

VEP NEWS

• VEP COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION •

Representing More Than 2000 Families In The Blossom Valley Area Of South San Jose Since 1969

May 2001

VEP MEETING

7:30 P.M. TUESDAY
May 22, 2001

GUNDERSON HIGH SCHOOL
* Forum *

AGENDA

* Home Improvement Faire *
Lester Property

Everyone is welcome. Bring your neighbors!

VEP's May Meeting

- Dave Noel

Our May meeting is our Annual Home Improvement Faire. **John Marks** has done a fabulous job again this year recruiting exhibitors for our Faire. Many of the exhibitors are VEP members and/or have been recommended by VEP members. If you are thinking of doing any home improvements this year, this is your chance to meet with contractors to discuss your projects.

We also have one important item of business to conduct. At 8:00 we will pause the Faire for about ten minutes to discuss bill HR 1486. This bill, currently under consideration in the House Ways and Means Committee, would help preserve the Lester property by providing Mr. Lester the opportunity to get out from under the estate tax that resulted from his sister's passing. The VEP executive committee recommends that the membership adopt a position in favor of this bill. We'll also have a petition at the Faire that you can sign to show your support of the bill.

Be sure to attend the meeting at 7:30 pm Tuesday, May 22nd in the Gunderson High School Forum, and bring a neighbor!

Also, be sure to come to the Vista Park community meeting at 7:00 P.M. on Wednesday May 30th at Gunderson High School. See a separate article and flyer in this newsletter.

Home Improvement Faire

- Ian Reddy

Our fifth **VEP Home Improvement Faire** is scheduled for Tuesday, May 22nd, and this year will include a VEP information table and refreshments.

Held in the Gunderson High School Forum area, this year's Faire will feature roofing, remodeling, plumbing, concrete work, security, tile, and others -- as well as home improvement retailers and high speed internet access providers. We will also have a display of the SummerHill Homes project on the Walnut Grove at the corner of Branham and Vista Park Drive, a display of the plans for Vista Park, and free "Vials of Life" provided by the San Jose Fire Department.

Here's a sampling of the exhibitors we expect to show up for our Home Improvement Faire:

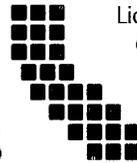
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Morazan Roofing Co.
Old Country Roofing
David Miller Home Security
Kitchen Connection
West Coast Gutters
California Contractors License Board
California Bathroom Remodeling (a VEP Advertiser)
RoofCo
Sun Tunnels
D&D Chem Dry (a VEP Advertiser)
Steel Fences
OSH Hardware
Chimney Safe
Composting Education (The Rot Line)
Student Painters
3-D Tile Company
Peters Construction
Don Needles Tree Service
Chesnos Painting (a VEP Advertiser)
Sean Haggett, House Painter & Handyman
Custom Pool Remodeling
4-Seasons Sunrooms
Altek Temite & Pest Control
Andersen Windows
Tupperware
Sprint Broadband Direct

Keep The Lester Property Whole

- Greg West

As you are most likely aware, **Mr. Walter Lester** has the dream of donating his roughly 300 acre property to the west of Snell Avenue between Branham Lane and Chynoweth Avenue in San Jose for use as a public open space and agricultural preserve celebrating the agricultural heritage of Santa Clara County.

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However, due to the passing of his sister, Mr. Lester has incurred a tax liability that could approach \$90 Million! This tax liability, if not forgiven, will most certainly cause Mr. Lester to sell a substantial piece of his land to pay off the taxman.

US Congress Member **Zoe Lofgren** has introduced a bill into the US Congress, HR 1486, allowing for an estate tax deduction for qualified conservation contributions by heirs of an estate. Passage of this bill would allow Mr. Lester to be forgiven the estate tax liability for the donation of his land and would, in effect, allow his property to remain whole for the enjoyment of generations to come. Congress Members **Zoe Lofgren, Mike Honda, Pete Stark, Sam Farr,** and **Anna Eshoo** all support HR 1486.

****What You Can Do To Help****

Please write a letter to:

Chairman Bill Thomas
House Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

and express your support for Mr. Lester's dream and for HR 1486. Please feel free to use the templates below, but, be sure to personalize your letter as well.

Sample Letters (also available in soft copy form on the VEPCA website):

*Chairman Bill Thomas
House Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515*

Dear Chairman Thomas;

As a resident of the neighborhood of Walter Lester's Cottle Ranch, I wish to call to your attention to an unfortunate situation regarding this property. It is Mr. Lester's intent to give this 300 acre property to the people of Santa Clara County as a park. Although the property is very valuable, Mr. Lester is not a wealthy person. Unfortunately, to pay estate taxes due to the

death of his sister, he would have to sell off a major portion of the land. Please support HR 1486 which would allow estate tax credit for Mr. Lester's contribution of his land for the public good. If this bill does not pass, another piece of our children's heritage will be lost forever.

Thank you,

*Your Name
Your Address
San Jose, CA 95136*

-or-

*Chairman Bill Thomas
House Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515*

Dear Chairman Thomas;

We are/I am a neighbor of Walter Lester's Cottle Ranch, more than 300-acres of land in the middle of our city. His ranch is zoned for Open Space in both the City of San Jose and Santa Clara County's General Plans. As you probably know, for years Mr. Lester has been trying to donate this land to the people of our county for a park. Our area is generally deficient in park acreage, especially the kind of larger regional park his land would provide. In the face of our need for recreational and open space land, our community of over 2000 homes is unanimously in favor of Mr. Lester's proposed park. Moreover, he has negotiated the donation of more than ten acres of that land to the city for long-planned widening of two major streets that serve our area (Branham Lane and Snell Avenue). That land alone is worth millions of dollars. I/We think he should be fairly credited for any donation of land he is willing to make to the public. Therefore I/we support HR 1486 which, if enacted, would allow an estate tax deduction for contributions to the public good from the estate.

Mr. Lester's sister passed on several months ago. As the only remaining member of his immediate family, he is now faced with a very large federal estate tax debt. Except for the value of his land, which has been in the Cottle-Lester family for 150 years, Mr. Lester is not a wealthy person. To pay estate taxes, he will have to sell off a significant portion of the land he wants to donate. The land he'd have to sell to pay taxes would surely be lost forever to urban development. This could mean the end of his dream for a park; if not, it will certainly mean that when a park is ultimately built, it will be much smaller than currently envisioned. The only reason is taxes.

There is almost no land available in our city for parks. As such, Mr. Lester's philanthropy is especially appreciated and must be taken advantage of. Please

also support HR 1486 so that he may be credited any gifts of land to the public against his tax debt.

Thank you,

Your Name
Your Address
San Jose, CA 95136

We need your help!

-Pat Dando, San Jose City Councilmember

As you may know, I have been working with **Mr. Walter Lester** to preserve his property. The beautiful 300 acre Cottle Ranch is the original Lester family homestead. It is Mr. Lester's intention to donate all of his property to develop a park for our community.

When I first took office in 1995 the property was designated for Medium/High density housing. My first action was to get the land designation changed to Public/Park Open Space. Since then, I have worked with a number of my colleagues at the County and Federal level to realize Mr. Lester's vision.

I have been working with Representative **Zoe Lofgren** and Representative **Mike Honda** to reform the Tax code to allow Mr. Lester to donate his land. Without this reform Mr. Lester will have to sell a large percentage of his property just to pay the Estate Tax due from the recent death of Edith Lester, his sister, who owned a large portion of the property. The estate tax could be as high as 90 million dollars.

Our Congressional delegation has proposed Bill HR 1486, which would amend Estate Tax Legislation to allow generous contributions, such as Mr. Lester's, without penalty. We need your help as we lobby the House of Representatives Ways and Means committee to support HR 1486. We need to bring this bill to the Committee Chair's attention. I urge you to write to Chairman **Bill Thomas** and Ranking Member **Charles Rangel** to impress upon them the importance of this Bill, otherwise it might never be heard by the committee.

Representative Bill Thomas
2208 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Charles Rangel
2354 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

A copy of your correspondence would be appreciated.

Please contact me if you have any further questions.

Pat Dando
Councilmember

City of San Jose

General Plan Changes

- Dave Noel

The executive committees of VEP Community Association, Almaden Valley Community Association, Woodside of Almaden Homeowners Association, Pinehurst Residents Association, and Thousand Oaks Homeowners Association are in the process of reviewing the recommendations presented by the Mayor's Housing Production Team for speeding up housing development in San Jose. One of those recommendations, "Increase GP Review of proposed housing to twice a year or more" is of particular concern to the VEP executive board.

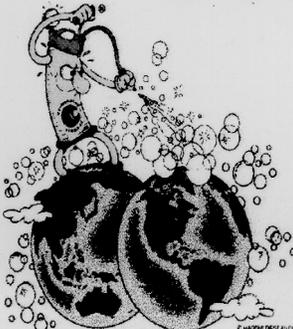
The VEP executive board voted unanimously on May 2nd to oppose this recommendation. The General Plan is a mature, comprehensive, twenty-year plan for land use that is intended to provide stability and forethought in land use decisions. Reviewing, and potentially revising, it two or more times per year makes it difficult for stakeholders to respond to changes in a timely manner.

Vista Park

- Dave Noel

At our April 24th meeting, San Jose City Councilwoman **Pat Dando** and City Parks Manger **Todd Capurso** presented the latest plans and funding status for Vista Park. With previously budgeted funds, plus funds from the recently passed bond measure, and expected Construction and Conveyance tax funds from the SummerHill development at Branham Lane and Vista Park Drive, we should be seeing major progress on Vista Park starting in late Fall this year. The development was broken into four phases about ten years ago, and those phases were defined with much input from and ultimately approved by VEP.

Vista Park is currently at Phase 1, and the City is expecting to complete Phases 2, 3, and possibly 4 in the construction that starts this year. Significant aspects of the construction such as irrigation



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infrastructure, a possible bathroom, play lots, seating, and tables were discussed at the meeting. Since the plan is consistent with the desires of the neighborhood and VEP as previously adopted, members present at the meeting voted to support the plan as presented without the need for a neighborhood survey.

Todd has scheduled a community meeting at 7:00 P.M. on Wednesday May 30th at Gunderson High School to present a detailed design for final approval. If the plans are ready early, he'll give VEP a set to display at the Home Improvement Faire as well.

If the detailed design shows that phases 2, 3 and 4 of the project can't all be completed with the city budget available, VEP will rally the neighborhood and local youth sports (bobby sox) to come up with creative ideas, volunteer efforts, grants and so on to try to make up the difference.

Vista Park Community Meeting

The Council District 10 Office and the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services invite you to attend a community meeting to discuss improvements to Vista Park:

Wednesday, May 30, 2001
7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
at Gunderson High School
(faculty lounge)

AGENDA

Welcome from Councilmember Pat Dando

Park Background

Discussion of park design

Consider project options and funding

Finalize project scope

Summary/Closing remarks

For more information, please contact Parks Manager Todd Capurso of PRNS at (408) 277-4573.

To arrange an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act to participate in this public event, please call (408) 277-4573 or the TTY number, 298-9527, at least 48 hours before the event.

SummerHill Homes

- Dave Noel

At our April 24th meeting **Jon Revells** of SummerHill homes presented the final plans for their housing development on the old walnut orchard at Branham Lane and Vista Park Drive. The project will consist of eighty upscale single-family homes on 9.3 acres. The new homes are expected to sell at a price about \$125,000 to \$150,000 higher than existing homes nearby. The lot sizes will be similar to the development at the site of the old Lucky's at Branham Lane and Pearl Ave.

Members in attendance at the meeting voted unanimously to endorse the project as presented with three conditions. These conditions were forwarded to Councilmember **Pat Dando** in the following letter:

April 26, 2001

Councilwoman Pat Dando
City of San Jose
801 N. First Street
San Jose, Ca 95110

Subject: SummerHill Homes project for 80± single-family homes at Branham Lane and Vistapark Drive

Honorable Councilwoman Dando:

Following a presentation by Jon Revells of SummerHill Homes at our April 24th general meeting, VEP members present voted unanimously to endorse subject project as presented, conditioned by satisfying the following conditions:

1. SummerHill will work with homeowners abutting the west property line to arrive at an attractive, mutually satisfactory fencing and landscaping plan to serve as a protective visual buffer between new and existing residences.

2. SummerHill will work with homeowners and the city to arrive at an attractive, mutually satisfactory fencing and landscaping plan to serve as a protective visual buffer along Branham Lane and Vistapark Drive for new residences that back-up onto those streets.

3. SummerHill will work within city guidelines to design



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intersection with a left-turn pocket (for site ingress) at the existing intersection of Almaden and the terminus of the Highway 85 westbound off-ramp.

- The developer will enter into a deferred development agreement with the County for the construction of a second left turn lane on Almaden Expressway into the project site within five (5) years of the occupancy of the project if a single left turn access lane is deemed unsafe.
- The developer will provide an additional westbound freeway on-ramp lane next to the project site to the satisfaction of Caltrans.
- The developer will construct a second left-turn lane from northbound Almaden Expressway to Cherry Avenue and related improvements as necessary.
- The developer has agreed to contribute \$359,000 to the County, pursuant to an agreement between the developer and the County, toward the general improvements of Almaden Expressway for the segment between Branham Lane and Blossom Hill Road. Said funds will be used for improvements to be made within five (5) years of occupancy of the buildings of the project or be returned to the d e v e l o p e r .
- The property owner has already contributed \$200,000 to the City towards the construction of the future Chynoweth Avenue Bridge over Guadalupe River.

Chynoweth Avenue Bridge – This project continues to lie dormant. It is required for full development of the Arcadia property and there has been no recent news on this front.

Winfield Blvd – The strip of land on the west side of

and construct an attractive termination, sidewalks, and landscaping of the stub-end of Vistapark Drive, where it now ends just south of Hyde Park Drive. It is our expressed desire that public (especially Construction and Conveyance tax) funds not be used to pay for this work.

Our resolution of support also asked that SummerHill include paid, first-year VEP membership for new residents of their project (\$15 per household) or, at minimum, include membership application materials in their new-owner packets.

Thank you for your assistance in assuring that these conditions be implemented as the SummerHill project moves toward completion in our community. We look forward to welcoming our new neighbors into the VEP area.

Sincerely yours,

David Noel, President
(408) 266-7183

cc: Mayor Ron Gonzales; City Planning Director Jim Derryberry; Jon Revells & Joe Head, SummerHill Homes.

Neighborhood Developments

- Dave Noel

Landscaping at Branham and Hwy 87 – At our April 24th meeting, City Councilwoman **Pat Dando** and her aide **Joshua Howard** showed us pictures of landscaping that begins soon at the southeastern quadrant of the Route 87 overcrossing at Branham Lane. Tall trees will be planted, and the Route 87 bike path will connect along this segment to Branham Lane near Narvaez. Landscaping will also commence shortly in the median of Narvaez, south of Capitol Expressway, beautifying this entrance to our neighborhood.

Snell and Branham Widening – **Pat Dando** announced that the widening of Snell Ave. and Branham Lane, adjacent to the Lester property, begins this year. Mr. Lester donated this land to the city in return for last year's General Plan change that removed the extension of Vista Park Drive and Chynoweth through his property.

Home Depot Expo Design and Best Buy – As of this writing, a pad has been poured and walls are being erected on the property in the northwest quadrant of the Almaden Expressway/Route 85 interchange. The following traffic mitigation measures and improvements are being required per the environmental impact report for the project:

- Intersection improvements to create a four-leg

Brian Bonnifield

Real Estate Consultant

VEP Member - Area Specialist

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Winfield Blvd across from the Bridge project is owned by VTA and there are no development plans at this time.

New Fire Station – One of the continuing issues of internal development of the city is that less than perfect attention is paid to the details of municipal infrastructure. One of these details is the distribution of Fire Stations. In our neighborhood, the Fire Station on Pearl has not been significantly upgraded in spite of the fact that the number of residences in our area has grown enormously. Development has apparently passed a trip point and there is a new Fire Station in the works. It will be built on top of Communication Hill and will access onto Vista Park Drive. We will keep you updated on development.

Almaden Expressway - Santa Clara County's Department of Roads and Airports will repave and re-stripe Almaden Expressway between Highway 87 and just north of Branham Lane in Summer 2001 as part of the 1996 Measure B Pavement Rehabilitation program. Other segments of Almaden will be done in future years.

President's Corner

- Dave Noel

Our annual meeting was April 24th and that means this is the beginning of a new year for VEP. As I write this, I've been president about two and a half weeks, but it seems more. The executive board has been quite busy with the transition of officers and duties, preparing for the Home Improvement Faire, following new developments, and strengthening bonds with our neighboring community associations.

As we start this year, I want to illustrate why VEP has been, and will continue to be strong. **Greg West** provided outstanding leadership as president for the last three years. In addition to mentoring me, he is currently leading some of our most important activities; the letter writing campaign for the Lester property, and the selection committee for the annual service awards that will be awarded later this month to two very

deserving graduating students from Gunderson and Andrew Hill high schools

As our treasurer for three years, **Brian Bonnifield** kept our books exceptionally well organized for a smooth transition to **Mark Schoenberg**, who has rejoined the board after a few years absence. With his energy and enthusiasm, Mark stepped up to the plate right away to coordinate the significant banking ramifications of our recent name change, as well as our change of officers.

Sharon Pardun continues as Secretary for her second year. She has exceptional note-keeping skills, keeps our executive meetings on track, and provides invaluable insight into the workings of her employer, the city of San Jose.

As the board faced a critical vacancy leading up to the elections, we were especially fortunate to have **Ian Reddy** join as Vice President. Ian is very insightful and has already come up with many good ideas. Ian and his wife Yvonne volunteered to produce this month's VEP News allowing Dave Fadness to take vacation without affecting our production schedule. This was a **huge** relief to the rest of us who all ducked when Dave looked for volunteers!

We are indeed fortunate to have **Dave Fadness** on our board as past president. He provides over 25 years of continuity and history, and provides an almost unimaginable number of volunteer hours to VEP, our neighborhood, our city, and region. In addition to producing the VEP News every month, he volunteers on the airport and roads commissions, and is currently serving on the city council redistricting commission.

Bob Aquino has served as newsletter co-editor for years, and is also a past president. Bob and his wife Barbara have maintained the VEP mailing list, and have folded, addressed, and mailed the VEP News for years. I can't wait to see what Bob will write about in his Computer Corner each month.

Last but not least, **John Marks**, another distinguished VEP past president, nearly single-handedly pulls together our Home Improvement Faire each year, in addition to regularly contributing articles to the VEP News.

I must also include our great friend of VEP, Councilwoman **Pat Dando**. Anyone who has worked with her knows that she raises the bar against which future city council members should be judged. She also has a knack for hiring great staff. **Joshua Howard** in particular has already been exceptionally helpful to me in my short time as president and deserves much of the credit for coordinating the Vista Park meetings. Similarly, **Chris Hemingway** from **John DeQuisto's** (city council District 9) office has done a great job researching answers to developments on our western front.

Over the last several weeks, VEP executives have met three times with executives from our neighboring community associations to discuss issues ranging from redistricting, city budgets, city housing recommendations, neighborhood developments and so on. These meetings have been very productive and make all of our associations stronger and better networked. Several of the web site improvements mentioned in **Greg West's** article are a direct result of our collaboration and teamwork with Almaden Valley Community Association.

By far the most important development for VEP this month is that our congressional representatives introduced house bill HR 1486 to make an inheritance tax deduction bill retroactive to cover situations such as Mr. Lester's. Unfortunately the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee is not inclined to support it. I urge you to write a letter or email in support of bill HR 1486 and make sure **Pat Dando** gets a copy to take with her on her trip to Washington D.C. on June 4th. We need to do all we can to help enable **Walter Lester** to realize his dream of donating a park to the people, with a working farm that celebrates the agricultural history of our area that has so quickly become paved with silicon.

Most of all, please come to the Home Improvement Faire to meet the many home improvement professionals who have taken time from their busy schedules to meet you... and bring a neighbor.

Neighborhood Vandalism - Beware!

-Greg West

VEP Member **Helen Moloney** reported that major vandalism occurred in our neighborhood on Tuesday night, April 24. Nearly two-dozen cars parked on the street and in driveways on Massachusetts and New World had their tires slashed. VEP got the word out immediately to our members on our email distribution list making them aware of the situation and asking that they report any suspicious activities to the police.

As a result of copying our City Councilmember's office on the email, we got the following response from **Lt. George McCall** of the San Jose Police Department:

"As to the vandalism of April 24th would you please advise folks in your neighborhood when the opportunity arises that the Swing and Midnight Sergeants and Lieutenants in your area have been advised of the problem with a request for increased police patrol during the problem hours. If you have a newsletter or e-mail letter in the neighborhood please tell folks that it is important to call the police and report these events. Even if we are unable to do anything about the specific case it makes us aware of the problem. It is also important to report people idling around in the neighborhood late in the evening even if they aren't seen doing anything specifically illegal. If they have legitimate business we will contact them and find that

out."

VEP Treasurer

MARK SCHOENBEG: Thirteen years ago my wife, Juliana, and I moved from a suburb of Chicago to a condo in Campbell. I soon became President of the 54-unit homeowner Association and dealt with the many headaches of living in a condo including a 1.5 million dollar lawsuit. About 5 years later we had our first child, Mary, and started looking for a house we could afford.

A couple of years later we moved into our current house and learned of VEP. I soon found myself vice-president of VEP for 2 years. We then had our second daughter Eliana. I found myself a lot busier with 2 children and didn't feel I could make the time commitment as a VEP officer.

I've been working in the computer industry for over 20 years. Most of my free time is spent with my family, coaching and chauffeuring my daughters, now 8 and almost 4 years old; volunteering at school; and trying to keep up with all the projects that come with being a homeowner.

I found that I missed being part of this great organization and this year I volunteered my time as treasurer. I look forward to getting re-acquainted with what's going on in our neighborhoods and helping VEP continue its fine work.

Computer Corner

-Bob Aquino, VEP's Computer Guru

I'm feeling a bit retrospective this month, because I've been thinking how, over the years that I have written this column, that the growth in both speed and capacity of the average computer has not only been sustained but also actually accelerated. This has enabled the software to become more powerful and, when well designed, more intuitive. I would be hard pressed to think of an area in which this trend has been more pronounced than in that of mass storage. My first



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computer was an Apple, whose only mass storage was a floppy disk with a total storage capacity of 256 Kilobytes (KB). You had two disk drives, so that you could keep your files on the B: drive. Remember?

Contrast that with the hard drive I recently bought - 40 Gigabytes! That's a growth of 160,000% capacity over a period of about 25 years. There has been a comparable growth in the speed of data transfer from the drive at the same time.

Try to envision what 40 GB represents. A printed character (including spaces, tabs, returns, etc.) on a page occupies 2 bytes of data. The average page of text will have about 2000 characters on it, 4KB to the page. A stack of paper has about 250 pages to the inch or about 1 MB per inch. So a 40 GB drive represents a stack of papers about 40,000 inches high or .6 miles!

What do we do with all this capacity? Well, it turns out that printed data is not nearly as dense as other data - graphics, sound files, animations and the like. Suffice to say, we find ways to use up the storage space. All of which brings me to the second theme of this month's column, Spring Housecleaning. The staggering size of today's hard drives actually gives rise to two problems. Since we do have such capacious drives, we tend to park a great deal of junk there. And, because the drives have become much more reliable, we tend to ignore that old bugaboo, backups.

In the matter of old files, the easiest thing to do is to go into Windows Explorer and open up the various folders. Arrange the files in descending date order by clicking on the "Date Modified" bar so that the most recent date appears on top. Now, you can sort through the files to see which ones to keep. My guess is that most of them older than a year are junk. Be careful though in case there are records that you may want to keep for legal reasons. These you should probably park in a separate directory. Once you've thinned down your files, take a look at them and see if there is a more logical directory structure that you could use to enable you to identify them better in the future. Also, in the future, use the long file names to identify files clearly, so you don't have to open them up to know what they contain.

Backups are always a sensitive subject. There are some programs, and Quicken comes to mind, that

practically insist on being backed up. This is really a service to you because Quicken is the program whose files it would be most painful to lose. And the longer that you use it, the more painful its loss becomes. Since hard drives have become more and more reliable, we tend to get arrogant about backup. Just remember this. There are one or more metal plates spinning at 5400 or 7200 rpm under a reading head that that is skating madly above the plate, separated from its surface by considerably less than a hair's breadth. Disaster is always just around the corner, so identify those REALLY important files and back them up.

Summer Lawn Care

-John Marks, VEP's Green Gardener

Different grasses have different ideal heights, and you should mow to keep the lawn within that optimum range. Cool-season northern grasses, such as Kentucky bluegrass, fescue and ryegrass, grow upright and should be cut higher than southern grasses, like Bermuda and zoysia, which spread out as they grow. More often than not, homeowners mow too low. There are three good reasons for mowing higher. First, grass, like all green plants, lives mostly on food manufactured in its leaves. Taller grass produces more food, so it's more vigorous and disease-resistant. Next, longer top growth is matched by deeper roots. Deep roots are better able to withstand drought and extreme cold. Finally, tall grass shades weed seeds, keeping them from sprouting.

You need to cut cool-season grasses, which falter in the heat of summer, at the top end of the cutting-height range in July and August. Lower the cutting height for these grasses during the cool weather of spring and autumn. And make the last few cuts of the season at the bottom end of the ideal range. This prevents the grass from matting up over the winter and also makes fall leaf cleanup easier. However, forget the "mow high in summer" advice if you have a lawn of warm-season grass, such as Bermuda, St. Augustine or zoysia. These grasses love scorching weather. With them, your task is to mow within the optimum range often enough throughout summer to keep up with their rapid growth.

Checking the mowing height of your mower is simple: Mow a swath of lawn and then measure the length of the grass blades from the ground up. Compare that measurement to the recommended mowing heights. If your mower cuts too low or too high, adjust it.

Mow When the Grass Needs It. For northern grasses, this may mean mowing twice a week in the spring, every two weeks in the summer and once a week in the fall. It's different for warm-season grasses. Typically, they require a cutting once every two weeks in spring and fall, and once a week or more in summer.

The overall rule for all types of grass is not to cut off more than one-third of the grass blade with any one cutting. If you want to maintain your lawn at 2 in., for



example, mow before it exceeds 3 in. Experts have figured out that cutting too much off at one time causes a variety of problems. Most significant, it shocks the grass enough to shut down its food manufacturing system. There will be times when the grass gets away from you and is higher than ideal before you can mow it. But instead of cutting too much off at one time, reduce the height gradually. Start by cutting no more than 1 in. with the first mowing. Allow the grass to recover for a few days and then mow again at a slightly lower setting. Like so many jobs around the yard, the key to mowing is working smarter, not harder.

Tip of the Month

Lighten up on using chemicals on the lawn. Spread organic mulches around shrubbery and hand-weed the lawn instead of using herbicides.

On the Web

The web site of Gardener's Supply Co., www.gardenerssupply.com, features gardening information and earth-friendly products. Click on the Gardening Info tab for how-to bulletins and tips.

VEP Web Site: All You Need to Know About VEP - and More!

-Greg West

Have you visited the VEP Website (<http://sites.netscape.net/hoavep>)? The homepage is a text and simple graphics only page for quick download and viewing. As you open the page and scroll down through it, you will find several items and links to keep you up to date on VEP and neighborhood issues.

At the top of the page you will see any appeals for help on special neighborhood issues. This section currently informs visitors of how they can get involved in a letter writing campaign to help save the Lester Property from the Tax Man. Scrolling down you will see an announcement for the upcoming VEP meeting. The next section contains information on specific VEP and neighborhood issues, currently, the Constitution and By-laws update, City of San Jose redistricting and how it impacts VEP, the Lester Property, VEP Goals, and the construction of Vista Park including links to the current plan drawings.

Scrolling down further, you will find links to City of San Jose council meeting agendas and to Planning Commission agendas, as well as to the City's Environmental Impact Report Library containing EIR information on projects currently going through the approval process. We also have links to SJD crime statistics for our neighborhood and to the website of our neighboring organization, AVCA, which includes links to Mercury News articles of interest to South San Jose neighborhoods.

Scrolling further down, you'll find the names and email contact information for our current VEP Board; on-line

Bulletin Board Ads

MR. FIX-IT will repair leaks, sticking doors, locks, latches, lights, and life's little ills. No job is too small. Call John Marks @ 629-6433.

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Call Moises, a VEP Member

(408) 224-2243 or (408) 690-2460

* * *

VEP will print free ads for its members for transactions involving less than \$250, for lost-and-found, for announcements of general interest to our community, and for kids under 18 or retirees who are looking for work. Free ads must be submitted monthly for publication.

Commercial ads cost \$1.00 per line per month, 10 lines maximum, must be prepaid before publication, and may only be run once per calendar quarter. Commercial ads must be submitted quarterly. No graphics allowed. For information on full-sized ads with graphics (camera ready), contact VEP'S Treasurer listed on the mailing page of this newsletter.

One line contains 50 characters, including spaces. Mail to VEP, P.O. Box 18111, San Jose, 95158. Ads must be received no later than the 10th of the month for inclusion in that month's newsletter. Use the following form as a guide for submitting an ad:

NAME: _____

PHONE # _____

AD WORDING: _____

The VEP Executive Board reserves exclusive right to refuse any ad for any reason. VEP does not certify nor is it responsible in any way for the claims, goods, or services of any advertisers.

VEP
Working together
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Become an active member of VEP:
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THE VEP NEWS



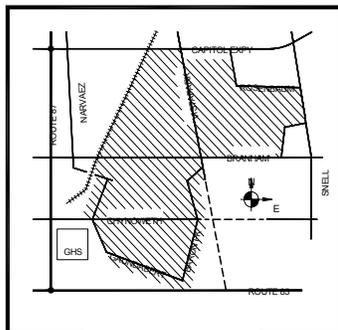
P.O. BOX 18111 SAN JOSE, CA 95158

[Http://sites.netscape.net/hoavep](http://sites.netscape.net/hoavep)

Published monthly by VEP Community Association, a not-for-profit organization of volunteers established in 1969 to serve and represent more than 2000 homes in the Blossom Valley area of southern San Jose. VEP is dedicated to neighborhood maintenance and improvement in its membership area as well as to active involvement in civic affairs. This newsletter is mailed monthly to all members in good standing, to our advertisers, and to schools and government officials serving our membership area. For membership or paid advertisement information, contact our Treasurer or write to the address listed above.

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VEP MEMBER AREA

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VEP
Meeting 7:30 pm
Tuesday, May 22