

THE VICENTE CANYON VOICE

The Newsletter of the Vicente-Claremont Canyon Neighborhood Association

Volume 4, Number 3

December 2000

VCCNA Needs Your Support!

Join or renew your membership TODAY

by Chris Johnson, President
VCCNA Steering Committee

Each year, the Vicente-Claremont Canyon Neighborhood Association (VCCNA) requests a small monetary contribution from area residents so that it can continue providing the services and information that people have come to rely on. Well, it's that time again, and we are asking for your help and support. The VCCNA recommends an annual contribution of \$10.00. If you are wondering what you get for your \$10.00, please read on.

VCCNA is not the kind of neighborhood group that tells people what color they can paint their house or what trees they can plant, nor do we mediate disputes between neighbors. Instead, VCCNA tries to support our local community in positive ways.

Formed in 1996 by firestorm survivors and other residents concerned about disaster preparedness, VCCNA is a not-for-profit, volunteer-driven, community group that seeks to fulfill several key goals. We assist neighbors to become better prepared for the next emergency, be it a catastrophic fire or major earthquake. (See the sidebar article about the emergency planning worksheet and calendar. Read Susan Mattman's article on First Aid.) We coordinate activities and programs that will improve and beautify the neighborhood and improve area fire safety. We also promote neighborhood awareness of, and involvement in, important local issues that may affect our community.

VCCNA publishes the Vicente-Claremont Canyon Voice newsletter and maintains a Web site, found at <http://homepage.mac.com/matt/VCNA>. We provide news and information about our community and help inform residents on issues of common concern.

Each fall, VCCNA sponsors an annual neighborhood meeting and potluck, to which all area residents are invited. The event gives neighbors from different areas a chance to meet, socialize, and talk about issues of common concern. City Council members, their staff, and police and fire department members regularly attend these meetings, reflecting the importance they attach to VCCNA's role and voice in the community.

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Support the Toys for Tots Drive at Fire Station No. 7

Needed: Toys (unwrapped)

Where: Fire Station No. 7
1006 Amito Drive
(at Gravatt Drive)

When: Until December 25



Oakland Fire Station No. 7, at the intersection of Amito and Gravatt Drives, is a collection point for Toys for Tots. Toys for Tots is an organized toy drive that serves children in our East Bay communities during the holidays and beyond.

As this newsletter went to press, the toy collection barrel was empty!

Let's show support for our local fire station and this very worthy cause. Help fill the barrel. You can deliver unwrapped toys to the station until December 25.

Are You Ready?

by Chris Johnson, President
VCCNA Steering Committee

You've heard it a hundred times before, but we'll say it again: The time to get prepared for the next emergency is NOW, before the disaster happens. That's why the VCCNA steering committee has decided to include tools that we hope will help you complete these important preparations.

With this newsletter, you will find a disaster planning worksheet and an emergency kit planning calendar. These documents, prepared by the Alameda County Water District, are some of the best tools of their kind that we've seen in recent months. If you haven't gotten around to planning for the next emergency or disaster, we hope these tools will help you to simplify and streamline the process.

A big part of being individually prepared is making sure that your community is prepared. Please share the information you put on the worksheet with trusted neighbors and friends. Your life, or lives of others close to you, could depend on it!

Vicente-C Claremont Canyon Neighborhood Association

The Vicente Canyon Voice is published by the Vicente-C Claremont Canyon Neighborhood Association (VCCNA).

Founded in 1997, VCCNA works to promote and maintain the safety of the neighborhood surrounding Vicente and Claremont Canyons. It is managed by a volunteer steering committee, which meets monthly to discuss issues of importance to the neighborhood.

Steering Committee Members

Chris Johnson - President
(510) 848-4580
corganj@ix.netcom.com

Louise Miller - Vice President
(510) 848-5203
lmiller460@aol.com

Miriam Green (Vicente Rd.)
David Kessler (Vicente Rd.)
Susan Mattmann (Eucalyptus Path)
Barry Miller (Alvarado Rd.)
Matt Morse (Eucalyptus Path)
Alan Rudy (Alvarado Rd.)
Mark Seligman (Westview Dr.)
Ann Smulka (Alvarado Rd.)
Georgia Wright (Vicente Rd.)

Interested in getting actively involved in VCCNA?

The next meeting of the steering committee will take place on Tuesday, January 16, from 7:30-9:00 PM. Contact Chris Johnson at (510) 848-4580 or Louise Miller at (510) 848-5203 for meeting location and other details.

The VCNA Web Site

by Matt Morse (matt@mac.com)

Search the Web for Vicente Canyon Neighborhood Association using Yahoo, Excite, Google or many of the other popular Internet search engines, and you are referred to the same location: <http://homepage.mac.com/matt/VCNA>. Yes, the VCCNA has a Web site, or at least the beginnings of one. So far, our Web site has news about:

The proposed expansion of the Claremont Hotel
Developments on the Vicente Canyon creek (aka Temescal Creek) and environs
Copies of our recent newsletters
Links to related sites, such as those of the North Hills Phoenix Association and the Berkeley/Oakland Neighbors of Claremont (BONC).

The Web site could be much more, given some additional effort and inspiration. What would you like to see added to this neighborhood resource? To get your ideas flowing, here are some suggestions:

- Neighborhood news, such as reports of thefts, car break-ins, etc. so that we all can know what is happening (and how often) in our neighborhood.
- A directory containing the contact information for our local beat officers, city council members, and other officials who are responsible for our area.
- The names of contractors, painters, gardeners, etc. that your neighbors have found to be excellent.
- Emergency preparedness information.

The Web site (like all other things VCNA) is a volunteer effort, and could use your ideas, articles, and time. If you'd like to help create a truly valuable neighborhood resource, please contact Matt Morse at <matt@mac.com> or (510) 540-0716.

VCCNA Potluck A Splashing Success

by Barry Miller (planbig@aol.com)

Okay, maybe there were no splashes literally, but everyone I spoke with said that the VCCNA's 2000 annual meeting and potluck, held on the beautiful poolside deck belonging to neighbor Reeve Gould, could not have been better. The weather was just fine, as about 80 people congregated around the pool and on the lawn. Following a delicious potluck, which showcased the culinary talents of VCCNA residents, VCCNA president Chris Johnson welcomed the group and reviewed the association's activities for the past year.

The highlight of the event, no doubt, was the crowning of neighborhood resident and VCCNA board member David Kessler as King for the Day. City Council proclamations from both Berkeley and Oakland accompanied David's coronation, and representatives of both cities were present to offer accolades and praise for David's fine service to our community.

Many thanks to Reeve Gould for the generous use of his home, and thanks to all VCCNA members who attended and helped make this event a success.

We're looking for a home to host next year's event, in September 2001. If you're interested, please contact Chris Johnson at (510) 848-4580 or Louise Miller at (510) 848-5203.

Opposition to Claremont Hotel Expansion Intensifies: BONC Builds Wider Coalition

by Wendy Markel

A recent article in the *East Bay Express* by political reporter Chris Thompson detailed the efforts of KSL Recreation, a subsidiary of the leveraged buyout investment firm KKR, to privatize the Lake Chabot golf course and correctly linked the takeover of the public course to KSL's planned 165 room expansion of the Claremont Hotel. Such expansion plans are linked to wider issues affecting the citizens of Oakland and Berkeley, including traffic safety, access to public parking, and the loss of public facilities like the golf course.

The immediate neighbors of the Claremont who banded together last spring as Berkeley and Oakland Neighbors of the Claremont (BONC) are now engaged in extensive efforts to broaden the coalition opposed to the Claremont expansion on several fronts.

Members of BONC's steering committee have called attention to this connection to the Oakland Planning Commission. Attention also has been called to the aggressive marketing efforts to expand the membership of the hotel's pool and tennis club well beyond the number allowed by its existing conditional use permit. AS A RESULT OF BONC'S PRESSURE, the Planning Commission called for specific and detailed parking plans from

KSL to address these concerns. The BONC steering committee also met recently with Polly Armstrong and the City of Berkeley Planning Department staff assigned by the mayor to work with Oakland Planning and discussed what leverage Berkeley will have.

On other fronts . . .

Petitions requesting a meeting were delivered to Mayor Jerry Brown; his office agreed to a meeting early in December.

A subcommittee has been formed to landmark the hotel property. An Intent to Apply for Landmark Status has been filed with the Oakland Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board. The subject was discussed at their December 11 meeting.

Subcommittees also are dealing with issues related to the restoration of the creek that was buried by landfill, legal representation and fundraising, and traffic congestion and connected problems.

BONC's membership now exceeds 450 members. It is forging active connections with neighborhood groups in Rockridge, Vicente Canyon, Chabot Canyon, CENA, North Hills Phoenix Association and other neighborhoods in Oakland and Berkeley.

For further information, visit the Web site that was created to connect and advise concerned residents about the latest developments: <http://www.saveclaremont.org>.

First Aid Training

by Susan Mattmann (smattmann@mac.com)

Date: Sunday, January 21, 2001

Time: 1:00 – 6:00 PM

Place: The home of Susan Mattmann and Matt Morse
43 Eucalyptus Path
Berkeley, CA 94705

Cost: \$40 per person

We have been talking about a sponsoring a neighborhood first aid class for several months. Some of you signed our sheet at the annual potluck; others responded to an item in one of our past newsletters. Well, it's finally going to happen!

VCCNA is offering this class because trained neighbors would be crucial in the event of a large disaster, when we may not be able to count on emergency services. First aid skills are also valuable for incidental emergencies that happen in the normal course of life. Taking such a class in our neighborhood, with those who someday may need our help, or be able to help us, seems like a smart idea. It's also another opportunity to meet with those who live around us.

An instructor from Fast Response, an American Heart Association training center, will teach the class. It will cover basic first aid with an emphasis on disaster first aid. We are not

offering CPR training at this time because it would add to the length of the class and, when dealing with a disaster, CPR is not a priority. If there is enough interest, we can offer CPR training in the future.

Wondering what's covered in the course? Here's an excerpt from the Fast Response literature:

We exceed the Red Cross standards. We teach a systematic approach to emergencies, explaining triage, how to prioritize, assess, and treat injuries and illnesses. In addition to cuts, sprains and other minor problems, we cover head and neck injuries, traumatic injuries, and serious medical problems.

Our classes are completely hands on, without endless lectures or boring videos. After four hours of instruction, scenarios and hands-on practice, students leave the class feeling that they could actually perform First Aid in an emergency.

Note: The VCCNA class will be 5 hours (not 4) to cover additional disaster training. To register for the class, get directions, ask questions, or express interest in future classes, contact Susan Mattmann at (510) 540-0716 or [<smattmann@mac.com>](mailto:smattmann@mac.com)

VCCNA Members Invited to Friends of Temescal Creek Meeting: Vicente Canyon Creek Watershed Protection on Agenda

Date: Wednesday, January 24
Time: 7:00 PM
Place: Community Room, Temescal Branch Library
5205 Telegraph Ave., Oakland

Friends of Temescal Creek (FOTC) invite interested members of the Vicente-C Claremont Canyon Neighborhood Association to join their meeting on Wednesday, January 24, to discuss several issues related to the protection of the upper watershed of Temescal Creek (the creek that flows through Vicente Canyon).

In the words of Bruce Douglas and Robin Freeman, President and Coordinator of FOTC,

As a remnant of a very large and heavily urbanized natural system, the upper watershed of Temescal Creek is critical for open space, habitat, water quality, flood protection, and fire ecology risk reduction. We feel the Vicente Canyon Hillside Foundation could be key in creating a creekside greenway open space in upper Vicente Canyon, and creating consensus in the neighborhood on how to protect the creek on private property. This fulfills important goals of Temescal Creek watershed stakeholders, including a Ridge-to-Bay greenway commons, native habitat, flood control, cleaner water entering the bay, and more sustainable development in the watershed.

The complex mosaic of ownership in the urbanized watershed makes any opportunities to preserve and manage any native landscape extremely rare and valuable. In some cases, like Vicente Canyon, there are pockets where there can be either visual or controlled physical public access. These are especially important for bringing attention to the quiet richness of the native landscape, the magic of free flowing water, and the impressive size of the whole watershed while also caring for the habitat, fire, and moisture concerns. The natural metaphor is otherwise lost in the jumble of traffic and public utilities which also rush down Temescal Canyon.

We invite you to join Friends of Temescal Creek in our common efforts.

Representatives of the California Department of Forestry and the Alameda County Resource Conservation District who are conversant in conservation easements and management plans have been invited to attend. They are particularly interested in our watershed and combining conservation with fire management.

Oakland Councilmember Brunner's Next Advisory Meeting Set for January 6

Date: Saturday, January 6
Time: 10:00 AM
Place: Peralta School, 460 63rd St. (entrance to parking is off of Alcatraz, 1 block east of Telegraph Ave.)

The next monthly advisory meeting of Oakland Councilmember Jane Brunner will be held on Saturday, January 6, at the Peralta School, starting at 10:00 AM. Discussions will be on affordable housing and the 10K Project, with Mayor Jerry Brown and several invited guests. Time will be allotted to discuss neighborhood concerns during the second hour of the meeting.

VCCNA members are invited to attend.

Join or Renew Your Membership

(Cont'd from p. 1)

VCCNA also coordinates ongoing neighborhood brush, weed, and trash removal programs in various locations, especially in Oakland's John Garber Park, located in Claremont Canyon, and along neighborhood pedestrian trails, including Sunset Path, Willow Walk, and the Eucalyptus Steps. If you have recently enjoyed walks through any of these areas, chances are, VCCNA members recently worked there to make them more beautiful.

Finally, VCCNA partners with other community groups, such as the North Hills Phoenix Association, to provide input and assistance on various public safety, environmental, and infrastructure issues that affect our neighborhoods.

As mentioned earlier, VCCNA is entirely volunteer-driven. We operate with a very small treasury and require your support to continue. Unless you have renewed since this year's potluck event, please take a few moments to fill out the membership form printed on the back page of this newsletter. Provide us with updated contact information, especially an e-mail address if you have one, and return it to us along with your donation in the envelope provided. With your support, we will be able to continue for another year.

**Everybody's favorite,
Morton McDonald's
Neighborhood History column,
will return in the next issue.**



New Zoning Regulations Proposed for Oakland

By Georgia Wright

A group of Vicente Canyon residents concerned about developments near the creek met on September 28 with Willie Yee, Leslie Gould, Calvin Wong and a number of other Oakland officials concerned with development controls. The meeting touched upon many issues such as creek permits, grading permits, erosion controls, and problems with violations that occur on weekends—all the problems we face that one (!) building inspector and a few other people cannot supervise. We discussed the question of future developments, especially the much-feared possibility of the development of the Felton property.

Would an area specific plan do the trick?

Calvin Wong suggested that it would take three years, by which time all the other properties would be built out, and it would require staff and money that Oakland does not have.

After more e-mail consultation, those of us at the meeting decided it was not worth fighting for and, instead, we should turn our attention to the new zoning regulations introduced at Jane Brunner's District 1 meeting on October 14 and given a second presentation at City Hall on October 23 to interested parties from all districts.

A Residential Design Review Working Group (which includes citizens) headed by Christopher Buckley has proposed a number of revisions to the existing standards that may help to limit the number of monster homes in our area. The idea is to have consistent standards throughout the city, evidently for the convenience of the builders. The most important standards might be adopted by the City Council, perhaps in January:

1) *Height limits.* For slopes from 20 - 40%, the height at setback line would be 26', with 1' added for each foot of additional setback up to 32' overall (currently 18' at front of lot but up to 40' on downslope lots; 24' at front of lot up to 35' on upslope lots.) The slides that were shown suggested that this would make a difference in apparent bulk.

2) *Side yard setbacks.* According to the package of information, the S-14 (fire) area already has this standard, namely, setbacks equaling 20% of the lot width. (Perhaps I have been looking at too many Berkeley plans with their five foot setbacks.)

3) *Floor Area Ratios (FARs).* Total floor area of building as a percentage of lot size would be 50% without design review and up to 65% with a conditional use permit review. (Buildings over 5000' would automatically require a design review.)

4) *Garages.* Garages would be limited in width to 22' and driveways to 19'. No more three car garages.

5) *Depth of building.* 45' from front setback line, but this seems to be dependent upon neighboring buildings, privacy, sunlight, views. This item is being fought by the developers and builders who say that they could solve the problem by lowering rear roof lines rather than building a box just 45' deep.

6) *Building appearance checklist.* The current checklist is being attacked by builders as leading to cookie cutter designs. These criteria include wall articulation, surface materials, and window treatments. (Without these the developers will use bottom line criteria leading to flat windows, flat walls, and box profiles.) The apparent uniformity of objections was surprising until I noted that several came from the same firm. They dislike the process because professional architects were not involved, and the criteria were either too restrictive or too vague. My own experience has been that our objections to houses planned for lots opposite us were clearly restated in specific terms and that they will result, we hope, in less bulky-looking houses with a less brutal front.

The restrictions on height and the addition of a FAR were traded for an expedited process, one without neighborhood notification and thus without design review. The staff (there are only three) would simply check the plans to see if they meet the criteria and then send them up for permitting, rather than notifying neighbors and then referring criticisms to the design review board.

The city-wide group meeting at City Hall insisted they did not want to lose neighborhood notification. While the builders say this process takes too long, the delay is probably no more than six weeks. We have to live with the results forever. (And Berkeley is famous for two to three year delays.)

We have asked that, in the future, there be not only neighborhood notification but that plans be deposited in the Rockridge library (for our area) so that people could have a better chance of reviewing them. This is being seriously considered by Willie Yee. We will alert the e-mail community when the City Council has the new standards on its agenda.

Warning: Mailbox Thefts

Our mailman, Jack Karn, has informed us about a recent rash of instances of theft from home mailboxes in our neighborhood. For your own protection, please reduce your vulnerability to mail theft by depositing outgoing mail in drop boxes; by making your home mailbox more secure; and by picking up incoming mail from your mailbox as quickly as you can. Let the Post Office, and the VCCNA, know if you have experienced this kind of vandalism. Jack suggests we look at the Rogers mailbox at 1220 West View as the best available model of a locking mailbox. Use one of these, and you will minimize your risk of mail theft.

Vicente-Claremont Canyon Neighborhood Association

Neighborhood Directory Information Collection Form (12/2000)

New _____ Renewing _____ Date _____

Resident Name(s) _____

Street Address _____

Berkeley, CA 94705

Resident of (legal address): _____ Berkeley _____ Oakland

Home Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Office Phone(s): _____

Emergency Phone: _____ Contact: _____

E-mail address(es): _____

Preferred communication method for neighborhood info: _____

Have you completed CORE (or other) emergency preparedness training? _____ Yes _____ No

Are you interested in participating in the neighborhood association by:

- _____ Participating in social functions?
- _____ Serving on committees to address issues/concerns/problems?
- _____ Participating in neighborhood watch/fire prevention programs?
- _____ Helping to publish/distribute neighborhood newsletter?
- _____ I have no time to contribute this year, but support the Association's goals and would provide/update my resident information as part of the program for issues notification, fire safety and emergency preparedness use.

Please return your completed form (by mail or hand) to:

David Kessler
Vicente Canyon Neighborhood Association
116 Vicente Road
Berkeley, CA 94705

We welcome your \$10 contribution for newsletter printing, food and drinks for neighborhood events, and photocopying for Steering Committee meetings. Checks may be made payable to:

Vicente Canyon Neighborhood Association.

INFORMATION COLLECTED WILL NEVER BE DISTRIBUTED FOR ANY COMMERCIAL PURPOSE.

IF YOU PREFER US NOT TO INCLUDE YOUR INFORMATION IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD-WIDE DIRECTORY, PLEASE CHECK THIS BOX