to enroll their children can call Mrs. Anabella Reyes at 485-3793 for information about enrollment. Here are the details:

- Grades available: Early Intervention (3-4 Year olds) through 1st Grade
- School Starts: 8:40-3:05 Wednesday release at 1:35
- Enrollment attendance: 150 Students
- There are 8 Classrooms and 7 Teachers (One empty room)
- School is in session Monday through Friday.



Centerfield Proposal for Minor League Baseball

The proposal for the City to enter into an Agreement with Centerfield Partners and host a Minor League baseball team at Albert Field went to the City Council on July 18th, 2011. The Council Chamber was over capacity with approximately 250 people in attendance. Over 50 people voiced their opinions on the proposal: for, against, and in favor of but with changes. Due to the large number concerns that were raised: rental credits to offset Centerfield's proposed stadium improvements, noise, parking, traffic, outfield fencing, concessions area usurping the space around the stadium, violations to the municipal code, and significant financial risk for the City, the Council decided to postpone their vote.

The City Council formed a sub-committee to address the financial issues and arranged to have a Community meeting with the concerned parties, the sub-committee and Centerfield Partners.

The GPNA committee is working closely with Communities for Albert Park (www.communitiesforalbertpark.org), a coalition of residents in the five neighborhoods surrounding the park.

After two community meetings in early August, Communities for Albert Park and attorney Dotty LeMieux pressed the issue of requiring an Initial Study to be performed. This is a CEQA requirement that is not as lengthy as an EIR but would provide an analysis of most of the issues raised by the residents. The Council sub-committee and the City Attorney will require that an Initial Study be conducted, and Centerfield Partners agreed to fund such a study. This was due to be voted on at the August 15th Council meeting but Centerfield cancelled their appearance at the last moment citing that they need more time to investigate their commitment.

Centerfield's proposal is due to go back to the City Council on September 19th, 2011

Safety Tips for Parents

After a child enticement incident in Gerstle Park recently Lieutenant Dan Fink of the San Rafael Police Department offered the following suggestions to parents of small children.

If there is an incident, call 911 immediately and report the following;

The location of the incident and where the suspect was last seen. A description of suspect - try to remember as much information as possible. Begin from the top down - hair, facial hair, shirt, pants, race, height, weight and age. Any unusual jewelry, tattoos, marks or scars. Describe the suspect vehicle, and especially the license plate number. Look for anything on the vehicle that stands out like bumper stickers, damage to vehicle, damaged or tinted windows.

If you have a cell phone and if it's safe to do so, take a photograph of the suspect and/or suspect vehicle. You could also video record via cell phone. Please remember to do this **ONLY** if it is safe to do so.

Don't assume that someone else has called the police. Often times, the police hear about crimes that happened days earlier but find out that the police were never notified the day of the crime. Time is the enemy in these cases. The sooner the police are informed the more likely it is that they will be able to solve the crime.

Lieutenant Fink urges parents to discuss safety measures with their children. Tell them ...

- Not to talk to strangers, especially if that person is inside a vehicle, and never enter a car or approach a car if a person asks you to get in.
- Don't stop walking if a person is following you. If you feel you are being followed, find the first adult, house, or business you see and let them know you are being followed.
- To make as much noise as possible if someone attempts to grab you and place you in a vehicle. Scream as loud as you can and fight as hard as you can.
- And finally, report suspicious people or vehicles to an adult immediately.

Don't hesitate to call Sergeant Jim Correa at 415-485-3195 or Lieutenant Dan Fink at 415-485-3148 if you have any questions.

Long-time Neighbors Talk About Gerstle Park – Part 2

This is the second installment of an interview with Hugo and Cynthia Landecker conducted by Amy Likover. The first installment appeared in the GPNA Spring newsletter.

Hugo and Cynthia Landecker moved to Gerstle Park in 1968 and have participated in community affairs ever since. Hugo was instrumental in organizing the Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association in 1971. He served on its Board of Directors, helped draw up the bylaws and then a neighborhood plan.

Hugo served for 17 years as Board President, VP, Secretary, Treasurer and “Flunky.” He currently liaisons between the Board, the SR Planning Department and the Federation of San Rafael Neighborhoods. The Federation was a “good idea,” said Hugo. Our neighborhoods pay the Federation a fee and we are stronger for it. Cynthia was on the GPNA board a number of times, and typed the newsletter on a “real typewriter.” The couple would hand-deliver the newsletter to all the neighbors.

When asked about his dedication to the neighborhood association Hugo said “There are two things in life we invest most heavily in: family and home, which by extension is your neighborhood. I see a lot of people who live in a box. In your religious affiliation, you do something for others and in your community you make your mark on the world. I have seen people get on the Board with no experience on boards and they have blossomed as individuals.” As an example, he cited Linda Bellatorre, who was Vice President and President of the GPNA. Linda went on to become chair of the Planning Commission. Another board member went on to serve on the Planning Commission, then got elected to the City Council and finally ran for the State Assembly.

Hugo went on to describe some of memorable results of the 1975 Neighborhood Plan. Its creation was a huge undertaking that really made a difference in the character of the neighborhood. That effort is lost in history, but the impact will be felt forever. Rampant development ceased and knockdowns of historic homes decreased. Open Space is Hugo’s pet project and over the years he has worked tirelessly to make the 15 acre wilderness area above Gerstle Park accessible and enjoyable. Years ago the space was overgrown with the invasive French Broom plant and was inaccessible to hikers. Hugo says “You have no idea how it’s changed. I remember asking where the fire road goes. No one knew it was a public open space;

there were ‘No Trespassing’ signs posted. There’s a quarry up there for blue stone.” A San Francisco businessman owned the quarry in the 1800s. The city of San Rafael eventually bought the property and established it as an Open Space for public use. Hugo works up there 7 days a week, six months a year, for at least an hour, pulling Broom, clearing brush and maintaining trails. Over the years, his friends have helped out including Bill Smith who would bring his cat Tiger along, René Mouly and Mitch Shandley. Each year in the Spring Hugo invites neighbors to join him in the cleanup work.

Cynthia Landecker cited traffic issues as an ongoing problem. “They have always been a major issue in Gerstle Park. The Neighborhood Association worked for over twenty years to convince the City to install traffic lights on D and Bayview so that there would be a place for pedestrians and cars to cross D in safety. More recently, the Association was instrumental in getting the City to extend the two-way portion of D Street so that heavy traffic would no longer impact First Street.”

The Association’s efforts have helped preserve the character of the neighborhood. Cynthia said, “The growth of consciousness about how important the old houses are; they are gems, one of a kind. These days, people have come to appreciate that.” Hugo added that keyhole housing developments (apartment complexes with a small entrance that expand backward) and high density developments have stopped in San Rafael and there is a nice mix of people. An ongoing problem, even in the face of the changes that have occurred in the real estate market, is the high cost of property in Gerstle Park, which limits the access of working people to homeownership. The Landeckers struggled to buy their own house, but their own child could not afford to purchase a home now in San Rafael. Another change in the neighborhood occurred when Short School, which was the center of the community, was closed. The Landecker’s daughter was in the last class before the closing. The Landeckers and other active community members exhausted themselves to keep the school open, including pleading their case in Sacramento. “Our hearts broke when it closed, for that’s how we met people,” said Cynthia. Changes in the neighborhood continue, and happily, Short School reopened this year, in response to the recent increase in the number of children in Gerstle Park.

When he was asked about his next steps for Gerstle Park, Hugo said “I have a draft of a new Neighborhood Plan....”

The GPNA salutes Hugo and Cynthia for their contributions to our wonderful neighborhood!

Beware – Possible Door-to-Door Magazine Scam.

Bob Beyea offers a warning to Gerstle Park residents, saying “Two young women came to a residents door last week selling magazines to raise money so that one of them could go to London. The woman was speaking really quickly and dropping names of neighbors. She said that her “granny” lived on the street below and asked if they knew various people that lived on that street. She also knew the name of an immediate neighbor and said that she had purchased two magazines for at total of \$84. She said that if they wanted, she could arrange to have the magazine sent to a soldier and would write up the order to send the magazines to Soldiers Angels. When they looked up her company, United Circulation LLC, there were numerous complaints against the company and many listings stating that the company was a scam.” The police department recommends that if you suspect that someone going door to door is misrepresenting themselves, that you should call them immediately and they will send an officer out to make sure that the people have a valid license to sell door to door.



What about Group Homes/ Sober Living Facilities?

“Sober Living Facilities,” are single family residences rented to operators for use as a post-rehab group living facility for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts. There are a number of these homes in Gerstle Park and our committee’s concern is for the health and safety of residents of the facilities themselves, as well as the neighbors of the unregulated homes. The neighborhood endured eight fatalities in the tragic “Lodge Fire” in a Gerstle Park boarding house many years ago and we continue to register our concern for regulation because of safety issues.

As an update, a community meeting was held at City Hall on July 27th with City Attorney Rob Epstein, Deputy City Attorney Lisa A. Goldfien, Paul Jensen, newly appointed Director of Community Development, and the City’s special land use attorney, Barbara Kautz from Goldfarb & Lipman in Oakland. The City presented an extensive slide show which addressed local, state and federal legal issues that would impact the regulation of large group homes by the City of San Rafael.

Two issues framed the discussion: (1) Residents of such facilities are considered “disabled” by federal law and (2) State law has determined that six or fewer such residents are to be treated as a single family residence for zoning purposes. City Attorneys and Director of Community Development are interested in regulating the homes and although more research must be done before a recommendation comes to City Council, they are hopeful to have a proposal for regulation. George Silvestri, the pro bono attorney for the GPNA Committee, believes that smaller homes could also be regulated.

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 - December 31st

One Vote Per Household - \$20/year (\$10 seniors age 65+)

NEW MEMBER RENEWAL

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____ Date: _____

Do you wish to receive our quarterly newsletter via email instead of home delivery? YES NO

Would you like to be included on our email distribution list? YES NO

Are you interested in volunteering with the GPNA? YES NO

Payment Type: CHECK CASH **TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$** _____