

## Cars On and Off the Street to Be Regulated by 2010

by Laurie Guitteau

Narrow roads choked by parked cars plague several areas of Mission Canyon, particularly Mission Canyon Heights. Multiple exclamation points underscored the frustration of the many residents who commented on these parking issues in the recent Fire District Assessment Survey conducted by the Mission Canyon Association. This is nothing new. Parking issues dominated numerous Mission Canyon Planning Advisory Committee (MCPAC) meetings, and the Mission Canyon Community Plan devotes more than 10 pages to Circulation and Parking. Your MCA Board of Directors has spent hours discussing the problem, searching for solutions, and we recently raised the issue of enforcement with Supervisor Salud Carbajal. He acknowledged the problem and assured us that solutions will follow a study that begins in April.

The Mission Canyon Community Plan requires that the County Planning and Development



Cars, cars, cars. Too many too close means no emergency vehicles in and no residents out.

PHOTO: Ralph Daniel

Department (P&D) work with Public Works and the County Fire Department to develop a residential parking strategy. Derek Johnson, deputy director of County Long Range Planning, explained that this one-year project has been funded and will begin in April 2009.

The first step is a comprehensive study to look at the roadway system and identify narrow areas where on-street parking creates serious safety hazards. Traffic patterns have already been analyzed, though further studies

**Cars (cont. p.2)**

## Uninsured Building Code Upgrades May Ruin Your Disaster

by Jean Yamamura and Laurie Guitteau

The end of Palomino Road may arguably be among the most expensive places to build in Mission Canyon because of its severe slope and soil and because of its narrow private roads, which largely don't conform to the new fire codes. One resident at the end of Palomino Road, Mike Kelly, has made his living as an insurance broker for the security, telecommunications, and electronics industry for 30 years. The convergence of these facts plus the ongoing rewrite of the 1984 Mission Canyon Specific Plan stirred an interest in Kelly in what it would take to insure his property for a rebuild after a disastrous fire or earthquake.

Kelly began researching the state and county building codes, county Fire Department development standards, and the Mission Canyon Draft Community Plan (MCCP) and Residential Design Guidelines. What he found lit a fire in him to revamp his

homeowners insurance policy and demand inspections from two insurers.

Kelly was shocked to learn that if he were to rebuild his 1970s home today, existing codes would require his home and property to possess caissons and steel-reinforcement for the foundation, a wider road, retaining walls, possibly fire hydrants, septic system recertification, and research into such things as the presence of archaeological resources and/or environmentally sensitive habitat. And he was horrified to learn that only the first of those items was insurable.

For structures, "The new high fire building codes apply to anyone in a high fire hazard area statewide," emailed Rosie Dyeste, a senior planner with County Long Range Planning. "The additional cost for compliance was reported in the *San Jose Mercury News* (6/29/08) as approximately \$1,800 a home or an additional 10 percent."

Ray Smith, chair of the Mission Canyon Planning Advisory Committee (MCPAC)

and an MCA board member, wrote in an email, "Few would argue against the new fire codes created with the benefit of experience of trying to protect homes in the urban wildland interface (UWI). These regulations are for the benefit of our community—and folk need to, perhaps belatedly, learn that this is the cost of living in the UWI."

Asking your insurance agent to arrange an inspection of your house is something Kelly recommends. He agrees with the other insurance agents we spoke with that homeowners should make sure their policy covers the cost of bringing their home up to current building codes after a disaster. If you discover you're not covered, Building Ordinance Coverage is something you might want to consider.

When the draft MCCP is adopted by the county (it is currently headed for environmental review before the Board of Supervisors on October 7 and should reach

**Upgrades (cont. p.2)**

## Cars (cont. from p.1)

could be included. Working with P&D, Public Works will determine where the county does have right-of-way and which of those areas can practically be altered to allow more parking. County Fire will determine critical points of egress and access, choke points, opportunities for parking turnouts, and other issues of fire safety on all public and private roads within the canyon. Once the information is gathered, MCPAC members will work with the county agencies to develop proposals for solutions.

Solutions will not be easy. Once all right-of-way and safety issues have been identified, cost will be just one factor in creating parking where possible and eliminating it where necessary. One-way streets, and expansion of limited and no parking zones have been suggested for some areas. Neighborhoods will obviously be impacted. However, nothing will happen without input from Mission Canyon residents affected by proposed changes.

Once the study is complete, neighborhood meetings will be organized to discuss all of the possibilities. Members of MCPAC, who developed the Community Plan, will facilitate these meetings and advise P&D in creating the final plan, which will be presented, hopefully, next summer or fall to the County Board of Supervisors for approval. With the active involvement and collaboration of Mission Canyon residents in this process, we should have a residential parking strategy implemented by 2010. The Mission Canyon Board of Directors urged Carbajal and Johnson to be sure that a viable, fully funded means of enforcement is included in any plan that is adopted.

Meanwhile, Mission Canyon residents should continue to police their own neighborhoods, reminding neighbors of the importance of accessible roads during fire season, especially during Red Flag Alerts. Carbajal has committed to facilitating a meeting between the MCA Board and the California Highway Patrol to discuss current enforcement issues. We will keep you posted on this important issue as the process moves along.

To examine the entire Mission Canyon Community Plan that includes excellent maps demonstrating the challenges to finding a workable parking strategy, go to: [http://longrange.sbcountyplanning.org/planareas/mission\\_canyon/documents/Draft%20Mission%20Canyon%20Community%20Plan/Initiation%20Draft%20MCCP%2006-08.pdf](http://longrange.sbcountyplanning.org/planareas/mission_canyon/documents/Draft%20Mission%20Canyon%20Community%20Plan/Initiation%20Draft%20MCCP%2006-08.pdf)

## Upgrades (cont. from p.1)

approval in 2009), it may include green building requirements beyond the State of California's Title 24 green mandates, as well as water conservation features for landscaping. "Green building methods are not necessarily more expensive," Smith pointed out, "and water conservation is a savings—not an expense." Going green was met with enthusiasm at the many workshops and meetings MCPAC held during the past two years, with dozens of participants agreeing that the "community would benefit from embracing such practices," wrote Smith.

Kelly estimates the building requirements, both existing and yet to be approved, would run about \$800 a square foot to replace his

existing home. "It will cost \$500,000 for the offsite [non-structure] items," Kelly said, adding that he believed the county should pay for wider roads and sewers through a bond measure. "It's unfair for current property owners to pay for the sins of the fathers," he said. Paying over time through a property taxed bond measure would be better than after a disaster, he said. "Why wait to pay at the worst time of your life?"

Actually, wrote Smith, "we are paying for the sins of developers that built homes either where they should not have been built or did so without proper methods for slope and soil stability and, usually, with little concern for fire safe building standards. We can repeat the 'sins,' or work to do better."

## Goats Arrive to Bite Brush in Mission Canyon

by Jean Yamamura

**G**oats will be welcomed to the canyon in October as part of MCA's fire-break project for five two-and-a-half acre zones above the top of Tunnel and Mission Canyon roads. Chewing their way along swaths of the east and west ridges, the herbivores will clear the underbrush—which as ladder fuels can ignite upper branches during a wildfire—and create a fire buffer to help protect the houses below.

This is a locally grown low-tech solution, as goat herders Lorraine Argo and Ian Newsam will haul their Brush Goats for Hire ([brushgoats4hire.com](http://brushgoats4hire.com)) here from Buellton and Gaviota. Their familiarity with the terrain and plant life gives them a head start in determining which goats are best suited for various chaparral conditions, for example, placing juvenile animals in lighter brush and adult Kiko goats in tough areas that need limbing up. The agile animals can climb into trees to eat, and chew as high as eight feet off the ground when rearing to forage in a canopy.

Using Great Pyrenees dogs and electric fences to keep the goats safe, Argo and Newsam will move the herd from zone to zone in a plan to avoid overgrazing. The 200-300 animals at work will no doubt prove a draw

to hikers and residents, but be warned, the fence will zap you and the dogs are working dogs, not pets. Please heed the signs that ask that you avoid trying to pet or feed the goats and dogs.

At a cost of \$1,100 per acre—paid through Forest Service money granted to MCA—the goat herd disturbs the extremely steep slopes of the upper canyon much less than men with chainsaws and weed whackers would. Likewise, cutting back the dense tangle of ceanothus, poison oak, manzanita, and other plants that cover the upper slopes has been described as torture by those who've done it, but the goats just view it as breakfast.

We all get a fire buffer in the steep upper canyon. The goats get a meal. That's not too baaad.



King, the Great Pyrenees, watching his flock.  
PHOTO: Brush Goats for Hire

## Brush Day Stats

The total amount of brush taken out of Mission Canyon on MCA's Annual Brush Day on June 7, was 33.7 tons, a very satisfactory total given the lack of immediate incentive. (The Gap Fire had not happened yet!) MarBorg mulched the green waste this year, instead of sending it through the county transfer station, and, as they have for the past 10 or 12 years, donated their dumpster, truck, and driver services.

This annual event takes place thanks to the work so many freely donate to help make Mission Canyon more fire safe. Our sincere thanks go to the folks at MarBorg; the Botanic Garden for providing a truck and driver Jason Nelson, who tirelessly shuttled between residences and the drop-off site to pick up loads of brush from residents who needed help; Rolf Brinkman, who spent the entire day collecting dues and signing up new MCA members; Dan Upton and his Bobcat, without whose help the whole enterprise would be a massive disaster—no exaggeration!; Station 15 for cleaning up after us and returning the site to its pristine pre-Brush Day condition; and, of course, Rockwood Woman's Club for donating their parking lot, the scene of the action. Having a spacious site allows this huge undertaking to be conducted in a safe and efficient manner.

And there's more. MarBorg offers each homeowner a once-a-year bagged brush pick up service. Give MarBorg a call, take your brush to the street in bags or bundles weighing less than 80 pounds, and they will haul it away for free, one time per year.—Tim Steele and Jenny Cushnie

## Be Careful Out There

A narrow section of Mission Canyon Road claimed a slight injury to a horse when it was nicked by a car speeding up the road on July 5. Ponying one horse while riding another, the rider was approaching Foothill Road when a Subaru came quickly up the road and struck the horse being led on the right hind leg. The horse sustained a minor injury and received treatment for abrasions and a shot for pain from its vet, while the car was slightly dented.

The road narrows at the accident location and the shoulder disappears due to a fence, overgrown with ivy, at the road's edge. The site is dangerous to anyone or anything on foot as tree branches crossing overhead deepen the shadow there.

Even the best-mannered horse becomes nervous when cars speed by—and especially when trucks roar by—and can unexpectedly swing wide. Though horses are to go with the flow of traffic, you'll sometimes find them to both sides of the street. For safety's sake, remember to slow down when you see horses sharing the road and offer them a little more space. Officer Dan Barba of the California Highway Patrol suggests that motorists keep a high visual horizon while driving and look as far down the road as possible.—J.Y.

## Helicoptering Hikers

You may have noticed a helicopter hovering at the far end of the canyon (how could you miss that racket?) a lot this summer. It turns out that Search and Rescue was called out for an unprecedented number of injured hikers and not, as one neighbor surmised, the sheriff looking for marijuana groves. July and August saw six to eight airlifts from the trails crisscrossing the national forest above Mission Canyon, County Fire Capt. Eli Iskow told us, with the injuries ranging from twisted ankles to broken limbs.

To locate the injured hikers, ground teams from the Forest Service, County Fire, and County Sheriff hiked in, while the helicopter and its crew orbited the trails, said chief pilot and Senior Deputy David Wight. In some rescues, the helicopter crew lowered a paramedic to the ground to treat the injured and then flew them to a location from which an ambulance could take them to Cottage Hospital. Iskow could only guess that high numbers of hikers were the cause of the large number of rescues this summer.—J.Y.

## Stubborn Fire Hazards

Residents have complained to MCA board members that though they clear their property, their neighbor doesn't. Residents can always contact Station 15 (681-5515) or Capt. Mark Mushinskie of county vegetation management (686-5066) when they feel there is a fire hazard on or near their property, but Mushinskie emphasized the importance of first speaking with the neighbor who you feel poses the hazard. Offer to work with them to resolve the issue if it is a case where the properties are close together.

Mission Canyon Heights presents challenges to the entire concept of defensible space because many properties cannot clear 100 feet from structures; thus, the importance of working with your neighbor to make the entire area as safe as possible is height-

ened. If your neighbor does not respond, call Station 15 and ask for another inspection. Remember that in all cases you must distinguish between a genuine fire hazard and an unsightly nuisance.

Mushinskie stressed that County Fire encourages individual homeowners to contact them in cases where clearing presents a financial hardship, the terrain is too difficult or dangerous to clear, or the homeowner has other extenuating circumstances. County Fire will work with individual owners to implement a plan to make their properties safe.—LG

## Survey Results

Back in May, MCA mailed a survey to canyon residents to test the waters for a benefit assessment district to pay for year round fire suppression services. About 215 property owners responded with overwhelming (82 percent) support for the plan, with most willing to pay as much as \$125 annually.

The answers were a bit muddy regarding what services were most desired, because the instructions were less than ideal. However, we did determine that improved evacuation routes, clearing vegetation by roads, and creating fire breaks were the top improvement choices.

The fire district idea now heads through the ballot evaluation process with a target date of the November 2009 election.—Ralph Daniel and Laurie Guitteau

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# MISSION CANYON ASSOCIATION

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## Your MCA Newsletter Fall 2008

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### Remodel, Recycle, ReStore

Wondering what to do with left-over building materials? Santa Barbara's Habitat for Humanity now sponsors the ReStore, a not-for-profit discount home improvement center, that accepts cabinetry, plumbing fixtures, windows, doors and other architectural salvage. And, of course, those of us building on a budget can find everything from vintage, one-of-a-kind items to new and surplus materials.

Donated items must be in usable condition, with no damage or deterioration. Windows must be dual glazed, and doors must be solid core. It is not a place for people to drop off junk or unusable materials.

ReStore relies on donations of usable building materials from homeowners who are moving or remodeling, stores, builders, contractors and others. Best of all, your tax-deductible donation enables the local Habitat for Humanity affiliate to build homes for low-income families.

Open Thursdays, 1- 4 p.m.; and Saturdays, 9 a.m.- 1 p.m., ReStore is at 6725 Hollister Avenue. Volunteers are welcome! Visit [sbrestore.org](http://sbrestore.org) to help this worthy cause, or call 692-2226.

### C A L E N D A R

- Sept. 19** **S.B. Botanic Garden Vital Mission Plan, final review, lighting and fencing.** Controversial project proposes parking lot lights and chain link, split rail, and stone fencing to encircle entire property. 9:30 a.m. South County Board of Architectural Review, 1st Floor Hearing Room, County Bldg., 123 E. Anapamu St.
- Oct. 7** **Mission Canyon Community Plan.** General plan for the canyon visits Board of Supervisors for decision on environmental review. 9 a.m. 4th Floor Hearing Room, County Bldg., 123 E. Anapamu St.
- Oct. 7** **MCA Board Meeting. Open to the public.** 7:30 p.m. McVeagh House, S.B. Natural History Museum, 2559 Puesta del Sol Rd.
- Nov. 2** **Natural History of Food: Whiskey.** \$45/\$60. 2-5 p.m. S.B. Natural History Museum. (Ages 21 and older only.) 682-4711.
- Nov. 4** **MCA Board Meeting.** 7:30 p.m. McVeagh House.
- Nov. 15** **California Indian Festival.** Storytelling, music, dancing, demonstrations, children's activities and more! Free-\$8. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. S.B. Natural History Museum.
- Nov. 29-30** **Great Bear Dome at Creekspirit.** Patti Jacquemain and David Gledhill hold an open house for friends and neighbors interested in the most talked about recent structure in the neighborhood. 11 a.m.-4 p.m, 1000 Mission Canyon Rd. Please walk or bike, parking very limited. .
- Dec. 2** **MCA Board Meeting.** 7:30 p.m. McVeagh House.
- Dec. 5-7** **Folk and Tribal Arts Marketplace.** Ethnic goods, food and entertainment. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. S.B. Natural History Museum.
- Jan. 6** **MCA Board Meeting.** 7:30 p.m. McVeagh House.