



# The Riviera Association

May 2022    [www.rivieraassociation.org](http://www.rivieraassociation.org)    P.O. Box 4235 • Santa Barbara, CA 93140-4235

## President's Letter

Dear Neighbor,

Occasionally I emerge from my day-to-day routines and obligations to look around and marvel that I'm living here, in Santa Barbara, on the "Riviera." It's always been a gift to be here where it's pretty and the air is clean, where beaches on one side and mountains on the other beckon me outdoors. From the Riviera, I can be hiking in the front range or lolling on a sandy beach in ten minutes or so, no crazy freeways necessary. In the evenings, in even less time, I can be dining downtown or enjoying a concert or a play. Many world-class artists who regularly play in venues like Disney Hall in LA, or Carnegie Hall in New York, or La Scala in Milan include Santa Barbara on their tours. Yes, it is a joy to visit those renowned cities and theaters, but partaking of our town's offerings is its own pleasure and easier on the budget and the climate.

Among the city's amenities are several parks that we Riviera residents can visit without even once turning over our cars' engines. Just this morning I walked with my dogs over to Orpet Park, both the lower and upper halves. Later this afternoon, the

three of us will go out again. This time we'll hike up the "secret" stairs in the lower section of Franceschi Park off of Dover Road, and achieve some good cardio work. When I catch my breath, I catch the views. They are spectacular.

I do drive a bit when I want a longer hike. The interwoven hilly trails of Parma Park offer woods, fields, an olive grove, seasonal creeks, and, of course, views. Sheffield Reservoir offers a paved path for jogging, biking, or power walking. And, a personal favorite, Skofield Park, has it all: a lawn for games, private areas for picnicking, boulders for climbing, and trees, wildflowers, a running creek, squirrels, deer. Nice.

All of these wonderful parks require ongoing maintenance and care. Weeds need whacking, trails need repairing, fallen branches need removing, picnic tables need painting, and so on. Sometimes parks even need updating, perhaps to provide disability access or to reopen dangerous pathways. And sometimes they need major change, and a major investment, to address decay and community danger. I am thinking in this latter case, of course, of Franceschi Park and its derelict occupant, Franceschi House, here on Mission Ridge in the heart of the Riviera.

Many of us know that the City of Santa Barbara has officially agreed to demolish the Franceschi House while salvaging the medallions that adorn it, and to create a memorial pavilion in its stead. We have invited the city's Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation, Jill Zachary, to address us and answer our questions about all of this at our spring general meeting. She will update us on the city's progress, setbacks, and plans for all of the area's parks, and especially for Franceschi Park.

Ms. Zachary, who holds a master's degree in public administration, has worked for the city since 1999 and has been the Parks and Rec director since 2015. As director, she oversees a department with a budget of \$30 million. Included in her purview are sixty parks, beaches, and recreation facilities, among other things. We are delighted to welcome her as our first keynote speaker at our first in-person meeting since 2019. We hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

Shelley Bookspan  
President, Riviera Association

## Riviera Association Spring General Meeting

Sunday, May 15 • 4–6 p.m. • Riviera Ridge Campus, 2130 Mission Ridge Road

Follow the signs, check in at the courtyard area

- Enjoy appetizers provided by Via Maestra 42 along with wine or another beverage.
- Get an update on Riviera Association activities from President Shelley Bookspan.
- **Keynote Presenter: Jill Zachary, Director, Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department.**

Learn what's happening at Franceschi and other Riviera parks • Voice your concerns and get your questions answered!

Admission is free for members. Nonmembers may join at the meeting for \$40.

## Are You Ready for the Next Big Wildfire?

Wildfire has become a year-round threat to Riviera residents. While preparing for a wildfire may not be fun, it is essential to ensuring your safety.

We recently spoke with Mark von Tillow, wildland specialist for the Santa Barbara Fire Department, to learn what practical steps you can take to better prepare your family for a major wildfire. Following are highlights of his thoughts and recommendations:

**Home Hardening** Hardening your home enables you to reduce the potential for ignition from direct flames or flying embers during a wildfire. Your roof, vents, and eaves are all vulnerable to intruding embers, which can fly up to a mile ahead of a large fire. Roofs should ideally be covered with noncombustible fire-retardant materials such as composition, tile, or metal. You can protect vents using 1/8" wire mesh, which is available at local hardware stores. Eaves should ideally be boxed in with nonflammable materials, but if you cannot afford that expense, maintain the paint or stain on the eaves so it stays smooth, and embers have nothing to grab. For more home hardening insights, visit [www.santabarbaraca.gov/depts/fire/wildland](http://www.santabarbaraca.gov/depts/fire/wildland), scroll down the page and click on the "Ready, Set, Go!" link.

**Defensible Space** Maintaining landscaped area around your home is key to providing a buffer against an approaching wildfire. Make sure Zone 0, the area zero to five feet from your home, is kept completely clear of flammable plants as well as patio furniture, barbecues, or wood piles. Further away from your home, remove the "ladder fuels" that allow a fire to move from lower growing plants to tree canopies by separating and spacing your plants both vertically and horizontally. For more tips on creating defensible space, read the "Ready, Set, Go" brochure mentioned above and contact Santa Barbara City Fire at 805.564.5737 for a free defensible space evaluation.

**Evacuation Planning** All households should develop an evacuation plan with more than one exit route. The Cal Fire web-

site [readyforwildfire.org](http://readyforwildfire.org) includes a number of checklists and videos to help your family create and execute an evacuation plan.

A Riviera Association member who lost her home in the Tea Fire has graciously shared some valuable tips that helped her family to evacuate safely and regain their lives after the fire:

- Revisit your insurance coverage yearly, keeping in mind building inflation costs.
- Photograph all valuable items. Take a picture of every open drawer, every closet, etc.
- Make a video, walking through each room, and pointing out all the important items. On the video, you can say when and where you got the items, and what you paid.
- Do NOT depend on a "Fire Safe." In a 3,000 degree fire like the Tea Fire, all the contents turn to ash and the dial melts. This occurs even if the safe is in the

## Floor Area Ratios Rejected for Multi-Unit Housing

At its February 15th meeting, the Santa Barbara City Council voted unanimously to continue with average unit size density (AUD) as the building density/size standard for multi-unit housing going forward, favoring AUD over the competing floor area ratio (FAR) approach. As a result, density per acre will remain the primary policy mechanism for encouraging the construction of multi-unit housing.

Critics of the FAR approach worried that it would grant developers too much flexibility in the amount of density, leading to larger and taller buildings downtown, primarily targeted to market-rate buyers and renters, while providing only a small percentage of units (i.e. 10%) affordable to our workforce. Members of the Riviera Association along with other community members wrote letters to the city council on this topic, which helped to persuade the city to move away from a FAR-based approach.

The motion gave city staff direction to analyze possible higher housing density along the upper State area along with adap-

ground. Keep your important documents, your insurance photos and your video in an offsite location/safe deposit box.

- Make a "Take List," room by room, so you don't have to make decisions when it's time to pack. **Frame this list** and hang it where you will be able to find it quickly, e.g. on the garage wall or a closet wall.
- Should your home burn, and you are mortgage-free and decide to buy another home rather than rebuilding: If the fire was a governor-declared disaster, you can move your Prop. 13 property tax base, regardless of your age. There are conditions, such as not purchasing a property that is worth more than the one you lost. The tax assessor can provide information on this provision, which is outside of Prop. 19 (which allows three moves with your tax base when you are over 55).

tive reuse of existing structures (e.g. former retail/office buildings) that might be turned into housing, and listed "granny flats" as an ongoing housing option.

The big question is, does granting greater regulatory and density flexibility encourage multi-unit housing that is really affordable to most of our workforce? Unfortunately, the answer in Santa Barbara to date appears to be, "no." Given the high land values in the city coupled with the need for developers to get at least a minimal return on new projects, public and/or private subsidies will almost certainly be needed to boost the housing stock for low- and moderate-income families.



## Pacaso Stirs Controversy in a Riviera Neighborhood

Are you ready for a timeshare next door? Pacaso may buy your neighbor's property and turn it into something like one: a home with multiple co-owners that stay for a weekend or up to a week or two.

What is Pacaso? It is a well-funded real estate startup that is buying properties in desirable single-family neighborhoods which are then divided into timeshare-like interests. Pacaso creates an LLC with up to eight ownership interests and then sells those fractional interests typically to out-of-town buyers looking for a second home. Each of the fractional owners has the right to use the home for up to forty-four days a year, but no more than fourteen days consecutively. Pacaso handles all scheduling and property management for which owners pay a fee, much like a timeshare. Owners can gift their time to anyone but are prohibited from renting it. Many cities, including Santa Barbara, have timeshare prohibitions. Pacaso claims it's not a timeshare.

Our newsletter editors spoke to Riviera Association members Carolyn and Don Vogt to learn about their experience as neighbors of a Pacaso-managed home on the Riviera. The following is an edited version of our conversation.

*Riviera Association (RA) staff:* Where is the Pacaso home located?

*Don:* Across the street, at 1131 Las Alturas.

*RA:* What has been your experience with people staying at the home to date?

*Don:* Last November, there was a large event at the Pacaso house. Noisy catering turned into a booming techno-rock party lasting into the night. The music was so loud that we couldn't even think with our windows closed. Since then, various strangers have shown up, sometimes in three to four cars at a time.

Pacaso's "rules" for owners against amplified music, barking dogs, cars off

the street, etc. have no real enforcement mechanism. It's up to the neighbors to call the police, complain to Pacaso or suffer. And what is Pacaso really going to do to an owner who has paid \$1 million for his forty-four days? In addition to the frequent rotating arrival of strangers coming and going, there are the cleaning and gardening crews between each occupant. An additional problem is that vacationing Pacaso owners and their guests are unlikely to have an interest in participating in the neighborhood, volunteering in the community, or doing other things real neighbors do.

*RA:* What other issues have you noticed?



*Carolyn:* The rotating set of owners and guests at a property can be a neighborhood safety concern. Are strangers we see people who shouldn't be here or are they temporary Pacaso owners, their guests, and invitees?

*Don:* We had hoped to welcome a new neighbor we could get to know. Instead, we have what amounts to a timeshare with short-term strangers. It's like a hole in our neighborhood.

*RA:* Do you know of other cities where Pacaso is operating?

*Don:* Pacaso has purchased homes in several communities in California, such as St. Helena, Sonoma, South Lake Tahoe, and Palm Springs, but they haven't exactly been welcomed with open arms. Angry residents in Sonoma County have been actively opposing Pacaso, and have set up an excellent website ([www.stoppacasonow.com](http://www.stoppacasonow.com)) that

posts news about fighting Pacaso.

*Carolyn:* These communities are outraged that Pacaso is using legal loopholes to circumvent longstanding single family zoning regulations as well as taking properties out of the inventory of homes available for purchase by single families. They are also angered that Pacaso does not pay transient occupancy taxes like other short-term lodging providers, depriving cities of much-needed tax dollars.

*RA:* What approaches are other cities using to stop Pacaso?

*Don:* Several cities have amended and/or expanded existing timeshare ordinances to prohibit "fractional ownership" of homes in their communities or have issued "cease and desist" orders.

*RA:* What actions are you taking to push back locally?

*Don:* Carolyn and I have put out "No Pacaso" signs, met with neighbors, and are talking with other neighborhood associations across the city. We are speaking with Assistant City Attorney Denny Wei to explore possible legal steps and plan to meet with city council members to urge the City to act to preserve single family neighborhoods as we believe the City wishes to do. We would also like to get press and TV coverage about the problem in local and social media.

*Carolyn:* I'd like to point out that this is not just an issue for us. Pacaso is likely looking to buy other homes on the Riviera and in other Santa Barbara neighborhoods. They recently purchased a home on East Valley Road in Montecito. So far Pacaso has bought very expensive homes, however, there is nothing to stop them from expanding to other price points. Anyone could have Pacaso as a neighbor.

*RA:* How can Riviera Association members contact you to help out or learn more?

*Don:* I encourage them to contact us at my special email address, [nopacaso@yahoo.com](mailto:nopacaso@yahoo.com).

# A Look Back at the Santa Barbara Trolley System

Diana Washburn



A designated city landmark, the last remaining streetcar stop is located on Alameda Padre Serra at Lasuen Road.

“Clang, clang, clang went the trolley; ding, ding, ding, went the bell.” These are sounds you would have heard in Santa Barbara between 1875 and 1929. Streetcars proudly served the city for more than fifty years.

The streetcar system was built to serve the rapidly growing population in Santa Barbara in the 1870s. At this time Santa Barbara had wooden sidewalks, a city hall, the Arlington Hotel with ninety guest rooms, and Stearns Wharf, which allowed

by horses and mules and could seat thirty or more passengers. You could jump on a streetcar at State and Cabrillo streets, ride up State Street to the Arlington Hotel on Victoria or continue on to the Mission and up Alameda Padre Sierra to the Normal School (currently the Riviera Business Center) where the last trolley stop was located, all for just fifty cents.

steamer ships to bring in tourists. The bustling city needed a form of public transportation. Cities such as New York and Chicago had trolley systems that connected their expanding districts, boroughs, and neighborhoods. Santa Barbara decided to build its own system.

The first streetcars were pulled

Gentlemen in three-piece suits, and ladies in dresses with lovely hats and gloves, could be seen riding along the routes, some accompanied by their dogs.

The last remaining streetcar stop is on Alameda Padre Sierra at Lasuen Road. Built in 1913, the streetcar stop was designated a city landmark in 1999, and was preserved through a gift from Michael Towbes in 2001.

If you're walking by the streetcar stop, take a moment to sit quietly and let your imagination run free. You just might hear the ringing of the streetcar bells.

—Diana Washburn

Reference: *Mule Car and Trolley, The Story of the Santa Barbara Street Railway* by William B. Everett and Gary B. Coombs.



Diana Washburn

## District 4 Intact After Redistricting

In April the Independent Redistricting Commission, a panel consisting of three impartial judges, completed its 2021–22 update to the City of Santa Barbara district maps. District boundary lines were reviewed and redrawn to reflect population and demographic changes from the 2020 census to meet requirements for population equality and voting rights protections. The updated map is on the [santabarbaraca.gov](http://santabarbaraca.gov) website in the Independent Redistricting Commission section.

The redistricting exercise resulted in only minor changes to District 4 boundaries, which includes the upper and lower Riviera, Cielito, and Eucalyptus Hill neighborhoods, in addition to the Upper East, Foothill, and East San Roque areas. District 4 still encompasses all of the Foothill and Extreme Foothill high-fire zones, good news for Riviera Association members, since it means we will have one district representative to advocate for fire prevention and safety in the foothills. Although Kristen Sneddon will term out by the time the redistricting takes effect, whoever represents District 4 will be able to use that clout at city hall to advocate for public safety interests of residents in the foothill areas, such as when Sneddon successfully fought against allowing greater housing density through SB 9 lot splits in the Foothill and Extreme Foothill hazardous fire zones.

## Riviera Association Board of Directors

### Officers and Directors

Shelley Bookspan, President     John Mosby, Treasurer  
Jeff Byrne, Vice President     Lisa Carlos, Secretary

### Directors

Christina Broderick • Janis Clapoff • Chuck Croninger  
Gayle Eidelson • Michael Erickson • Laurie MacMillan  
Richard Page • Diana Washburn

### Committees

Fire & Safety Lisa Carlos     Newsletter Jeff Byrne  
Membership Gayle Eidelson     Streets & Utilities Richard Page  
Hospitality Diana Washburn     Website Michael Erickson  
Parks, Recruitment/Nominating Chuck Croninger

The Riviera Association News, Vol. 112—May 2022, is a free newsletter published semiannually by:  
The Riviera Association,  
P.O. Box 4235,  
Santa Barbara, CA 93140-4235