



The MARA News

Spring 2007 Edition

Montecito Area Residents' Association

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Update on Third & Union Safety Improvements

Almost ten years ago MARA brought to the attention of San Rafael's City Traffic Engineer certain safety problems associated with the Third and Union intersection.

Since then, studies have revealed just how dangerous that intersection is for both automobiles and pedestrians. Some of the main issues:

- Because of the short left-turn lane for eastbound vehicles on Third preparing to make a left onto Union (many en route to Whole Foods), the line of vehicles often backs up beyond the three-and-a-half-car left-turn lane, blocking the adjacent throughlane. The line of vehicles then waiting to make a left turn into the Whole Foods lot blocks through traffic on Union.
- Frequently, drivers making a left onto westbound Third as they exit the Montecito Shopping Center do not stop for pedestrians who are crossing with the Walk light in their favor.
- The pedestrian Walk light to cross Third is not set to allow enough time for pedestrians to get all the way across, especially when interrupted by vehicle traffic making turns across their path.

- The sidewalks along Third are too narrow to accommodate the large number of SRHS students using them at lunchtime, so numbers of students walk out on the roadway, in the traffic lanes.

The City Traffic Engineer drew up plans to make safety changes to the intersection, sidewalks, lights, and roads and also requested that Montecito Shopping Center make some changes to its parking-lot exits. The City's portion of the changes is very expensive, and we were told that although these safety issues are very real—there have been many accidents at that intersection, often involving pedestrians—there was no money in the budget to make these changes at that time.

However, the good news is that Montecito Shopping Center was very cooperative and has completed all of the safety changes the City requested. Also, the City has finally accumulated enough money to make the remaining changes required.

The City Council held a study session on this subject in early 2007, and it looks as though later this year they will be willing to vote to give the project the go-ahead.

Once the traffic issues at this intersection have been resolved, it is expected that Whole Foods will renew its application to build a 3,000-square-foot kitchen as an adjunct to its store.

REMEMBER TO COME TO MARA'S ANNUAL MEETING

Mid-May 2007

(location, date, and time TBA—likely to be at Aldersly • 326 Mission Avenue)

* Including a PowerPoint presentation featuring historic buildings in the Montecito area *
(and how these structures influence the design of new construction here)

* Elect new Board members *

Does It Have a Permit?

In the past, when you saw nearby construction, you may have wondered if the owner had the appropriate permits for the work. And maybe you didn't have the time to go to City Hall to check.

Now the answer is as close as your computer.

Visit www.cityofsanrafael.org and click on the **ePermits: Project and Permit Status** link. This online public-access program allows anyone to search for building permits, planning projects, licenses, and contractors.

Under the new system, the time for presale inspections may be reduced from the present two to three weeks to as little as two to three days.

MARA encourages area residents to check the above Web site when they see workers doing major alterations. If it turns out there isn't a permit, you can contact either City Planning (at 485-3085) or MARA (in care of the mailing address on the masthead or at montecito.residents@gmail.com).



Current Montecito Area Building Projects

The following projects are either before the Design Review Board or under construction:

555 Second Avenue

KFC-Taco Bell

△ Opened March 2007 (updated at presstime).

411 Mission Avenue

Architect: Leila Bijan

△ Proposal for a three-unit residential condominium project.

This project would renovate the existing craftsman-style single-family residence at the front of the site and construct a new, three-story structure containing two additional units to the rear of the site.

MARA members met with the architect when the first design did not blend with other homes in the area, explained to her the 20-20 Plan Guidelines, and acquainted her with the designated-historical buildings in the area. Because of this input, the final design of the two additional condos will be complementary to the neighborhood.

The remodeling of the home at the front is nearly complete.

115 Third Street

Owner: Marin RC Hobbies

△ Request for permits for the legalization of an existing outdoor radio-controlled (RC) model-car track to be used for product demonstration and for the installation of a parking area with fencing, landscaping, and a viewing stand.

522 Third Street

Owner: United Markets

△ Request to build a new, two-story mixed-used building consisting of 3,425 square feet of office area on the ground floor and three condominium studio units on the upper floor.

This is on the lots adjacent to Elephant Pharmacy where two cottages were razed to provide additional parking and space for this building.

15 Broadview

Owner: Andrea Lane

△ Addition of 93 square feet to the north corner of the basement, 478 square feet to the first floor, and a complete second floor, of 778 square feet.

Neighbors of this project have requested the Design Review Board to be aware of problems with drainage and a retaining wall, as well as the need to set a schedule for completion of the work.

35 Belle Avenue

Owners: Laura and Max Williams

△ A request to build an addition to the rear of an existing single-family home consisting of 193 square feet of ground-floor space and 550 square feet of second-floor space.

224 Belle Avenue

Owners: Phong Nguyen and Tuan Tiet

△ A request to divide a single parcel into two lots; the removal of several small outbuildings in order to build a single-family home.

(see **Projects**, page 3)



(Projects, continued from page 2)



524 Mission Avenue (corner of Mission and Irwin)

Owner: West Bay Builders

△ Fifteen-townhome project.

This project is awaiting an environmental impact report (EIR) from the State, but West Bay Builders expects to begin site work in April or May 2007.

These units are well designed and will blend in well with the Victorian homes in our area.

249 Jewell Street

Owners: Michelle Kahn and David Glazier

△ Request a permit to allow construction of a 610-square-foot two-story rear addition to a 1,661-square-foot two-story single-family residence and to raise the existing roofline by 3'; 316 square feet of elevated rear decking also proposed.

The Peaceful Village

Within the limits of the Montecito neighborhood, tucked away on a quiet street, lies an entire village—one that's been there since 1921.

And although there's no sign at the outskirts that says "Population 102," it's a thriving community with 86 apartments surrounded by beautiful gardens.

Most of us go to Aldersly only once a year when it hosts MARA's annual meeting. But daily, 85 staff members arrive to care for the residents, who range in age from 78 to 101. Entertainers come in to give performances or host singalongs, and there is a full schedule of activities—chorus, art classes, and bocce ball and croquet, as well as bridge and the BBs (women who crochet hats and blankets for others).

You may even recognize some of the villagers as they take a pleasant walk to nearby stores. Others still drive to and from social events or use scheduled buses to go to concerts, church, and other outings.

Many of these "villagers" at 326 Mission are MARA members who have refreshed us with their enthusiasm for work, age aside, whenever they volunteered their services.

We are fortunate to have such a peaceful community living within our neighborhood's borders.

City Design Discussions

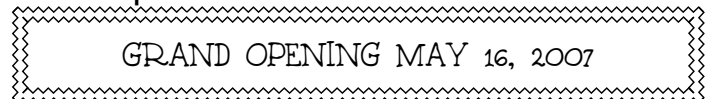
In March and April, San Rafael is holding a series of "Design Discussions" to talk about the City's design-review process and the quality of the design of

recent projects built or approved. MARA and other neighborhood groups have representation at these meetings as well, along with people from the Planning Commission, the Design Review Board, the City Council, the Redevelopment Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, the Planning Department, and local developers and architects.



It's Almost Done!

SRHS Update



It's time to celebrate the completion of the restoration of San Rafael High School. Funding of \$9 million was supplied via a 1999 school bond issue, with a further \$24 million in bond funds to be spent on classrooms and site improvements. The only unfinished part of the project is the cafeteria area, which must wait until the current school term is over in order not to disrupt services.

Principal Judith Colton has scheduled May 16, 2007, to showcase the new look of the San Rafael High School. The public is invited to see the work that has been done, as well as to view a Wall of Honor listing major contributors, alumni, and staff, with a section that portrays the history of the school.

Visitors will see totally renovated areas, including the music and science buildings, the art facility, and

(see SRHS, page 4)

(SRHS, continued from page 3)

the gymnasiums and swimming pool. Bleachers will feature synthetic material in the school colors, and a covered walkway connects the school and the gym. The PTA donated \$10,000 to hire a consultant to design a master plan for the site so that all future landscaping and lighting will be practically and thematically unified. This will help Dawg Pride Days planners organize work within established guidelines.

At present there is a rush to complete the theater, which needed considerably more work than originally planned. Among other things, the exterior walls had to be fireproofed and an elevator for disabled access provided. New drapes and a fire curtain were ordered and installed, and a new technical control area for lighting and sound equipment had to be designed and

How We Rate

This past year, MARA members got involved, either directly or via the Board, and had a say . . .

- ☀ about third units
- ☀ about the Third and Union intersection
- ☀ in the Design/Planning Committee
- ☀ as representatives at Federation meetings
- ☀ by e-mailing our members
- ☀ by beautifying the Irwin Street Triangle and the Jewell Street Triangle
- ☀ by participating in the SMART forum
- ☀ by joining the Measure S oversight committee
- ☀ by training themselves in emergency preparedness
- ☀ attending seminars
- ☀ exploring sites for a neighborhood park

How do *you* rate? What would you like to do for your neighborhood this year? **TO COMMENT** or be involved, please write or e-mail MARA. ↗

installed. Funds for new seating were raised by the theater booster club. SRHS drama students are looking forward to staging major productions in this state-of-the-art venue in the near future.

Unfortunately, unforeseen costs such as those mentioned exhausted funds that would have gone toward many of the items the neighborhood requested.

The parking lot was not expanded, and drivers continue to park illegally in the unpaved sidewalks along the Mission perimeter of the school— although a Safe Routes to Schools grant may pay for paving some of the sidewalk area. Additional landscaping, a new restroom adjacent to the bleachers, and a covered walkway from the parking area to the bleachers were also eliminated from the original proposal.

Join or Renew Now!

Annual memberships expired December 31. To become a new MARA member or renew your existing membership, just send us your name, address, telephone number (along with your e-mail address if you wish), and a check payable to “Montecito Area Residents’ Association” c/o MARA, P.O. Box 150266, San Rafael, CA 94915-0266. Membership is \$10 per person (\$5 for seniors).

MARA welcomes not only residents, but also retail, commercial, and other organizations in our neighborhood as well.

Attend the annual meeting in mid-May and you can participate in the election of officers, voice your concerns, and offer your support and ideas. Also e-mail us at montecito.residents@gmail.com or mara@cwnet.com or visit us online at <http://users.cwnet.com/ourfence/>.

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SUPPORT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION . . . JOIN NOW!