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.

Firefighters were seen shooting water from the backyards of homes along Lomitas, and Copter 3 made 6 coordinated water drops onto the blaze. Police arrived on the scene at Old Trolley Barn Park and cordoned off the area closest to the canyon as dozens of people took videos and pictures with smoke and falling ash filling the air.

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.

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 on the ground.

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

Sunday afternoon where the fire was with some tension, so I moved up to where the fire was. Photograph by Marc Johnson.

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...
MEMBERSHIP

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UHCA NEWS

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.

UHCA NEWS OF THE MONTH

Narcotics Department of Environmental Health
Public Health/Crime Stoppers Tip Line
Code Violations Animals / Non-Emergency
Alice Birney Elementary Office
Abandoned Vehicles
Online: non-emergency problems: www.sandiego.gov/get-it-done
requiring evacuations www.readysandiego.org/alertsandiego/

COVID-19
2-1-1 San Diego
Reverse 911 notification to mobile phones for emergencies
SD City Services: Emergency • Police • Fire • Medical
Suspicious Activity, Homeless Outreach Team, etc.
Non-Emergency

San Diego County Public Health Library 4191 Park Blvd
UH Zone Watch Coordinator Nan McGraw

SDPD Western Division
Suicide Prevention
Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol
Vacation home security check, welfare of home-bound, patrolling business districts, homeland security support

SDPD Community Relations Offices
Bad Service: sandiego.gov/211
SDPD Western Division 5215 Gaines Street
Shopping Cart Pick-Up Service
Stonewall Citizens Patrol

Volunteer Your Time on a UHCA Committee!
- Beautification & Planning
- Blockwatcher
- Marketing & Merchandising
- Membership

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UHCA OFFICERS

President: Marc Johnson, vp@uhsd.org
Vice President: Nan McGraw, nmcsan@aol.com
Secretary: Brent Overley, treasurer@uhsd.org
Treasurer: Paul Farris, pmfsd@aol.com

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.

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.

CRIME WATCH SIGNS
UHCA installed 6 new signs in 2016. If you know of an old sign that needs replacing or a location needing a sign, email signs@uhsd.org.

ZONE WATCH COORDINATOR
Nan McGraw
nmcsan@aol.com

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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 Ehrod also lives on the same block and had similar encounters. Ehrod said, “I’ve seen a number of clear-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 Surwido, 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.”

Surwido outlined how the SDPD Progressive Enforcement policy is followed: “Neighborhood policing tracks contacts with folks in the canyons. We document encounters, especially for repeat offenders. On the first encounter, we try to offer officers, 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 date (clean up). In open space areas like this where there is a high fire risk, we try to do it quickly.”

Counclimember 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 help 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 Erby, 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 B 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 619-553-2000 for non-emergency matters.

Officer Surwido 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.”

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!
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 mash, 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 20th Street east of Pershing.

Engelmann Oak (Q. engelmannii) is found only in southern California, with most remaining trees in San Diego County. They typically occur a bit further inland than (up slope 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 30 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 (Berberid- ifolia means barberry-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) is 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 Pass 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 sparse, 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 rums, but you will never forget his characters or their stories.

- Stefanie Fry

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 for 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 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

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WHO YOU WORK WITH MATTERS!
# October 2021

**San Diego Zoo/Park Kids Free All Month**

**Hillcrest Farmers Market**
9 am - 2 pm

**World Habitat Day**
5 pm, sandiegounified.org

**SDUSD Board Meeting**
5 pm, uptownplannerssd.org

**UHCDC**
6 pm, uhsd.org

**UH Park & Rec Meeting**
5:30 pm, uhcdc.org

**UHCA Meeting**
6:45 pm, uhsd.org

**Mr. Jack O’ Lantern Pumpkin Patch:**
6710 La Jolla Blvd.
Oct 1-31
Mondays-Thursdays: 11:00am to 8:00 pm
Fridays/Saturdays: 10:00 am-9:00 pm
Sundays: 10 am-8 pm
Free admission

**PB Pumpkin Patch:**
670 Garnet
Mondays-Fridays: 10:00 am-10 pm
Saturdays-Sundays: 8 am-10:00 pm
Free admission

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**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.
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 65% 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 constructed by the end of the decade, 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.

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 Councilmember and Chairman of the City’s Land Use and Housing Committee, Steven Whaitburn. SROs offer inexpensive housing to those on the last rungs of the housing ladder, and San Diego could use a lot more of them.

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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
Cautiously Elated about New Academic Year

Roosevelt International Middle School inched ever closer to “normal” as the 2021/2022 academic year began in August.

With the end of August, Pickup and dropoff lines busied with parents transporting their kids to in-person school, and the surrounding neighborhoods were alive with hoik artists on foot, bikes, skateboards, and scooters. If it wasn’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 offers 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) is no longer “simulating” classes.

Indeed, 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 with popular clubs like Girls in Science (in coordination with the San Diego Zoo), Photography (in coordination with MOPA), Improv (with Diversity Theatre), Strategic Games, Gardening, Gay/Gender/Minority 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 Hinck

UHCA MEETING NOTES

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

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September 9 UHCA Community Meeting Summary

Roosevelt International Middle School inched ever closer to “normal” as the 2021/2022 academic year began in August.

With the end of August, Pickup and dropoff lines busied with parents transporting their kids to in-person school, and the surrounding neighborhoods were alive with hoik artists on foot, bikes, skateboards, and scooters. If it wasn’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 offers 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) is no longer “simulating” classes.

Indeed, 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 with popular clubs like Girls in Science (in coordination with the San Diego Zoo), Photography (in coordination with MOPA), Improv (with Diversity Theatre), Strategic Games, Gardening, Gay/Gender/Minority 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 Hinck
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, or 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.

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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? How about taking an extra step here? 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. They celebrate the next featured artist and guest performers at www.firstthursdayartnight.com. Food, creative artists, and neighborhood promotions. Stay tuned for information on the first Thursday of every month from 5-10 p.m. when visitors can explore an art market and 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 will have the food trucks and marching bands. In the meantime, take pride and Take Back Your Alley. – non McCaw

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 you!

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, Kauai 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 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.friendsofthelibraryca.org, or contact us at info@friendsoftheLibrary.org. You can also subscribe to our newsletter for all the latest info.

Thanks for supporting the University Heights Library.

– Isabel Schlichter, 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: 95-3317474. 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.

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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 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:

“[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 great list of necessary items to pack and store [https://www.ready.gov/fires]

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 neighborhoods 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 sensitive 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://www.readyforwildfire.org], 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 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://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 Annichiarico

SUSTAINABLE UH
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.

Is the UHCA board trying to get more street enforcement, but as the saying goes, it seems there’s never a cop around when you need one. 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.”

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 horizons, as well 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 beautifully 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.
2020: THE HALLOWEEN THAT NEVER WAS...

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 unplanned. 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.

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