



One of Our Worst Fears: Canyon Fire Threatens UH Homes

At 5:36 p.m. on Saturday, September 4, San Diego Fire-Rescue received the first reports of a fire in the canyon below Lomitas Drive, Old Trolley Barn Park, and Panorama Drive. Within minutes the blaze grew to approximately 1.5 acres and moved quickly up the heavy, dry brush, threatening the canyon-side homes. Evacuations were ordered for about a dozen homes in the fire's immediate path as two strike teams, seven brush rigs, a battalion chief, 30 personnel, and Air Operations "Copter 3" responded and beat back the fire.



Fire coming up canyon toward Lomitas. Photograph by OnSceneTV.

Island Palm in the canyon that had been killed by the beetle infestation was smoldering, so SDFD crews cut it down to make sure the fire was completely out. The San Diego Metro Arson Strike Team has determined that the fire was not an intentional act of arson, and it is instead being investigated as an accidental fire, with the assumption that it started in a homeless camp likely caused by someone cooking or smoking.



View of the start of the fire from Panorama Drive. Photograph by SDFD via Twitter.



Sunday morning, there were still some hot spots smoldering. Photograph by Scott Levy.

Local resident Bill Powers was at the movie theater in Mission Valley when he got a call from a neighbor about the fire. "I saw the flames moving up the canyon towards my home. We rushed back and luckily things were under control by the time I got home," Powers said. "Battalion Chief Allen and the crew used my patio as a command post. They were amazing, professional, and really cool and calm about it."

Powers knows this canyon very well, having worked with the local Park, Recreation, and Open Space Advisory Group in years past on clean-up and planting projects. With those volunteer programs on hold during the pandemic, he's seen a lot of activity in the canyon, with a lot of debris left over.

"We got lucky this time - neighbors spotted the fire immediately, and there wasn't any wind, so it was a best-case scenario," Powers said.

"It's really important and healthy that we do some basic inspections in the canyons occasionally. I've seen encampments and lots of combustible trash over the



SDFD Air Operations Fire Copter 3 making one of six water drops onto fire. Photograph by Bill Powers.

years. The encampments tend to pop up and then get abandoned or moved. Sometimes if they are using fire to cook or even just smoke, with the dry brush we have here, it's a recipe for disaster.

Scott Levy is another neighbor who was also affected and had heard screaming coming from the canyon area minutes before the fire was reported. "I heard some cursing coming from the canyon Saturday afternoon," Levy said. "It wasn't unusual, as we've seen and heard numerous people in camps coming and going over the years. Sometimes I've even seen where they have left markers along a trail towards a campsite. I've seen them haul lumber, canvas, even some patio furniture - they go to the fence at the park, toss it over, and then jump the fence and follow the well-worn trail to their site."



Sunday afternoon where the fire was with area of investigation roped off by police line, from Old Trolley Barn Park, photograph by Marc Johnson.

Levy went to a fundraiser in Hillcrest for New Orleans victims of hurricane Ida just before the fire started. "Not 10 minutes after I left, my wife called to tell me what was going on. I thought it was a joke. I raced back and saw everything happening," he said.

Levy has had encounters with a few of the people living in the canyon over the years, some getting heated to the point that he worried for his family's safety. He said, "One guy came up to my window at night and was banging on it while I was holding my daughter. He kept threatening me not to mess with him. I've even started going down the path of getting a restraining order against one guy who has been threatening, but the time and costs involved are really prohibitive. I just try to avoid making eye contact." **Canyon Fire continued on page 3**

NEXT UHCA MEETING

OCT. 7
6:45 PM
GUEST: CARIE CHOUINARD
CERT (COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM) MANAGER FOR THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
UHSD.ORG/ATTEND-A-MEETING

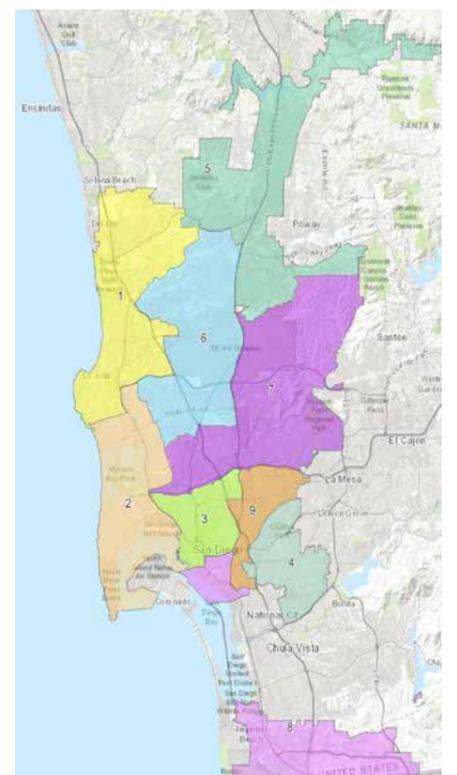
LOOKING AHEAD

NOV. 4
6:45 PM
GUEST: REGIONAL DIRECTOR HANAN SCRAPER AND HER TEAM
PEOPLE ASSISTING THE HOMELESS (PATH)
UHSD.ORG/ATTEND-A-MEETING

Redistricting Is Coming!

Every ten years following the national census, state and local governments begin working on redrawing maps to account for population movements and changes. The State of California will redraw congressional districts (we're in the 53rd district), State Assembly and Senate districts (we're in the 78th and 39th, respectively), while The County of San Diego will work to equalize the five supervisorial districts (we're in the 4th).

The State of California does this work through the California Citizens Redistricting Commission, which was formed after a 2008 ballot initiative that put redistricting into an independent citizen-led commission. State Law requires that the County use an independent commission of appointed commissioners, and the City of San Diego requires an independent Redistricting Commission, whose work is starting now (we're in the 3rd Council District).



The goal of all these commissions is to redraw districts in a fair, impartial, and equal way. Many of the commissions have had - or will soon have - hearings to get community input. UH community group leaders participated in the County redistricting meeting held on September 9 and voiced our strongly held belief that

Redistricting continued on page 8



6pm Saturday, SDFD is on Lomitas Drive with multiple engines. Photograph by Bill Powers.

By 8 p.m., thanks to the fast response and significant efforts of the SDFD, the fire was out, and crews remained on the scene to ensure there weren't any flare-ups. On Sunday morning, a Canary



SDFD "field command post" fighting fire from resident's patio. Photograph by Bill Powers.

MEMBERSHIP

JOIN TODAY AND HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE! OUR SUCCESS IS LARGELY DEPENDENT ON VOLUNTEER EFFORTS FROM AREA RESIDENTS LIKE YOU.



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Diversionary Theater

GOLDEN OSTRICH
Mary Anne Stevens

HOUSEHOLD
James Gerber & Marion De Koning, Priscilla Dickson & Terry Dickson, Paul Sandbo

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 NEW RENEWAL

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\$ _____ Donation for Keeping Up the Good Work (Donate as a member or non-member)

Volunteer Your Time on a UHCA Committee!

- Beautification & Planning** Keep UH beautiful.
- Blockwalker** Help deliver *UHCA News* to neighborhood residences and businesses.
- Marketing & Merchandising** Promote UHCA via marketing/advertising, visual arts, photography, and product merchandising.
- Membership** Help meet record goals for membership and meeting attendance.
- Neighborhood/Zone Watch** Join your neighbors to keep UH safe.
- UHCA News** Write articles, take photos, or sell ads; these are just a few of the many ways to contribute your talent, creativity, and energy to the *UHCA News*.
- Program & Events** Plan and oversee the various events and general meetings.

A portion of your membership is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. For more info, email membership@uhsd.org



UHCA NEWS

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Published 10 times per year by the University Heights Community Association. We welcome articles, letters, and announcements about issues and events relating to University Heights. The deadline for submission is the first of the month. Please see www.uhsd.org/submissions for details.



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UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS BOUNDARIES AND ZONE WATCH



Zone Watch Coordinators manage email lists of participants wishing to receive University Heights crime watch information and updates. Download more on the UH Zone Watch program at uhsd.org or contact your zone's coordinator or Nan McGraw.

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CRIME WATCH SIGNS

UHCA installed 60 new signs in 2016. If you know of an old sign that needs replacing or a location needing a sign, email signs@uhsd.org.



SLOW DOWN SIGNS

Speeding on neighborhood streets in UH continues to be a problem. Shaving time off trips by speeding has small benefits and high risks. PLEASE SLOW DOWN! please email signs@uhsd.org.

UH PHONE BOOK

Emergency • Police • Fire • Medical	911	Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol (RSVP)	619-692-4945
Non-Emergency Suspicious Activity, Homeless Outreach Team, etc. Online: non-emergency problems: www.sandiego.gov/get-it-done	619-531-2000	Vacation home security check, welfare of home-bound, patrolling business districts, homeland security support	
SD City Services: Emergency & Non-Emergency Street lights, potholes, etc. Online: www.sandiego.gov/city-hall/departments	619-527-7500	SDPD Community Relations Officers: David Surwilo dsurwilo@pd.sandiego.gov	619-692-4858
Alert San Diego Reverse 911 notification to mobile phones for emergencies requiring evacuations www.readysandiego.org/alertsandiego/		SDPD Western Division 5215 Gaines Street	619-692-4800
2-1-1 San Diego Free Resources: COVID-19, CalFresh, Medi-Cal, Covered California, etc.	211 or 858-300-1211	Shopping Cart Pick-Up Service	800-252-4613
Abandoned Vehicles	858-495-7856	Stonewall Citizens Patrol	sredmond@stonewallcitizens.org
Alice Birney Elementary Office	619-497-3500	Suicide Prevention	888-724-7240
Animals / Non-Emergency	619-767-2675	UHDC University Heights Community Development Corporation	619-297-3166
Brush and Weed Abatement	619-533-4444	University Heights Public Library 4193 Park Blvd	619-692-4912
Code Violations	619-236-5500	UH Zone Watch Coordinator Nan McGraw nmcsan@aol.com	619-260-0668
COVID-19 City of San Diego Daily Updates	www.sandiego.gov/coronavirus	Graffiti: In Progress Emergency:	911
COVID-19 California Daily Updates	www.cdph.ca.gov	Report Online: apps.sandiego.gov/streetdiv/ email photos	cericson@pd.sandiego.gov
COVID-19 County of San Diego Daily Updates	www.sandiegocounty.gov/coronavirus	Graffiti Hotline:	619-527-7500
COVID-19 National Daily Updates	www.cdc.gov	SD Vector Control mosquitoes / ticks / rats	858-694-2888
Crime Stoppers Tip Line	888-580-TIPS (8477)	Online: vector@sdcounty.ca.gov	
Department of Environmental Health Public Health/Rats/Rodents	858-694-2888	https://getitdone.force.com Download this app for reporting non-emergency issues like potholes, graffiti, etc.	
Downed Power Lines / SDG&E	800-411-7343	If all else fails, email	
Emergency Water / Sewer Repair / Sink Holes	619-515-3525	IMCaballero@sandiego.gov at Councilmember Stephen Whitburn's office.	
Narcotics Suspicious drug house / anonymous	619-531-2468		



DISASTER CONTACTS

In case of a major disaster, have two out-of-area contacts handy. When the power is out, landline phones may not work. Make sure your cell phone is charged. Call 211 for updated information.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

CHRISTINE HERNANDEZ

Hello, Neighbors!

And just like that, it's Fall season. Where does the time go? We hope you are staying safe as the pandemic continues. The Delta variant has aggressively taken so many more lives across the world. UHCA wants to extend their heartfelt condolences to any neighbors affected by the Delta variant. Our hearts are with you.

While we all are doing our part to carry on following safety precautions, we once again want to send a kind reminder to mask up while indoors in public facilities or within close proximity to others at public outdoor areas. It's our duty to take care of one another.

Last year, UH's famous Halloween spectacular was cancelled due to the pandemic. As I write this, it was announced that Norbert the Dragon will return this year along with all of the amazing decorations by our neighbors along Maryland Street. This year, to promote safety, the neighbors will be following a strict "No Mask, No Candy" policy to promote safety, while still making this time of year special for the entire neighborhood.



I want to personally thank Andy Cameron for all that he does for our neighborhood, including spearheading (and doing much of the theatrical lighting) for his block at Halloween. If you haven't experienced it, it's something to be seen. KPBS ran a story about this a few years ago, and you can watch it here to get a bit of the history: <https://bit.ly/UH-Halloween>.

Let's all enjoy a safe Fall and Halloween!

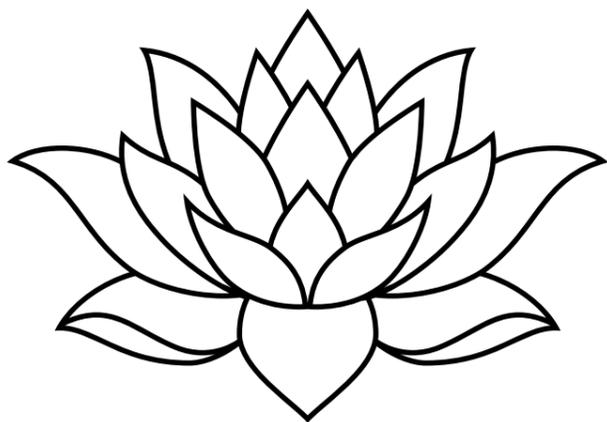


- Christine Hernandez, UHCA President

CALL FOR WRITERS!



UHCA News is always looking for content that matters to UH residents. We strive to cover local UH news, and our best "reporters" are our neighbors. So if you have news to share, or an item that would be of interest to your UH neighbors, we want to help you share it to the community in these pages. You can pitch ideas, articles, or topics to the UHCA News team by sending them to uhcanews@uhsd.org. Be sure to check out our Editorial Guidelines at www.uhsd.org/submissions.



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Canyon Fire *continued from front page*

contact now. I'm confident the screaming from the canyon as the fire was breaking out was the same individual that has been threatening me."

Russ Elrod also lives on the same block and has had similar encounters. Elrod said, "I've seen a number of clean-outs done, lumber, metal, construction materials – even a car body that had to be cut up and taken away. Some of the people in the camps can be aggressive. One guy in particular, who several of us have talked to the police about, has yelled at people in the park, saying, 'This is my park – I'll fight you' and 'this is my driveway, get out of the way.' It's been getting worse since COVID, definitely over the last one and a half years."

Officer David Surwilo, Public Relations Officer with the Western Division of the San Diego Police Department, empathized with the neighbors we spoke with. He said, "Encampments are not new – San Diego is a huge city with canyons in many of our neighborhoods. The problem isn't new, but there are more now than before."

Surwilo outlined how the SDPD Progressive Enforcement policy is followed: "Neighborhood policing tracks contacts with folks in the canyons. We document encounters, especially for repeats. On the first encounter, we try to offer services, and after that we can issue citations when there are infractions and build cases for prosecution if we continue to have issues with the same people at the same camp. Unfortunately, once the camp moves, we have to start the escalation process all over."

"In this canyon, our officers have visited folks in the canyon and they discovered the encampments a few weeks ago. We moved the camp, and then called in the appropriate department to abate (clean up). In open space areas like this where there is a high fire risk, we try to do it quickly."

Councilmember Responds

"Many University Heights residents have long feared a destructive fire ignited by the activities of people living in neighboring canyons," said Council President Pro Tem Stephen Whitburn, who represents District 3 which includes University Heights. "This incident demonstrated how dangerous such a fire could be to both our unhoused and housed neighbors."

"The solution is to end the widespread homelessness that exists in our city today. I'm working with my Council colleagues, Mayor Gloria, our non-profit service providers, and community groups, and we have taken steps that will begin to improve the situation. We have a lot of work to do, but we're finally doing the right things to connect more people to the housing and services they need."

What can we do

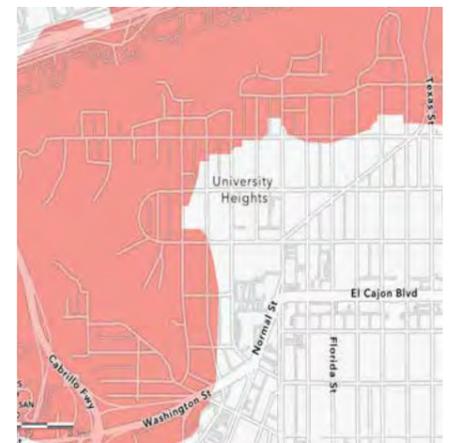
Our neighborhood has a large number of canyons on the North and West boundaries, including the Vermont Street bridge area and the Adams Avenue bridge over Texas Street, and these areas have attracted homeless encampments. We have experienced a number of fires over the years, with the fire on Sept. 4 being one of the larger and most threatening ones.

It is not a crime to be homeless, we are frequently reminded, and for the most part people who are in the canyons keep out of sight and don't cause problems. A number of neighbors along the canyons have made connections with the people in the canyons, some of whom also have

connections to the neighborhood. One of the homeless people described by neighbors interviewed for this article is believed to be a life-long UH resident, having grown up here and having attended Birney, but has fallen on hard times. Unfortunately, the threat of fire danger from the encampments is too dangerous to ignore.

Residents are urged to use Get It Done to report encampments and dumping/debris. When there are illegal activities – public drinking, urination, defecation, harassment – residents are urged to contact SDPD at 911 (emergency, life threatening, or property damage in progress) or 619-531-2000 for non-emergency matters.

Officer Surwilo advised, "If we can get Neighborhood Policing involved sooner, establishing a dialog with people who are living in the canyons, the chance to get them help through services goes up. Not everyone is receptive, and for folks that repeatedly break the law, we may be able to arrest them and hopefully break the cycle. It doesn't happen often; we're dealing in many cases with folks with addiction and mental health issues."



Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone in University Heights along canyon, San Diego Fire Department

For homeowners on the canyons, it's critically important to keep a 100 foot "defensible space" free of flammable materials. Additional information is available on the City's Fire-Rescue website at www.sandiego.gov/fire/services/brush/severityzones.

- Marc Johnson

Do you want to help make UH better?

UHCA is the voice of University Heights, and we need more neighbors to join us to help promote, beautify, lobby for, organize, and protect our special neighborhood.

Have you considered how your talents, passion, drive, and energy could help make a difference in our community? We have open volunteer, board, and committee leadership positions.

You can have fun meeting - and working with - neighbors and friends, while helping make a real difference.

Contact us at volunteer@uhsd.org and let's make good things happen in UH... together!

Nature in the Neighborhood

Oak Varieties



Coast Live Oak



Engelmann Oak



Scrub Oak

When the Portola expedition explored San Diego in 1769, Fr. Crespi reported “some large Live Oaks at the end of the [Mission] valley.” Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) acorns were a major food source for Native Americans, who likely cultivated these trees. To make oak mush, bitter tannins must be leached out, but these same tannins were used to tan hides (from the bark) and dye (from oak galls, which form in reaction to wasps laying eggs). Today, almost all the trees in San Diego are non-native, but we can still spot a few native oaks in our neighborhood.

Coast Live Oak is our largest oak, growing up to 100 feet tall and wide. To identify this species, turn the leaf upside down. You’ll notice that the leaves are typically cup-shaped and have a few small hairs growing where leaf veins meet – “hairy arm pits.” The leaf shape causes fog to collect into droplets and drip off onto the ground below, a neat way to harvest a bit more moisture in the coastal zone. There is a grove of (planted) Coast Live Oaks in Balboa Park, along 26th Street east of Pershing.

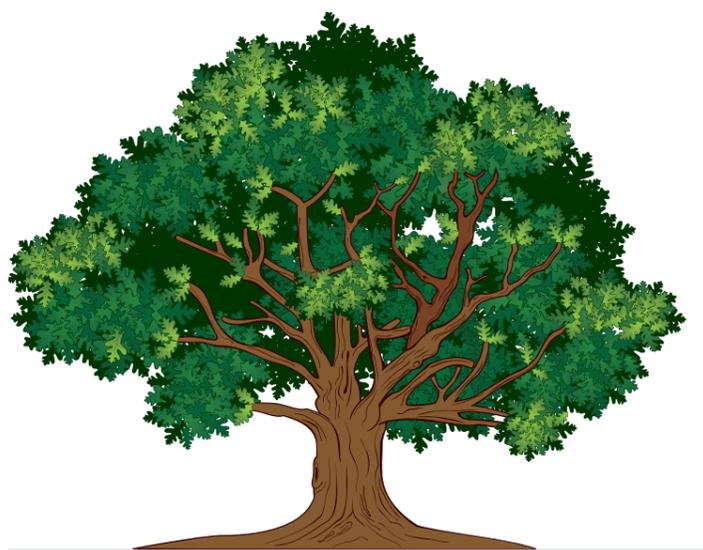
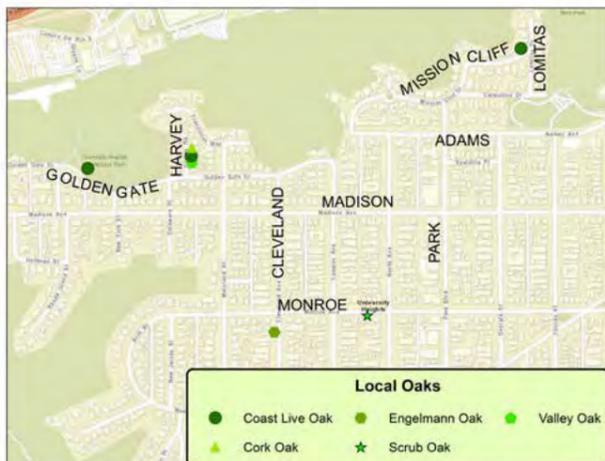
Engelmann Oak (*Q. engelmanni*) is found only in southern California, with most remaining trees in San Diego County. They typically occur a bit further inland than (or upslope from) Coast Live Oak. The grayish, furrowed bark and the distinct blue-green color of the flat, leathery leaves makes this species easy to identify from a distance. It’s not as large as the Coast Live Oak (to about 60 ft tall and 90 ft wide) and can grow in a wider variety of soils.

A young scrub oak (*Q. berberidifolia*) is just getting established along Monroe Street. Scrub Oaks grow up to 20 feet tall and are distinguished by their wavy, sharply pointed leaves (Berberidifolia means barber-like leaves).

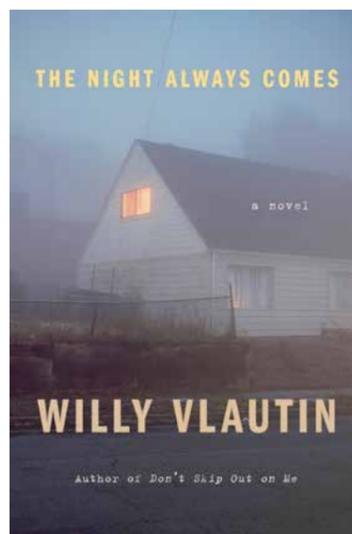
There are two other oaks growing cheek by jowl with the Coast Live Oak on Harvey Street. Cork Oak (*Q. suber*) is native to the southern

Mediterranean, where its thick, shaggy bark can be removed from mature trees every ten years or so and used for wine bottle corks. Valley Oak (*Q. lobata*), distinguished by its deeply lobed leaves, occurs naturally from Los Angeles to around Chico. It’s the tree dotting the grassy hills in that classic California image. Unlike the other oaks discussed here, this oak loses its leaves in winter. In Spanish, deciduous oaks are called robles, as in Paso Robles, while evergreen oaks are called encinas, as in Encino or Encinitas.

- David Flietner is proprietor of Design with Natives



WHAT ARE YOU READING?



“The Night Always Comes” by Willy Vlautin

Of all the good books I’ve read recently, one that stands out is a slim little novel by Willy Vlautin, called “The Night Always Comes.” If you are not familiar with this author, I highly recommend him.

With his spare, dispassionate prose, Vlautin is this century’s Hemmingway. His characters live on the fringes of our society. If you don’t think you come from a privileged background, you may change your mind after reading one of his books.

The heroine of “The Night Always Comes” is a young woman working three jobs, trying desperately to earn enough to buy the home she and her family have been renting for years. The action takes place over two days, and you will be on the edge of your seat as she gambles all for the American Dream.

Along the way, the author reveals how greed and the gentrification of lower income neighborhoods are forcing people out of the areas they have called home, sometimes for generations. We can see these same forces at work in our own neighborhoods as the housing market skyrockets.

Vlautin’s books are not light-hearted romps, but you will never forget his characters or their stories.
- Steffanie Fry

UHCA BEAUTIFICATION UPDATE

Fighting Graffiti

Graffiti: some people call it urban art while others describe it as self-expression. Most people, however, view it as mindless and irresponsible vandalism that degrades the quality of life of all members of our community.

To combat this urban scourge, the University Heights Community Association Beautification Team and supporting volunteers routinely conduct sweeps of our neighborhood to identify and remove accumulated graffiti. Team members also remove highly visible tagging when it occurs to send a signal to the vandals that they are wasting their time and money since the results of their efforts are going

to be expeditiously removed and thereby not seen by their intended audience.

We all can be a part of these efforts. How can you help? When you see graffiti, contact the city using its “Get It Done” app, including a picture when possible. A city crew will respond and notify you when the problem has been eliminated. Even better, acquire a can of “Goof Off” graffiti remover the next time you are at a hardware store, and fix the problem yourself.

Better yet still: join the Beautification Team that meets the first Wednesday of every month at 6:00 p.m. at the Lafayette Hotel. Working together, we can keep University Heights clean and beautiful.

- Rod Girvin, UHCA Beautification Team Leader beautification@uhsd.org

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WHO YOU WORK WITH MATTERS!



October 2021

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

San Diego Zoo/Park Kids Free All Month




1
World Smile Day
Nov. News Articles Due

2
International Day of Non-Violence

3
Hillcrest Farmers Market
9 am - 2 pm

4
World Habitat Day

5
SDUSD Board Meeting
5 pm, sandiegounified.org
Uptown Planners
6 pm, uptownplannerssd.org

6
UHCDC
6 pm, uhcdc.org
UHCA Beautification Meeting
6 pm, uhsd.org

7
UH Park & Rec Meeting
5:30 pm, uhcdc.org
UHCA Meeting
6:45 pm, uhsd.org
Curbside Recycling & Yard Waste Collection

8

9

10
Hillcrest Farmers Market
9 am - 2 pm
World Mental Health Day

11
Indigenous People's Day

12
SDUSD Board Meeting
5 pm, sandiegounified.org
Hillcrest Town Council
6:30 pm, hillcresttc.org

13

14



15

16

17
Hillcrest Farmers Market
9 am - 2 pm

18
Ellen Browning Scripps Day

19
North Park Planning Committee
6:30 pm
northparkplanning.org

20
Friends of the UH Library Meeting
6 pm
No UH Library Task Force Meeting

21

22

23



24
Hillcrest Farmers Market
9 am - 2 pm
United Nations Day



25

26
SDUSD Board Meeting
5 pm, sandiegounified.org
UHCA News Out

27

28

29

30

31
Hillcrest Farmers Market
9 am - 2 pm
Halloween



Pet of the Month Kayla



With her tangerine eyelashes, golden coat, and feathery tail waving in the breeze, Kayla prances through Old Trolley Barn Park with pride and glee.

She is one of the most cuddly and loving dogs in the park. She delights in visiting the blankets of friendly kids and adults to collect pats and snuggles, giving love and kisses back all she can.

Rescued by our University Heights poet, Jon Von Erb, she's his service dog from Palm Springs and now loves living here in San Diego. She looks forward to sharing more love and pettings with others daily as we all delight in our moderate climate and beautiful surroundings.

Ode to the Pup Kayla

young soul full of boisterous bounce wet with the pink of your kisses you echo past energies spunky spirits filled with wonder the amaze of adventure your eyes speak of instant love ears warn of danger before you know what peril is all in play that teaches fast your nose follows ancient paths as you claim your pack	demanding to belong to guard forever strong with head at attention your ancestral sense shows who you are the queen huntress with flaxen coat and a feathered tail you whip up a joyous hello and in a flash goodbyes that leave me longing for more
--	---

Jon Von Erb
9/2021

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PB Pumpkin Patch:

870 Garnet
Mondays-Fridays: 10: 00 am-10 pm
Saturdays-Sundays: 8 am-10:00 pm
Free admission



PLEASE WEAR YOUR Mask

San Diego's Housing Situation Is Bad, But Getting Better

San Diego's recent housing reports show just how far the city has to go to meet its goals, and how far it has come.

San Diego needs more housing. The good news is that, according to the most recent Annual Housing Report, San Diego seems to be in the middle of a housing boom with new, denser construction underway everywhere from Downtown to Uptown, as well as into the Mid-City region. The bad news is that even with this sizable increase in construction over the past two years, San Diego is still nowhere close to having enough housing.

According to that same report, only 55.3 of the over 88,000 housing units needed under the previous eight-year Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) cycle were actually built, and nearly 85% of these units were intended for households making well above the area's median income. While affordable housing construction has picked up dramatically since 2018, the city has a long way to go before it approves construction for the number of units required to meet its housing demand.

The housing situation in San Diego was further complicated in July, when the next eight-year RHNA cycle targets were announced. This updated version of the plan calls for a total of 108,036 housing units to be constructed by the end of 2029 in the city of San Diego, with even more units needed in the surrounding area. This new allocation represents a nearly 23% increase in city housing stock needed before the end of the decade.

On a positive note, while the previous

eight-year cycle came to an end with few units actually constructed, over the last two years there has been a sharp uptick in the number of affordable housing projects that have been approved and that are under construction. In 2020 the city approved 68 new affordable housing projects totaling over 700 units, compared to just 15 two years earlier. Similarly, the annual number of affordable housing projects for which construction has started has more than tripled since 2018.

In another promising change, San Diego leaders are becoming increasingly enthusiastic about the benefits of denser housing, especially for lower-income households and those currently unhoused. These days many leaders and experts understand that housing and homelessness are deeply connected, and that a lack of affordable housing is a direct contributing factor to the homelessness crisis that has impacted California and San Diego specifically.

In an effort to increase the availability of affordable housing, Mayor Todd Gloria announced in July a new Homes For All of Us package which, among other things, aims to bolster the city's "Entry-Level Housing." The details of this package are still being worked out, but the plan aims to construct new single-room occupancy (SRO) units "to provide more entry-level living options for the unhoused population." SROs are "one of the oldest, if not the oldest form of naturally occurring affordable housing," according to the office of City Council-member and Chairmen of the City's Land Use and Housing Com-

mittee, Steven Whitburn. SROs offer inexpensive housing to those on the last rungs of the housing ladder, and San Diego could use a lot more of them.

For years, city regulations have discouraged the construction of both new SROs and affordable micro-apartments, preferring instead to simply preserve the existing SRO supply. But it seems that San Diego may finally be ready to undergo a desperately overdue transformation and build housing for those who actually need it.

While the last decade of housing construction left a lot to be desired, City leaders should be applauded for working to change course and increase the supply of housing in the

region. The progress in the past two years represents a departure from San Diego's prior anti-housing policies. If progress continues to improve this decade, San Diego will be significantly closer to becoming a place where everyone can afford housing. For now, though, it's too early to tell whether 2020 was a momentary break from the status quo, or the start of a journey to a new normal.

Assuming the latter, it's also difficult to know whether the quickening pace of housing construction will be enough to counter the increasing demand. This would be crucial to help stabilize both soaring housing prices and rising rents. For the first time in a decade, San Diego is finally trending in the right direction, but for now there is still a long road ahead.

-Brian Schrader is a software developer and Uptown neighbor Normal Heights and writer at Democracy & Progress democracyandprogress.com



Housing construction starts remained below the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goals for the 5th Housing Element Cycle in all income categories except the above-moderate category. Approximately 55.3% of the total needed units for the current cycle were achieved.

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BIRNEY BUZZ

It Takes a Village!

For a parent, back-to-school time comes with many mixed emotions: gratitude that you were able to squeeze in some time with the kid(s) this summer, hope that they had more than their share of carefree childhood adventures, an obsessive motivation to de-clutter your home, and most importantly, a relief that you will be soon handing them off to someone who is much more qualified to educate your kids.

It definitely takes a village to raise our children, and for so many of us, the Birney teachers and staff are a supporting, critical part of that village. Many of these individuals have some kind of celebrity status in our households.

For that reason, we all looked forward to the new school year which started up on August 30. The sight of the kindergartners and their nervous parents waiting until the last possible minute to let go of each other reminded us, the parents of older kids, that we were there not long ago and how fast time passes by. We also loved to see our kids' faces brighten up after recognizing a friend or classmate, and we knew the excitement and classroom stories were going to replace the complaints of the summer ending.

Family Fridays will continue to be held on the second Friday of the month via Zoom for the foreseeable future, and Birney will continue to follow the COVID-19



protocols that have been outlined by the San Diego Unified School District.

The Birney Fall fundraiser, an on/catalog event, has started and runs until October 8. If you are interested in helping support the school and in getting your holiday shopping done at the same time, please go to www.boonsupply.com/collections/614490-birney-elementary. In addition to the Fall fundraiser, Birney's Big Give, a one-day online fundraising drive, is happening on December 9.

Please contact us at info@friendsofalicebirney.org if you are interested in becoming an annual sponsor (we will include your name or logo on the FOABE website, Run for the Green t-shirt, or the school electronic board), please contact us at: info@friendsofalicebirney.org. All funds raised support our award-winning International Baccalaureate program which includes Art, Spanish, and Garden.

A heartfelt thank you to the Birney team for your endless dedication!

– Vaychan Hallman, Humbled Parent of two Birney Bees and Friends of Alice Birney Elementary (FOABE) Board Member

Redistricting continued from page 1

University Heights needs to continue to be represented in one district.

The City of San Diego just started their public hearings, and due to an increase of 7,000 people, the boundaries of the current Council District 3 (CD3) will have to be adjusted. The first hearing for CD3 will have happened on September 28 (as this issue is distributed).

All three University Heights community groups (UHCA, UHCDC, and UHHS) are jointly advocating that University Heights be treated as a single Community of Interest (COI) and be represented in a single Council District. We already are divided into two planning groups, with our community East of Park Boulevard in the North Park Planning Group, and West of Park in Uptown Planners. This division has caused problems for our community, with the most recent and visible one being the "North Park" traffic circles having to be corrected to say "University Heights."

Different planning groups have different priorities for developments and public facilities, and this requires a lot of attention and advocacy by community organizations and residents on both sides of the dividing line. Having our community further divided into two different Council Districts will dilute our community's influence, and relationships with multiple Councilmembers will require additional time and resources to ensure our whole community has a voice and is heard.

Stay tuned to UHCA News, our website (www.uhsd.org), and social media to find out what's happening next and how you can make your voice heard. We are ONE UH, and we will advocate that we remain represented as ONE UH.

Learn more at www.sandiego.gov/redistricting-commission.

–Community Coalition of University Heights (University Heights Community Association, University Heights Community Development Corporation, and University Heights Historical Society)

ROO NEWS

Cautiously Elated about New Academic Year

Roosevelt International Middle School inched ever closer to "normal" as the 2021/2022 academic year began at the end of August. Pickup and dropoff lines bustled with parents transporting their kids to in-person school, and the surrounding neighborhoods were alive with boisterous kids on foot, bikes, skateboards, and scooters. If it weren't for the donning of masks as the kids approached campus, the casual observer might forget that the COVID-19 pandemic still affects many aspects of our lives.

Compared to last school year (and the final months of the year before that), Roosevelt is nearly unrecognizable. The schedule has returned to a semester system wherein the kids take 6 classes per day, with the options of a "zero" period elective before school and Band/Orchestra during seventh period after the standard school day. This is in contrast to last year's setup, where they switched to a quarter system, and the students took only three intensive classes per quarter. While each system has its academic pros and cons, it is clear that full-day, in-person school affords students many more opportunities for the kind of social/emotional learning that the truncated school day doesn't.

In addition to the schedule, classroom instruction has changed significantly since last year. Last year teachers were asked to simultaneously teach both in-person students and those students who had opted to learn from home. This resulted in a situation where in-person students and online students were all essentially participating in the same Zoom class. This year, schools in the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) are no longer "simulcasting" classes.



Instead, those who choose not to come to in-person school have the option to enroll in a District-wide "Virtual Academy," allowing in-person classes to function in a more traditional manner.

Roosevelt's beloved After School Enrichment (ASE) program also returns to an in-person format this year, offering wildly popular clubs like Girls in Science (in coordination with the San Diego Zoo), Photography (in coordination with MOPA), Improv (with Diversionary Theatre), Strategic Games, Gardening, Gay/Gender/Straight Alliance, Black Students Matter, and many more. ASE is free to all students and funded by Friends of Roosevelt, the school foundation.

Another big change is that Roosevelt students are no longer required to wear uniforms. After discussion and polling among families and staff, the community came to the conclusion that personal expression is more in line with the school's IB values than is uniformity.

SDUSD has taken the continuing threat from COVID more seriously than most districts around the country, and Roosevelt families seem to be overwhelmingly on board with the safety protocols, which include universal masking indoors and COVID tests. During a recent Zoom town hall, Principal Steinberger assured attendees that, virtually without exception, families and staff were cheerfully complying with protocols, realizing that keeping one another safe and healthy is everyone's shared responsibility.

– Andy Hinds

UHCA MEETING NOTES IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

September 9 UHCA Community Meeting Summary

UHCA Vice President Marc Johnson opened the "Crime Watch" segment at 6:45, and we heard from Sheila Moss who recounted her recent ordeal with someone breaking into her yard and hanging out in her jacuzzi for several hours - and her attempts to get the police to come out to help deal with the situation (which failed). Officer Surwillo from the Western Division empathized with the situation, but advised that the homeless problem is big, growing, and that policing alone will not solve it. Marc announced that an upcoming meeting in November will feature speakers from PATH, and that UHCA would be adding additional focus to homelessness, how it affects our community, and what we can do to help.



After announcements about the cancellation of Taste of UH + Arts Walk, the reopening of the Birney Joint Use Field (no off-leash dogs please!), and site selection work on the new off-leash dog park, Rachel Esguerra updated the community on the new library hours and new cameras installed, and reminded folks to keep an eye out for meetings about the new Library Master Plan. Isabele Schechter provided updates about activities that the Friends of the UH Library are working on, and reiterated that the Library Master Plan will be an important guide as we move forward with what will happen next with the UH Library.

Our main speaker, Cody Hooven, COO, San Diego Community Power Community Choice Aggregation, then provided an informative overview of what Community Choice Aggregation is, how it works in California, and what San Diego Power does. As a community non-profit, they provide electricity to the grid that SDG&E then delivers to customers. By offering choice to customers, they can lower bills and at the same time provide energy produced with 100% renewable resources. Currently, they have signed up municipal and business customers, and will be expanding to residential customers in early 2022. More information is available at www.sdcommunitypower.org.

Our meeting ended at 8 p.m., and the next meeting, also via Zoom, will be on October 3.



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BETWEEN THE COVERS

OCTOBER AT THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS BRANCH LIBRARY

We've been open for a couple of months now and hope you have had a chance to come visit us. If not yet, did you know you can use the library from the comfort of home? Especially after we've added an awesome new streaming service you can access for FREE using your library card – Kanopy! Kanopy partners with public libraries and universities to bring you ad-free films and series that can be enjoyed on your TV, mobile phone, tablet, and online.

Not up for a movie? Another recent addition FREE with your library card is PressReader – the best place to read thousands of newspapers and magazines from around the globe, including the latest issues of The San Diego-Union Tribune, Los Angeles Times, New York Post, Daily Mail and The Guardian, to name a few.

If you haven't used the library in some time, be certain to check that your account is in good standing. You may visit us during regular library hours with a valid photo ID, and, hopefully, you still have your library card in hand. If not, we have fun designs to choose from to replace your current card for \$1.

Need to print or make copies? You may now register your library card as a print card instead of buying a separate card. Black and white prints and copy costs have been slightly lowered to \$0.15 a page. Our public printer and copier are also capable of faxing and scanning to email for FREE!

We've also noticed an influx of folks who have gotten billed for items they checked out long before the closure. Be sure to check all the nooks and crannies of your home, vehicle, or other storage places for any outstanding items. Depending on when you got the notice, you may still return them without penalty. We know the last year and a half of being closed has been stressful and difficult, so we're happy to help you as best we can.

Your comments to the library matter, and I have proof! One of our regular patrons submitted a comment card regarding not being able to see the latest issue of a magazine if it's already checked out to a patron. Since magazines are not holdable, it can be out for months to one patron due to the automatic five renewals. I brought this to the attention of our Executive Team, and the lending policy was changed so that magazines cannot be renewed, similar to leased items – yay!

Also, we've mentioned the Library Master Plan in past articles, and the Library is continuing to take your comments here: www.sandiego.gov/public-library/about-the-library/library-master-plan/input. Providing your feedback is an important step to take to get a beautiful library that UH deserves, so please comment away!

– Rachel Esguerra, Branch Manager, University Heights Branch Library, San Diego Public Library
619-692-4912 - UHStaff@sandiego.gov



Library Hours
UH Branch Hours
Monday-Tuesday 11:30 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Wednesday-Saturday 9:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
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FRIENDS OF THE UH LIBRARY

October Update

Now that our library is open again and back in the swing of things, we are excited about all the upcoming programming and events and hope you will join us for everything the branch has in store for us!

National Library Card Sign-Up Month Events:

In case you missed our Open House and Get Carded! events, don't worry! You can see pictures of the events on our website. And remember, it's never too late to sign up for a library card! Thank you to our event sponsor, Kairoa Brewing Company.

National Friends of the Library Week:

This October, libraries across the country will be celebrating National Friends of the Library Week. This is a great time to find out what exactly it is that the Friends of the University Heights Library does for our library branch. (The simple answer is that we buy stuff for the library!)

Check out our website for testimonials from staff about some of the ways we've been able to support our library this year thanks to membership dues and donations that allow us to do the work that we do.

Friends of the University Heights Library Meeting:

We hope you will join us for our upcoming general meeting on October 20 at 6:00 p.m. We will provide a Zoom link via email and on our website closer to the date. Meetings are open to all Friends members and the general public.

Membership:

Help us support the University Heights Library by joining the Friends of the University Heights Library. You can pick up a membership form at the branch or on our website.

For more info:

Check out our website at www.friendsofuhlibrary.org, or contact us at info@friendsofuhlibrary.org. You can also subscribe to our newsletter for all the latest info.

Thanks for supporting the University Heights Library.

– Isabel Schechter, Secretary
Friends of University Heights Library

The Friends of San Diego Public Library is a California Tax Exempt Non-Profit Corporation under IRS 501(c)(3). FEIN: 95-3313747. Tax deductible membership dues and donations may be matched by the City of San Diego and used to support programs and purchase books, materials, and equipment.

TAKE BACK YOUR ALLEY... CAN COOL ALLEYS = CRIME PREVENTION?

Some of our alleys are dumping grounds: trash, dumpsters, flies – a mess. But some are “cool.” Here's what one neighbor did to spruce up their rear entry:



Could alley improvements discourage vagrancy and theft? Perhaps. Cameras, lighting, cleaning alleys of debris and flies could make a difference. How about taking an extra step here? Many people live in apartments off alleys and have made improvements to their “front porch.” Here is an example of one.

A step even further? There is an actual alley culture in some cities.

Pittsburg made public spaces of some, showing local art and murals. They celebrate an “Alley Crawl” with music, food, and marching bands. Closer to home and in our own back yard, Hillcrest has “Mural Alley” between 5th and 6th Avenues south of University Avenue. Walk in ART is Hillcrest's monthly art event in and around Mural Alley. It's on the first Thursday of every month from 5-10 p.m. when visitors can explore an art market and enjoy delicious food, creative artists, and neighborhood promotions. Stay tuned for information on the next featured artist and guest performers at www.firstthursdayartnight.com.



But back to cameras, lighting, and debris control: we can at least do those things. Later we'll have the food trucks and marching bands. In the meantime, take pride and Take Back Your Alley. –Nan McGraw



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ZONE WATCH

NOW IS THE TIME TO HAVE A NEIGHBORHOOD GATHERING!

California state mandates were finally lifted, prompting my neighbor Carol and me to host a potluck in her backyard mid-June. Finally, we gathered to officially meet our new neighbors!

I am the block captain for our street, and what I do to maintain our Neighborhood Watch is easy. Every participant on our block receives a list of names and phone numbers. I maintain a blind copy group email list to communicate important info such as up-to-date crime statistics for our zone.

University Heights is a safe community because of you. Many years of Coffee with the Cops, Ice Cream with the Cops, Cookies with the Cops, plus your activism and your community spirit have tightened up our neighborhoods. Collectively, we've been able to shut down drug and prostitution houses.

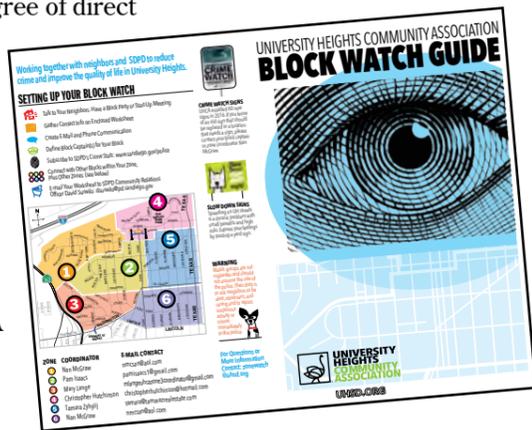
Recent crime stats from the San Diego Police Department indicate that Zone 6 had quite a few vehicle break ins/thefts in May. Car break-ins are easy pickings for thieves. Here is what our Community Relations Officer, Michael Hayes, says in response to crime in that area:

"I used to live on 1800 Madison Avenue. It is a very popular area with lots of people living, working, and visiting together. University Heights is a great community, but like all communities there are some issues. It seems the most common crime [from the May crime stats report] is theft from a vehicle. Keeping a clean car, without any belongings inside, and locking the doors is the most effective way to prevent people from stealing anything from a vehicle. There is a 'crime triangle' for law enforcement: suspect, victim, and opportunity.

As a citizen, you have some degree of direct control over two of those angles. You can reduce your likelihood of being a 'victim' and providing the 'opportunity' at the same time by keeping a car free of anything on the inside and locking the doors at all times."

Tight neighborhoods help prevent crime. Tighten yours up. A handy UHCA guide is available at: www.uhsd.org/Gathering.

- Nan McGraw

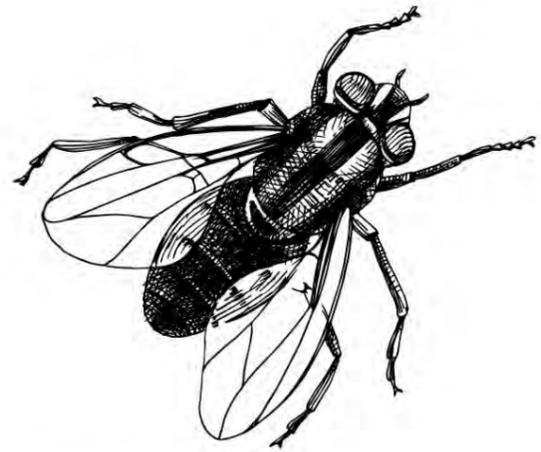


PLEASE TIE BAGS TIGHT & HELP STOP FLIES FROM BREEDING



During summer heat garbage cans and dumpsters should have tight-fitting lids and be cleaned regularly.

Flies are known to carry & spread: Cholera • Conjunctivitis • Dysentery Gastroenteritis • Salmonellosis • Shigellosis • Tuberculosis • Typhoid fever



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
San Diego County Vector Control Program
www.sandiegocounty.gov/deh/pests/vector

SUSTAINABLE UH

ADAPTING IS KEY

The kickoff of our 2021 fire season hitting so close to home is an unfortunate reminder of how fragile our comfortable homes in our charming neighborhood can be in the face of looming climate-related threats.

While we continue to plant trees, eliminate plastic waste, reduce our carbon emissions, go solar when we can, etc., we obviously also need to be sensible about planning for and adapting to the changing climate and weather-related disasters that may come our way.

The UT has reported that, as this drought-stricken year heads into fall, much of our county is "primed to burn." Even if this year's major wildfires are miles away, falling ash and air made toxic by particulate matter will blanket our neighborhood at some point.

We need the best air filtration systems we can acquire, even if that means building them ourselves. Toxins and particulates in the air during and after wildfires are deadly, particularly to the very young and very old. Air filtration units sold by many local and online retailers are good but expensive. A highly effective DIY air filter, such as one demonstrated on Ask This Old House <https://youtu.be/aw7fUMhNov8>, can be built for around \$140—still expensive

for some households, but it filters out particulates more effectively than some costlier store-bought units.

We also need disaster supplies kits in our homes and cars, even as we pray to never have to use them. Ready.gov has a great list of necessary items to pack and store <https://www.ready.gov/kit>.

We need to check to make sure our email and phone number lists for our neighbors are up to date so that we can contact and help one another if an emergency arises.

And, as noted elsewhere in this issue, if our homes are bordered by vegetation or anything combustible, we need to clear defensible space. Cal Fire's website provides guidance and additional tools we can use to stay prepared <https://www.readyforwildfire.org>.

Adaptation to the "new normal" is necessary, but of course we must also continue to work for a sustainable future: Join up with the UH Beautification team to plant more trees. Lobby the city to require that new apartment homes crammed into our neighborhood on transit routes actually be affordable to the people who ride public transit. Keep all shopping and dining local... There is still so much we can and must do.

Here's to fall - may our skies stay blue and our DIY air filters go unused!

- Judith Annicchiarico

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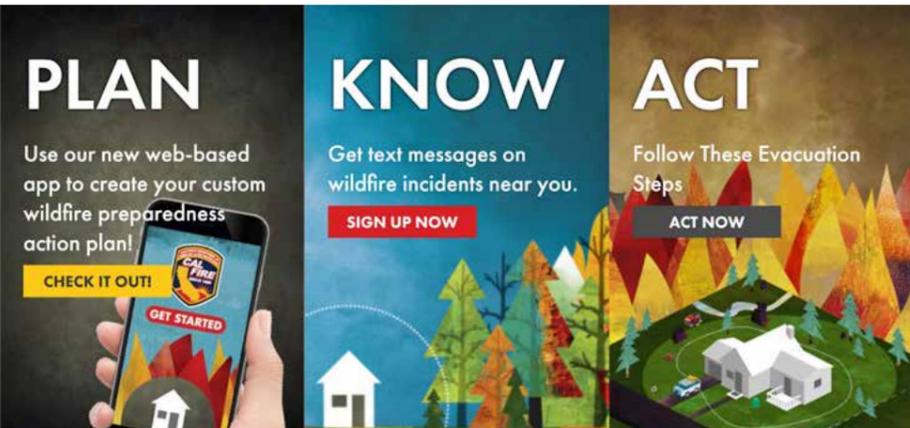
Get text messages on wildfire incidents near you.

SIGN UP NOW

ACT

Follow These Evacuation Steps

ACT NOW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Illegal Parking

Dear UHCA News,

Do you know if the city has given up on policing our streets in UH? We have a lot of helicopter activity, which is hard on the nerves and on the ability to sleep. But I never see cop cars here anymore, even though we clearly need enforcement. I've stopped driving east on Meade near Park because Pie shop customers park on the red curb totally blocking the westbound lane. I've almost been hit 3 times by cars turning from Park onto westbound Meade who turn into the wrong-way lane because of the illegally parked pie shop customers.



Cars illegally parked on Meade at Park

Everyone knows we also have a speeding problem that's been made worse by all the new building on ECB and street work barricades. People treat our streets like freeways now more than ever. We need some street enforcement, but as the saying goes, it seems there's never a cop around when you need one.

Is the UHCA board trying to get more street patrolling, or is that a lost cause? And if so, won't things continue to get much worse with even more apartment buildings (and traffic) coming? - Mike Tibberts

UHCA News Responds: *Thanks Mike for bringing this up. Parking and speeding are ongoing concerns in our community, and we are sharing your letter to SDPD. We also reached out to Pop Pie's Steven Torres about the parking situation, and he's as frustrated as you are, telling us, "We have told folks to not park in the red curb zone and have even reported delivery drivers to their companies when they violate the parking rules."*

Murals

Hi there University Heights. We are Roxy and Phoebe and together we run the non-profit Ladies Who Paint. Perhaps you've seen the murals we installed in 2019 around the East Village. Our goal is to empower female artists and beautify San Diego.

We are currently looking for wall space for four different San Diego muralists and we were wondering if you had any available in UH. It would be of no cost to you as we provide all the supplies and the women volunteer their time. We just ask that they're given creative freedom and that the murals be up for at least two years.

If any property owner in UH has a space they would like us to consider painting, please email hello@ladieswhopaint.org. We're also on Instagram [@ladieswhopaint](https://www.instagram.com/ladieswhopaint).



UHCA News tries to include letters to the editor as space allows. You can send them to: uhcaneews@uhsd.org

UHCA BUSINESS MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Stu McGraw Real Estate

"Love your neighborhood"

Stu McGraw is grateful for the opportunity to build his real estate career in the neighborhood in which he was raised. He has been a volunteer in University Heights his whole life. He's the son of Nan McGraw, who co-founded University Heights Community Association, responsible for the creation of Trolley Barn Park and the rebuilding of the Vermont St. Bridge. Stu spent his childhood bicycling throughout UH, getting to know it very well, building his knowledge and foreshadowing his future in University Heights real estate.

Stu is confident in his team at Woods Real Estate Services, a boutique real estate firm that specializes in highly personalized service you won't find at large corporate brokerages or discounted, web-based real estate companies. Stu joined Woods to provide himself and his clients the substantial benefits of having a local real estate attorney as his broker.

The son of a flight attendant, Stu travelled around the world, marvelling at our vast human history while learning how to be a welcome guest.

At Home With Diversity certification by National Association of Realtors provides Stu with extra training in the subtleties of U.S. fair housing laws and empowers him to work successfully in San Diego's increasingly multicultural real estate market by practicing business etiquettes of various cultures, further expanding his competency to serve his growing international clientele. Stu also grew up knowing our LGBTQ+ community and is an "honorary member" and staunch ally.

Stu's certification in *Short Sale and Foreclosure Resources* by the National Association of Realtors allows him to serve buyers and sellers of distressed properties, and he will help you navigate this daunting process if you fall behind on your mortgage payments and/or property tax bills or if your property is facing liquidation as part of a bankruptcy or divorce.

Stu has over a decade of experience working for himself in estate liquidation, estate sales

and household downsizing for seniors. He has liquidated hundreds of estates and has mastered the art of helping people sell their most cherished possessions for the highest price. Stu will guide you through a smooth transaction providing a positive experience as you look forward to new beginnings. When you sell your home with Stu McGraw you are entitled to complimentary estate liquidation services.

Stu closely monitors real estate development and urban planning in University Heights and surrounding communities. He offers unique insight into how local real estate trends coincide with your goals whether you're planning on buying or selling or both.

McGraw is an elected board member of Uptown Planners, a group that advises the City regarding land-use and development in Uptown. He advocates for a dog park at Park Blvd & Normal St, increasing housing while maintaining neighborhood character and encourages the City to bring the Utilities Undergrounding Program to University Heights. The best examples of urban planning, affordable housing, clean environment and quality of life are found in "the happiest country in the world," Denmark, where Stu earned a BS in Business Administration and MS in Accounting from Aarhus University School of Business.

Do you have a question about University Heights? Are you ready to start a home search? How would Stu market your home? Are you interested in building our beautiful community?

Please reach out with no obligation to your UH neighbor who's ready to get to work for you today. Call 619 793 7795 or email SOLD@StuMcGraw.com to get started!



UH Real Estate Expert
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2020: THE HALLOWEEN THAT NEVER WAS...

...AND IN 2021, IT WILL BE BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER!

Two newspapers and a television news program came to interview me. In recent years I had put off media stories about Trick or Treat on Maryland Street because the crowds had grown so big. But here we were in the middle of the 2020 pandemic, and there would be no way to control the crowds that visit Maryland Street on Halloween. A theater or sports arena can just shut the doors and stop selling tickets, but this is a city street. Trick or Treat on Maryland Street is organic and unscripted. It is the result of generous neighbors up and down Maryland Street who spend one night a year entertaining anyone who passes by. But after more than 20 years, the number of people passing by has surged to over 5000. I reached out to my neighbors and we all agreed: The only way to avoid the crowds of people would be to shut down completely. No Halloween decorations at all. Not even in the weeks leading up to Halloween, and all porch lights off on October 31st.



It made the front page of the UT Sunday edition before Halloween. I remember sending online links to friends and family with my comment, "Behold! A front page story about a man doing nothing." Actually, I was far from doing nothing. A small notice here in the University Heights News with a photo of Norbert the Dragon and Frank Skinnotra wearing breathing masks got the word out, but I realized one or two neighbors with decorations and lighting could draw in various people who knew nothing of the shut down. I delivered flyers to every address from Lincoln to Monroe and made sure to knock on the doors of any neighbors who had ever participated in the past.

One bright spot in this dreary business was Aaron Coleman and his refusal to

accept defeat. He was producing a video of Frank Skinnotra and the Gabbing Gourds performing Queen's greatest hits. Gathering some Halloween scenery and costumes, I was able to contribute shots of Norbert and Frankenstein for the video, which premiered on YouTube the evening of October 31st 2020. If you missed it, you can still type "Halloween" into a YouTube search and watch the whole performance.

That Halloween, after watching the premiere of Aaron's video, I ventured out front to the street. I have never been so moved and impressed by the results of a neighborhood pulling together on Halloween. Not a soul on the sidewalks. No lights on the porches, and only the occasional car passing by. Truly, the most important Halloween was the Halloween that never was.

In case you haven't passed by Maryland Street lately, the countdown clock is out and Trick or Treat on Maryland Street will be as big and fun as ever this year. Norbert has a serious warning, however, for the residents of University Heights. Dragons can destroy any virus with fiery breath, but humans cannot.

Everyone visiting Trick or Treat on Maryland Street must wear a mask (and not just the scary Halloween type). This year, Norbert has made it mandatory: No mask... No candy!

-Andy Cameron



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