



The Riviera Association

April 2009

www.rivieraassociation.org

P.O. Box 4235 • Santa Barbara, CA 93140-4235

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President's Letter

The Riviera Association continues its mission this year devoted to preserving and enhancing the quality of life in an area that includes approximately 1,900 addresses. Your board has been active with the Santa Barbara City Council, county and city fire departments in keeping communications open on any important issues affecting the Riviera area. I joined several other board members recently to speak before the Santa Barbara Planning Commission on behalf of the stalled El Encanto remodeling project. The wooden fence and exposed steel girders left for many months as the project navigates its way through an appeals process, has been an eyesore to the community and a lost tax base to the city.

In the wake of the Tea Fire we are focusing on several critical projects before the upcoming fire season:

■ **Wild Fire Protection Plan**—Our board member, Paul Cashman, has taken the lead in working with the city on implementation of the Wildfire Protections Plan. One important feature of the plan is the ability to write grant proposals which can bring funds into the area for fuel reduction to make the area more fire resistant before we have another event.

■ **Emergency Communications**—In many of the “lessons learned” meetings held since the fire, communications was at the top of the list for needed improvements. Procedures are being reviewed by the city council and the fire departments and we will pass the information along as it becomes available. We are also evaluating a resident communication network in association with the Santa Barbara Amateur Radio Club. More information will be available at our General Meeting in May.

■ **Public Education**—Several excellent talks and seminars have been offered over the past couple of months on a summary of the Tea Fire as well as fire preparedness. Future talks along with information on other active projects will be posted on our Web site.

I would like to thank Helene Hill, Jan Tyler, and Steve Kittell for their recent service on the board of directors. Helene helped prepare our newsletter and served briefly as president while Jan served as our treasurer. Steve Kittell supported the Riviera Association's membership in the Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council. Their contributions to the Riviera Association board were much appreciated.

Our organization is only as strong as our membership. If you are not a member and you would like to join for \$30 a year, you can use our secure Web site at www.rivieraassociation.org to join online, or print out the form and mail it in with your check. If I can answer any questions about the Riviera Association and our charter, feel free to contact me at jjknight3@cox.net. I also enjoy talking over coffee and would be glad to meet with you to discuss your ideas and our current activities.

Please join us at the spring general meeting schedule to be held at Marymount School Auditorium, 2130 Mission Ridge Road, at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 31. We look forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,

Jim Knight/President
The Riviera Association

Wildland Fire Defensible Space Compliance

Your president, Jim Knight and I met with this month with Council Member Grant House, Fire Chief Ron Prince, Fire Battalion Chief Joe Poire, and Fire Prevention Supervisor Jim Austin. The goal of the meeting was to revisit the city's Wildland Fire Plan to see what lessons can be learned from the Tea Fire. A full report will be made to City Council of our findings in May. One of the topics discussed was the enforcement of existing California Fire Code that requires we maintain 100 feet of defensible space from our homes. The Fire Department has been conducting "curbside inspections" of Riviera properties to determine compliance with the City's "Defensible Space Clearance Requirements." Your property must be in compliance with these requirements by June 15 of this year, and is required by law to stay in compliance year round. If your property is not in compliance with the City of Santa Barbara Municipal Code, Chapter 8.04 at the time of inspection, you will be issued a warning and your property will be scheduled for reinspected. If after re-inspection there is still no compliance you will be referred to the city attorney's office for enforcement.

Effective fire prevention measures can keep fires from starting and reduce hazards that threaten you and your neighbors' property. The intent of defensible space clearance is not to promote the indiscriminate clearing of land. It is possible to create defensible space and retain the visual beauty, privacy and environmental health of your property. If you have questions regarding these requirements you can call City Fire at 564-5702 for a voluntary inspection of your property or check out their Web site at www.santabarbaraca.gov/Government/Departments/Fire. —Paul Cashman

El Encanto Hotel and Garden Villas

Since the last newsletter information about this project, neighbors and Riviera Association representatives have met with the El Encanto planning team several times to review and discuss the revised Master Plan. In letters to the Planning Commission, the association requested consideration of issues and concerns shared with neighbors:

- Removal of Eucalyptus trees along Alvarado Place—to reduce fire hazard.
- Set-back increase on Mission Ridge Road and Alvarado Place and lowering of surface parking lot—to reduce noise and light from parking lot activities.
- Increase of wall height along Alvarado Place—to reduce noise and visual clutter from parking operations.
- Improved sound attenuation for the Utility Distribution Facility (UDF)—to reduce noise to immediate neighbors and the general public.

At the January 9, 2009 Planning Commission hearing, the association accepted conclusions of the Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration regarding noise and parking issues. This was restated at the February 12, 2009 hearing when the Planning Commission accepted the report and project by a vote of 6:1—Commissioner Lodge was the dissenting vote.

This decision has been appealed by three neighbors adjacent to the El Encanto property. The appeal is scheduled to be heard by City Council on April 28, 2009. In the meantime building activities at the site have stopped, the General Manager has left, ivy is growing through the construction fence and plantings by the El Encanto sign wall have died. Is this the beginning of a "Miramar West"? —Brigitte Forssell

Tea Fire Rebuilding

By mid March 2009 The Single Family Design Board had held hearings on proposals to rebuild more than 19 homes in Santa Barbara destroyed by the Tea Fire. The most unusual proposal was for the use of a pre-built home to be constructed in Alameda Park as part of the Earth Day weekend. The plan



Photos by Charles Croninger

The pre-built home installed on East Pedregosa Street last year.



The pre-built home in its early stages, under construction at Alameda Park, before its move to Coyote Road.

calls for many green features. After the celebration the home is scheduled to be transported to Coyote Road to replace a home lost in the Tea Fire.

A pre-built home was installed last year in Santa Barbara on East Pedregosa Street. —Charles Croninger

The Riviera Association General Meeting

**Sunday, May 31, at 5:00 p.m.
at Marymount School Auditorium, 2130 Mission Ridge Road**

Joe Poire, Santa Barbara City Fire Marshal, and Jim Austin, Supervisor of the city's Fire Prevention Bureau, will make a presentation on "Lessons Learned from the Tea Fire" and give us an update on the city's Wildfire Protection Plan and

Defensible Space Enforcement, followed by a question and answer period. Several board members will give updates on the El Encanto project and Francheschi Park. Please join us for an informative evening.

Foothill Road Closure

If you have been driving on Foothill Road near Mission Canyon Road lately, you've been aware of traffic slowdown and one-way reversing traffic control in place making your normal quick transition through the area much slower. A Caltrans project named the Mission Canyon Safety Project is focusing on drainage improvements and relocating a water main along with adding paved shoulders for pedestrians and bicycles. A section of Foothill Road between Cheltenham Road and Tye Road will be completely closed to through traffic from April 20 through early July. You can get current information by calling (805) 549-3318 or use the Caltrans Web site at www.dot.ca.gov/dist05/projects. **More importantly, if you should have to evacuate off the Riviera during an emergency, incorporate a revised exit plan that does not use that portion of Foothill Road during the construction period.**

Join the Riviera Association

For nearly 80 years, the Association has been dedicated to ensuring that the Riviera is a great neighborhood—by protecting and preserving what we have, and by working to improve things throughout the neighborhood.

The Tea Fire demonstrated the critical importance of fire safety and emergency preparedness. Our defensible space and brush clearing program showed its value on many streets. The fire drill we held a year earlier proved to be very valuable in helping residents who needed to evacuate quickly. Our program for undergrounding unsightly utilities is

being simplified so that more residents can take advantage of it.

A few members have not yet sent in their dues for 2009. Please do this and encourage any neighbors who are not members to join. The Association's ability to influence issues and the decisions of our local government is directly proportional to the size of our membership. Our ability to monitor and protect neighborhood interests depends on adequate funding. We depend on your dues of only \$30 per year per household.

You can conveniently pay your dues online at www.rivieraassociation.org/join.php. Or print the form and mail it in with your check. We need you!
—Bob Johnson

Open Board Positions

It is an unusual time for the Riviera Association board—**new board members are needed!**

Since the founding of the association in 1930, the board has consisted of fifteen members. The term of each member is three years, with the option for renewal of an additional three year term. In order to keep continuity, each year the service of five members expires and new members are voted in at the fall membership meeting.

Board members meet every other month and meetings last about two hours, depending on the volume of business at hand. Committee chairs present updates and, after discussion, votes are taken on action items.

If you are interested in your neighborhood, have concerns about issues in our area, or have ideas to improve service to our members, this is an opportunity to become involved.

Please contact Paul Cashman (paul.cashman.b87q@statefarm.com) and let him know that you want to join the board. We look forward to working with many new board members. —Brigitte Forssell

Francheschi Park and House

Many residents ask about the status of the park and the house.

In February, the Franceschi Park Advisory Committee was dissolved due to its inability to raise funding for park projects. A promised grant from the Franceschi Park Foundation for development of a planting bed was no longer available. Although the Pearl Chase Society has a contractual agreement with the city to rehabilitate the house, there has been no public fundraising for this project. In addition, needed city funds for widening of the driveway and stabilization of the sloping patio are also not available.

So what will happen to this city property? Very likely nothing until the economy recovers and financial situations improve. In 1998, when discussion started regarding the future of the property, the public was divided as to the house issue. The Pearl Chase Society rallied many citizens with a promise to rehabilitate the house. However, more than ten years later the house continues to deteriorate and attract illegal activities, vandals, and graffiti.

Park neighbors and residents are concerned about the fire hazards associated with park and house. The Riviera Association will continue to be interested in annual vegetation clearing and general upkeep of the park. —Brigitte Forssell



The Riviera Association
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Riviera Association Questionnaire Summary

As part of the package we mailed to the Riviera residents in the fall of 2008 we included a survey to help understand on what you thought was important for us to focus. We received 271 responses and a summary of your input follows:

1. What are the most important activities the Riviera Association should be involved in (listed in order of importance on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the most important)?

Fire safety	2
Emergency preparedness	3
Traffic safety	4
Zoning enforcement	5
Density of housing	5
Undergrounding utilities	5
Policing	5
Public landscaping and parks	5

2. Should the Association take a more active stand in having utilities undergrounded? **Yes 81%** No 19%
Based on this feedback, the city has agreed to carry out a survey of Riviera residents to determine the level of interest by homeowner in undergrounding.

3. More social activities among neighbors of the Riviera Association? **Yes 46%** **No 54%**

4. Work with city to develop ordinance that protects homeowners from having houses built that block their views?
Yes 88% No 12%

5. Interest in emergency preparedness/disaster training?
Yes 69% No 31%

—Jules Bender

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