



**SAN RAFAEL**  
NEIGHBORHOODS ASSOCIATION

# Summer 2017 SRNA Newsletter

Vol 6, Issue 2

Contact: [info@srapasadena.org](mailto:info@srapasadena.org)  
On the web at [www.srapasadena.org](http://www.srapasadena.org)

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\*\*\*\*\*

Ed Graf - 710 Committee  
Joanne Fletcher - Utilities Consultant  
Wendi Moffly - Artist

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**MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT**

**SRNA General Meetings**

WHEN: FIRST WEDNESDAY EVERY MONTH

WHERE: CHURCH OF THE ANGELS  
CHURCH HALL

1100 AVENUE 64  
7 PM

## Next Meeting at National Night Out

**August 1st, 2017**

SRNA GENERAL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

**SRNA Sponsors -  
National Night Out**

**Wood Fired BBQ!**



**SRNA in Solidarity with Pasadena's Police Officers and Fire Fighters**

**Join Us!**

**Tuesday, August 1st**

**6:00pm-8:30pm**

**455 Laguna Road**

**Pasadena, CA 91105**

**(North of La Loma Road)**

**Hot Dogs, Brats and Ice Cream**

**Old Fashioned Lemonade**

***(Special Appreciation to Robin's Wood Fire BBQ)***

**BRING THE FAMILY!**

***"America's Night Out Against Crime" promotes neighbor involvement in crime prevention practices where they live. The first National Night Out took place on Tuesday, August 7, 1984 with 2.5 million Americans participating across 400 communities in 23 states.***

For the 5th year in a row, SRNA supports the National Association of Town Watch (NATW) and National Night Out (NNO).

For more information go to: [www.natw.org](http://www.natw.org)

## 710 Metro Vote

### 710 TUNNEL **CHECKMATE!**

May 25, 2017

### IMPORTANT THANKS

SRNA is especially appreciative to all those neighbors (too many to name individually) who took personal initiative in fighting the Avenue 64 route and supported the 710 opposition rally at Church of the Angels the evening of August 22, 2012.

**A special thanks to Rev. Robert Gaestel and his congregation for so generously opening their church and the church grounds for this critical rally.**

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The METRO Board voted **unanimously (12-0)** Thursday morning, May 25, 2017 to **abandon** the proposed 710 single bore freeway tunnel through El Sereno, South Pasadena and SW Pasadena, to **be replaced** with:

***"Mobility improvements that are fundable with existing resources (to) bring some relief to affected corridor cities."***

Fiscal practicality and the growing crush of traffic in communities along the corridor compelled the unanimous METRO decision. Cost of the tunnel was estimated at \$5+ billion, with only \$780 million reliably allocated (and \$730 million remaining) from Measure R. Funding from Public Private Partnership deals (PPP's), expected to make-up the difference, was not forthcoming.

## ADU's and STR's

**ALLOWING COMMERCIAL DENSITY IN NEIGHBORHOODS  
"ON THE HONOR SYSTEM"**

## Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) Short Term Rentals (STR's)

Two social/political trends have **reset debate over Pasadena's residential zoning**, challenging the city's lawful right to regulate the "intensity of land use" through local zoning codes protecting single-family neighborhoods

:

- 1) **State legislation effective January 1st** imposes wide mandates for second units (Accessory Dwelling Units - ADU's) in single family neighborhoods - deemed by the governor a matter of over-riding necessity to meet affordable housing needs;
- 2) **Corporate home rental platforms** (Airbnb, HomeAway, VRBO, Flipkey) offer access to an upside-down-Shaklee-style business model for homeowners wishing to market their homes and neighborhoods for short-term stays and rental income.

The debate and the challenge have been especially noticeable at Planning Commission meetings, with certain commissioners focused heavily on achieving "**fair**" **standards for the earning of rental income** from variously sized homes and lots across the city's many neighborhoods.

Such meanderings into finance and away from its functions of implementing existing land-use planning and the city's General Plan cast doubt on Planning Commission recommendations to City Council.

Exasperated speakers have used the podium to suggest the Planning Commission is engaged in "personal financial planning rather than land-use planning." One resident asked City Council: "**Why are they fighting so hard for the right for equality to be more crowded?**"

### **ADU's:**

City Council made it clear June 19th it would **not support a Planning Commission recommendation** to lower the minimum lot size to 5,000 sq ft to permit second units (Pasadena presently identifies lots under 7,200 sq ft as "sub-standard") nor would they be willing to reduce rear and side **setbacks to 2 feet**.

Mayor Tornek concluded Council debate with this: "**Council is not prepared to buy anything approaching this proposal. It will have to come back (to Council).**"

### **STR's:**

Short-term rentals (STR's) have been and, are, **prohibited in Pasadena**, despite an ever-growing number of illegal listings. Initial staff proposals for legalizing/regulating/taxing short-

term rentals were reasonable and protected single-family neighborhoods from rental saturation, safety hazards and crass commercialization.

But the **Planning Commission again went side-ways**, folding to Airbnb demands that process not be "**overly-cumbersome**" and that home-hosts (already scofflaws) be allowed to largely police themselves through an "**honor system.**"

The matter now has been reviewed by the Council's ED Tech Committee, with debate heavily influenced by **Airbnb's on-the-spot lobbyist** who - getting off the phone with superiors - promised to add \$3 million to the city's line-item revenue from Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) - a figure far exceeding that estimated by the city.

**NOTE:**

The city's annual hotel tax, or transient occupancy tax (TOT, 12.11%), is currently estimated at approximately \$15 million. Airbnb has made assurances their residential/corporate short-term rental model will shift 20% of the city's tourism "hotel" taxes to single-family neighborhoods.

**QUESTIONS:** Is this good for Pasadena and its residential neighborhoods? As new hotels open? As large retail spaces vacate, giving-way to on-line shopping? As "affordable" housing costs escalate to match international corporate rates for short-term rentals? As the Pasadena Planning Commission sends recommendations to City Council that all this will function on the "honor system?"

**OBSERVATION:** SRNA has seen good work by the city's planning staff when issues are first released for public review. But once run through the Planning Commission and the assault of lobbying pressures, the good work often "goes missing" making it difficult for City Council to trace original staff considerations.

**SUGGESTION:** Content for new ordinances should be drafted and re-drafted within single document, to include staff's earliest recommendations (dated editing by strike-thrus and red-lines and to include deletions). The current procedure of printing separate documents dated months apart, with brief summaries, obscures exactly what City Council (and the public) needs to trace to make informed decisions.

There will be continued debate on these issues, monitored by SRNA.

Read staff reports here:

[Commision Report](#)

**Storm Water Tax?**

## **VAPORIZED? NEW STORM WATER TAX**

For months Sen. Robert Hertzberg (D-Van Nuys) has been playing semantic roulette with property owners by disguising a new stormwater property tax as a hike in "sewer costs" to avoid Prop. 13 voter-required approval.

The increase in property taxes to Pasadena homeowners would be considerable and, without public debate followed by a vote at the ballot box, should never see the light of day.

Strong opposition via phone calls and faxed letters to state legislators made a difference. Sen. Hertzberg's bill, SB 231, failed to come to the floor of the Assembly for a vote July 6th, as scheduled. It has not been re-scheduled but remains active and could show up between now and mid-September.

### Proposed Storm Water Legislation

The SRNA letter of opposition, in its entirety, is linked below.

[SRNA Stormwater Letter](#)

**SRNA will continue to monitor**

## **SAN RAFAEL WEEKEND WARRIORS**

**MANHATTAN HAS LEGENDARY BASKETBALL GAMES AT RUCKER PARK**

**PASADENA HAS "RUCKER PARK WEST"**

**SOUTH SAN RAFAEL AVENUE**

***CALLING ALL NEIGHBORHOOD WEEKEND WARRIORS!***

**SUNDAY MORNING**

**PICK-UP BASKETBALL GAMES**

***DO YOU WANT A GOOD WORKOUT THAT BEATS THE MONOTONY OF WALKING  
UP AND DOWN THE STREET?***

**ARE YOU AGE 25 TO 70 AND STILL LIVING-OUT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL  
FLASHBACKS?**

**JOIN YOUR NEIGHBORS  
EVERY SUNDAY MORNING**

**FROM 8AM - 10AM**

**FOR A FUN AND FIT GAME OF BASKETBALL  
ANY ABILITY IS OK AND PLAY AT YOUR OWN PACE**

**60 S. SAN RAFAEL  
ROBIN SALZER - SRNA BOARD MEMBER  
626-616-0585**

**KIDS & FAMILIES WELCOME TO CHEER YOU ON**

## **Great Changes to the Hillside Development Codes**

SNRA is deeply concerned about preserving our unique neighborhoods and **agrees with the Planning Commission's statement in the April 26th report that "the San Rafael Hills is distinct from other Hillside District areas in that it consists of smaller lots, combined with narrow streets and steep slopes."** We live in older neighborhoods where lot lines often follow topographic features and many homes were built before planning commissions and building codes existed.

SNRA supports the idea that there is more to consider when discussing property values than dollar per square foot; intangibles such as views, privacy and neighborhood compatibility impact values in our area. When neighbors' projects impact these intangibles adjacent property values do decline, regardless of the perceived value of the new structures. Often one owner's gain is another owner's loss.

The Zoning Code review process started in 2014 and included community meetings and outreach. **SNRA was vocal when it became clear that Hillside zoning codes needed clearer definitions regarding view protection, neighborhood compatibility issues, and the permit process.**

**On June 19, the City Council voted to adopt the Planning Commission's recommended changes to the Hillside Overlay Codes.**

**In summary, the major changes impacting the San Rafael Hills:**



- 1) A **Hillside Development Permit (HDP)** would be required for construction above one story including a new two-story house, addition of a second-story or an addition to an existing second story-house, **and for all additions larger than 500 square feet.**
- 2) Limit on basement size to the footprint of an existing or proposed main house with a maximum allowed depth of one level and an interior height of 9 feet.
- 3) Limit size of **accessory structures to 600 square feet** with restrictions based on lot slope and location limited to the rear of the house.
- 4) Revised definition of "primary living area" to **allow view protection from any room** in the house. Also, language clarifies view blockage of horizon lines and ridgelines.
- 5) Requires story poles, **a digital rendering**, and a notice of application to all properties within 500 feet once the story poles have been erected.
- 6) Major renovations will require a HDP, which are defined as any project altering more than 50% of the exterior wall facades by reducing existing walls down to the framing **and any alteration of the roofline resulting in an increase in height above the highest point of the existing roof.**

**SNRA hopes that these Hillside code changes will reduce the conflicts between neighbors that have arisen over proposed building projects.** The Planning Commission is committed to reviewing how these changes impact our neighborhood.

**Many thanks to city staff for care and perseverance in achieving a much-improved Hillside Ordinance for our San Rafael Hills!**

**Note:**

SRNA requested two changes to process that could not be written into code:

- 1) **Site inspection requirements** by decision-makers in hillside zoning appeals and council call-ups, and
- 2) Special scrutiny of impacts when **reverse-corner lots** are involved. We will monitor appeals over the six-month evaluation period.

# Leaf Blower



## Time to ban gas-powered leaf blowers?

### **NOTES FROM A BUSY MOM . . .**

*It's a sunny weekend afternoon. I head from my kitchen to my back deck, cocktail in hand. It's been a long week. I sit down on my favorite comfy pool lounge, my newest mindless romance novel in hand. It was finally time for ME to relax. I had just come back from dropping the kids off at a friend's for a play-date. Hallelujah! FINALLY I would get a few minutes of peace and quiet. Suddenly, the neighbor's leaf blower started up. Again! I had forgotten about that weekly nuisance!! I knew the next hour-and-a-half would be filled with its noise, on/off, on/off, on/off, on/off, on/off, on/off, ONNNNNNN!!!*

*So much for my quiet time.*

*Resigned, I headed back inside, and started a load of laundry. Might as well get some chores done.*

**NEIGHBORS:** *Stand up to debate more stringent regulation of the noise and air pollution issued by these foul machines, which do little-to-nothing to tidy anyone's yard, simply blowing leaves around to end up in a pile underneath patio furniture and collect between plants and hedges.*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Sound Familiar?**

The above is one neighbor's account of her weekly experience contending with the noise and air pollution from largely unrestricted/unregulated use of leaf blowers in our Pasadena neighborhoods.

The City of Los Angeles banned gas-powered leaf blowers in 1998. See Los Angeles Municipal {(LAMC) Section 112. 04 (c)}. The City of Santa Monica banned the use of gas powered leaf blowers in 1991 and amended the ordinance in 2011. see {S.M.M.C 4.08.270}. Several other

cities: City of Sonoma (2016), City of Los Gatos (2015), Beverly Hills (1998), Hermosa Beach (2007) **have all banned the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.**

The **Orange County Grand Jury** took a look at the same concerns, detailing impacts to neighborhood families and finding, among other facts, the following:

**"Exhaust pollution per leaf blower per hour is the equivalent of the amount of smog from 17 cars driven one hour and is localized in the area of blower usage."**

**Full report may be reviewed here:**

<http://www.ocgrandjury.org/pdfs/leafblow.pdf>

Cities in Orange County that have banned gas-powered leaf blowers are: Corona Del Mar (2011), Newport Beach (2011), and Solana Beach (2011).

In addition to the noise and air pollution, gas-powered blowers remove needed top soil from lawns and garden beds - top soil that is needed for healthy growth. Top soil also helps retain ground moisture which reduces water use. The exterior of homes, windows and cars are filthy after a gas-powered leaf blower is used even for the 15 minute maximum use limit set in the code.

**Pasadena's leaf blower ordinance was last reviewed by City Council in 2009:**

[http://ww2.cityofpasadena.net/councilagendas/2009%20agendas/Feb\\_09\\_09/5E1.pdf](http://ww2.cityofpasadena.net/councilagendas/2009%20agendas/Feb_09_09/5E1.pdf)

**It's time for a new review by the City of Pasadena.**

***Pasadena's Busy Mom Suggests This:***

*Outlaw leaf blowers in Pasadena!*

*Or upon review, restrict gas-powered leaf blower use in Pasadena:*

→ *8-5 Monday through Thursday*

→ *8-3 on Fridays*

→ *Zero use on weekends*

→ *Zero use on sidewalks and public streets*

→ *Code Enforcement to have responsibility for enforcement*

**Your view???**

**[info@SRNAPasadena.org](mailto:info@SRNAPasadena.org)**

# JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP WITH SRNA

## MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

Member	\$	20.00
Household	\$	35.00
Sustaining	\$	100.00
Patron	\$	250.00
Benefactor	\$	500.00

You may send your check by mail to:

**San Rafael Neighborhoods Association**  
PO Box 92617  
Pasadena, CA 91109

[SRNA 2017 Membership Form](#)

OR

Join us at our website at  
[www.srnapasadena.org](http://www.srnapasadena.org) and click the tab "Join Us"

Debit and credit cards accepted.

Sign up for our News and Notices:  
<http://srnapasadena.org/join-us/>



***The mission of the San Rafael Neighborhoods Association is to enhance and maintain the character and quality of all San Rafael neighborhoods through advocacy and an activated community.***

SRNA is a California exempt non-profit 501 c 4 corporation and registered with the City of Pasadena/Neighborhood Connections office.

**Membership Dues/Donations are Not Tax Deductible.**

