

VIEWPOINT

A Publication of the Sierra Curtis Neighborhood Association

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April 2020

Joggers pass a solitary reader in Curtis Park as neighbors learn to keep a safe distance during the Covid-19 crisis.

Photo/Joan Cusick



Creative neighbors make best of scary time

Viewpoint staff

From a shopping collective to a sidewalk scavenger hunt and long-delayed home repair projects, Curtis Park neighbors have been finding ways to turn the statewide shelter-in-place order into positive activities.

Neighbors have been making the best of the bad situation brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, which, as of March 25, had afflicted more than 468,000 people worldwide, about 14% of them in the United States. Nearly half of U.S. cases were in New York; California, although third nationally, accounted for less than 5% of the U.S. cases.

Some neighbors have pushed the limits, getting together to socialize, drink a bit, dance and sing while staying the designated six feet apart. Such gatherings, while a simple symbol of our neighborhood's cherished tradition of socializing and caring for each

other, apparently violate the current statewide stay-at-home order.

West Sacramento Mayor Christopher Cabaldon, after seeing such gatherings in his city, posted a caution on Facebook: "We are required to stay home, with only the members of our own household. The order permits outdoor activity – but only individual activity, not team sports and definitely not sitting around in a group."

Many neighbors have been extending acceptable kinds of assistance to those in need, offering virtual hugs and checking to make sure everyone has food and necessities.

Residents in the 2200 and 2300 blocks of Portola Way implemented a shopping collective. "Whenever one of us heads to a store for essentials, we let others know and pick up what's needed," Judy Harper said. "This saves a trip and potential exposure. Of course, the

Please see Coping, Page 4

April 2 is the deadline for public comments on proposed mixed-use development

By Dennis Cusick

The city's Planning Department is accepting public comment until April 2 on HK3 Development Co.'s application for a three-story, mixed-use building in the empty lot on the southwest corner of Castro Way and 24th Street.

The 13,352-square-foot building, which would be across the street from the 24th Street Theatre, would include 14 residential units over 3,000 square feet of ground-floor retail.

The developer sent the plans to SCNA for review and comment. The Neighborhood Concerns Committee has recommended that the SCNA board send a letter of opposition to the project as currently

designed. Committee members favored a mixed-use building, but were concerned that the proposed scale and design of the project were unsuited to the site.

The lot is at the gateway from downtown to the neighborhood and flanks the historic landmark Sierra 2 Center. The matter is on the agenda for the April 1 SCNA board meeting.

The site is zoned C-1, which would limit the project to six residential units. However, the developer seems to believe that more units might be allowed because of a provision in the city's general plan concerning mixed-use developments.

City senior planner Marcus Adams, who is supervising the city's review, wrote in an email to Viewpoint that "at the density proposed, 14 units,

SCNA President's message

Closure of Sierra 2 could be devastating \$62,000 monthly rent loss possible

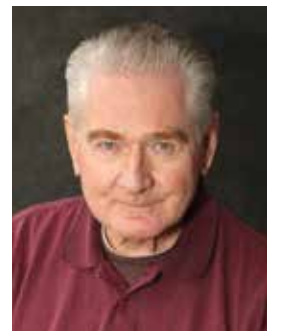
By Bill Hoover

I am struck by the radical changes that have occurred in our lives in a mere 30 days.

Last month, my column touted upcoming SCNA events and encouraged increased neighborhood volunteerism. Now, I have to report the cancellation of the Egg Hunt and Home & Garden Tour for this year. Perhaps of greater importance and impact is the closure of the Sierra 2 Center until April 5 and likely longer. A skeleton staff will be in place in the interim.

The coronavirus has spread rapidly and has intruded into and affected almost every aspect of our lives. Aside from obvious and valid health concerns, the resultant health restrictions have had severe consequences on our

Please see Finances, Page 3



Bill Hoover is president of the Sierra Curtis Neighborhood Association.



Ellis Architects

Proposed project at 24th Street and Castro Way.

the project would require a zoning or general plan amendment, which ultimately would need City Council approval after a planning commission recommendation."

Adams said he is in discussions with a representative of HK3 about whether he wants to

Please see Building, Page 2

In the District

Our community always steps up to deal with challenging times

We are living in a surreal time. The coronavirus crisis has completely upended almost every aspect of our world. Like most everyone, I have grave concerns about the health and welfare of all Sacramentans, particularly those most vulnerable.

How will working families exist with so many jobs being cut? Who will take care of our children if their parents and guardians do remain on the job? How will businesses survive with customers staying home? Do our hospital systems have the capacity needed to confront and handle this unprecedented situation?

While we wrestle with these questions, and many others, we see bright spots where we are standing up to meet the challenge, both as

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individuals and organizations. In Sacramento, credit to the Kings organization for continuing to pay their hourly employees despite a canceled season. Thank you to Perfect Union for supporting handwashing stations for our unhoused population. The list goes on – I have received many emails with offers of help.

I am pleased with what the city has done to date – including a \$1 million

loan fund for small businesses, placing a moratorium on residential evictions, \$250,000 for sanitation kits being distributed to many in our homeless population, and a host of other measures, with many more to come.

We are taking steps to ensure the health and safety of our own employees as they stay on their jobs – particularly our first responders. The city will soon have 1,000 of its employees working from home. A special thank you to our city staff – they are working overtime to meet the needs of Sacramentans.

I also wanted to share feelings after inspired meetings soon after the initial concerns regarding the coronavirus outbreak and its impact on our school system, students and families. Among those attending were representatives from U.S. Rep. Doris Matsui's office, state Sen. Richard Pan, Assemblymembers Kevin McCarty and Ken Cooley, County Supervisor Phil

Serna, Mayor Darrell Steinberg and six City Council members.

Never in my nearly two decades of public service have I sat in a room with so many local leaders dedicating their time to collectively meet head-on a crisis that will severely impact our way of life. Over two and a half hours, we collaborated on several ideas, some aspirational and some very practical, all focused on serving our respective communities. There are others we need to include in these conversations, including our parents, labor community, business community and non-profit sector.

Sacramento always steps up when the need presents itself. We will only be successful if we do this together. I have never been so proud of our community and calling myself a Sacramentan.

We will do our best to keep everyone updated on this ever-changing health crisis and the city's response. Be safe.

Biden is favorite of local Democratic primary voters

By Mike Scheible

Curtis Park neighbors actively engaged in the primary election, and many came by the voting center in Curtis Hall to vote or drop off ballots. Due to extensive mail-in voting, full tallies were not yet available. According to the Sacramento County election website, about 95 percent of the countywide votes had been counted by March 17.

In the Democratic presidential primary, the percentages and vote totals from precincts 44255 and 44310, which represent most of the Curtis Park neighborhood, are in the accompanying tally box.

As in much of the nation, early Democratic primary votes cast by Curtis Park residents had a significantly different distribution than those cast closer to Election Day. The results provided by Sacramento County on March 4, representing votes cast well in advance of the voting deadline, showed a close race with Bernie Sanders at 25% and Elizabeth Warren and Joe Biden close behind, each at 22% of the vote. Michael Bloomberg, Pete Buttigieg, Amy

Joe Biden.....	33.6%612 votes
Elizabeth Warren	25.0%463 votes
Bernie Sanders.....	22.7%419 votes
Mike Bloomberg.....	7.7%143 votes
Pete Buttigieg.....	5.4%100 votes
Amy Klobuchar	3.9%72 votes
Others	1.6%30 votes

Klobuchar and Tom Steyer collectively accounted for 31% of the vote.

However, votes counted later, which were likely cast after Biden won big in South Carolina and Buttigieg and Klobuchar dropped out and gave their support to Biden, produced a far different result. Votes reported on March 13 and 17 strongly favored Joe Biden at 43%. Warren was in second place at 26% and Sanders was third at 24%. The collective vote share of Michael Bloomberg, Pete Buttigieg,

Amy Klobuchar and Tom Steyer in later voting dropped to just 7%.

In the Republican primary, President Trump received 146 votes – 87% of those cast.

On ballot issues, 62% of local residents voted no on Measure G, which would have dedicated 2.5% of the city's budget to youth programs. Measure H, school bonds for the Sacramento City Unified School District, was winning locally with 76% voting yes.

Final percentages may differ somewhat as the remaining ballots are counted. Up to date results, including precinct level tallies, can be found at the Sacramento County election website, <http://sacresults.totalvote.com>.

While most of the Sierra Curtis Neighborhood Association area is represented by the two voting precincts identified above, voters in the neighborhood east of Franklin Boulevard cast votes in another precinct, 44209. However, most of that precinct covers areas outside of the SCNA boundaries, and the votes were excluded from the tallies reported here.

Building: Projects are likely to be delayed

Continued from Page 1

proceed with the project as proposed or modify the project to comply with C-1 zoning. "If he were to reduce the amount of units and change the use of the area from residential to commercial, he conceivably could move forward with the same building if it met all other required development standards," Adams wrote.

Architectural drawings of the project by Ellis Architects were posted on the independent Facebook page Curtis Park News on March 13. The post generated more than 1,500 page views, 36 comments, 13 "likes" and three shares. Criticism of the project focused on three areas: that the three-story project was too big for the location; that the modern architectural

style was out of character with the neighborhood; and that the project lacked sufficient parking.

HK3 Development's website says the firm is owned and operated by Sacramento natives, building "dynamic, high-quality infill development projects throughout Sacramento. We believe that by providing more housing, and more adaptive reuse projects throughout the city, we will continue to grow Sacramento as a great city to live, love, laugh, and work."

Adams said planning commission meetings have been "put on hold" because of the coronavirus crisis, "so projects that would be subject to their review could experience a delay or extended processing time period."



Ellis Architects

The proposed development is at the gateway to the neighborhood.

Notes from March 4 meeting

Coalition of 'Parks' associations proposed

The Land Park Community Association is proposing a "Parks" coalition of Curtis Park, Hollywood Park, Land Park, South Land Park and Upper Land Park neighborhood associations. SCNA's Neighborhood Concerns Committee has been invited to give input on the Land Park association's traffic-safety group.

Neighborhood Concerns

John Mathews and **Dan Pskowski** were elected co-chairs at the Neighborhood Concerns Committee meeting.

The committee was asked to set up another meeting to discuss organizing a Curtis Park Neighborhood Watch.

A neighbor has asked for help with traffic calming on 26th Street.

Executive director

The Crab Feed in February netted \$3,700.

Executive Director **Terri Shettle** gave a presentation on the history and dimensions of the Sierra 2 Center. The building is 40,000 square feet and sits on 3.1 acres. The facility was designated as

a historic property in 2005. The 24th Street Theatre has 296 seats. Recent renovations include new seats, carpet, paint, roof and signage.

The Sierra 2 Center has a staff of 14 dedicated to the operations of the facility and Senior Center. The Senior Center has historically operated at a financial loss, but changes made several years ago have turned it into a sustainable program that no longer drains resources.

Development

Chair **Kat Haro** gave an overview of the committee's 2019 undertakings and thoughts for the future, including membership surveys, communications, evaluations, goals and metrics, developing a needs list for volunteers, fundraising and a business plan.

Kathy Les will chair the Big Day of Giving on May 7.

Facilities

Chair **Gerre Buehler** reported that the committee went on a tour of the Sierra 2 Center. Members encountered puppies, sword fighting,

Next meeting

The next regular meeting of the SCNA board will be a Zoom meeting. If you're interested in participating, please contact president@sierra2.org. We need your patience with us while we get this new system up and working.

martial arts, dancers and The Learners. They toured the theater, outbuildings and Senior Center. They discussed the current lease, which is in place for another four years. **Andrea Rosen** reminded the board that it had hired a professional to assess components of the building to see what the 5- and 10-year plans of needed improvements look like.

Attendance

In attendance at the meeting were Sierra 2 Executive Director **Terri Shettle**, SCNA President **Bill Hoover**, and board members **John Bailey**, **Kimberley Bond**, **Gerre Buehler**, **Nury Enciso**, **Erik Fay**, **Kat Haro**, **Eric Johnson**, **Kathy Les**, **John Mathews**, **Bruce Pierini**, **Andrea Rosen** and **Kate Van Buren**.

Submitted by

Kate Van Buren, board secretary

Finances: Spring is normally SCNA's most productive season

Continued from Page 1

economy, nationally and locally.

This was made abundantly clear with the closure of the Sierra 2 Center. It did not come as a complete surprise; Sierra 2 Executive Director Terri Shettle had already begun contingency planning. However, the rapidly changing landscape greatly accelerated the implementation of these plans, causing us to adapt and react on a nearly daily basis.

While the closure of the Sierra 2 Center is understandable, the resultant financial impact is devastating, affecting every aspect of our operations. In the days and weeks leading up to the closure, Sierra 2 Center staff was dealing with cancellations of theater bookings and other short-term rentals. Additionally, now that the center has closed, the rental income from resident tenants will cease. The center's budgeted monthly rental income is \$62,000, of which \$16,000

is from residents and the remaining \$46,000 from all other rentals.

Sierra 2 Center staff is rescheduling as many events as possible, but is operating in the dark as to when the center will reopen. Factor in the monthly payroll and other fixed expenses of at least \$40,000, and it is easy to see that we are in uncharted and dangerous waters.

We are entering what is typically our most productive season. We have no idea how long it will be before this virus is brought under control. We are exploring various options to help get us through this uncertain period, but do not have enough cash on hand to cover our expenses. It is evident that we will have to draw upon our investment account, which was never intended for that purpose.

Now that the Home & Garden Tour has been canceled, there are only two fundraisers remaining, the Big Day of Giving in May and the Wine Tasting

& Silent Auction in October. The Big Day of Giving may provide an opportunity for all of us to show our support for the Sierra 2 Center. I'll have more to say about that later. And, by October we hope to be celebrating the end of this scourge.

In the meantime, don't forget the folks on your street. Many streets have Neighborhood Watch programs or other structures in place for looking after one another and organizing block parties, etc. There are undoubtedly folks on your street that could use some assistance, so reach out to them. Remember, they are more than just "the people next door." They are your neighbors.

(Note: The home tour has been rescheduled. Chairperson Lori Harder says, "Please put April 24, 2021 on your calendars now. I hope most or all of this year's homeowners will roll it forward a year and we'll be in good shape for a successful returning event.")

Big Day of Giving
MAY 7

With the closure of Sierra 2 due to the coronavirus, it is more important than ever to raise money for the facility and its programs during **Big Day of Giving**. We hope we can count on your support.

We aim to make up some of the shortfall from closure with fundraising on **Big Day of Giving**. Last year we raised \$15,000 through the generosity of neighbors. Can you help grow that amount this year?

To schedule your donation starting April 20, go to bigdayofgiving.org/sierra2center.



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Coping: 'Who would have thought that being elderly could have perks?'

Continued from Page 1

shopping, etc. is done with all precautions in place."

Jemine Keely posted on NextDoor.com the idea for a Curtis Park neighborhood scavenger hunt to get out-of-school children outside for some fresh air. She tied her suggestion to St. Patrick's Day and asked neighbors to hang a shamrock in their windows so children could try to spot them while walking outside.

Charon Jenner of Curtis Way mused, "Who would have thought that being elderly could have perks? My neighbors have gone shopping for me, and we're checking in regularly with each other. Yesterday we went for a walk, keeping a safe distance from each other. The 'birders' on my street discovered a nest high up in a sycamore and (started) speculating on what kind of bird had built it. Another neighbor set out oranges, lemons and limes from her trees to share. Life is good!"

Geno Delyon of Rochon Way keeps a safe distance while checking in on two neighbors and greeting people on walks. "I rode my bike down to the Pocket area with a pal along the river, which was really good."

With a chair and a beverage in hand, **Nina Bookbinder** of Highland Avenue has a date to chat across her driveway with her nextdoor neighbor, who sits on her own front porch. Nina said she's trying to walk around the neighborhood and look at all the beautiful spring flowers and greenery. "During these stay-at-home days, I plan on cleaning out my home office and tackling the garage."

Sharon and Mark Helmar of Rochon Way are making the most of this down time by working in their yard, talking to friends, cleaning closets, watching PBS, reading, FaceTiming with grandchildren and ironing. Sharon said, "We may eventually sort all those papers in the office, learn how to use our phones and try to laugh a little. We'll be putting away St. Patrick's Day decorations and putting out Easter decorations. But mostly, we're

being thankful for friends, relatives and living in Curtis Park."

Paul Barth of Fourth Avenue said, "I am using the time to work on my kitchen. I put off removing the wallpaper for years and now have 90% of it gone. The holes are patched, low spots floated and high areas sanded. With just a coat of primer it looks nice. With new paint it will be a pleasant change."

Madeleine Lohman of Portola Way, one of the owners of Delta Mind & Body Center, has a new YouTube channel, MadYoga, on which she streams yoga classes.

For St. Patrick's Day **one Curtis Park neighbor** organized a shamrock hunt. Neighbors were asked to put a Shamrock in their window on March 17. Any kind of shamrock, colored, painted, paper cut in the shape, printed from a computer. Then neighbors walked around the neighborhood to find shamrocks. No human contact. Just fresh air.

Wayne Anderson of 25th Street is baking different kinds of bread and listening to operas.

Bret Harte Elementary School will continue to serve breakfast and lunch meals to any child age 18 and younger during the Sacramento City Unified School District-wide closure. Regardless of free and reduced eligibility or school attendance, families can pick up meals at the Bret Harte campus to take home Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

There will be a drive-through service in the front of the school. District staff in a white vehicle with an apple logo will deliver meals to cars. Walk-up students will be given meals but cannot eat them on-campus and must leave school grounds.

For a complete list of all the Sacramento schools providing meal pick-up as well as any potential extension of the school closure period, go to the Sac City Unified website at www.scusd.edu

Gunthers Ice Cream is still open for curbside pick up. For fastest service, call ahead: 916 457-6646.

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Photo/Judy Scheible

For St. Patrick's Day, an enterprising parent asked neighbors to put shamrocks in their windows so her children could go on a scavenger hunt and spot them. This one is perched in the front window at Judy and John Brush's Third Avenue home.



Photo/Judy Scheible

Couple with baby stroller: Pat and Avalon Fitzgerald of 23rd Street took their 1-year-old son, Everett, for a walk that went by the Plant Foundry on Broadway at 35th Street in Oak Park. The Foundry limited its customers to 10 at a time. When the gate was closed customers had to wait outside on the sidewalk, which was marked in pink chalk at 6-foot intervals.

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Coping: Several local businesses open for takeout

Continued from Page 4

They're opting for curbside order only from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. They have a system to get your ice cream, keeping the six-foot social separation enforced. Menu items are at gunthersicecream.com. For more information, go to Curtis Park News on Facebook.

Rob Archie of Fifth Avenue said his **Pangaea Bier Cafe** at Franklin Boulevard and Third Avenue remains open for takeout orders. Pangaea's website says it is only accepting online orders for curbside pickup: "Call us at 916 454-4942 when you arrive to pick up your order and we'll bring it out to you."

Taylor's Market opened its doors from 8 to 9 a.m. for shoppers over 65. "The seniors are gracious and grateful," said owner Danny Johnson. Johnson does not anticipate any supply problems during the pandemic because his local suppliers are loyal. "Our long term relationships are paying off."

Taylor's Kitchen is also preparing takeout meals that can be ordered by phone or email. The limited menu is online. Payment is in advance by credit card.

Judy Brush, Carol Blackman, Dennis Cusick, Patti Roberts and Judy Green Scheible contributed to this report.



Photo/Carol Blackman

Sally Espinoza and her dog, Beau, relax on their front lawn, waving and smiling as neighbors walk by.

10 ideas for coping with stressful times

By Alison Ledgerwood

As a behavioral scientist and consultant, I draw on scientific research and experience to help people find better ways to cope with stress and negativity. Here are 10 ideas for keeping your balance in the midst of the current crisis.

- 1. Working from home?** Take advantage of the opportunity to set up a Skype happy hour with a far-flung friend.
- 2. Pay your people.** House cleaner, hairdresser, anyone you usually depend on but find yourself canceling to help flatten our local curve. If you can, pay their holiday bonus early, or prepay your next five appointments.
- 3. Go outside.** Look at a tree. Put your face in the sun. Witness a flower.
- 4. Limit your media and social media intake.** Set times for it. Then make yourself put it down. Plug your phone in across the room. Or even – and this may seem extreme but stay with me now – in an entirely different room.
- 5. Exercise. Walk. Run. Bike. Pushups. Yoga.** Bonus points if you get outside.

6. Share nourishing experiences even from afar. Plan a video-call dinner party with friends. Everyone cooks and drinks the same thing. Click glasses into the camera.

7. Write down three things you're thankful for. They can be little things, big things, in-between things. Crocuses. Dog ears. Cat purrs. A person. The rhythm of a sentence. The pattern of a shadow.

8. Help someone. Reach out to your neighbors and see if anyone needs help getting groceries. Hop on Patreon and support a musician. Did you panic-buy masks? Donate them to the hospital. Think about the specific skills you have and how you could use them to help others.

9. Breathe. No, but seriously. In for 5 seconds. Out for 5 seconds. Once again. I'll do it too. Nice, huh? Set aside 5 minutes. Yes, an entire 5 minutes. Breathe.

10. Let go of something. A task, an obligation, an impossible standard for yourself. There are more important things in life. Go do one.

Alison Ledgerwood is a Curtis Park resident and TEDx speaker on getting unstuck from negative thinking.

Communication can continue if we all pitch in

To our readers:

One of the joys of living in Curtis Park is that we talk to each other – spontaneously on walks with our dogs, and when we see neighbors coming and going, and also, for more than 40 years, in the pages of our neighborhood newspaper, *Viewpoint*.

But, these are hard times financially for our neighborhood association, as SCNA President Bill Hoover explains in his column on Page 1.

To ease SCNA's burden, Carol Blackman is donating her production services for this issue of *Viewpoint*. I'm donating half the cost of printing the eight-page issue. (We dropped the four-page Sierra2Day center section this month because of the cancellation of activities at the Sierra 2 Center.)

We feel this little newspaper is an important neighborhood asset and hope you do, too.

Can you help out by donating a few dollars to SCNA to help cover the costs of publication? Make checks payable to SCNA with "Viewpoint fund" in the memo line. Send to: SCNA at 2791 24th Street, Sac., 95818, or drop off in Carol's home mailbox at 2900 26th Street (southwest corner at Fourth Avenue). Thank you. – Dennis Cusick, Viewpoint Editor

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Trees of Curtis Park

Palms bring exotic, tropical feel to city, neighborhood landscape

By Dan Pskowski

Palms are sometimes considered unsuitable for our urban forest, as some believe they do not provide shade, collect rainwater or release oxygen as well as other trees do.

However, studies have documented that palms provide about the same benefits as most other trees. A study in Santa Monica showed that Canary Island date palms produced a significant value for the city in terms of shade cast, pollution reduced and storm water collected.

Palms tend to have smaller canopies than most other trees, but more of them can be planted to derive the same benefits. Their adventitious root system causes little sidewalk/hardscape damage. They can be planted in narrow street medians where no other tree species would fit.

Palms bring that exotic, tropical motif to the landscape. The towering, 60-foot tall, California fan palms are the dominant street trees surrounding the State Capitol in downtown Sacramento.

The California fan palm, Mexican fan palm and the Canary Island date palm are the three most popular palms planted throughout Sacramento. They are drought-tolerant and don't mind the scorching summer heat.

Palm trees have a long connection to the Curtis Park neighborhood. William Curtis apparently had at least one palm on his farm in the 19th century. At one time, palm trees lined both sides of Marshall Way in the West Curtis Oaks subdivision, until pruning spread disease and wiped out many of

them. Today, the lone survivor stands in front of 2100 Marshall Way. Other remnants of the palm-lined streetscapes of an earlier era can be found in the 2100, 2300 and 2600 blocks of Portola Way, the 2800 block of Marshall Way and the east side of 21st Street, between Marshall and Portola ways.

Palms are susceptible to nutritional deficiencies not commonly found on other landscape trees. The use of palm-special fertilizer is recommended. It is better to prevent nutrient deficiencies rather than treat them after they occur because in many cases recovery can take two to three years.

Palms require little pruning to achieve and maintain optimal growth. Palm pruning involves the removal of dead fronds, flowers, fruit, stems or loose petioles. It is best for the palm if green fronds remain intact. Removal of green fronds should never occur above a horizontal line drawn across the base of the crown.

Over-pruning is detrimental to a palm's health, slowing the growth of the palm and attracting pests.

When pruning palms that are susceptible to fusarium wilt, avoid the use of chain saws because they can create wounds and spread the disease. Handsaws should be used in pruning palms. Saws should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before pruning each palm. Remove all sawdust and other particles and then soak the saw for 10 minutes in a 1-to-3 pine oil to water solution or undiluted, full-strength household bleach.

Fusarium wilt – a lethal, vascular wilt disease – is primarily restricted to Canary Island date palms,



Photo/Joan Cusick

A single palm in front of 2100 Marshall Way, bottom, remains from the grove that lined both sides of the street in a 1930s postcard.

although California fan palms can contract this disease under some circumstances. Once the diseased palm is removed, only a species of palm resistant to fusarium can be planted back. As a result, Canary Island date palms continue to disappear from the neighborhood.

Kris Backus says the garden she and her husband created at their Portola Way home was intended to reduce water use.



Portola Way couple will have to wait to show off garden, remodeled kitchen

By Kimberley Bond

Kris and David Backus, residents of Portola Way for more than 22 years, were excited to show off their garden and newly remodeled kitchen on this year's Home and Garden Tour. Alas, the tour has been

postponed to April 24, 2021, because of the current health crisis.

In October 2017, they removed the turf and shrubs from their front yard. A Mediterranean landscape that better reflected the architecture of their home was planted.

The impetus for this change was

to reduce their water use, create a low-maintenance garden, and take advantage of Sacramento's Water Wise Rebate Program. All three were accomplished.

Kris and David are not gardeners; Kris says she has a "purple thumb."

Please see Garden, Page 7

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Third Avenue bungalow goes from dilapidated to gem of Home Tour

By Judy Scheible

No one walking into Judy and John Brush's beautifully renovated home could imagine its physical history. It was in such a state of deterioration when the Brushes tried to buy it in 1974 that the bank would not complete the loan until the front and back porches were repaired and a floor furnace was installed.

Their 1910 bungalow will be among the gems on display during the Curtis Park Home & Garden Tour, which has been postponed to April 24, 2021, due to the coronavirus crisis.

Visitors will see a mostly new home inside its original shell. John Brush, a carpenter, at one time had the walls down to the studs. Another time he dug a basement, which now is a full, finished room, complete with full bath, closet and furnace room. That project took more than two years of muddy days with a ladder required for access from the kitchen to the backyard.

A local historian told them that their home was the first building permit pulled for the West Curtis Oaks development. That permit is dated June 5, 1910. The home is currently on Third Avenue; originally, the street was named First Avenue.

The original kitchen had low counters covered with green hexagonal tiles, a free-standing water heater in one corner and an old gas stove "that worked great," Judy said. She

remembers the original cupboards were so shallow that her dinner plates wouldn't fit on the shelves.

When Judy and John started the kitchen remodel in 1979, they were expecting their first child. When Rachel was born in November, the kitchen was gutted and the back of the house was off.

John did nearly all of the work in the kitchen, which included removing an old chimney, clearing space for a large, walk-in pantry.

Now the kitchen is a modern hub with a large breakfast nook, windows and a glass French door that overlook the back patio and yard and a spacious, separate laundry room.

Judy said the home's only original space is the dining room. Its dark wood paneling and built-in cabinets with leaded-glass doors are enhanced by dramatic wallpaper that encircles the room above the plate rail.

For the living room, John put up new sheetrock and built a classic mantel for the fireplace, which was completely rebuilt to make the room cozy in the winter.

Adjacent to the living room is a newly remodeled hobby space where Judy makes jewelry, designer cards and does her computer work. An alcove off the room is Judy's dressing room with a closet and vanity.

Upstairs are three bedrooms and a recently remodeled bathroom with a step-in shower. Through the French



Photo courtesy of John and Judy Brush



Judy Brush says she figured it would take seven years to renovate their house on Third Avenue when she and husband John started in 1974, above. Now, they have an upstairs deck to enjoy, "but here we are at 45 years and we still have a list."

Photo/
Judy Scheible

doors of the back bedroom is a recently built deck as wide as the house.

"When we started working on the house, we estimated it would take about seven years to remodel, but here we are at 45 years and we still have a list," says Judy.

During that time they raised two children and had careers. Now with two grandchildren underfoot most days, they've recently resurfaced the front porch and constructed the upstairs deck. As with any old house, there's never an end to fix-it projects.

Garden: New plants attract bees

Continued from Page 6

So when it came time to choose the appropriate low-maintenance plants and design the space, a landscaper was hired. They wanted a number of ornamental grasses, a specimen tree and a sitting area. Again, all three were accomplished.

They have more than 20 different plants in the new landscape. Some of their favorites are the yarrow with large garnet flower heads, the coral bark maple with contrasting chartreuse green leaves, the barberry with orange-red foliage and a flax with its dark, arching leaves.

"He is happy as can be," Kris said of the flax. She's fond of the plants received from friends and neighbors, such as a miniature rose and an orange clivia that is thriving in its new location.

Another aspect of the landscape they love is the increased activity of the bees, especially on the dwarf pomegranate and

the violet flowering germander, which is great for rock gardens.

Most of their time in the yard is spent relaxing in the sitting area. "What's cool about it is it gets us out here," said Kris. "We realized how much interaction we have with neighbors who are walking by. Some will stop and chat."

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Anna's hummingbird



Black-chinned hummingbird



Rufous hummingbird



Calliope hummingbird

Photos/Dan Murphy

Brightly colored hummingbirds may be back in neighborhood soon

By Dan Murphy

April and May are peak spring migration months for birds. During spring migration, there are chances to see unusual birds in their vibrant breeding colors.

No bird colors are more vibrant than the iridescent throat patch or gorget of a male hummingbird. This dazzling color is produced by feathers that trap ultra thin layers of air bubbles that work like tiny prisms to split light.

Female hummingbirds have at best a few iridescent scales in the center of the throat and are more difficult to identify.

Six species of hummingbirds visit Sacramento, and three of them might be seen in Curtis Park backyards: Anna's, black-chinned, and rufous hummingbirds. Anna's hummingbirds reside here year round. The male Anna's has the ability to refract a blazing rose pink light from his head and throat.

Black-chinned hummingbirds, like Anna's, but smaller, nest here in the

summer, but migrate south for winter. The black-chinned gets its name because its purple iridescent patch is limited to a band on the male's throat. It is more sparingly displayed than the Anna's and when not displayed, all you see is black.

Rufous hummingbirds are uncommon and only pass through our area on the way to nesting grounds farther north. They are easy to identify because of orange on the back and chest. The male gorget can show gold, red, or green, sometimes in combination.

There are two nearby sites to see lots of hummingbirds during migration. One is the flower garden near the chapel at the Sacramento City Cemetery. The other is at either end of the UC Davis arboretum trail along Putah Creek, where a variety of Australian Grevillea flowers are found. If you are very lucky, you might even catch a glimpse of the distinctive streaked magenta gorget of a rare calliope hummingbird passing through on the way to the Sierra at either of these sites.

Curtis Park News page on Facebook

Viewpoint staff

The new Curtis Park News page on Facebook may have only 108 followers, but a recent post about the proposed development on 24th Street at Castro Way reached more than 1,500 people, including 142 reactions, comments and shares.

Since the start of the year, Curtis Park News has posted breaking news of interest to the neighborhood. The page shares relevant information from the Sierra 2 Center, City Councilmember Jay Schenirer and Curtis Park residents. To follow the page, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/CurtisParkNews/>.

Bluebird houses – a whodunit



Looking out of a classroom window at Sierra 2 Center, a tap dance student saw something new in an oak tree nearest the Fourth Avenue gate – a beautifully painted and artfully constructed bluebird house, perched in an oak tree about 12 feet from the ground. And then another, spotted at the north end of William Curtis Park, just east of the park sign (photo at left). Who is building these houses for the bluebirds? The anonymous craftsperson is enhancing our time outdoors and reminding us to be aware of our surroundings.

Photo/Joan Cusick

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