



The MARA News

Oct 2014 Edition

Montecito Area Resident's Association

P.O. Box 150266,

San Rafael, CA 94915-0266

Montecito.residents@gmail.com

www.montecitoresidents.com

In the event of an emergency or noise issues, call the SRPD at 485-3000

Now is the time to join MARA. To become a MARA Member or renew your annual membership, please send your name, address, telephone number, and email address along with a \$10 check per person (\$5 for seniors) payable to "Montecito Area Residents Association", to MARA P.O. Box 150266, San Rafael, CA 94915-0366.

In addition to residents, MARA extends a welcome to our neighborhood retail, commercial and other organizations, and invites them to become members.

SMART QUIET ZONES

The eastern side of our neighborhood is about two blocks away from the SMART train tracks, which go along Tamalpais, and border our neighborhood from Belle to Third Streets. The MARA Board has been attending the City's meetings on this subject. Here is what we have learned so far:

- 1) Because of the very short blocks in this area -- **and** the speed at which the trains will be traveling, **and** the Federal law which requires trains to blow their horns a certain amount of time prior to crossing an intersection -- if the requirement for the SMART trains to blow horns is not removed, they will have to blow their horns CONTINUOUSLY from Mission Avenue to Third Street. This has been confirmed publicly by SMART's senior engineer.

This would obviously be a nightmare (starts at 5:30 a.m.) for anyone living or working anywhere near the tracks.
- 2) To remove this requirement for continuous horn blowing, the law mandates that lots of extra safety equipment be installed at each intersection. It has already been decided to add, and SMART has agreed to pay for, this equipment. It will be installed no matter what.
- 3) Now it is up to the San Rafael City Council to decide whether or not to allow the horns NOT to be blown (i.e. to establish a "Quiet Zone"). They get to make this decision because: a) all of the requirements for Quiet Zones will have been met; and b) other required technical reviews have already been done.

- 4) The City Council will vote on this sometime in the yet-to-be-determined next few months. The decision they will make is whether they should allow a Quiet Zone to be established, or whether they should insist that the horns still be blown, despite the fact that all of the extra safety equipment has been installed at each intersection.
- 5) It has been argued that, at least in the downtown area between Mission and

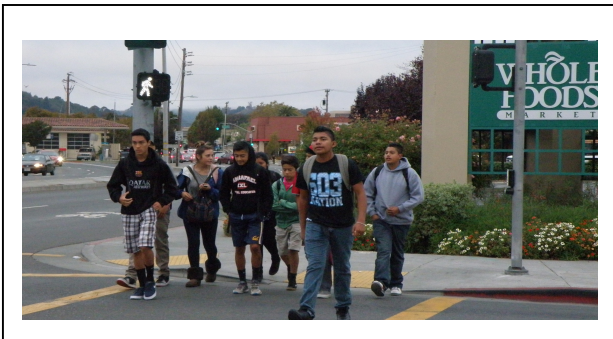
Third, the continuous blowing of horns might be LESS safe than having a Quiet Zone. This is because people get inured to continuous, expected noise, and might be more likely to ignore it. If there is a Quiet Zone, train engineers could still blow the horns if they see anything on the tracks or near them that they think is a danger. Thus, if there is a Quiet Zone, people who hear the horn would know it was a “DANGER – WATCH OUT!” signal, and would pay attention to it.

Stay tuned. Contact the City Council (go to www.cityofsanrafael.gov) if you want, and be prepared to attend the City Council meeting where they will vote on this issue when we find out its date and time.

TRAFFIC ISSUES ON THIRD STREET DURING COMMUTE HOURS

By Jackie Schmidt

Third Street traffic, especially during the morning commute, was especially bad last summer. This prompted the San Pedro Road Coalition (a group of homeowners who live along San Pedro Road) to hold meetings and to write several letters to the City suggesting changes to make the trip faster for cars from San Pedro to get onto Highway 101. These



suggestions included removing ALL of the parking all along Third Street (with special interest in allowing autos to quickly turn right at Embarcadero, Mary, or Grand Streets, thereby skipping Third by driving through the neighborhood), changing the left turn only lane at Grand to "left or go straight", removing the cross walk at Third and Heatherton, closing the

Shell gas station driveway closest to Third and Irwin, and more.

The City's Department of Public Works did a comprehensive study of the situation during October and November of 2013. They counted vehicle, pedestrian and bike turning movements, and parking utilization. They videotaped intersections and arterials, and studied travel times from and to various destinations. In January and February, the DPW presented their findings to MARA and the San Pedro Road Coalition.

Long story short, it turned out that the main cause of the back up on Third was that Hwy 101 was congested, causing back-up on the 101-southbound on-ramp at Second and Heatherton. This, of course, backed up Third St. The back up on the on-ramp was greater than in previous periods. In addition, there is increased pedestrian activity along Third St. during the morning commute (mostly students going to San Rafael High School). The DPW came to the conclusion that the only change on Third St. which might be helpful was to remove the parking on the south

side of Third St. between Grand and Irwin (in front of United Market) between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on weekdays. This has been done for a trial period of six months, and DPW will study the results.

The Department of Public Works did another study in January of 2014, and found that the Hwy 101 congestion (which was evidently caused in the summer of 2013 by construction at the toll plaza of the Richmond/ San Rafael bridge) had returned to normal, and that there was a significant reduction of the back-up on westbound Third St. as a result.

The whole area around Third and Heatherton -- the bus station, the new SMART station, and all of the intersections with the SMART tracks at

Mission, Fifth, Fourth, (and in the future Third and Second?) -- is being studied carefully as part of something called the Regional Transportation System Enhancements Project. There are and will be increasing conflicts among pedestrians, bicycles, vehicles, the SMART train, etc. These will be addressed as possible to enhance the safety of everyone.

MARA's position on all of this, of which the City has been advised, is that we are concerned about: 1) the safety of everyone, 2) the continued economic viability of the large number of commercial retail businesses along both sides of Third, and 3) only lastly that vehicles traveling down Third should be able to go "as fast as they want to."

BEACH PARK

By Constanza Perry

Beach Park is located on the south side of the San Rafael Canal. It is right on the water. Our neighborhood gets the best view of Beach Park from behind Montecito Shopping Center.

Beach Park was created in 1974 with palm trees, sand, bocce ball courts and parking nearby but, unfortunately, the City of San Rafael has completely neglected it and gave up on it. Its hidden location (you can only see it from Montecito) means that residents forget that it is there. It became a wasteland years ago.

Today it is scary to go there. There is drug use, drinking, littering, homeless camping with dogs, and human waste. There is no bathroom there. It would take a "Friends of Beach Park" Association to get the attention that it deserves.

According to Megan Hansen, in an article published in the Marin Independent Journal on September 3, 2014, "The owners of the Terrapin Crossroads restaurant and nightclub have

complained that being next door to the park has given diners a view of activity that does little to promote waterfront dining."



Terrapin Crossroads thinks it can improve park usage and alleviate its problems. To this end, the City of San Rafael is giving Terrapin a seven year lease of Beach Park which includes:

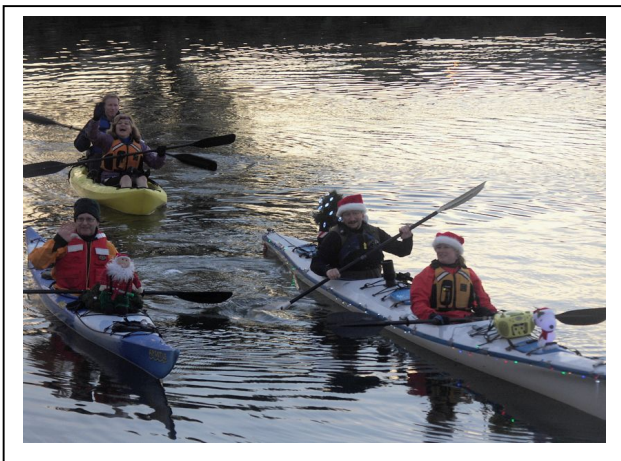
- leasing the park for commercial use by Terrapin Crossroads;
- expanding their seating and performance area into the park;

-- giving the public seven free public events at the park per year (i.e.: concerts, movies in the park, kite festival, bocce ball tournaments on the refurbished bocce court); and
-- taking over maintenance and security of Beach Park.

Terrapin Crossroads now has permission to build a new dock. (But you cannot drag a kayak or a canoe through the restaurant: there will be no "put in" access for boats.)

Beach Park will be open to the public to view the boats at our popular annual San Rafael Lighted Boat Parade every December -- which is one of the largest lighted boat parades in the US.

According to Hansen's article in the I.J., Terrapin Crossroads will pay \$15,000 per year in rent to the City as part of the agreement.



This loss of Beach Park is not without controversy. A letter submitted by the San Rafael Federation of Neighborhoods and printed in Hansen's article said: "...public access is precious and shouldn't be given away. The tradeoff of a private entity cleaning up the park in exchange for controlling the essential functions of access, security, hours, food service

and having numerous special events is a dubious public benefit."

We have no neighborhood park in Montecito/Happy Valley. (The City considers San Rafael High School's fields as our "park." See note below.) Having said that, our neighbors are dedicated to protecting and preserving any piece of parkland we can, especially a waterfront park.

We have been working with the City and the Canal neighborhood to continue building the public waterfront trail around the Canal. But with houses, apartments and businesses on both side, and Trader Joes blocking the public trail with pallets, boxes, crates and trucks, you might not know the trail is there.

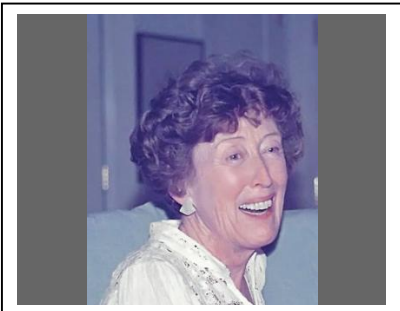
The view is worth it if you get there. Surf Sports 101 has welcomed the public and lets people "put in" their kayaks, canoes or SUPs (Stand Up Paddle) boards from their refurbished dock at no charge. I saw two otters swimming from their dock once.

The best place to view the canal is on a boat. Now is the time to focus on that area. They should make Beach Park the next step in constructing our waterfront public trail for people and their dogs to enjoy.

We also think that the City should also do more for water access for kayaks and canoes and SUPs at Beach Park as it is the perfect water access location and has parking nearby.

Let's just hope that leasing out Beach Park to Terrapin Crossroads will improve our beautiful waterfront and make Beach Park a place that people will want to go to on those seven days a year when there are public events.

Did you know that the campus of San Rafael High School is **open to the public** during non-school hours? This has been confirmed by the San Rafael School District. If you would like to walk or run around the track, use the basketball hoops, etc., WHEN SCHOOL IS NOT IN SESSION, you can go there (there is a gate on Mission Avenue that is usually open). This is for individuals and families only. Any organization wanting to have organized sports event on the campus must apply to the school district as usual.



Katherine "Kay" Corlett, a long-time member of the Montecito Residents Association, died June 8 not long after returning from a European cruise and just several days after being diagnosed with cancer. She was 88. Mrs. Corlett was a San Francisco native who attended the University of California at Berkeley. She lived for many years in San Anselmo, but for the past 24 was a resident of the Aldersly retirement community in San Rafael.

EULOGY FOR KAY CORLETT – FOR WHOM THE WORD “EULOGY” WAS COINED
By Sid Waxman

My wife Catherine and I knew Kay since 1995, when her lovely husband Bob was still alive. He was a quiet and very intelligent man. Kay was very intelligent, but never quiet. She was passionate, and active, with informed opinions on almost every topic, particularly if it had some bearing on life in the Montecito neighborhood or the rest of Marin.

We often broke bread together, and loved asking her about the history of the county. Conversation never flagged at the table when you were with Kay. She was a font of information about its people and events. When Kay and my wife went to see the documentary about saving Pt. Reyes, “Rebels With a Cause” at the Rafael Theater, every few minutes, Kay would whisper her personal knowledge about a Marin activist on the screen. That was typical Kay. She had boundless enthusiasm and energy.

Fluent in Spanish, Kay participated in a literary discussion group that met regularly at Whistle Stop. She was on the board of MARA when it was first formed, serving many years. She served on the county Civil Grand Jury, volunteered at the Marin Art and Garden Center, and many other committees.

She was vivacious, warm and generous. Last year, we were her guests at a major fund raising dinner for the SF-Marin Food Bank. She had purchased half a table and invited friends who included Lorenzo Ersland, my wife and I, and others. She contributed her entire Social Security check to the Food Bank every month because the people the Food Bank served needed it more than she.

We miss Kay, think of her every time we pass Aldersly, and treasure our memories of her.

MARA ON THE WEB
Updates by Bryn Deamer

Redesigned web site:

At the last Annual Meeting two new residents were voted onto the MARA board, Kristie Garafola and Tom Hurray. Along with new blood and fresh energy, Kristie took on the redesign of the ancient website. Check it out at <http://www.montecitoresidents.com/>

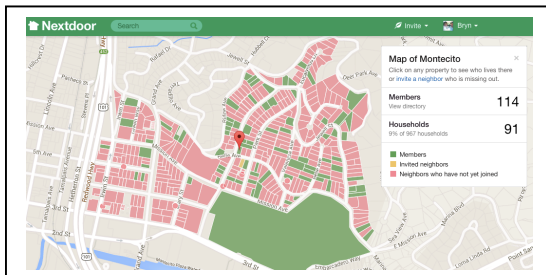
Facebook presence:

For a public presence MARA has a traditional Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Montecito-Area-Residents-Association-San-Rafael-CA/125941994138797>

Nextdoor.com/Montecito:

This platform to create a dynamic web presence is sort of like a private community “Facebook” page. Nine percent of the 419 households within the MARA boundary lines have signed up, opening the doors to announcements, discussions, questions and comment about our neighborhood. The more of us that connect, the more useful it will be so we encourage you join us at: <http://montecito.nextdoor.com> .



MODERN NEIGHBORHOODS

By Sherna Deamer

Historically, neighborhoods were pretty predictable places. By choice, public policy or social pressure, people tended to live near folks who were just like them. In America there were Italian neighborhoods, Irish areas, China towns.... People usually knew each other or at least knew what to expect from each other. In times of stress they took care of “their own.”

Since the Second World War, neighborhoods have become a lot more diverse. There are many reasons for this. The GI Bill, for example, allowed men from many backgrounds to get a college degree that would not have been possible for them before, thereby changing the economic predictability of your neighbors.

Refugees from war zones made the American population in general much more diverse. And immigrants who come here to escape political or social instability in the land of their birth might move in next door.

Our Montecito neighborhood is particularly diverse. We have million-dollar homes on the same block as Section 8 housing. We have communities for senior citizens and San Rafael High School. We have social service agencies across from elegant old mansions. We have students from literally all over the world who are attending Dominican University and renting

apartments in our area. We have commercial areas and lovely private gardens.

It’s fun. One of the interesting things about our neighborhood is that it has an unusually high number of artists of various kinds – graphic designers, novelists, cinematographers.... Our diversity is what attracts creative people to our community. But sometimes our diversity puts us outside of our comfort zones. When we see someone walking down our street we can’t begin to know their story. Does he or she speak English or not? Employed or not? Happy to stop and have a chat or not?

The only thing we can really know for sure is that they are human and are probably doing the best that they can. A smile is a universal language. People should be shown respect whether they are employed or not. And if they don’t want to stop and have a chat, they probably have places to go and things to do -as do you.

So make a goal of stepping out of your comfort zone once in a while. When you have a bit of time, be willing to take the risk of talking with a neighbor you haven’t met yet. You’ll probably find a very nice person with a really interesting story. Your life will be richer for it and you will feel ever more comfortable in our modern neighborhood.