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Midtown Residents Association Neighborhood Newsletter

FALL 2014

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

MRA is 20! A History

By Sylvia Gartner

In 1994 the Midtown Shopping District was looking very sad and rundown. Bergmann's Department Store, a Midtown institution since 1956, had closed. Bergmann's was not exactly a haute-couture destination, but was a great place to buy cotton underpants, kids' toys, and sewing supplies. And free wrapping came with every gift purchase! The Bergmann's location is now No Excuses Personal Fitness. I was also a regular at Midtown Market, now CVS. The market was small, but it had an excellent full-service meat counter. This small supermarket also dated from the 50s.

In 1995 we lost Midtown Pharmacy when its owner, Carl Gould, decided to retire and could not find a buyer to take it over. This building is now occupied by Palo Alto Café.

Like many of the neighbors of the Midtown Shopping District in 1994, I felt bereft. Merchants I'd supported for years were gone, and the empty shells left behind made the whole district look "blighted".

Our neighbor and founder of the Midtown Residents Association, Debbie Mytels, decided to take action. She organized a meeting at what is now Mike's Café, but was then a delicatessen. About 50 people squeezed into the space; everyone was concerned that his or her neighborhood-shopping district was an eyesore. The consensus was to organize and try to put pressure on city officials to see if useful replacements could be found for what we'd lost. We also decided at that meeting to organize a neighborhood association. Our second meeting was at St. Marks. And then we had a third. I had attended all the meetings and agreed to become the treasurer of our newly created Midtown Residents Association. At that point we were down to about 20 stalwarts. We all threw some cash on the floor of the meeting room. I gathered it up and opened a checking account. And so began MRA.

Since those early days the Midtown Residents Association has certainly grown. We have thousands of households listed on our database. Our regular enews keeps our community informed of events and meetings of interest to both children and adults. We just held our 20th anniversary celebration at our Ice Cream Social on September 14 and, as always, the event was well attended.

Twenty Years of Accomplishments – A Brief Sampling

By Sheri Furman

Many of our efforts occurred behind the scenes, dealing with City Council and various departments.

Parks & Public Art

- Murals in the Midtown Center – Liz Lada, Poetry Wall, Greg Brown
- Matadero Creek sidewalk railings on Greer and Louis Roads
- Bathrooms at Hoover and Seale Parks
- Scott Meadow at Greer Park
- Bear Family in Hoover Park

Communications

- Annual Ice Cream Social
- General meetings on topics of interest to Midtown
- Weekly enews and mailed newsletters
- Web site (www.midtownresidents.org)

Services

- Participated in the revitalization of the Midtown Center
- Como Está at Walgreens
- Matadero Creek Remediation Project participation resulted in lower creek walls
- Created Emergency Services Volunteer Teams – over 70 volunteers
- Collaborated with the City to require Ground Floor Retail in the Midtown Center

2014 Ice Cream Social

300 people! 16 Council and School Board candidates scooping ice cream. Palo Alto Firefighters chili.

Face painting. Balloon animals. Fire, police, emergency vehicles and Eddie, the police dog.

Emergency preparedness, zero waste, public art, utilities information tables.

Canopy, Avenidas, Deborah's Palm, FabMo, Friends Meeting, Coder School, Dental Wellness



VOTE! = = = = = 2014 Election Information = = = = = VOTE!

Why You Should Vote

By Betsy Bechtel, former Palo Alto Mayor and City Council member; current member of the Board of Trustees of Foothill-De Anza Community College

Did you vote in the last election in June? Of course you did, but 70% of your neighbors did not. Some did not even bother to register to vote.

Why not?

Some say it doesn't matter, their vote isn't important.

Others say, what difference does it make. They are all crooks in Washington or Sacramento or wherever.

Other say, they are too busy. They don't have time to vote.

But to all those who choose not to vote or forget to vote, they are letting others decide who will govern them or which measures will be supported.

Does one vote matter? Absolutely. Historically there have been a number of close races. For example, in the primary in Virginia this year, fewer than 10% of the voters came out to defeat Eric Cantor, House Majority leader. In California, the race for controller in the primary was very close; Yee beat Perez by 481 votes statewide. Locally the measure for the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District won by only a small margin, needing 66.67% to pass and passing with 67.9% voting yes.

Do vote this November. Encourage your friends and family to do so and to register to vote, if they have not. In Palo Alto there are five seats to be voted upon for Palo Alto City Council and two seats on the school board. The Council and School Board vote on policies and make decisions that affect all of us now and in the future.

City Council Candidates

Wayne Douglass	waynedouglass@gmail.com	
Tom DuBois	tomforcouncil@gmail.com	votedubois.com
Eric Filseth	efilseth@gmail.com	www.ericfilseth.com
John Karl Fredrich	jkfredrich@gmail.com	Votes4fredrich.com
Karen Holman	kcholman@sbcglobal.net	www.karenholman.org/
A.C. Johnston	acjohnston@mofo.com	www.acjohnston.com/
Lydia Kou	lydiakou@gmail.com	www.lydiakou.com
Seelam Reddy	paloaltolife@gmail.com	
Greg Scharff	gregscharff@me.com	www.gregscharff.com/
Nancy Shepherd	nlshep@pacbell.net	www.reelectnancyshepherd.com/
Mark Weiss	earwopa@yahoo.com	markweiss86.wordpress.com/
Cory Wolbach	corywolbach@gmail.com	www.corywolbach.com

You can also view the PAN City Council Candidate Questionnaire responses at www.paneighborhoods.org

School Board Candidates

Jay Blas Jacob Cabrera	jay@jaycan.us	www.jaycan.us/SchoolBoard/
Gina Dalma	gina@dalmaforpausd.com	www.ginadalma.com
Ken Dauber	kenneth.dauber@gmail.com	www.kendauber.com/
Catherine Crystal Foster	catherine@catherine4paloalto.com	www.catherine4paloalto.com/
Terry Godfrey	terry@terrygodfrey.org	www.terrygodfrey.org/

Candidate Forum Reruns

League of Women Voters Council and School Board Forums

midpenmedia.org/government/election-coverage/ (select the "Santa Clara County Voters" tab)

Palo Alto Neighborhoods (PAN) City Council Candidate Forum

youtu.be/YIX4tLyLQVo

A Taste of Midtown Diversity

To start off MRA's 20th year anniversary, the committee members organized their first multi-cultural potluck at Hoover Park for its residents this summer on June 21 2014.

Residents and Midtown cafes and restaurants shared their favorite dishes from numerous heritages. We had tasty, homemade dishes from Britain, China, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, just to name a few, complete with coffee from Latin America and fancy ice cream from the US.

Children also enjoyed diversity themed games arranged by the Palo Alto Diversity Teens such as World Soccer, Artifact Trivia and craft-making such as Native American inspired dream-catchers and Japanese Koi Windsocks.

MRA would like to recognize the generosity and diverse cuisines of Midtown eateries. Contributors provided Round Table Pizza gourmet pizzas, Palo Alto Cafe Pesto Chicken Calzones, Indochine Pineapple Fried Rice, Subway BLT sandwiches, Como Está a Tortilla Soup, Starbucks Latin American coffee and Baskin Robbins six flavors of ice cream.



"Japanese Buckwheat Noodles"
A traditional summer dish with Japanese buckwheat noodles, soba tsuyu sauce, edamame soy beans, kombu seaweed and organic tofu



Fiber to the Premises (FTTP) – Has Its Time Finally Arrived?

By Tom DuBois

For more and more Americans, access to high-speed Internet has become an essential part of our lives. Fiber to the Premises (FTTP) provides ultrafast internet speeds, 20 – 100 times faster than what is available today. However, the U.S. is falling behind the world on this front.

What's at stake is whether the new ideas of the 21st century will come from the U.S. or not. In Beijing, Stockholm, and Seoul, these very high capacity networks are taken for granted the way we think of sewer or electrical service. We risk no longer being the country where new ideas flourish.

A city-wide FTTP system is a natural monopoly; you only need one, just like you only need one electrical connection to your house. How FTTP is provided and by whom are critical decisions.

Palo Alto has an existing fiber network (currently 41 miles long) and has \$18M reserved in a fiber fund that can be used to expand service. For 17 years, we've struggled to develop a business plan to bring it to residents—initially because no one had done it before and then the recession made it more challenging. Now's the time to finally get this done. Several cities in the U.S. have paved the way by successfully deploying systems. The city is currently evaluating two paths – Google Fiber and a City owned-service managed by a private company.

The primary question is not technical but anti-competitive practices. AT&T and Comcast are entrenched in the city and will work hard to retain their market share. For Palo Alto to launch a service, we will need to have the political will to endure these short-term anti-competitive forces to create the long-term advantages of vastly better service at rates that include reasonable profit margins. Done right, broadband infrastructure can pay for itself, enable productivity through technology, and deliver revenue to the city.

Tom DuBois is running for City Council and supports a city-managed Fiber to the Home service as the city's newest utility.

Palo Alto Neighborhoods (PAN) 2014 Issues Survey Results for Midtown

By Sheri Furman

In May, PAN conducted a survey of the neighborhoods to find out which issues were important to residents, regardless of their position on them. The survey was not meant to be scientific; the terminology used reflects what's heard in the community. The following shows the top issues of Midtown residents.

	Important	Not Important	Rank
Architecture (build-to-street, design exceptions, building height, etc)	99%	1%	1
Emergency Preparedness	97%	3%	2
Electing councilmembers who support residents' interests	96%	4%	3
Streets and sidewalk conditions	95%	5%	4
Crime	95%	5%	4
Increasing city commission support for residents' interests	94%	6%	5
Flood control	93%	7%	6
Future of Cubberley	93%	7%	6
Increasing City Council support for residents' interests	93%	7%	6
Comp Plan Update	92%	8%	7
Concept Plan for California Avenue	92%	8%	7
2014 Council Elections	91%	9%	8
Water availability/Rationing	91%	9%	8
Downtown Development	90%	10%	9
PC (Planned Community) Zoning	90%	10%	9
Inadequate code enforcement	90%	10%	9
Government transparency / Sunshine laws	89%	11%	10

Help MRA Reflect the Rich Diversity of Our Neighborhood

By Jill Matzke

Over the years, the Midtown neighborhood has evolved into a rich fabric of residents from many far corners of the globe. MRA has worked to help us all appreciate and enjoy this diversity with events such as the recent multi-national potluck and new activities at our annual Ice Cream Social. In order to continue to sustain and grow these as well as our ongoing programs, we need your help!

- Please start or maintain your supporting membership in Midtown Residents Association - at only \$15, MRA is surely one of the best values around.
- Consider sharing this newsletter with a new neighbor on your street.
- Volunteer to help our organization with its many civic and recreational goals

I'D LIKE TO HELP SUPPORT MRA

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (home) _____ (cell) _____

Email _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____ Add me to enews (email required) Yes

Areas I'd like to become involved in:

- Traffic Schools Events Membership Parks Public Art Trees
 Working with Midtown Merchants Newsletter Enews Zoning/Developments

=== Send your \$15 membership payment to Sylvia Gartner, 824 Moreno, Palo Alto 94303 ===

Upcoming Events and Meetings

VOTE!

Tuesday, November 4

Please let us know (MidtownNews@att.net)
if you would like to receive our periodic electronic enews
and/or if you have a new email.

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



Midtown Residents Association

824 Moreno

Palo Alto, CA 94303

Your financial support enables us to pay for the modest expenses of MRA: postage, events, etc.

Please note the date on your label on this newsletter is the date you last paid or sent a check.

To join or renew online: go to our web site www.MidtownResidents.org and click the left icon "Become a Member".
If by check (\$15): make check out to MRA, and send to our treasurer, Sylvia Gartner, at 824 Moreno, Palo Alto, 94303.