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Editorial/Letters
619-961-1952
ken@sdcnn.com

Advertising
619-961-1958
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San Diego Community News Network

San Diego Uptown News



Anthony and Patrizia "Trish" Guidi with daughter Madelyn Grace, who weighed less than 2 pounds at birth (Courtesy of Guidi family)

By Margie M. Palmer

After years of trying to conceive, Patrizia "Trish" Guidi and husband Anthony were overjoyed when they learned she was pregnant with a baby girl.

But then Madelyn Grace was born prematurely on Oct. 25, 2014. She was only 1 pound 9 ounces, and just 14 inches long.

Trish credits the March of Dimes with helping save her daughter's life.

"Madelyn's prematurity meant that her lungs were severely underdeveloped. Her immature lungs did not produce enough surfactant, a protein that keeps small air sacs in the lungs from collapsing," Guidi said. "We were told that Madelyn's lungs were like two pieces of wet tissue paper stuck together."

The Guidis have been named as a San Diego March for Babies Ambassador Family. Trish said the March of Dimes has impacted her family in the best way possible, and she is only happy to give back through the charity's major fundraiser.

The San Diego March for Babies will take place on Saturday, April 23, at Balboa Park. The 3.5-mile walk will help raise much-needed money to help prevent premature birth and birth defects; all funds raised will benefit the March of Dimes.

More than 7 million supporters are expected to

participate nationwide in a total of 650 organized marches this year.

Local event chair Dr. Lance Prince, who is Division Chief Neonatologist and Associate Professor of Pediatrics at UC San Diego Health, said he is proud to support the March of Dimes in making a difference in the lives of mothers and babies.

"I've been associated with the March of Dimes for many years; it's one of the charities that has helped support reach early on within my career," Dr. Prince said.

"I've always felt an attachment to their mission; one in 10 babies is born too soon, which can lead to serious and lifelong health consequences. While the work of the March of Dimes has led to extraordinary advances, challenges related to premature birth, birth defects, and infant mortality remain," he said.

"The challenges that we face in prevention of premature birth are still there. We continue to make progress each year but we still have a long way to go," he added. "The reason to have the March for Babies and raise money for the March of Dimes has not wavered, it's just as important as ever. Our goal is to heighten awareness that prematurity is the number one killer of babies worldwide because the more people that

see Babies, pg 22

Another election raises eyebrows

By Tori Hahn

Leo Wilson has made his way to head of the Uptown Planners — yet again without the public's input.

The Bankers Hill resident was elected chair, for the third time, in the group's meeting April 6 at Joyce Beers Community Center, in a strangely similar chain of events to his first return to the board in 2013.

Wilson served as chair of Uptown Planners for seven years from 2005 to 2012. And when a vacant seat on the board needed to be filled in 2013, all but one board member voted to approve Wilson's nomination.

That same meeting, chair Beth Jaworski stepped down from her position and, in a move that didn't come as a shock even

see Election, pg 3



Matt Ramon and Beckie Webster voice their concerns about adding more lanes on India Street (Photo by Tori Hahn)

Riding along with a community warrior

By Joseph Ciolino

After sifting through an old reusable grocery bag to find a medical wristband with a name on it, Allen Bennett had a better idea about who lived in the homeless encampment he had just discovered hidden behind a road partition along Florida Drive in Balboa Park.

The camp's inhabitant — a man who had been recently discharged from the hospital, according to the wristband — wasn't there at the time. Garbage was thrown around the nearby drainage system, which poses a threat to the

community and the native plants in that part of Balboa Park, Bennett said.

Finding and investigating homeless encampments is only part of what the now retired Bennett does on a weekly basis, and more specifically during his three-hour tours as part of the Citizens' Patrol for North Park (CPNP). San Diego Uptown News rode along on one of those patrols on a Friday afternoon.

Bennett, 71, also reports graffiti that should be removed as part of the San Diego Police Department's

see Warrior, pg 18



Playing detective along with Sue Zinda, Allen Bennett finds a discarded medical wristband that likely identifies the homeless person camping along Florida Drive in Balboa Park. (Photo by Joseph Ciolino)



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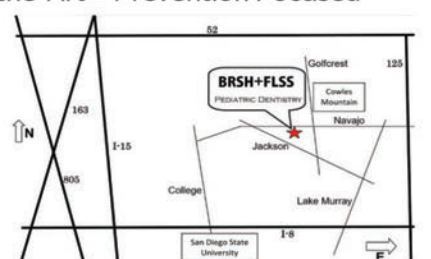
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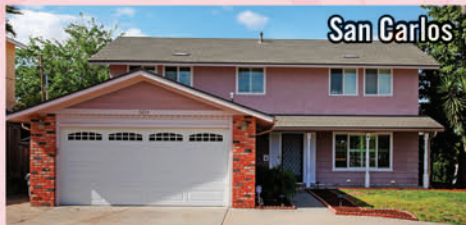


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\$612,500

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\$270,000

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3BR 2BA • 1176 sq ft

\$565,000

2927 Bancroft St



SOLD

CONDO

2BR 1BA • 770 sq ft

\$330,000

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3BR 3BA • 1920 sq ft

\$825,000

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FROM PAGE 1

ELECTION

then, Wilson took her place. All without a public vote.

Fast forward to 2016. Wilson ran for a seat on the Uptown Planners during the March 1 annual elections. He did not win, although he fell only one vote short of tying for the final position on the board.

On April 5, the first order of business at the meeting was filling the vacant seat of Kyle Heiskala, who resigned just before the group's elections on March 1 to run for the District 1 City Council seat. After the board quibbled over bylaw rules, they ruled two candidates were ineligible to serve.

About 50 attendees and the board then heard brief speeches from nominees Josh Clark (Mission Hills), David Lundin (Hillcrest) and Wilson. The board voted 9-5 to appoint Wilson to the vacant seat.

Immediately after, board members made nominations for candidates to succeed termed-out chair J. Demetrios Mellos III, who was not present at the meeting. Those nominated to succeed Mellos as chair were Tom Mullaney and, again, Leo Wilson.

In a bizarre speech following his nomination, Mullaney claimed he was not the best man for the job, highlighted Wilson's experience with the Community Planners Committee and, finally, declined his nomination.

The board swiftly voted 10-2-2 to elect Wilson, promoting him from member of the public, to board member, to chairman — all

within the hour.

The whole process — hauntingly similar to an Uptown Planners meeting three years prior — elicited groans and sarcastic laughs from a large number of people in the audience.

Hillcrest architect Ian Epley vocalized his frustrations with the vote during the time allotted for public comment.

"I think the community feels that the chair has come on twice as a vacancy vote in the past and that ... the fix is in," he said. "There's nothing we can do [about it] in the community."

Wilson, no stranger to controversy, took the criticism in stride. He said he hoped to be a facilitator on the board, which he noted was "polarized a bit." A minority of the board supports growth, taller building heights and density, which are hot-button issues — particularly in Hillcrest, University Heights and Mission Hills. The majority, however, would prefer to keep developers at bay.

Meanwhile, the remaining oficer positions were filled smoothly and unanimously. Mullaney, who has sat on the board for two years, was elected vice chair.

Board treasurer Roy Dahl and secretary Michael Brennan, who have both been board members since 2015, were each reelected to their positions.

In other news, the Uptown Planners heard from three separate speakers about ongoing projects to improve road and pedestrian safety in the city.

Middletown residents Beckie Webster and Matthew Ramon spoke against San Diego Airport Authority's plan to eliminate

parking in order to widen India Street to four lanes between Washington and Laurel streets.

The pair discussed the loss of parking, increased traffic and heightened risk to pedestrians that would result from the plan. Webster, who refused to leave without resolution about the project, settled for a motion that Uptown Planners request the authority to discuss its project at the next meeting in May.

Linda Culp, a planner for SANDAG, presented an update on the Uptown bikeways project — a plan to create 12 miles of bikeways in order to construct "low stress" areas for both motorists and cyclists.

The proposal will reconstruct dangerous streets like University Avenue by adding bike lanes, raised medians and diagonal parking spaces. According to Culp, the project has already counted an additional 55 net parking spaces between Downtown, Bankers Hill and Hillcrest.

Gary Pence, senior traffic engineer with the city, discussed a "road diet" project for Sixth Avenue from Laurel to Elm streets that would introduce marked crosswalks, flashing beacons and buffered bike lanes to minimize car accidents and increase pedestrian safety.

Pence said the project will be implemented in the next three to four months.

Uptown Planners will next meet Tuesday, May 3 in the Joyce Beers Community Center.

—Tori Hahn is an intern with SDCNN and a senior majoring in journalism at San Diego State University.❖

How to Sell High: Avoid these Three Mistakes When Selling Your San Diego Home

San Diego - When you decide to sell your home, setting your asking price is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. Depending on how a buyer is made aware of your home, price is often the first thing he or she sees, and many homes are discarded by prospective buyers as not being in the appropriate price range before they're even given a chance of showing.

Your asking price is often your home's "first impression", and if you want to realize the most money you can for your home, it's imperative that you make a good first impression.

This is not as easy as it sounds, and pricing strategy should not be taken lightly. Pricing too high can be as costly to a home seller as pricing too low. Taking a look at what homes in your neighborhood have sold for is only a small part of the process, and on its own is not nearly enough to help you make the best decision. A recently study, which compiles 10 years of industry research, has resulted in a new special report entitled "Home sellers: How to Get the Price You Want (and Need)". This report will help you understand pricing strategy from three different angles. When taken together, this information will help you price your home to not only sell, but sell for the price you want.

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Residents generally happy with bus, trolley service

By Dave Schwab

The Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Board recently voted unanimously to approve \$108 million for the fiscal year 2017 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), welcome news to several Uptown residents who depend on the regional bus and trolley system.

The local residents largely echo a random sampling by the MTS that showed San Diegans are generally pleased with the agency's work.

MTS operates 95 bus routes and three trolley lines on 53 miles of double-tracked railway. Every weekday more than 300,000 passenger trips are taken on MTS bus and trolley services. MTS set a new record in FY 2015 with 96.7 million riders.

"The MTS CIP is an important road map for planning and funding assets for San Diego's transit system, and having more than \$100 million to allocate in CIP funds is very healthy for an agency our size," MTS CEO Paul Jablonski told San Diego Uptown News.

"This includes new trolleys and buses, transit facility upgrades, hundreds of bus benches and bus shelters, technology improvements and more," he said.

"MTS is committed to providing the best rider experience possible, and the CIP helps us achieve this goal," Jablonski added.

Len Farello of North Park, who has regularly ridden MTS buses for years, said he likes recent service changes.

"I do like the new premium express 215," Farello said of the Rapid Bus that runs between Downtown and San Diego State University via Park Boulevard and El Cajon Boulevard. "It's much more convenient and faster, and runs more often than the old 15. It makes getting from Downtown to North Park and beyond easier."

Another North Park resident, Rob Steppke, rides public transportation daily. He said MTS works well, overall. But he added that some bus schedules, as well as transitions between MTS buses and other regional transportation modes, could be improved.

"A lot of times, the MTS bus schedule doesn't allow for the time-of-day traffic," Steppke said, citing as an example the No. 10 bus route, which runs from Old Town Transit Center through Hillcrest to North Park

and on to City Heights, largely along University Avenue.

"When I take the 10 any time after 3:30 or 4 p.m., and I'm waiting for it at Park (Boulevard) and University (Avenue), it will seldom be on time, sometimes as much as five or 10 minutes late," he said. "That schedule doesn't take into account gridlock traffic coming through Hillcrest."

Steppke — chair of the North Park Maintenance Assessment District and a trainer for the County of San Diego — said those traffic-generated delays not accounted for in the MTS bus schedules can lead to serious issues for riders taking buses to get to places where they can transfer to other regional transportation modes, like the Metrolink commuter rail to Los Angeles.

"You have to use an Amtrak train to get to Oceanside to take the Metrolink, and you have to take the No. 235 (MTS) bus that leaves Downtown about 4:20 a.m.," he said. "If that bus is late for any reason — your entire plan of going to LA for the day is shot."

A total of 2,950 rider surveys were collected by MTS between 5 a.m. and 8 p.m. from March 16 to April 18, 2015.

"Overall satisfaction with services is high with 91 percent of riders saying they are either very satisfied or satisfied with both bus and trolley services provided by SDMTS," MTS said in a statement. "Satisfaction with service coverage received the highest overall rating with 90 percent of riders awarding at least a satisfied rating. The ease of loading a Compass Card also received high scores from riders with a 90 percent satisfaction rating."

MTS however indicated 2015 surveys showed "rider satisfaction with service frequency showed the steepest decline with 27 percent of riders indicating that they were not satisfied with how often the buses and trolley run, compared to 10 percent in 2013. Rider dissatisfaction was also 27 percent for the cost of a pass/ticket, compared to 16 percent in the previous study. Riders are also less satisfied with the cleanliness of transit centers with 21 percent saying they are dissatisfied, up from 9 percent in 2013."

MTS CIP projects receiving the most funding in FY 2017 are: Eight new low-floor trolleys, \$31 million; 45 Compressed Natural Gas buses, \$23 million; new transit facility (location to be determined), \$7.1 million; new Courthouse Trolley Station on C Street between State and Union streets, \$5.7 million; and 46 near-zero emission paratransit buses, \$4.7 million.

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— Dave Schwab can be reached at dschwabie@journalist.com. ❖

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Residents repeat objections to SR94 HOV lanes

By Dave Schwab

Renewed talk of a Caltrans/SANDAG plan to widen state Route 94 between the 805 and 5 interstates adding HOV lanes has Uptown neighbors scrambling to reassert their opposition while crying foul.

"It would bring no benefit to us — only detriment," Valentina Molten of Golden Hill said about the freeway project, which if completed, would "add noise and emissions negatively impacting our health and further fragmenting our communities."

"It's been proven in Los Angeles that the addition of lanes doesn't really decongest the traffic in the long term — they fill back up right away," said Valerie Pasquetto, also of Golden Hill.

Residents feel local government is going back on its word, she added. "They (officials) told us they wouldn't go forward with freeway expansion without getting back to the communities. And now they're (SANDAG's) talking about a November ballot initiative (to do that)," Pasquetto said.

Edward Cartagena, Caltrans media information officer, discussed the status quo of the SR 94 expansion project.

"Caltrans and the San Diego Association of Governments have agreed to study community-based alternatives as part of the state Route 94 Express Lanes draft environmental document," he said. "These studies are currently on-going, and we estimate the distribution of the revised DRAFT EIR in 2018."

Victoria Curran, another Golden Hill resident opposed to SR 94's expansion, said "nobody is saying we want everybody out of their cars or to get rid of freeways: We know that's not realistic."

But Curran added, "It cuts both ways. You build more freeways — more cars will come. We want more transit options — trolleys, buses, bike lanes and paths — that people will use. Building more freeways is not going to achieve the goal of reducing congestion and pollution."

It's the second go-round for the freeway infrastructure improvement project, which first surfaced more than a year ago. The SR 94 Express Lanes Project proposes to connect I-805 South Express Lanes with Downtown San Diego by constructing two new Express Lanes along SR 94,



The SR 94 Express Lanes Project would connect I-805 South Express Lanes with Downtown by constructing two new Express Lanes along SR 94. (Courtesy of Caltrans)

one in each direction, and a new direct connector between SR 94 and I-805.

The Express Lanes would accommodate new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service, in addition to carpools/vanpools traveling between South Bay and Downtown connecting to a wider network of Express Lanes on I-805, and at a future date on state Route 15.

Renewed discussion of reviving the SR 94 Express Lanes Project has brought renewed opposition.

Pasquetto, Molten and Curran previously were involved in organizing neighborhood opposition not only in Golden Hill, but also in Sherman Heights, Bankers Hill, University Heights, Mission Hills and South Park. A previous petition drive in those communities netted nearly 1,000 signatures in opposition to the project in a matter of weeks.

Due in part to public opposition to the SR 94 Express Lanes project, a draft environmental impact report for it, which was to have been released last summer for public

review, was indefinitely delayed.

Previously, Caltrans noted that SR 94, built in the late 1950s, has since become one of the most congested highways during the morning commute in San Diego County. SANDAG studies also have estimated that nearly 1 million more people will reside in San Diego County by 2030.

SANDAG/Caltrans officials have said that the SR94 Express Lanes Project has a number of objectives including: encouraging people to get out of their cars and use mass transit; provide additional lanes between on- and off-ramps; replace non-standard, left-hand connectors at the SR 94/SR 15 interchange; reduce commute times for travelers heading into Downtown using the South Bay Bus Rapid Transit; and facilitate vanpools/carpools reducing congestion while offering more commuting choices.

Now the SR 94 Express Lanes Project may be back for another bite out of the apple. And Uptown residents say they'll be ready for it.

"This is a project that, in our

opinion, is not needed," Molten said. "We want them to be more creative in coming up with transportation alternatives."

"This project would be very close, 200 yards, from people's windows," Pasquetto said. "It would be terrible."

"This project is exactly the way it was before," Curran said. "They're asking the same communities that have already struggled to pay the price, to continue to pay the price."

Pasquetto wrote a "call to action" recently via social media: "SANDAG is attempting to include the SR-94 freeway expansion as one of the projects that would be funded by a new tax that they plan to put on the November ballot. Adding the SR-94 (2HOV from I-5 to I-805) and the SR94/I-805 HOV connectors in the ballot initiative is a breach of public trust, because it will lock the region into funding this freeway expansion, and it demonstrates SANDAG's true intentions to continue the project as originally proposed, rather than give serious

consideration to community-supported alternatives that put transit first. Our community will oppose the ballot initiative if these projects are included."

Monique G. López, senior planner and policy advocate with the Environmental Health Coalition (EHC), said adding HOV lanes is not the right solution.

"EHC is currently working in a coalition with environmental, labor and community-based organizations to advocate for better and affordable transit, good jobs, safer streets and clean air," she told San Diego Uptown News.

"What SANDAG is proposing falls very short of this vision. Specifically, EHC is very concerned and opposed to projects that add lanes for expanded car capacity because it will increase air pollution in environmental justice communities, elevate emissions that contribute to climate change, and ultimately fails as a solution to traffic congestion over time."


López criticized SANDAG for renege on its promise to residents.

"Community residents have been engaged in advocating for a better approach to SR 94 corridor planning. As a result, in July 2015, SANDAG promised the community that they would take a fair look at other alternatives for the SR-94 corridor that did not allow for increased car capacity, but rather allowed for greater transit use. Additionally, SANDAG committed to implementing a pilot study for bus rapid transit on-shoulder, as an alternative to expanding the freeway," she said.

"These are things the community celebrated. But now, SANDAG is proposing on adding the SR-94 (2HOV from I-5 to I-805) and the SR94/I-805 HOV connectors in the ballot initiative. We see this as a breach of public trust because the way the ballot initiative is worded, SANDAG is proposing to move forward with a plan that the community greatly opposed. Therefore, we stand by the community in opposing the inclusion of the SR 94 in the ballot initiative."

To contact those opposed to the project, email SR94project@gmail.com. More information about the project is available at bit.ly/1Yc5Lqp.

— Dave Schwab can be reached at dschwabie@journalist.com. ❖



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EDITOR

Ken Williams
(619) 961-1952
ken@sd cnn.com

SALES & MARKETING DIRECTOR

Mike Rosensteel
(619) 961-1958
mike@sd cnn.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Jeff Clemetson, x119
Morgan M. Hurley, x110

WEB & SOCIAL MEDIA

Jen Van Tieghem, x118
jen@sd cnn.com

COPY EDITOR

Dustin Lothspeich

CONTRIBUTORS

Charlene Baldrige
Joseph Ciolino
David Dixon
Eric Domeier
Tori Hahn
Katherine Hon
Morgan M. Hurley
Dr. Ink
Benjamin Nicholls
Margie M. Palmer
Frank Sabatini Jr.
Dave Schwab
Jen Van Tieghem

ART DIRECTOR

Todd Kammer
(619) 961-1961
todd@sd cnn.com

EDITORIAL INTERNS

Joseph Ciolino
Tori Hahn

ACCOUNTING

Priscilla Umel-Martinez
(619) 961-1962
accounting@sd cnn.com

WEB DESIGNER

Kim Espinoza
kim@kespinoza.com

PUBLISHER

David Mannis
(619) 961-1951
david@sd cnn.com

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GUEST EDITORIAL

HBA's view on Uptown Community Plan update

By Benjamin Nicholls

You might have missed it but, over the last few months, the city's Planning Department rolled up its sleeves and got busy creating a new neighborhood plan for Hillcrest and Uptown.

The Uptown Community Plan will guide new development and growth in Uptown for decades to come. Last week, city staff presented the most recent proposals for the Uptown plan and guess what? They're pretty good! I say this because many of the new proposals are ones that have the quiet support of most residents and business people in Hillcrest.

When the plan update process began in 2009, the Hillcrest Business Association (HBA) hosted a series of forums for our members called Hillcrest 2.0. Hundreds of community members attended, along with Planning Department staff, students, City Council staff and many expert speakers.

From that series came a wide variety of ideas and suggestions that were passed onto the Planning Department staff back in 2011. Many of those ideas, developed by a well-attended community process, have now ended up in the proposed community plan.

Most Hillcrest business people and customers report to us that they favor Little Italy-style development for Hillcrest. Our members want more housing, appropriate devel-

opment, professional offices and community improvements. The city's plan to provide 109 dwelling units per acre and varying building height limits between 65 feet and 120 feet in the commercial core (with appropriate community review) will create an environment that is very similar to Little Italy. These proposals match almost exactly the proposals made by the HBA's members back in 2011.

Back then, the HBA's members also proposed getting involved in a national preservation and economic development movement called National Main Street. This method of pairing historic preservation and economic development is part of the National Trust for Historic Places and balances historic preservation and growth. Coronado, North Park and many of the beach cities participate in this program. I am happy to say that the city has removed the "proposed historic district" that some had asked for in the heart of Hillcrest. A district such as this would stymie plans to revitalize and improve the heart of our business district. This also clears the way for the HBA to move forward with an application for Hillcrest to join the National Main Street movement.

Planning a neighborhood is not an easy feat. The HBA applauds the city's Planning Department for listening to the business community and the many voices (most who don't make it to the Uptown Planners each month) when they ask for reasonable growth for Hillcrest.

—Benjamin Nicholls is executive director of the Hillcrest Business Association. ❖

GUEST EDITORIAL

Know the risks before picking a roommate

By Alan Pentico

One of the best ways for renters to find a good deal in San Diego is to share an apartment or house with roommates instead of living alone. Where a typical one-bedroom apartment may cost \$1,050, splitting the cost of a two-bedroom unit can bring each roommate's share of the bill closer to \$850.

For many people, that \$200 savings is worth the inconvenience of having to share a kitchen, a living room and sometimes a bathroom.

Choosing to live with a roommate, however, may be a greater financial risk, especially if you have not carefully vetted your roommate. When you sign a lease with another person, you are entering into a binding financial agreement with both that person and the landlord. It's a decision that should be taken carefully, especially when you consider that most leases assign "joint and several liability" to the tenants. That's a legal term that essentially means everyone and anyone on the lease can be held liable for any and all money owed.

In practice, this means that if you've been paying your rent on time every month but your roommate hasn't, the landlord has the right to collect the entire amount of the unpaid rent from you. It also means that if your roommate throws a party while you're away and the partygoers damage a wall, both you and your roommate can be held responsible for the cost of repairs. If your roommate moves out and doesn't find a suitable replacement, you could be on the hook for the entire rent amount.

The shared liability built into leases with multiple tenants can also complicate things when it comes time to return the deposit. Landlords typically prefer to return the deposit in one payment to one tenant after the home or apartment has been vacated. Few landlords are willing to cut separate checks or mediate disagreements between tenants over who paid what when they moved in. You should be able to trust that your chosen roommate will return your fair share of the deposit when you move out.

Speaking of security deposits, keep in mind that a renter's insurance policy may cover unintentional damage. If you choose to live with a roommate, talk to your insurance agent about whether to list your roommate as an "additional insured" on your renter's policy or whether it's better for each roommate to get their own insurance policy.

Many renters are naturally inclined to choose a roommate they already know and trust, such as a friend, family member or coworker. This is often a better idea than picking a stranger from Craigslist, but be careful about assuming someone will be a good roommate just because they are a good friend. Aside from questions about how well a friend maintains their home, you should also have a good understanding of how well they manage their money. Whether you're considering living with a stranger or someone you know, indicators like credit history, rent-to-income ratio and positive references are all worth considering.

This column is intended to illustrate situations renters may face when choosing to live with roommates. It is not intended to serve as legal advice. If you are in a dispute or need legal counsel, you are advised to contact a lawyer.

—Alan Pentico is executive director of the San Diego County Apartment Association. ❖

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New update: density, building heights and historical districts

Ken Williams | Editor

City planners briefed local residents on the March 2016 version of the Uptown Community Plan update, with Planning Director Jeff Murphy assuring everyone that “90 percent of growth will be in commercial zones.”

Density has become a four-letter word to some local residents, particularly in Mission Hills and Hillcrest, who fear their neighborhoods will turn into clones of Bankers Hill and Downtown. Other residents, as well as some influential property owners and developers, advocate for density along transit corridors as a way of providing affordable housing.

The City Council’s December approval of the groundbreaking Climate Action Plan also impacts the update process, putting planners between a rock and a hard place. On one hand, they must enact the goals of building density projects along public transit routes outlined in the Climate Action Plan as well as appease the concerns of residents.

The update of the Uptown Community Plan — which began in 2009 to amend the 1988 plan — will guide development for the next 20 years in Bankers Hill, Park West, Hillcrest, the Medical District, Middletown, Five Points, Mission Hills and the portion of University Heights west of Park Boulevard.

The public workshop on March 24 in Casa Del Prado’s Majorca Room in Balboa Park was limited to four topics:

1. Conversion of Planned District Ordinances (PDOs) to citywide zoning.
2. Citywide zone amendments to adopt urban design-related development standards.
3. Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone (CPIOZ) for building height.
4. Proposed potential Historic District Overlay Zone (HDOZ).

The first two topics didn’t generate a lot of conversation among workshop participants.

Senior city planner Marlon Pangilinan said the conversion of the PDOs to citywide zoning is based on the Mid-City PDO of 1988, which has essentially become the standard for much of the city.

Pangilinan said a staff review of the June 2015 update draft — the version preferred by the

Uptown Planners advisory group — included a CPIOZ and covered single family, multi-family and mixed use. Further analysis determined the most proposed CPIOZ regulations were already covered in citywide zoning.

In the March 2016 version of the update, the CPIOZ was included only to address building height in higher-density commercial and residential corridors.

City planners again showed a slide of the proposed land-use map, which is different from the one that the Uptown Planners supports. Because of San Diego’s embrace of the Climate Action Plan and its 2004 adoption of the City of Villages concept to encourage urban micro-clusters of mixed-use development near transit and commercial hubs, planners want to reduce carbon emissions by creating neighborhoods that encourage residents to walk, bicycle or use public transportation instead of cars.

What this means for Uptown is that density will be encouraged along transit corridors, defined as Park Boulevard, Washington Street, University Avenue, and Fourth, Fifth and Sixth streets.

Ben Nicholls, executive director of the 1,200-member Hillcrest Business Association, hailed the proposed change.

“The HBA supports this plan and the changes related to height and density,” Nicholls said. “These are more to the liking of the business community and matches well with the Climate Action Plan.”

Any discussion on building heights always generates debate, and this workshop lived up to the billing.

The latest update version allows 150-foot-tall buildings in Bankers Hill and Park West, south of Upas Street. This is in keeping with existing heights.

Uptown Planners — who set a temporary moratorium on 60-foot-tall height limits in western side of Hillcrest that will expire with the City Council’s approval of the new update (likely in January 2017) — has conceded that density should be focused on the eastern side of Hillcrest, mostly on or near Park Boulevard, making it coordinate with the density proposed by the North Park Planning Committee along the east side of boulevard.

SANDAG, meanwhile, has plans to build a trolley line from Downtown, along Park Boulevard and El Cajon Boulevard, all the way out to San Diego State University. This dovetails with the city’s goals to allow density along such high-profile transit routes.

The new proposed update calls for 120-foot-tall buildings in central Hillcrest and 100-foot-tall buildings along University Avenue between state Route 163 and Park Boulevard. These would be considered Type B developments and would require a more strenuous discretionary public review.

Type A developments would require only ministerial reviews and puts 50-foot limits in Mission Hills and 65-foot limits in other parts of Hillcrest and Bankers Hill.

Award-winning architect Jonathan Segal, also a developer who most recently built the Mr. Robinson Building at Park Boulevard and Robinson Avenue, told city planners that he was disappointed that “the professionals weren’t involved” in the update process. He drew applause from the audience with his passionate point that the people who design buildings were never brought into the process as one of the key stakeholders in the plan.

Segal scoffed that density equaled more traffic and blamed that perception on a lack of vision. “We’re on the cusp of self-driving cars,” he said. “We already have a generation using Uber. This will change traffic demands.”

The millennial generation is totally against commuting to work or play, Segal and others have pointed out.

Several developers criticized the urban design elements that

require specific setbacks on taller buildings, which create a step-back every number of floors as a way to allow sunshine to reach smaller buildings.

Jacob Schwartz, president of Urban Coastal Development, said the economics don’t always work for developers under these plans and gave a long list of examples how they limit design and other esthetics.

The discussion on a possible historic district interim protection raised a few eyebrows, since city planners said there wasn’t money in the coffers to pay for expensive reviews of potentially historical properties. A superficial review by planners identified a number of potential sites that could be included in overlay zone, including Allen Terrace and Avalon Heights. Kelley Stanco, a senior planner who works on historic issues, said buildings built 45 years ago or more would be subjected to review by city officials.

Some worried that the interim designation had no expiration date. Stanco said only the City Council could remove a property from that category, which seems to satisfy those concerned about historical preservation.

“I think it is a step in the right direction,” said Robert Barry, a member of the North Park Planning Committee who attended the workshop.

—Ken Williams is editor of Uptown News and Mission Valley News and can be reached at ken@sdenn.com or at 619-961-1952. Follow him on Twitter at @KenSanDiego, Instagram at @KenSD or Facebook at KenWilliamsSanDiego. ❖

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Craftsmanship is alive in Uptown, and it's available to everyone

By Eric Domeier

The act of making something from scratch can be a transcendent experience. And this experience is locally available to anyone who does not mind getting their hands dirty. We are lucky to have a variety of craft studios in our community. And there are many benefits from practicing a craft.

Craftsmanship, above all else, is an exercise in mindfulness. In order to craft something, one must be in the moment. Singularly focused on one's hands and tools and material of choice, the craftsman temporarily left their world behind. It is an opportunity to break the mental loop and constructively rise above concern.

Additionally, the studio environment is a wonderful place to share this experience. Sharing project successes and failures in the studio environment helps hone the skills of the practitioner. And you might make a new best friend or at least become a part of tightknit group.

If new to crafts, it's important to find one that seems to be a natural fit. For this author, I'm a pitiful painter. Likely the result of being color-challenged, the process is a frustrating exercise that usually results in a mud-colored mess. But feeling the flow of clay between my fingers as it spins on a wheel is the most natural thing in the world. The point is, don't get discouraged. Find a medium that taps into your natural strengths and then ... practice, practice, practice. The following descriptions may help you get started.

CERAMICS

In the ceramic arts, one transforms clay into artifact. With a gentle process of pressing, pushing, and pulling, the craftsman creates miniature spaces. Whether functional or exclusively for display, the best of these resonate with holiness. And the least of these make a perfect coin collector. If you like getting dirty, then this is the one for you.

Local ceramics studios include San Diego Ceramics Connections and Ceramic Heights.

PAINTING

Painting is the craft of color, surface and texture. For local artist Jason Gould, "Painting is a balance between getting lost in the process and making formal decisions about composition, color, balance, movement and space." In other words, it's a keen exercise for those with a finish-fetish. "The ultimate goal is to find that moment of clarity and then sustain it for as long as possible." While all crafts can expand into fine art, painting quickly enters the realm of richly creative and strongly conceptual.

Local painting studios include Art Studio of San Diego and Art on 30th.

NEEDLE CRAFTS

Needle arts are a methodical craft. Once mastered it can be a meditative process of repetition and nuance. New knitter Danielle Stag Lee says, "It's calming and I really like making progress on a project that I can see." Needle crafts are one of the more social activities.

Local needle arts studios



Forming clay (Photo by Lisa Hamel)

include the Needle Art Club at the North Park Branch Library, South Park Dry Goods and Aráñitas Yarn by Sofia. If you want to fashion your own clothing while kicking back a trendy cocktail, check out Mona Lizzy's salon and studio.

JEWELRY MAKING

The shaping of metal into deliberate form requires heavy forces. High-heat, machine-presses and the hammering tool can coax precious metal into timeless shapes. Alternatively, bead arts are a more passive and meditative endeavor. Either way, jewelry making is an intensely focused craft.

Local jewelry studios include Whaley Studios and San Diego Mineral and Gem Society.

ART THERAPY

Art can also be a means to self-discovery and resolution. The medium of the creation is not as important. Instead, the process of connecting with oneself is the goal.

Guided by an art therapist, art is used as a way to focus on interpersonal processing, to getting unstuck. The medium can be anything. But the goal is to more fully experience a piece of one's own history or current existence. This is often some traumatic event that the individual struggles to accept. With greater access to the experience, the individual can process and integrate the event with the result being a more wholesome self. While the art part of the process is immediate, it is typically just the first step of integration. The studio experience can be moving, and a great way to bond with friend and stranger alike.

Local art therapy studios include Expressive Arts for daily classes and Soul Care House for weekend workshops.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Creative talent is not a prerequisite for becoming a proficient craftsman. Some people may be wary of engaging in creative pursuits, but crafts can be a technical process as much as anything. And if creative expression finds its voice, then all the better.

As we busily rush through our days trying to make ends meet, a regular practice of craft-making can be another resource for finding peace within and connection without. And one more way to immerse ourselves in our vibrant community.

—Eric Domeier lives in North Park and practices architecture from his Grim Avenue office. Visit his website at dome-arch.com or call him at 619-531-0010. ♦

Expendable gems?

University Heights residences could be at risk in North Park Community Plan update

PastMatters
Katherine Hon

The community plans for many areas of San Diego, including Greater North Park, are being updated. At a recent meeting, the city project manager for the North Park Community Plan update cheerfully assured North Park Historical Society representatives that in 20 years, we won't recognize North Park.

If the current version of the update is fully implemented, she will be right. But to those who treasure the historic soul of Greater North Park, that thought is horrifying. So before we rush headlong in pursuit of all that is shiny, new, dense and high, let's take a walk and look at what the city has earmarked for replacement by higher density development in the March 2016 version of the update. This column focuses on University Heights.

The historic subdivision of University Heights was mapped in 1888 and extends from the current location of state Route 163 to Boundary Street between University Avenue and the slopes above Mission Valley. The eastern half of this large subdivision from Park Boulevard to Interstate 805 is included in the city's Greater North Park Community Planning Area. Some of the oldest homes in Greater North Park are in University Heights, including two Victorian cottages built circa 1905 on Howard Avenue east of Georgia Street, and 10 Victorian/transitional/early Craftsman homes built before 1912 on Florida Street north of Polk Avenue.

Like the neighborhoods south of University Avenue, most original homes in University Heights were built before 1940, and many are approaching or have passed their 90th birthday. Nearly all residences between Lincoln and Howard avenues from Florida Street east to I-805 could be profoundly affected by the city's proposed "Pedestrian-Oriented Infill Development Enhancement Program" (formerly called a "density bonus" area) in the update. The zoning in this part of University Heights is being rezoned to residential-medium high, or up to 44 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) from the current density of 35 du/ac. But worse yet, the "enhancement program" would allow developers to propose up to 73 du/ac.

The two-story, 28-unit complex at 4420 Cleveland Ave. exemplifies a 44 du/ac development. In contrast, the six-story, 37-unit DECA complex at 3740 Park Blvd. exemplifies a 73 du/ac development. Such a development placed in the small-scale residential heart of University Heights would overwhelm the existing residences, even the much-maligned but typically only two-story Huffman-type apartment buildings. The "enhancement program" in this area would allow for such intense development that "ensuring



This Craftsman home on Polk Avenue is in the pedestrian-oriented "enhancement program" area that would allow up to 73 dwellings-per-unit development. (Courtesy of North Park Historical Society)

compatibility with the traditional character buildings," which is part of the Vision in Section 4 of the update, would not be possible.

The "enhancement program" is not the only way the update would put the integrity of historic neighborhoods at risk. Much of University Heights from University Avenue north to Adams Avenue and from Park Boulevard east to Boundary Street has been mapped by the city as "Multi-Character," which is described in Section 4 of the update as where "North Park's original character is no longer dominant" and where the neighborhoods "have experienced diverse changes in building scale, style, form and materials that are in contrast with the community's neighborhood origins." The subtle message here is that there is not much to lose by replacing existing residences with dense multi-family buildings.

It may be easy to color whole blocks on a map as having lost their original character, but an on-the-ground survey reveals a different story. A group of concerned University Heights residents conducted a detailed walking survey of the "enhancement program" area from Lincoln Avenue to Howard Avenue between Florida and Texas streets. Among their findings: both Lincoln Avenue and Polk Avenue from Park Boulevard to Texas Street retain 100 percent of their traditional architectural character, and Howard Avenue from Park Boulevard to Texas Street retains 95 percent of its traditional architectural character. Florida Street in this area, with 23 apartment buildings infiltrating after 1960, still has 37 pre-1960 single family homes and four pre-1960 multi-family units, retaining a 64 percent traditional architectural character. So how accurate is the "Multi-Character" label? Are post-1960 units really "dominant"?

Park Boulevard between El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue has been designated as a "Transit-Oriented Development Enhancement Program Area," which would allow up to 145 du/ac proposals; however, even this major street has unique historic resources. These include Grace Lutheran Church, four bungalow courts built in the 1920s between Lincoln and Polk avenues, the Sprouts Farmers Market building near Howard Avenue, the yoga/Pilates building at 4201 Park

Blvd., and the centerpiece of the shopping center at Park and El Cajon boulevards, which was once a Piggly Wiggly grocery store.

In analyzing the impacts of the update, it is possible to conclude that the proposed zoning is not much different from zoning in the existing community plan in a "plan-to-plan" comparison, since relatively high densities are already allowed. But a walk through the neighborhood to conduct a "ground-to-plan" comparison reveals that a shocking number of unique historic structures could be lost by development encouraged inside and outside of the transit corridors in the update.

While encouraging high-density development in the transit corridors of El Cajon Boulevard and Park Boulevard makes sense, targeting generally intact and human-scale residential neighborhoods for dense infill through the "Pedestrian-Oriented Infill Development Enhancement Program" in University Heights does not. The contrast between historic single-family homes and "projects that were developed from the 1960s through the 1980s that were not sensitive to Greater North Park's character and its traditional architectural and design treatments," as stated in Section 2.8 of the update, cannot be improved by replacing existing compatible-scale six-plus-unit complexes with structures that will be more modern, massive, and at least twice as high. Furthermore, there is no definitive language in the update to prevent the description of targeted structures from being applied to historic bungalow courts, which typically provide six-plus units but were built in compatible styles and during the same time frame as historic single-family homes.

The North Park Historical Society is opposed to zoning and policies that will result in widespread loss of irreplaceable historic resources, and has joined others in asking the city to delete the pedestrian-oriented "enhancement program" from the NPCPU.

—Katherine Hon is the secretary of the North Park Historical Society. Reach her at info@northparkhistory.org or 619-294-8990. Her opinions are her own, and San Diego Uptown News encourages a diversity of opinions on its pages. ❖

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Annual planet-embracing festival returns in advance of Earth Day

Morgan M. Hurley | Contributing Editor

If you aren't already doing it in your daily life, it's that time of the year to feel connected to the Earth again, as the annual EarthFair 2016 heads to Balboa Park on April 17 from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Though the internationally recognized Earth Day is actually the following Friday, April 22, San Diego Earth Works — the non-profit that has produced the annual local homage to planet Earth since 1990, the 20th anniversary of the Earth Day — likes to get a jump on things.

Dubbed the "largest free annual environmental fair in the world" by organizers, it certainly is a large draw locally, attracting nearly 600,000 visitors to Balboa Park every year for the one-day festival. In comparison, organizers say the first event in 1990 drew 60,000.

This year's EarthFair is themed "Vote Cool," a spin on the current presidential election season.

"Not only do we need to support



Nearly 600,000 people are expected to take part in this year's EarthFair at Balboa Park April 17. (Courtesy San Diego EarthWorks)

ways to cool global warming, we need cooler heads in our politics," said Carolyn Chase, chief executive officer of Earth Works. "Be cool, do cool, VOTE COOL!"

This year's EarthFair attendees are in for another full day of exhibitors, kids activities, entertainment, sustainable energy and product demonstrations, art, food and more, all focused on sustaining the planet where we all live. There's even a kid's Earth parade and a concourse showing off the latest in electric cars.

"It's totally amazing to me each year all the new things people come up with to go green and help others do the next thing," Chase said.

"Also interesting is who sticks with it from year-to-year — what works and what doesn't."

The list of exhibitors, which

really are the heart and soul of this event, is exhaustive. They include national brands and small mom-and-pop businesses, including such unique vendors as Aunt Be Botanicals, Plant with a Purpose, Peace Pies, Herbal Apothecary, Temple Turmeric, the Friendly Feather Shop, Scenichouse, Urban Octopus and dozens of others. Also on hand are local and state community and public service organizations, those with political leanings, and the expected, like Greenpeace, SDG&E, SolarCity, MTS, the Sierra Club and more. For a full list of exhibitors, visit tinyurl.com/ztwpcsd.

"I make a list each year of the tables I'm going to visit with an empty backpack at the beginning of the day," Chase said. "This year I hope to score a free tomato plant, sustainable dog treats for my dog

Dozey and some of the most fantastic enviro-candles — and that's just to start."

Entertainment this year will take place on five different stages throughout the park.

The Children's Area will have its own Children's Stage, with lots of performances for kids when they are not occupied by the crafts, painting and games in the rest of the area.

There will also be a Magic Show stage set up in front of the lily pond, with entertainment by EarthFair mainstay "the Dr. Wilderness Family." The children's parade will start from Spanish Village at 10:30 a.m. and work its way to Pan American Plaza, where the Children's Area can be found.

Other stages include the Sun Stage, located behind the Federal

Building and the Moon Stage at Park Boulevard and President's Way. Both will feature contemporary style music.

Those interested in learning about everything imaginable that falls under the sustainable umbrella will want to hit up the eHome exhibit area. Ways to get you off the grid, make your windows more energy efficient, and alternative home building methods will all be on display with demonstrations and representatives to assist you.

Sustainable, plant-based food can be found in the Food Pavilion. Always been curious about vegetarian and vegan fare? Here is your chance to check it out. There will be no shortage of non-meat options.

Remember EarthFair is a "zero waste" event — you can imagine it creates a lot of potential waste — but everything used is recycled. Organizers said that last year they were able to divert 90 percent of their waste from the landfill by keeping to this policy. That's commendable, and you can do your part.

In addition to overseeing the April 17 event, Chase said she likes to spend a big part of the festival taking hundreds of photographs with two different cameras to capture the day's festivities and document them for EarthWorks.

"My pre-event nightmare the other week was that I forgot my camera," she said.

For more information about EarthFair, and information on alternative transportation options, visit earthdayweb.org.

—Morgan M. Hurley can be reached at morgan@sdcnn.com. ❖

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Climbing in popularity

By Tori Hahn

Mission Valley is now home to the largest and tallest indoor rock-climbing gym in San Diego. Mesa Rim's Mission Valley gym was completed in November 2015 and is tucked away at 405 Camino Del Rio, just below Hillcrest. The company also operates another location in Mira Mesa at 10110 Mesa Rim Road and one in Reno, Nevada.

People of all ages and backgrounds come to Mesa Rim to test the walls, the tallest of which is 55 feet high in Mission Valley and 50 feet high in Mira Mesa.

In Mission Valley, the gym offers youth and recreational programs for children ages 4 to 18, but also attracts climbers in their late 60s. While some train to compete, many others take on the rock walls for the first time.

"It's hard to break into climbing because it seems like it's really hard if you don't know the techniques and you're not used to it," said Alexis Diller, senior coordinator for promotional communications. "We help create a community that cheers you on, even if it's your first time."

Rosie Bates, head coach at Mesa Rim, describes it as a "life-style sport" in which anyone in the family can try. Loud, upbeat music fills the expansive space, and climbers laugh and joke in between their time on the wall.

But there's more to Mesa Rim than just rock climbing. The center offers a wide range of facilities,

including bouldering — an equipment-free style of climbing — training walls, treadmills, stationary bicycles, weights, weekly free fitness classes, yoga classes, a party room and a gift shop, all of which are included in a membership.

The gym even switches the placement of the walls' handgrips every few weeks to keep the facility dynamic. Bates said the gym aims to help their members and visitors master the walls they work on, but also challenge them with new pathways.

Mesa Rim members have the option of attending more than 24 yoga classes throughout the week. Bates said most members — and usually more men than women — practice yoga in addition to climbing because of the added mental and physical discipline in balance.

"Climbing's a really cool sport in that there's just as many women almost as men pushing the limits and getting stronger, and so the gender roles in a lot of ways don't play as big a part," Bates said. "Going to yoga they just see as another aspect to ... becoming a better climber."

According to the 25-year-old coach, it's normal for people who once considered themselves only a yogi or only a climber to eventually attempt the other to enhance their skills.

The rock-based sport has expanded immensely in recent years and might even make it to the 2020 Olympics, Bates said. "The facilities have grown



Mariya Ioffe almost reaches the top of the rock wall at Mesa Rim in Mission Valley. (inset) A balcony overlooks the 55-foot-tall climbing walls. (Photos by Tori Hahn)

quite a bit ... the climbing gyms have been popping up all over the country and [have gained] popularity because of that," she said. "The youth kids programs are facilitating this growth of ... a family environment, so the whole family will come in and climb."

The growth is evident in the numbers: Three years ago, seven kids participated on Mesa Rim's youth team, which has since grown to 90 kids in 2016, Diller said.

Indoor gyms like Mesa Rim have increased in popularity, she said, due to amplified media exposure and the inaccessibility of out-

door rock climbing venues nearby.

"Climbing gyms are kind of the logical first step in a lot of ways for people who are living in a city," Bates said.

"Because of limited access in some areas to the outdoors, indoor gyms started popping up and so people are being introduced to rock climbing through the indoor community now," Diller said.

Bates says indoor and outdoor climbing have evolved so differently, they're almost two different sports. Whereas rocky terrain outside is unpredictable and unforgiving, handholds on manufac-

tured walls are carefully designed and strategically placed.

For now, the social setting at indoor gyms like Mesa Rim can provide a viable option for climbers until they reach what Bates says is their ultimate goal: conquering landscapes outside.

Mesa Rim in Mission Valley is open seven days a week. Visit mesarim.com for more information about the company.

—Tori Hahn is an intern with SDCNN and a senior majoring in journalism at San Diego State University. ❖

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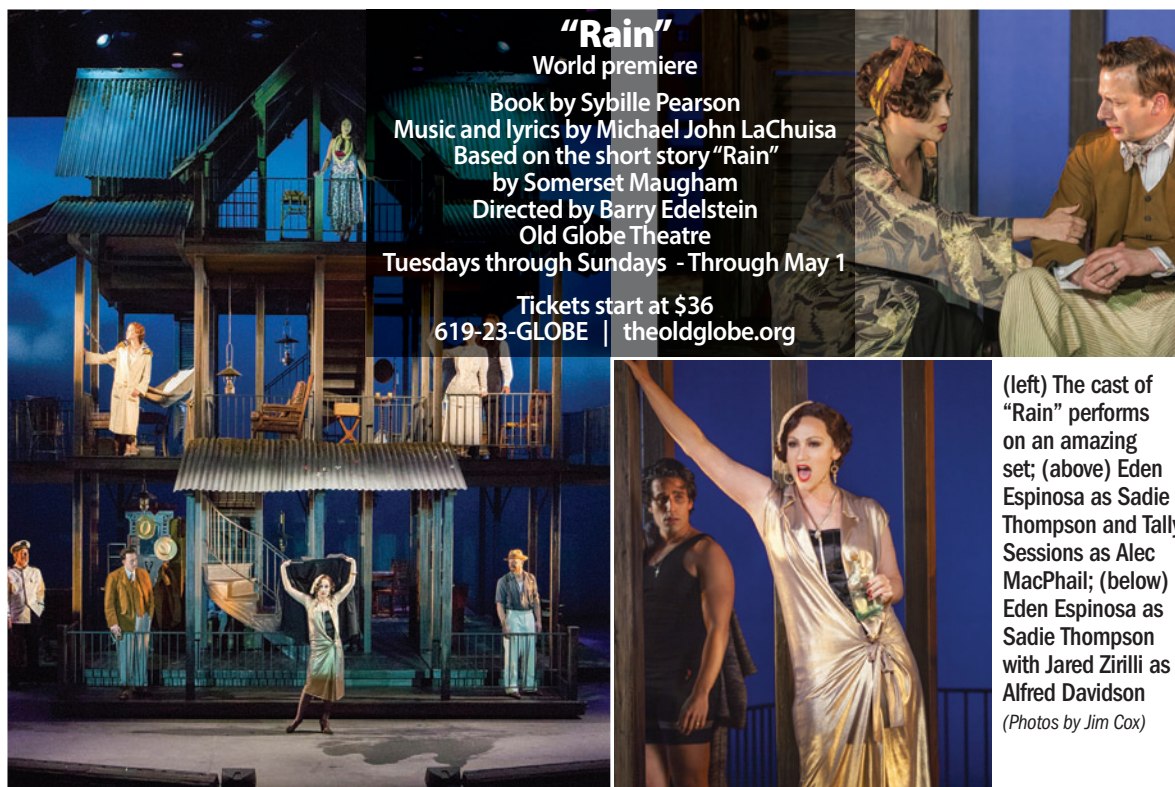


Not another person could be shoehorned in as the house was packed April 1 for the opening of the Old Globe's world premiere musical, "Rain," with book by Sybille Pearson, and music and lyrics by Michael John LaChiusa.

Directed by Artistic Director Barry Edelstein, the piece is based on the Somerset Maugham short story about sizzling Sadie Thompson, set in 1924. Thompson is a prostitute isolated in a small boarding hotel on the island of Western Samoa, along with two decent couples marooned there while their cruise ship's personnel recover from an outbreak of the measles.

As adapted for the stage, Maugham's story was so scandalous that all the Hollywood femme fatales wanted to play Sadie. Three succeeded: Gloria Swanson (1928), Joan Crawford (1932) and Rita Hayworth (1953).

The Old Globe world premiere stars Eden Espinosa as Sadie, a down-on-her-luck entrepreneur who claims to be looking for a new start with a body that's approaching midlife. Her arrival at the Horn Hotel, run by the islander Noi Noi (Marie-France Arcilla) and her Scots husband,



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(left) The cast of "Rain" performs on an amazing set; (above) Edén Espinosa as Sadie Thompson and Tally Sessions as Alec MacPhail; (below) Edén Espinosa as Sadie Thompson with Jared Zirilli as Alfred Davidson
(Photos by Jim Cox)

Jo (Jeremy Davis), is not well received, especially when the ship's quartermaster (Mike Sears) and a sidekick (Rusty Ross) turn up for a little recreation of the recumbent kind.

The other temporary residents are a missionary pair, the Rev. Alfred Davidson (Jared Zirilli) and his wife, Anna (Elizabeth Davis); and a World War I doctor, Alec McPhail (Tally Sessions), and his wife, Louisa (Betsy Morgan).

Being cooped up in the boarding hotel, while enduring each other and the incessant rain, underscores the tumult within person and within each set of relationships, especially when Al-

fred, whom Sadie calls Mr. Jesus, decides Sadie is ripe for salvation and devotes himself to her redemption behind closed doors.

Trying to save her house, Noi Noi encircles it with incantations. She and Jo, the most unlikely of couples, are the happiest, perhaps because of their daily "English" lessons. Dr. MacPhail, decent at the core, is an alcoholic. His marriage to the long-suffering, under-appreciated Louisa is full of secrets. Both sincerely devoted to their missions, Alfred and Anna are in trouble, too. Vastly insecure, Alfred comes across as a prig, especially in his initial denunciation of Sadie and in his sabotag-

ing of Alec's attempts to help her.

All the singers have pleasant voices and most succeed at creating affecting characters. The most joyous and believable relationship is that of Noi Noi and Jo. Also deeply felt are the sorrow and sincerity of Louisa and Alec's relationship.

Despite his good looks and nice, high baritone, Zirilli is rather wooden and fails to convey the depth of conflicted passion. I don't feel the turbulence he is going through despite being told its causes. As for undeniable desire, native drums at moments of high dudgeon don't do it. Where is the heat and undeniable intensity in the musical numbers between

Alfred and Sadie? Is it the fault of the music or the performers' lack of chemistry, or a combination thereof?

In Pearson's adaptation of the story, and in its scoring by LaChiusa, each of the characters seems ultimately prepared to move forward with his or her life, whether together or alone, and we go home with the hope that each will effect their individual salvation (survival) despite the tragedy. We know that the resilient Sadie will survive so long as she has her red dress.

Some of the music – particularly the ensemble numbers and the duet/trio "Only the Rain Stays the Same" for Louisa, Noi Noi and Anna – is exceptionally fine, for instance Alec and Louisa's "Let Love Do What It Does."

Sadly, you can't sing the scenery. The best thing about "Rain" is Mark Wendland's amazing revolving set, which is the three-story boarding house and all its rooms and lanais; and the rain itself, the sea and sky and sand beyond. Katherine Roth is costume designer, Russell H. Champa is lighting designer, and Ken Travis is sound designer. Bruce Coughlin did the orchestrations, and music director J. Oconer Navarro, who conducts and plays keyboards, is hidden below the stage in the orchestra pit with a fine eight-piece orchestra, all members of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada.

—Charlene Baldridge has been writing about the arts since 1979. Follow her blog at charlenebaldridge.com or reach her at charb81@gmail.com.

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A tragic marriage in Nagasaki

By David Dixon

Garnett Bruce — director of the famed Opera de Montreal — returns to Downtown San Diego later this month to present Giacomo Puccini’s Italian opera, “Madama Butterfly.”

This will be the fourth time Bruce has staged the tragic story for the San Diego Opera and its fans.

Set in Nagasaki, Japan, in the early 20th century, a geisha, Cio-Cio-San (Latonia Moore) falls for an American Naval officer, B.F. Pinkerton (Teodor Ilincai).

Though the couple weds, the union is bittersweet, because while Cio-Cio-San believes she has found true love, Pinkerton does not take their arranged overseas vows seriously.

Bruce said he has read the original short story, “Madame Butterfly,” and seen the David Belasco play, “Madame Butterfly: A Tragedy of Japan.” Both the tale and the drama enhanced his appreciation of Puccini’s music and the libretto written by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa.

“Belasco’s script is not a kind portrayal of either Asians or Americans,” he said. “Puccini softened these characters and believed in them with the help of glorious music.”

The singer who gets to perform some of Puccini’s most unforgettable melodies is J’nai Bridges, who plays Suzuki, Cio-Cio-San’s maid. Suzuki does what she can to remain loyal as her employer goes through challenging times.

The mezzo-soprano said she doesn’t wish her portrayal of Suzuki to be viewed as merely that of a “simple domestic.”

“It’s really easy to play this [role] just like a servant who follows instructions,” she said. “I think she’s deeper than just a woman who runs errands.”

In the upcoming production at the San Diego Civic Theatre, the bond between Cio-Cio-San and Suzuki will be an important part of the narrative.

“I feel like they are sisters in a way,” Bridges said. “Suzuki cares a lot about Cio-Cio-San and does not want her to get hurt.”

An aspect of Puccini’s music that continues to fascinate Bruce is the composer’s meticulous artistry.

“Puccini is very structured,” he said. “He knows how to hold the attention of an audience and how to take them on an unforgettable journey.”

Bridges acknowledges the beauty of Puccini’s compositions.

“His music feeds the soul,” she said. “Puccini’s music is really relatable and accessible to people’s emotions.”

Even though the interpretation is going to be traditional, Bruce said in-house technology will keep each scene visually fresh.

“We’re trying to enhance people’s mood and experience through lighting,” Bruce said. “We have strong reactions to different uses of color.”

While Moore has played Cio-Cio-San for both Germany’s Hamburg State Opera (Hamburgische Staatsoper) and New York’s Metropolitan Opera, Bruce hopes that San Diego theatergoers do not compare her upcoming performance to her previous portrayals of the central character.



“Madama Butterfly”
April 16 – 24
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sdoopera.org
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(top) Latonia Moore in costume at The Met in NYC last month. (Photo by Marty Sohl); (bottom) l to r, director Garnett Bruce and Latonia (Courtesy of San Diego Opera)

“Everybody who comes needs to have an open mind,” he said. “They need to be ready to hear and see a new side of a familiar role.”

According to Bruce, one of the biggest reasons the intense plot continues to make an impact with audiences is the depth of the Cio-Cio-San character.

“She is very naïve, pragmatic, and trusting,” he said. “We all want to be as good as she is throughout the opera. We want to believe the way she believes and if we can, we’re open to joy.”

Similarly to Bruce, Bridges said she feels that the plot has a heart-rending quality.

“It is a very humanistic story,” she said. “There are real human emotions from everyone.”

With Bruce at the helm, it seems like audiences are in for a grand and passionate rendition of the monumental tale. His version appears to contain all the necessary ingredients to comprise a stirring evening.

—David Dixon has been a fan of film and theater from a

very young age, and has written reviews and features for various print and online publications. Reach him at daviddixon0202@gmail.com.

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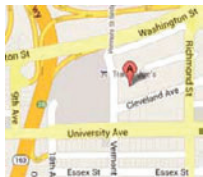


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Meaty sandwiches have entered into the equation since Heart and Trotter Whole Animal Butchery opened a year ago. (Courtesy of Assault Media Marketing)

Free pork tacos are up for grabs on a first-come, first-served basis starting at 1 p.m. April 17, as The Heart & Trotter Whole Animal Butchery in North Park celebrates its one-year anniversary. Lauded for its antibiotic and hormone-free meats, the shop also sells sandwiches on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, although it may soon offer them daily according to manager Ben Zuba. 2855 El Cajon Blvd., 619-564-8976, theheartandtrotter.com.



Ashleigh Dinan of Wild Water is a new vendor at North Park Thursday Market. (Photo by Frank Sabatini Jr.)

The North Park Thursday Market debuted March 24 with several new vendors and a tent designated for cooking demos scheduled into the month of May. The weekly farmers market was re-branded through a partnership between North Park Main Street and San Diego Markets. It moved several blocks west from its original location and now occupies nearly three blocks on North Park Way, between 30th and Granada streets.

"This gives us higher visibility and we're right next to the huge parking garage off 30th, which makes it a perfect location compared to the small lot we were in behind CVS Pharmacy," operations manager Brijet Myers said.

Among the newcomers is Ashleigh Dinan of Wild Water, whose first day of business coincided with the market's launch. She sells vacuum-sealed fruit — kiwis, Asian pears, blood oranges and mandarins — and the bottles used for infusing them into water.

J's Tacos & Ceviche is also new to the neighborhood market, as well as Edible Alchemy, which brings in kimchi and sauerkraut from a nearby kitchen.

There are about 65 vendors in total selling everything from produce and street foods to turkey eggs and crème brulee. Myers says the new blueprint allows for future growth.

The cooking demos are held at 4 and 5:30 p.m. each week by a local chef. The lineup includes: Rich Sweeney of Waypoint Public on April 14; "Chef Norbert" from Tiger! Tiger! on April 21; and Joe Kraft of Wow Wow Waffle on May 5.

For more information and listings, visit northparkmainstreet.com.

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Dungeness crabs from San Francisco Bay waters have returned after a temporary ban, arriving this month to King's Fish House in Mission Valley and Carlsbad, and its sister restaurant, Water Grill in the East Village. The ban began in November, when waters in and around the Bay Area showed high levels of domoic acid, a naturally occurring neurotoxin produced by algae that had infiltrated the crustaceans.

The ban, however, was lifted for safe consumption on April 1, and the crabs will be available at both locations of King's Fish House in several ways: steamed; sautéed in peanut oil, jalapenos and peppercorns; or served chilled. (Water Grill will offer them chilled only on seafood platters.) A company rep says the seasonal crabs should stick around through the end of spring, or while supplies last. 825 Camino De La Reina, 619-574-1230, kingsseafood.com.

—Frank Sabatini Jr. can be reached at fsabatini@san.rr.com.❖



Dungeness crabs are back on the menu at King's Fish House in Mission Valley. (Photo by Jeff Clemenson)

The space that formerly housed D Bar in Hillcrest will undergo a major interior design for the mid-summer arrival of H2O Sushi & Izakaya, which has locations in Orange and Los Angeles counties.

"We've been to their restaurant in Costa Mesa and the food is amazing, and with very reasonable price points," said Tami Daiber, chief operating officer for Carleton Management, which is handling the lease agreement. "It will be unbelievably hip, almost like a nightclub."

Daiber is also president of the Hillcrest Business Association.

In addition to numerous specialty rolls and crafty small plates, H2O will feature full entrees, a yakatori bar, sake and cocktails. 3930 Fifth Ave., h2osushiizakaya.com.

A bevy of local chefs and breweries will unite to benefit Feeding America San Diego as they break into duos to create competing pairings of food and beer. The event, titled Pairings with a Purpose, will be held from 1 – 5 p.m. April 16, at the Bobby Riggs Tennis Club & Museum in Encinitas. Attendees will get to sample and vote on their favorite matchups along with a panel of celebrity judges that includes former San Diego Charger Billy Ray Smith and radio personality Scott Kaplan.

Nearly two dozen teams are taking part. Among them are: Karen Barnett of Small Bar working with Karl Strauss Brewing Company; Trey Foshee of Galaxy Taco with Benchmark Brewing Co.; Amy DiBiase of Tidal with Modern Times Beer; and more.

General admission is \$45, which includes tastings from all teams. For tickets and more information, visit feedingamericasandiego.org. 875 Santa Fe Drive, Encinitas.

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Mexico City meets Hillcrest

Come On Get Happy! Dr. Ink

When brothers Tony, Memo and Javier Fragoso transformed Local Habit on Fifth Avenue into La Vecindad, the restaurant became a colorful light-filled space where sturdy margaritas and dynamite tacos rule the day.

"We know how to make tortillas, beans and other ingredients, so it was the right decision to change the concept," Tony said when comparing it to the previous New Orleans-style format the family maintained for a couple of years.

The re-branding four months ago ushered in the vibrant ambience of a bar and taqueria you'd find along the beaten paths of their native Mexico City, a place that opens to the street and greets with a level of pride and hospitality seen commonly in family-run businesses.

During happy hour, house margaritas are \$4 and the flavored ones using pureed fruits are \$5. The latter are served in bigger glasses, although both receive generous pours of Sauza Gold tequila. If you prefer the Sauza straight up, a shot of it costs only \$2.

Draft beers such as Bud Light, Corona Light and Modelo Especial are \$3.50. But with a festive display of tequila staring at me from behind the bar, I chose a plain margarita, opting for a mixture of sugar and chili powder on the rim of my rocks glass. Better than salt, it's the sweet-spicy accent every classic margarita needs.

The tacos also drop down in price. From a list that includes al pastor, pollo asado, carne asada and more, you can choose two for \$6. (On taco Tuesdays, they're \$5 a pair all day.) During regular



Fish and longaniza tacos (Photos by Dr. Ink)

hours, they're \$3.75 apiece.

The gracious bartender recommended her two favorites: the "pescado" stuffed with beer-battered tilapia, and the spiced pork "Lalo," named after the brothers' father.

I was in taco heaven. The house-made corn tortillas were fresh and downy, and the tilapia took on the added flavors of lemon-jalapeno sauce amid diced mangos and shredded cabbage. It was decidedly zestier than what other places sling.

The Lalo was filled with longaniza, which is akin to chorizo but less fatty and spiced differently. Here, the family recipe calls for cinnamon, cloves, onions, garlic and guajillo chilies, which gives the meat its reddish tint. For those on a quest of finding the best taco in town, this one shouldn't be overlooked.

La Vecindad translates to "the neighborhood," and Tony said he'd like to eventually open an additional outlet somewhere in North County. Based on the stimulating food, drinks and environment he brought to Hillcrest, the odds of a second location taking root in another neighborhood are in his favor. ❖

La Vecindad

3827 Fifth Ave. (Hillcrest)
619-501-2885

lavecindadneighborhoodtacos.com

Happy hour: 3 to 7 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

RATINGS

Drinks: **★★★★**

The beer list is limited, although margaritas abound in both classic and flavored versions, and without leaving your taste buds searching for the tequila.

Food: **★★★★**

The tacos are terrific. They're available with a variety of fillings, and each offers a range of flavors from different sauces and spices.

Value: **★★★★**

Prices on drinks and food drop about 40 percent during happy hour. A strong margarita and a couple of tacos will set you back only \$10.

Service: **★★★★**

The staff and owners greet customers warmly, and in the absence of printed happy-hour menus, they eagerly provide you with a rundown of the deals.

Atmosphere: **★★★★**

Whimsical décor, picnic tables and bright paint colors tastefully unite under a high ceiling with skylights. The smooth, white-top bar is spacious and inviting, and the dining room opens to a sidewalk patio. (Note: Happy hour is available only at the bar unless it fills to capacity.)

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Register today at aquarium.ucsd.edu.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

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858-456-2807, ext 307
summercamp@sdfrenchschool.org

San Diego French-American School offers a wide array of creative, artistic or sporty camps in many different languages. In addition to English, campers will have a week-long exposure to Mandarin, French, Italian, or Spanish.

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Kids can learn woodworking or become a little Picasso; they can become mini-yogis or walk on a balance beam; they can plant their own garden and learn how to grow their own food; they can even bake pastries like a French chef or make a delicious Italian dinner. They can improve their singing and learn songs in French and English or go down to the beach and ride the waves. Many of the camps will have a show or presentation at the end of the week for the parents.

If you register before the end of April, you will enjoy a discount. Lunch service is available. Full day camps for preschoolers. Ages 3 – 5 or 6 and up.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Summer Camps at Arts District Liberty Station

LibertyStation.com/SummerCamps

Classes and workshops for all ages are presented throughout the year by dozens of cultural groups, but this summer, something Summer Camps at ARTS DISTRICT will be Where KIDS Get Creative.

Presented by the nonprofit NTC Foundation in partnership with 11 professional arts organizations, Summer Camps at ARTS DISTRICT are ideal for families looking for creative experiences for their children, ages 4-17.

Camps feature music, dance, theater, creative writing, hands-on art making, photography, and more ... all in Liberty Station's park setting.

This summer, kids can explore and discover new skills in San Diego's burgeoning Arts District," said NTC Foundation executive director Alan Ziter. We encourage parents to let their kids get creative with local artists this summer."

Visit LibertyStation.com/SummerCamps for a complete list of camps and links for enrollment.

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The cast of Rain. Photo by Jim Cox.

Backyard waffles

Restaurant Review

Frank Sabatini Jr.



Joseph Kraft recalls feeling cheated in life prior to eating his first Belgian waffle at the age of 30, saying it didn't compare to any waffles he ate growing up — and certainly not to the frozen brands you heat in a toaster.

The revelation was triggered specifically from a recipe he made for Liege waffles, which are constructed from yeast dough and pearl beet sugar. Similar in texture to brioché, they're exactly the kind you'll encounter at his hidden outdoor eatery, Wow Wow Waffle.

The signage is understated, although 30th Street Laundry marks the spot. An alley to the right of it leads to a rear patio replete with sprawling greenery, a tented make-shift kitchen, and a mish mash of tables strewn with books on travel, cycling and food.

I've driven by dozens of times since Wow Wow opened in 2014, and never knew this little waffle paradise existed until seeing it listed online.

The business was originally founded in 2011 by entrepreneur Todd Casselberry, who began selling the waffles at farmers markets in Northern California. He eventually partnered with Kraft and his wife, Amy, as they branched into farmers markets locally. They currently operate stands in Oceanside on Thursdays; Poway on Saturdays; and La Jolla on Sundays.

The menu at their 30th Street space features sweet and savory waffles. And that's it. You'll find nothing more here than house-made lemonades, pour-over coffee and Tazo teas. If you're craving eggs, a sign at the order table recommends you head to nearby Cardamom Café & Bakery, Lucky's or The Mission for them.

Although if you're shakin' for bacon, the menu obliges with the No. 7 waffle, a top seller crowned with creamy, crumbled goat cheese, mashed avocado and a couple ounces of thick bacon coated deliciously in brown sugar. The friend in our threesome who ordered it proclaimed it was more filling than she expected, and that it harbored enough protein to leave her forget-



Wow Wow Waffle

3519 30th St. (North Park)
619-458-9211

wowwowwaffle.com

Prices: \$4 to \$8.50



(above) The turkey melt with smoked mozzarella and roasted red peppers; (below) the "market special" with goat cheese, strawberries and pink sea salt. (Photos by Frank Sabatini Jr.)

ting about omelets and scrambles.

My other tablemate, however, would have preferred eggs in one form or another. He ordered the "market special" waffle. Goat cheese, strawberries and pink sea salt on top wasn't enough to constitute a full breakfast for him. A side of guacamole helped, although drops of chocolate-infused balsamic flooding a few of the waffle's crevices made it all the more dessert-y for his liking.

So I shared with him my turkey-melt waffle sandwich, which included an unctuous layer of smoked mozzarella as well as arugula and tender, roasted red peppers. We loved the interplay between the mildly sweet waffles and the savory ingredients. But it left us further imagining how exquisite these semi-dense beauties would taste with eggs between them — or ham or chorizo or salmon for that matter.

"We used eggs at one point, but our kitchen is so tight that we didn't want to deal anymore with cooking them for every other waffle," Kraft said, hinting that eggs might return to the menu after an onsite

commercial kitchen is installed this summer.

"We'll expand the savory items," he assured, adding that "we're trying to figure out a good non-fried chicken recipe to go with the waffles."

For now, nearly every waffle option includes a sweet component, either from fresh fruit or locally sourced Jackie's Jams paired to French brie cheese (the No. 8).

The "chocolate lovers" waffle is particularly toothsome. Sticks of Belgian chocolate are embedded into the dough, resulting in a gooey filling that oozes out as you fork along. Dusted in powdered sugar and augmented by fresh berries, you get two small squares per order.

Other choices include the "fresh & light" topped with berries and house-made whipped cream; the "cookie butter" using Belgian ginger bread cookies; and the "Greek parfait" embellished with Greek yogurt, berries and wildflower honey.

The lemonades are clean and refreshing. Available plain or flavored with pureed fruits, they share in common highly filtered H2O from The Water Lady store in North Park, plus regionally grown lemons and sensible measures of pure cane sugar, just enough to quell the pucker factor. For this non-coffee drinker, it was a rewarding kick-start for getting out of bed earlier than usual on a weekend morning.

Wow Wow operates from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Thursday through Saturday, and from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sundays. We got there five minutes before the gate opened to a Sunday-morning line that formed quickly. But tables turned at a decent clip; as well they should when eating at a place built around a single food item served with finesse and simplicity.

—Frank Sabatini Jr. is the author of "Secret San Diego" (ECW Press), and began his local writing career more than two decades ago as a staffer for the former San Diego Tribune. You can reach him at fsabatini@san.r.rr.com. ❖

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Taste of Morena focuses on food and drink

Ken Williams | Editor

Seems like every neighborhood in San Diego has its own food festival, and each has their own quirky personality. Taste of Morena, for example, focuses exclusively on showcasing food and drinks.

"Tasters get to taste samples of restaurant offerings at the restaurant instead of a central location, which provides a better quality experience," said Kimberly Weber, a member of the board of the Morena Business Association, which sponsors the annual event.

"We have a fun trolley to shuttle people to the entire list of participating locations so people don't have to walk — just park at one place and enjoy the ride."

The ninth annual Taste of Morena will take place from 5 – 9 p.m. Wednesday, April 13, with a mission to raise awareness for the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank's Food 4 Kids Backpack Program.

Savory food samples, sweet treats, and drink specials from microbreweries and local bars highlight the event. Unlike some other food festivals, Taste of Morena ignores the entertainment side and instead lets the food and drinks shine.

Participating venues represent a variety of cuisines include Bay Park Fish Company, Home Brew Mart by Ballast Point, Bay Park Coffee, Urbane Café, Baci's, Pacific Time, Fiji Yogurt, Bull's Smokin BBQ Restaurant, Dan Diego's, JV's Mexican Food, Tio Leo's, Luce Bar & Kitchen, Andres Restaurant, Offshore Tavern & Grill;



Volunteers serve up food samples at a previous Taste of Morena. (Courtesy of Morena Business Association)

Zpizza, Sardina's Italian Restaurant & Bar, La Gran Terraza, Pita Pit, Poseidon Project, The Clutch Bar, Side Car, and Siesel's Old Fashioned Meats.

The Morena neighborhood — which is on the east side of Interstate 5 — includes West Morena Boulevard and Linda Vista Road, between Friars Road and Clairemont Drive. More than 400 businesses, restaurants and breweries call Morena their home, Weber said.

Taste of Morena benefits the Morena Business Association.

"This is our major fundraiser for the year," Weber said. "As a micro-district, we don't charge fees to

member businesses. The Taste helps fund our mixers, monthly meetings, website, mobile app and banner programs, which increase the stature of the business community and promote engagement with residents who shop, dine and use the many other services in the area."

Only 600 tickets — \$25 per customer — are sold for the Taste of Morena.

"The event sells out quickly," Weber said.

There are three locations to purchase tickets: Jerome's Furniture, located at 1190 W. Morena Blvd., will take charge cards and cash; Cole's Fine Flooring, located at 1170 W. Morena Blvd., will take

cash only; US Bank, located at 5330 Napa St., will take cash only.

Old Town Trolley shuttles will run a continuous loop to participating restaurants the night of the event. Participants are encouraged to park in Jerome's Furniture's spacious parking lot, located at 1190 W. Morena Blvd. in the Morena Plaza Shopping Center, and take the free trolley from there.

In addition, a special tram will take participants to and from La Gran Terraza on the campus of the University of San Diego. Staff from the San Diego Food Bank will be at La Gran Terraza, encouraging participants to donate money to the Food 4 Kids Backpack Program. The program provides weekend food packages to chronically hungry elementary-age students from low-income families. For a donation of \$5.50, one child will receive enough food for a weekend. For a \$200 donation, that child would be taken care of for an entire year, according to the association.

Weber said the Morena Business Association would like to broaden the food festival's appeal.

"We certainly hope we get lots of new people, but the Taste has always been very popular with locals," she said.

—Ken Williams is editor of San Diego Uptown News and Mission Valley News and can be reached at ken@sdenn.com or at 619-961-1952. Follow him on Twitter at @KenSanDiego, Instagram at @KenSD or Facebook at KenWilliamsSanDiego. ♦

Tips to Safely Connect to WiFi Hotspots

Increasingly, access to the Internet is important for all areas of life. Whether you're looking up the best place to have lunch, checking your work email or connecting with friends and family, WiFi hotspots are a convenient way to stay connected when you're on the go. Using hotspots also can save you money on your mobile data plan. However, it's important to be mindful of activities that could put your security at risk. Here, Joe Andreozzi from Cox Communications, discusses how to safely connect to hotspots.

How do I know how safe a WiFi hotspot is?

Some hotspots have security settings, while others do not. For example, hotels and coffee shops often require a password before you can connect. Other security settings may be seen by hovering your mouse over each WiFi connection in your WiFi settings. The name, signal strength and security type will display. WPA2, WPA and WEP are three types of secured connections. Others will say 'unsecured.' Once connected, be sure to select 'Public network' when prompted to select a network location. This will block some common routes for potential hackers.

How can I protect my information when I connect to a public hotspot?

- Avoid tasks such as paying bills, accessing your bank information, and using your credit card online when using a public hotspot.
- Opt not to save passwords, especially when it comes to your financial accounts, like credit cards and banks.



Learn more about your digital security by visiting Store Manager Joe Andreozzi at the Hillcrest Cox Solutions store at 1220 Cleveland Ave., or call (619) 780-0800.

- Use HTTPS and SSL to make your connection to websites more secure. Both are protocols that provide encrypted communications. Many browsers offer notifications to show enhanced security, such as displaying a padlock next to a website address or turning the address bar a different color.
- Update your device when prompted. Often, these contain security updates to keep you protected.
- Keep WiFi off if you don't need it.
- Verify that you are connecting to a legitimate connection. For example, Cox enabled WiFi hotspots are named 'Cox WiFi' or 'CableWiFi.' In other instances, ask an employee the name of their hotspot before connecting.

Where can I access a hotspot?

Hotspots will be listed in your devices WiFi settings. Cox customers have access to more than 400,000 hotspots across the United States, including 148 in Balboa Park, 40 new hotspots on the USS Midway and nearly 100 hotspots in Downtown San Diego. In total, customers can access more than 500 hotspots throughout San Diego County, just find 'Cox WiFi' or 'CableWiFi' in your WiFi settings. Noncustomers are able to access the hotspots by signing up for a free one-hour trial. Find a hotspot at www.cox.com/hotspots.

How much speed do I need?

The level of speed you need varies on the activities that you use the Internet for. Use the Cox Speed Advisor tool at www.cox.com/internet to determine what's best for you. Cox WiFi hotspots have download speeds of up to 15 Mbps and upload speeds of 4 Mbps. These can vary and are dependent on the number of devices connected to a hotspot at any given time. Cox High Speed Internet ranges from 15 Mbps up to Gigabit speeds.

I keep hearing about Gigabit speeds. What is it?

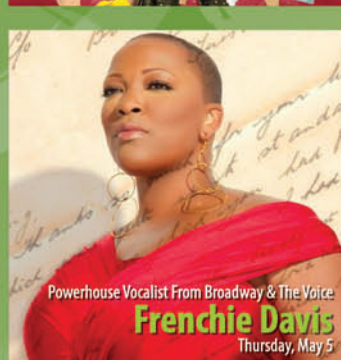
Gigabit speed is Internet that's 100x faster than the average speed. With gigabit speed you can download 100 songs in three seconds, an HD movie in under one minute and upload 1,000 photos in about one minute!

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Uptown News

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Allen Bennett photographs gang graffiti in North Park to help local authorities keep track of criminal activity. (Photo by Joseph Ciolino)

FROM PAGE 1
WARRIOR

“broken window” program, which looks for vandalism, other crimes and abandoned vehicles. More on that later.

Born in Kansas and raised in Seattle, Bennett received his master’s degree in public administration at the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Policy and Governance at the University of Washington. He worked under former Seattle Mayor James d’Orma Braman in setting up a model city program.

“That’s what really got me into community development,” Bennett said. “I’ve always been involved with grant writing and development of community projects from sewer systems to transit systems to weatherization programs.”

More specifically, looking at graffiti helps the CPNP and police to identify where gangs are trying to establish turf in North Park, Bennett said. Recently, a gang defaced the blocked-off entrance to 28th Street at Upas Street with boldly colored graffiti and also tagged the back wall of the Mission Restaurant, located at 28th Street and University Avenue. The tags were removed the same day, because nearby residents had alerted police before CPNP knew about it.

Bennett is a pro when it comes to identifying graffiti. He can differentiate, mimic and recognize the tags of particular gangs. One area on a wall can be reported up to four times because it has been repeatedly tagged and painted over.

He also looks for abandoned vehicles and broken windows to report to authorities, so criminals know that people are looking out for each other.

“We want to keep North Park’s reputation as the most walkable neighborhood in San Diego,” Bennett said. “That’s really the mission for CPNP.”

But the plants are what Bennett holds dear to his heart. So much so that he kicked out a rollerblader who was encroaching on a nature reserve near the tennis courts.

“All this land in here is designated and set aside by the City Council as a reserve wilderness area,” Bennett said to the disgruntled rollerblader.

After yelling some obscenities that a 30-year-old could do what he wanted, the rollerblader continued to ride up and down the area. Bennett pulled out his cell phone and start calling a park ranger. After that, the man angrily climbed over the fence and skated away.

“I’ve never seen anyone more tenacious,” said Sue Zinda, a CPNP volunteer, said of her colleague. “He really cares deeply about all of this.”

But when not dealing with disgruntled people encroaching on protected native plant areas or homeless encampments and graffiti, Bennett volunteers with plants and students.

Bennett is working with the international baccalaureate program at Roosevelt Middle School in replacing eucalyptus and planting native plants so the students can learn more about botany in an outdoor laboratory.

“I want them to understand how to talk about plants,” he said. “I want them to have the opportunity to be excited about science and how to really observe things.”

—Joseph Ciolino is an intern with SDCNN and a senior majoring in journalism at San Diego State University.❖

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Sudoku

Puzzle from page 19

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8	1	3	2	5	9	7	6	4
9	5	4	7	6	8	2	1	3
2	3	6	5	9	1	8	4	7
1	7	8	4	3	2	9	5	6
6	4	2	9	1	7	5	3	8
3	9	1	8	4	5	6	7	2
7	8	5	6	2	3	4	9	1

Pen in Hand

Crossword from page 19

V	R	E	S	E	E	L	E	S	R	E	R	D
S	E	R	A	S	E	S	E	R	E	R	E	D
O	D	E	S	E	S	I	N	G	S	I	N	G
C	I	T	E	R	O	A	S	E	N	O	I	E
M	A	P	E	D	A	R	E	I	T	E	S	E
O	T	A	L	O	B	U	F	F	E	S	T	A
I	E	P	I	E	S	N	I	U	G	N	E	N
R	E	P	E	R	L	E	S	N	A	H	R	E
E	Z	E	R	A	S	E	N	E	D	W	I	D
N	O	E	S	E	N	I	N	E	F	I	N	E
O	O	A	R	O	A	G	N	A	K	A	E	T
S	T	R	I	S	A	L	I	A	R	E	T	N
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123 Camino de la Reina, Suite 202 East, San Diego, CA 92108.

OR VOTE ONLINE AT: sduptownnews.com. One ballot per person. Ballots must be postmarked, submitted online, or hand-delivered by 5 p.m. April 17.

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- American Cuisine
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- Barbecue
- Beer
- Billiards
- Breakfast
- Brunch
- Burger
- Burrito
- Business Lunch
- Casino
- Casino Buffet
- Casual Dining
- Chinese Cuisine
- Cocktail
- Coffee Shop
- Comfort Food
- Dance Club
- Deli
- Dessert
- Dinner
- Donut Shop
- Family Restaurant
- Farmers Market
- Fast Food
- Fine Dining
- French Cuisine
- Greek Cuisine
- Happy Hour
- Health Food Store
- Hot Wings
- Indian Cuisine
- Irish Pub
- Italian Cuisine
- Japanese Cuisine
- Jazz Bar
- Late Night Dining
- Live Music Venue
- Lunch

- Margarita
- Martini
- Mexican Cuisine
- Micro Brewery
- New Restaurant
- Nightclub
- Outdoor Dining
- Pet Friendly Dining
- Pizza
- Romantic Dining
- Rooftop Lounge
- Salad
- Sandwich
- SD County Winery
- Seafood
- Sports Bar
- Steakhouse
- Sushi
- Thai Cuisine
- Vegetarian/Vegan
- Wine Bar

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- Chiropractor
- Collective
- College/University
- Consignment/Resale

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- Doctor
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Madelyn Grace was born premature and needed surfactant therapy, a lifesaving treatment developed in part due to research by the March of Dimes. (Courtesy of Guidi family)

FROM PAGE 1 BABIES

become involved, the more money we can raise to support grants and research in this field."

That kind of research was vital for baby Madelyn. After receiving surfactant therapy, which was developed in part due to research by the March of Dimes, her condition improved greatly.

"If she hadn't received [this therapy] her lungs may never have been able to develop or breathe properly. The ability to have this treatment established and a part Madelyn's protocol was a true lifesaver," Trish said.

"I just really want to bring the point home about how what these babies, and us parents, go through when a child is born premature; I watched my child fight to live. She had a brain bleed, collapsed lungs, was on a ventila-

tor, had an extra-large hole in her heart, almost lost her eye sight and on and on," she said.

"And while we all survived and are stronger people because of it, I want less people to experience this. I also want to point out that we were the lucky ones. Our little girl survived and is doing very well. There are many, too many, parents that lose their child. And for those reasons, we need to raise money and we need to fund the research to stop prematurity."

Registration for the San Diego March for Babies will begin at 7 a.m. on April 23 for the 8 a.m. walk. Those who are interested in signing up in advance can do so at marchforbabies.org.

—Margie M. Palmer is a San Diego-based freelance writer who has been racking up bylines in a myriad of news publications for the past 10 years. You can reach her at margiepalmer@alumni.pitt.edu.

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UPTOWN CALENDAR

FEATURED EVENTS

DIGITAL GYM GEMS

‘Desperate Living’
Saturday, April 9

FilmOut San Diego, Horrible Imaginings and The Film Geeks present this event showcasing filmmaker John Waters’ horror-comedy “Desperate Living” at Museum of Photographic Arts (1649 El Prado, Balboa Park). The film tells the story of a murdering housewife (Mink Stole) on the lam with her overweight maid (Jean Hill). The screening will be held from 3 – 5 p.m. Tickets are \$5 for MOPA members; \$10 for general admission. Visit bit.ly/1Rwxnmr.

Taste of Hillcrest
Saturday, April 16

This annual event features more than 35 restaurants spanning 12 blocks in Hillcrest. Ticket holders will go on a self-guided culinary tour from noon — 4 p.m. stopping along the way to try everything from Italian to Mexican to Middle Eastern cuisines. A few participating restaurants/locations include: Baja Betty’s, Napizza, Vinavanti Urban Winery, Vom Fass and many more. Tickets are \$30 in advance and \$35 the day of. Check in for the event will be at two locations: Rite Aid Pharmacy (535 Robinson Ave.) and Gossip Grill (1220 University Ave.). Visit fabulushillcrest.com for tickets and more details.

‘Community Safety & Security Meeting’
Tuesday, April 12

This meeting at Normal Heights Community Center (4649 Hawley Blvd.) will feature San Diego Police Chief Shelley Zimmerman as the special guest speaker. Learn about making your neighborhood safe at this special event starting at 7:30 p.m. It is presented by the Normal Heights Community Association along with other community organizations. Visit bit.ly/1Mbq6vo for more information.

FilmOut Screening: ‘Donnie Darko’
Wednesday, April 13

This month’s FilmOut San Diego screening showcases the psychological thriller “Donnie Darko” starring Jake Gyllenhaal as a jaded teenager who survives a freak accident and begins exploring what it means to be alive. The character – and film – delves into concepts of time travel and destiny. The mind-bending film is turning 15 this year. Tickets are \$10 and the screening starts at 7 p.m. at Landmark Hillcrest Cinemas (3965 Fifth Ave. #200, Hillcrest). Visit filmoutsandiego.com for more information.

HBA quarterly open house and mixer
Thursday, April 14

The Hillcrest Business Association presents their quarterly open house and mixer at Lemonade (3958 Fifth Ave., Hillcrest). Get to know other HBA members while enjoying food and drinks. Police Chief Shelley Zimmerman will be the guest speaker. The open house and mixer will be held from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Visit hillcrestbia.org for more information.

‘Bike In Cinema’
Starts Friday, April 15

Digital Gym Cinema will be hosting monthly bike rides from City Heights to an outdoor movie screening in North Park. The bike rides will occur on the third Friday of the month to coincide with the block party that takes place in the business district around 30th Street and El Cajon Boulevard called #30ECB. Riders should meet at 6 p.m. outside the City Heights Weingart Library (3795 Fairmount Ave.) They will then ride about three miles to Digital Gym Cinema (2921 El Cajon Blvd.) for the screening around 7 p.m. The first screening will be cult classic “Pee-wee’s Big Adventure.” Visit mediaartscenter.org for more information.

The PGK Dance Project presents “San Diego Dances”
Friday, April 15 – Sunday, April 17

“San Diego Dances” are pop events featuring The PGK Dance Project and guest artists performing in unexpected community places. The three performances on April 15, 16 and 17 each have 100 seats available so space is limited. These events will take place at SDYS Tay Academy (2220 Broadway, Golden Hill) and feature a collaboration with Lux Boreal of Mexico. Several choreographers will present various dances. Tickets are \$25 for general admission, \$15 for students, military, seniors and PGK Dance Passport members, and \$10 each for groups of ten or more. The performances on Friday and Saturday start at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday’s performance is at 2 p.m. There will be a beer and wine garden with the first drink offered for free by the San Diego Reader. Visit sandiegodancesattay.bpt.me for tickets and more information.

‘Rise Up’ concert
Saturday, April 16

The First Unitarian Universalist Church’s women’s choir will perform this special concert named for the poem “Rise Up” by Maya Angelou. The event will include uplifting music, storytelling, food and drinks and more. The concert will be held at the church’s meeting house (4190 Front St., Mission Hills) at 7:30 p.m. with a reception to follow in Bard Hall. The concert will benefit refugees and other poor women aided by San Diego Women’s Empowerment International (SDWEI). Some of the women SDWEI has helped will tell their stories at the event and showcase their various wares at the reception. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door (tax-deductible). Visit womenempowerment.org for more information and to register to attend the concert.

Friday, April 8 – Thursday, April 14: The film “Songs My Brothers Taught Me” follows the story of a brother and sister living on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation with their single mother. When their absentee father dies the brother, Johnny, decides to move to LA but fears leaving his sister, Jashaun, behind. Unrated. 94 minutes.

Friday, April 8 – Thursday, April 14: The legendary Catherine Deneuve stars in “La Tête Haute (Standing Tall),” which was Cannes’ Official Opening Night Selection in 2015. The film is about a juvenile delinquent abandoned by his mother who finds support from a new adoptive family. Unrated. 120 minutes.

Sunday, April 17: “Paranoïac!” will be screened as part of the “Get Hammered Horror Film Series.” Loosely based on the crime novel “Brat Farrar” by Josephine Tey, the film tells the story of a long believed dead man who returns to claim his family inheritance. Unrated. 80 minutes.

Visit DigitalGym.org for show times and tickets and information on additional films.

‘Hops Over The Vine’
Saturday, April 23

This event will feature tastings of boutique craft beer, wine and spirits from local producers. There will also be gourmet bites provided by San Diego eateries. Everything will be served under the stars at the Cabrillo National Monument (1800 Cabrillo Memorial Drive, Point Loma) with views of the ocean and city plus live entertainment. Along with ticket sales, a silent auction and raffle will be held to benefit the Cabrillo National Monument Foundation. This event fundraises for the park’s programs and celebrates the foundation’s 60th birthday. Tickets are \$60 for members and \$75 for nonmembers. Each ticket comes with eight wine, beer and/or food tastings. Visit cnmf.org for more information.



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★ CHRIS WARD ★ ANTHONY BERNAL ★

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April 28th

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