

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

John King, BPA President



Unprecedented times! While we are (temporarily) living with this very unusual normal, the residents of Barron Park are at the forefront of being supportive to other neighbors, offering to help those who are homebound or in need of assistance, nodding with a smile of acceptance in the circumstances, taking advantage of our wonderful outdoor spaces, and just plain being neighborly! I've seen neighbors of mine going on walks, a wonderful Barron Park tradition! It's great to see people whom you might not see very often under ordinary circumstances.

The recent cancellation or postponement of our usual neighborhood events – the BPA Annual Meeting, Juana Run, BPA Community Happy Hour, and BPA Board meetings – is just a local example of the impact that the

coronavirus is having on our communities. It is now more important than ever to be mindful of the people who may need help. Be sure to check in with our older residents and see what they might need; it might simply be a few cheerful words exchanged at a safe distance. Don't forget phone calls and email messages. We will all need to come together (but six feet apart!) to get through these bizarre times.

The BPA has had to cancel our 2020 May Fête, of course. With wonderful memories of many past May Fêtes, we will plan for a special day next year when we can dance around the Maypole together and enjoy a wonderful neighborhood tradition. Take care and stay healthy! Please contact me or the BPA anytime at: president@bpapaloalto.org

BOL PARK MAY FÊTE 2020 Postponed to May 2021



Dear Barron Park Community,

It is with sadness that we announce another cancellation in these hard times. For the first time in 42 years, our annual May Fête in Bol Park cannot take place, for all the reasons we know.

We'll save the music, the dancers, our Maypole Dance, the games and races, the treats, the beautiful weather – and most of all – visiting with each other, for this time next year!

Thanks from the BPA.

EMAIL LISTS

The Barron Park Association manages three email lists: *bpa-news*, *bpa-misc*, and *bpa-issues*. The email lists are hosted on Google Groups. To join a list, go to <http://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-email-lists/>. The link provides information about each list and an easy way to subscribe to one or more of them.

2020 Senior Lunches!

1:00 p.m. Tuesdays every other month
April 14 (cancelled – but hopefully June 9!)
August 11, October 13, December 8

Corner Bakery Café
3375 El Camino Real, Palo Alto
All are welcome to join and enjoy these community get-togethers. No reservations needed.

Questions? Contact: Rakhi Singh at:
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Barron Park Elementary School's Inclusive Spirit

By Angie Foster, BPES Parent

From the outside, most would never guess what was happening at Barron Park Elementary on a Wednesday in January. Students grabbed poster boards and markers, decorated them, and held an "Inclusion March" around the school yard perimeter with signs reading "Bee Inclusive," "Bee Kind," and "Bee Respectful." (Don't worry about the spelling – the students are being taught that marches are an effective way to enact social change, and the school mascot is a bee!)



This Barron Park student supports inclusion with love and cookies in her poster. Images courtesy Barron Park Elementary School.

The celebration of Inclusive Schools Week in January is well reflected in the mission statement from the Barron Park Student Council: "We include students with all kinds of abilities, of all genders, with different amounts of money, who speak different languages, who come from different places, who have different learning styles, who practice different religions or no religion at all, and others."

This inclusive spirit of Barron Park Elementary is treasured by the school's families – it's somewhat of a well-kept secret in Palo Alto, but it leaks out on Bay Area parent forums and many families move here just for this reason.

In fact, our family is one of those who moved to Barron Park for its reputation of inclusion. As a parent of a special needs child, I cherish the time my child gets with diverse, accepting, and friendly peers. The school staff go the extra mile to make Barron Park welcoming to

all, through staff trainings, parent events, and school spirit activities. Creating effective inclusion requires significantly more communication and collaboration among staff and parents.

Principal Eric Goddard kicked off the first day of Inclusive Schools Week with an assembly with presentations from the students. The week featured inclusive lunch events and buddy classes where students with learning differences joined peers in other classrooms so they could get better acquainted. As a member of the parent-run Community Advisory Committee on Special Education, I helped organize an inclusive coffee event for school parents. We were joined by Principal Eric Goddard, School Psychologist Hector Mora, and 4th grade teachers Ms. Shromila Gupta and Ms. Sylvia Sanders. The spirit of the week was nicely captured in a reflection from 4th grade students who contributed their individual ideas about the week's events and their experiences (see **Ability Challenge Reflection** below).

When they are immersed in an inclusive attitude, Barron Park students learn that it can be remarkably easy to welcome all of their peers, including my child, no matter what their backgrounds. The school strives to better include students of all abilities in all aspects of school life, not just during Inclusive Schools week. This means students are treated as individuals and supported in their learning so they can be full participants in the school community. "Bee Inclusive!" Try it yourself!

Ability Challenge Reflection

- Everybody is equal.
- Even if someone has a disability, we can still include them.
- People with disabilities have to overcome more things. Like if they have a physical disability, it might be way harder to get words on paper.
- We need to help people who look different, eat different, and act different.
- If you just go over and help someone, they might feel bad because they might assume you think they can't do it.



Another Barron Park student encourages others to "Bee Kind."

- Help people, but if they want to be alone you should respect their feelings. That's helping them.
- You can't actually feel like someone who is disabled is feeling, but you can still try to understand and try to help.
- Even though some people have a disability, it doesn't mean you can't be friends with them or that you're better than they are.
- Always include others even if they're different than you. Just because someone is a little bit different doesn't mean they can't play with you.
- We have learned that a student who has disabilities is really good at doing puzzles, and it is fun to play with him/her.
- You should include everyone.

Thanks to my friend and fellow BPES Parent Tina Chow for her contributions to this story!

Summer BPA Newsletter Deadline – Monday, June 1, 2020!

To Our Valued Past and Future Contributors:

Please submit articles and drafts (preferably in Word) for BPA Newsletter Summer Issue, along with photos/illustrations (separate from text), by Monday, June 1, 2020, to Myrna Rochester, newsletter@bpapaloalto.org

If your Summer idea is a query (for an article, story, report, update, interview, announcement, review, anecdote, or artist's page ...), please contact us in advance. We will mail and email the Summer issue in early July 2020.

Announcements should be for events scheduled after July 15, 2020.

Ivy: the Tree Hugger that Kills

It takes decades for native oaks to mature — save them for ourselves and future generations



Before: here's an oak tree at risk from creeping ivy. Photo: Christine Witzel



After: the ivy on this oak tree has been cut near the ground and removed. Photo: Richard Elder

Ivy is creeping up the trunks of heritage oaks and other canopy trees all around Barron Park, particularly by the creeks. Algerian ivy (the most common kind around here) grows up to 80 feet and **kills mature trees** by absorbing all the sunlight. Ivy also **strangles young trees** by wrapping (“binding”) its vines tightly around them so they can’t grow bigger. Most ivy is on private property. Visit

<http://www.thetreecareguide.com/climbing-vines-tree-killers> or scan the QR code at right to learn more.



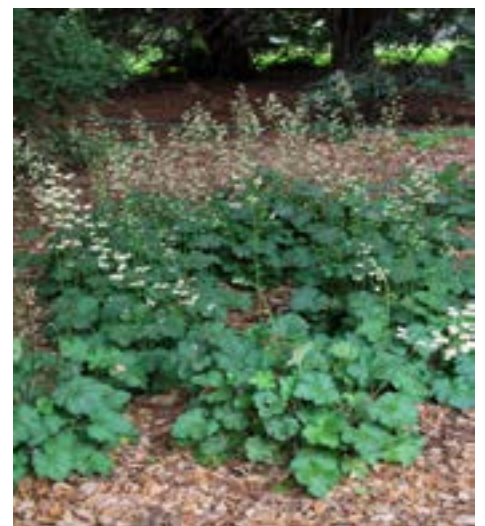
To halt ivy growth, cut the vines near the ground **carefully**, don’t stab the tree. Pull to loosen ivy in the ground and cut roots with a lopper or hand pruner to create a small clearing around the trunk. Make second cuts a foot or two higher, remove the vines between the cuts, and wait for the ivy above to die. When dry, it’s easier to pull off and less likely to tear bark off the tree. This will halt ivy for a year or two — a very worthwhile accomplishment!

To kill the ivy permanently, however, you must pull out the roots. Dig out ivy roots when the ground is soft. For more information, scan the code on the right or go to <https://canopy.org/tree-info/caring-for-trees/native-oak-trees/> But please, **don’t use Roundup™** — it’s not worth the risk to yourself or the environment, especially creeks.



To replace ivy, consider a non-invasive alternative ground cover such as *Heuchera*. Visit <https://bit.ly/2Jw1wHw> or scan the code to learn more.

The BPA’s Native Habitat Committee is seeking volunteers to help Barron Park residents cut ivy vines from trees on their property. To volunteer or to request assistance contact bpativegarden@gmail.com



Heuchera Maxima. Photo courtesy of Bri Weldon. <https://bit.ly/39xg4kv>

BP Donkeys Star in New Palo Alto Humane Society Book

By Carole Hyde, Executive Director, Palo Alto Humane Society



“Girl Bikes Down Lane,” a watercolor by Linda Haim (from *Snapshot*, Palo Alto Humane Society publication).

Perry and Jenny, the donkey residents of Bol Park, inspired the winning story in Palo Alto Humane Society’s 2019 “Ambassadors of Compassion Story Writing Competition.” The donkeys star in this fictional story about an inquisitive girl who meets a lonely donkey and creates a happy ending through resolute action and new friendships.

“Snapshot,” written by then-seventh grader Vandana Ravi of Palo Alto, won the competition’s \$500 first place prize. Vandana, winner of many writing honors, including three first-place awards in the Palo Alto City Library Kids and Teens Writing Contest and most recently a Gold Key for Writing in the 2020 Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, says that she frequently bicycles past the donkeys in the park on her way to school. The donkeys were also an integral part of the award ceremony last May in Bol Park in honor of “Snapshot” as well as the runner-up stories. Palo Alto Humane Society thanks Doug Moran and Jenny Kiratli for arranging the appearance of Perry and Jenny at the festivities.

Our book *Snapshot* has been professionally illustrated with luminous watercolors

by Colombian-born artist Linda Haim (we include some of her working sketches here) and published by Palo Alto Humane Society with international essays and information on resources related to the well-being of donkeys. Donkeys – 45 million of them hard at work around the world – are often mistreated or misunderstood. Palo Alto Humane Society highlights their situation in this new and original book.

Palo Alto Humane Society (PAHS) started the story-writing contest to encourage young people to become ambassadors of compassion through their fiction or non-fiction writing about how animals and people help one another. The PAHS diverse education programs help build a sense of empathy and responsibility for animals and help young people create the framework for an ethical society.

Snapshot is available from PAHS. Please contact PAHS if you would like to purchase a copy for yourself or for your local school or library. To inquire, call (650) 424-1901 or write to pahs@paloaltohumane.org



“Girl Donkey Meet” a watercolor by Linda Haim (from *Snapshot*, Palo Alto Humane Society publication).

Neighbors Go Electric to Fight Climate Change

By Hilary Glann

Residents throughout Palo Alto are going green to reduce their carbon footprints and make our communities less polluted. Here are stories of two Barron Park families who made changes that have made them happier, safer, and healthier.

Green Home Retrofit

As an environmental engineer at UC Berkeley, Tina Chow understands that natural gas can be dangerous due to the risks of leaks, asphyxiation, and particulate matter, in addition to its major contribution to climate change. So, when Tina, who is also a Cool Block Leader, and her husband Eugene decided to remodel their older house, they took advantage of the opportunity to convert their home to 100% electric power.

After getting a new roof, the Chows installed solar panels to power their electric appliances and future electric vehicle. They added four “tubular skylights” in their kitchen and bathrooms to improve daytime lighting and provide solar battery-powered “nightlights.”

The house had old air ducts with asbestos, so the Chows decided to replace the air ducts and install an electric air-source heat pump which functions as both a furnace and air conditioner. Heat pumps work by extracting heat from one place and transferring it to another and are ideal in moderate climates. “I grew up in the Bay Area, but I’ve never had air conditioning before, so that was an unexpected bonus of the heat pump solution,” said Eugene. For their water heater, the Chows installed a tankless electric water heater, which is a solution common in Asia and Europe.

They also replaced their refrigerator, dishwasher, oven, and stove with new and more efficient electric models. “People say they need a gas stove to do ‘real cooking,’” Tina said, “but that’s totally not true. I’m pretty serious about cooking and I’ve never had an issue.”

Tina and Eugene stressed that replacing gas appliances with clean electric versions took some research and planning. “Every home is unique, and choosing, getting permits, ordering, and installing electric appliances takes time,” noted Eugene. “Survey your major appliances now and make plans now before they fail, so you can choose an electric

appliance on your own timeline. For a major remodel, talk to your contractors about the implications of Title 24, California’s Building Efficiency Standards.”

“Getting rid of natural gas in your home sounds scary and unknown,” said Tina. “But in the end, it works great and it feels safer. We no longer worry about gas leaks or a gas line breaking in an earthquake. There’s no risk of carbon monoxide either. And with solar power, our electric bill is zero for much of the year!”



Tina and Eugene Chow with their solar rig. In the future, they plan to install a solar battery to take even less power from the grid and to provide electricity during power outages. Photos by Hilary Glann

To get started on electrifying your home, learn more here and/or talk to the Palo Alto Home Efficiency Genie visit this Palo Alto Utilities site: <https://bit.ly/3bC6SNb>

New Green Wheels

Last Fall, Nancy Krop and Mike Hedblom decided to replace their beloved old Subaru Outback with an electric vehicle (EV). They drove a variety of EVs from Teslas to Priuses, but ultimately chose the Audi e-tron mid-size SUV, which fit their tall frames the most comfortably. They found their switch to electric unexpectedly delightful and easy.

“I feel so great driving an electric vehicle, said Nancy. “It’s joyful, guilt free driving. Our EV is smooth, quiet, and has great acceleration. Our other car is a hybrid, but we find ourselves optimizing our trips to use the EV instead.”

Although Mike was initially concerned about the e-tron’s 200-mile range, it turned out to be a non-issue. “90% of our driving is local, and we can charge at home or while we shop,” Mike noted. “When we drove to Los Angeles, we stopped at a fast charging station along the way and in 30 minutes we had a full charge.”



Nancy Krop and Mike Hedblom were surprised by the joy they experience driving an EV and appreciate the lower operating costs versus a gas-powered vehicle.

According to the US Department of Energy, <https://bit.ly/3dHpbT3> costs less than half as much to travel in an EV than a gas-powered car because electricity is less expensive than gasoline, and EVs are more efficient than conventional vehicles. “We’re thrilled with no more buying gas, no more paying for oil changes and no more routine expensive maintenance, as required for a gas or even hybrid car,” said Nancy.

CALL FOR ARTISTS!



Created by Nathan Driscoll from Noun Project

Are you a Barron Park artist, photographer, artisan, crafts-person, sculptor, designer, musician, composer, writer, poet ... ? Do you know one?

You and your work can be featured — with samples or as an interview — in a future

BPA Newsletter. Please send us your idea with a draft artist’s statement and reproducible samples or a description of your work to: mbrbpa@sonic.net or newsletter@bpapaloalto.org

What Are Those Things in the Oak Trees?

By Jeralyn Moran

Barron Park is blessed with several types of oak trees, the most familiar being the Valley oak (*Quercus lobate*) and the Live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). As you look closer at these trees, you might see odd-looking growths, usually on the smaller branches. They might take the form of roundish tan balls, small pointed blobs, or a wide spot on a branch that is riddled with holes.



Look up into some of our neighborhood oak trees for this common gall. Photo: <http://leftcoastnatty.blogspot.com/2010/09/oak-gall-wasps-cynipids.html>

You might be wondering, “Does this tree have a disease ... ?” Yes and no. These growths are called “galls” and are typically formed when the tree has been invaded by an opportunistic (parasitic) insect inviting itself into the tree tissue to make a home for itself and its offspring. The most common insect with this habit is the Oak Gall wasp, belonging to the Cynipidae family. Unlike the wasps that are unwelcome guests at your summer picnic, these are only about the size of a house fly (or smaller) and have no desire to sting you.

The female adult Gall wasp uses her “ovipositor,” the long thin spike at her rear end, to poke into the tree’s “meristematic” (young) tissue – this could be leaf, bud, or cambium (just under the bark) tissue. She lays one to two eggs that then proceed to trick the tree into forming a “gall” around them. How? The egg secretes chemicals that the tree reacts to as if they were growth hormones. A small casing is created around the developing eggs; then a connection is established to the tree’s nutritious vascular system which sets up the food supply for the wasp larvae to grow. It’s a happy setup for the baby wasps, comfortably encased inside spongy cells, with an



An “apple” oak gall. Notice the vascular system extending from the single egg. Photo: www.projectnoah.org

outer layer of hard cells for further protection. The larvae might stay in their gall home for weeks, months, or even years, depending on the climate and the specific type of Gall wasp (there are over 50 species in this insect family). When they finally pupate into adult wasps, they dig a tunnel out of the gall and fly away.

Many Gall wasp species alternate between sexual and asexual generations – in the spring, the male and female wasps mate; then the female lays the eggs. In the fall, the female creates offspring alone (called parthenogenesis), translating into galls that overwinter before the cycle begins again.

There are parasitic wasps (also in this cynipid family) that invade already built galls and lay their own eggs there. The invading larvae eat the original gall-forming wasp babies. Yet other aggressive Gall wasp species will prey on these, and so on – the galls are consequently a not-so-simple ecosystem in and of themselves!

Fun Facts

- There are over 50 types of Gall wasps.
- Galls can be anywhere from 1 mm to 15 cm (150 mm) in size, depending on the host tree species and the location on the tree.
- In many cynipid (Oak Gall) wasp populations, only females exist – they have developed a way to reproduce without any males around.
- Some Oak galls secrete nectar to attract ants – these ants then defend the gall against other invading enemies.

- Gall wasps have abdomens that are flattened sideways.
- In England, scientists found 17 different Gall wasp species growing inside a single gall – the ultimate in communal living!?



A Gall wasp on a fingertip. Photo by J.R. Baker

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER SPRING 2020

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PRINTER

Prodigy Press



2020-2021 Barron Park Association Membership

Thanks to all the supporting members of the Barron Park Association! Memberships are now due for April 2020 - March 2021. (If you joined or renewed after December 1, 2019, your membership is current.) If you need to check your membership status, just email:

barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com

Your annual dues support BPA-sponsored community events and Committee activities, including the BPA Babysitter List, quarterly Newsletter, monthly Community Happy Hours, May Fête, and Movie Nights.

Your support is greatly appreciated! Join the BPA online using PayPal at:

<http://bpapaloalto.org/membership-form> or mail this completed form with your check to:

Barron Park Association

724 Barron Ave.

Palo Alto, CA 94306

Name(s):	Email Addresses:
Address:	Phone:
<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter: I want the online edition instead of a mailed copy	BPA Babysitter List <input type="checkbox"/> I want to list a sitter/childcare provider <input type="checkbox"/> I need the password to access list

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fellow | \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Member | \$30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior | \$15 |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Business | \$50 |

Additional Contribution: \$ _____

Total Contribution: \$ _____

Make check payable to: Barron Park Association. Note: Membership and contributions are not tax deductible.

Need any more reasons to support the BPA?

The BPA is a volunteer organization open to all residents and businesses in the Barron Park/Green Acres 2 neighborhood. The BPA supports committees that work to make Barron Park more livable, safe, and sustainable. Please send an email to barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com to connect with a Committee chair on the following community interests at:

- Shared bicycle/pedestrian pathways

- Safety and emergency services
- Social events
- Environmental programs
- Senior lunches
- Welcoming committee
- Zoning and land use
- Traffic and streets.

The BPA supports several other Barron Park volunteer and community projects. If you're

interested, please contact these groups directly:

- Donkey care and handling: Jenny Kiratli at barronparkdonkeys@gmail.com
- Volunteer for Bol Park Native Habitat support or for Ivy removal: Rich Elder at bpnativegarden@gmail.com
- Lead or support a Cool Block Palo Alto team: Hilary Glann at hglann@gmail.com



CREEKSIDE INN

Your home away from home

(650) 493-2411



The Creekside Inn welcomes Barron Park residents and their guests! Perfect for visiting relatives. Preparing to renovate your home? Reserve the Creekside Inn's Renovation Package (call us). Stay in the neighborhood until renovations are complete — your home away from home!

Complimentary amenities included in our rates:

Room Amenities

- Complimentary Wireless (Wi-Fi) high-speed internet access throughout the property
- All 136 rooms offer a patio or balcony
- Refrigerators in all rooms
- Complimentary bottled water
- Complimentary local and toll-free calls
- Complimentary in-room safes for the largest of laptop computers (17-inch size)

- In-room coffee & tea
- Hair dryer
- Make-up mirror
- 50+ television stations including HBO, CNN, and ESPN
- Voicemail
- Bathrobes in room
- Iron and ironing board
- Air-conditioned rooms

Reception Services

- Complimentary Wall Street Journal & USA Today available weekdays at reception
- Complimentary morning pastries, coffee & tea served daily in lobby
- Guests are invited to join complimentary evening wine hour at Cibo's Lounge Sunday through Thursday 5 pm to 7pm

The Barron Park Association thanks the Creekside Inn for graciously providing rooms for our monthly meetings.

BPA Native Habitat Committee Spring Update

By the BPA Native Habitat Committee

The Bol Park Native Garden would have been on the California Native Plant Society's Going Native Garden Tour (GNGT), originally scheduled for May 2, 2020. Hopefully next year? For more information see the GNGT website at: <https://gngt.org/GNGT/HomeRO.php>

All the new plants in our Bol Park Native Garden have been labeled with both scientific and common names, thanks to Melanie and Peter Cross. If you want ideas for gardening with native plants, the Bol Park Native Garden is the place to visit!

A volunteer garden maintenance work party was held on Saturday, February 22, and included both neighbors and Grass Roots Ecology volunteers. Many hands pulled many weeds and the garden looks much better! Members of the California Native Plant Society were also with us, giving away sprouted Coast Live Oaks as a part of the movement to Re-Oak California.



Checkerbloom planted only three months ago. Photo: Linda Elder

We hope to schedule another work party soon. Keep your eye out for the date, or contact bpnativegarden@gmail.com to be put on the list. Just a couple of hours of your time – outdoors too! – makes a huge difference to beautify our neighborhood.

The campaign that Chris Witzel started in the last Newsletter to save our oak trees from invasive ivy is now an official effort of the BPA Native Habitat Committee. See the flyer created by the ivy-fighting Tree Huggers on [page 3 of this Newsletter](#).



Coast Silk Tassel blooming in the garden. Photo: Peter Cross

Nature's Wonderful Ingredients: Fennel Seeds

By Jaya Pandey, Green Beans Coordinator

When I was growing up, I was fascinated by the use of different herbs and spices on a daily basis in my mother's kitchen. Now I have put together my own list, and many of them have become a part of my routine, given their flavorful taste and health benefits.



Fennel seeds in the kitchen. Photo: Jaya Pandey

Today, I'd like to highlight the medicinal value of fennel seeds (scientific name: *Foeniculum vulgare*) which is a culinary herb. Fennel seeds have anti-inflammatory properties and also support the digestive system. They contain the volatile oils anethole, fenchone, and estragole. Their medicinal properties are mostly attributed to these oils.

Two simple recipes from my mother's kitchen using fennel seeds:

- Add 1-2 teaspoons of fennel seeds to approximately 2 cups boiling water, and allow the water to turn golden yellow. Once it cools down, put it in the fridge, let it get cold, and enjoy it as a soothing drink.
- Dry roast fennel seeds, and add dry grated raw coconut (1:1). Chew this mixture after your meals as a mouth freshener as well as for its digestive benefits!



Fennel plant in bloom. <https://bit.ly/3asZ3JD>

Our Barron Park Eichlers

By Douglas L. Graham, Barron Park Historian

1948 – The Year of Change

Nineteen-forty-eight was a key year in the history of our neighborhood. It was the year Barron Park tipped over from being predominantly agricultural to becoming primarily residential. During almost thirty years of subdivision, only about one quarter of the area had been developed for housing. Then in 1948 the development process accelerated dramatically.

The Agricultural Era Was Just About Over

Early that year, there were still several hundred acres in apricot, prune, and pear orchards. We still had tomato fields and a few berry patches. Cattle still grazed to the west and south on the Stanford lands where the Research Park, the VA hospital, and Gunn High School now stand. Encina Dairy occupied much of the land between Matadero Creek and Barron Avenue, from Whitsell Avenue to La Donna Avenue (then known as Whitsell Street and La Rosa Street). Encina Dairy was forced out in 1948 after complaints by many new neighbors. By the end of the year, more than half of Barron Park's acreage had been laid out in residential building lots. Farming was quickly becoming a way of life that existed only in the past and in the memories of established residents.

Joseph Eichler – Developer and Social Visionary

Wikipedia describes Joseph Eichler as “a 20th-century post-war American real estate developer known for developing distinctive residential subdivisions of mid-century modern style tract housing in California.” His company built more than 11,000 homes in nine communities in Northern California and homes in three communities in Southern California. “Eichler became one of the nation’s most influential builders of modern homes.” He is “considered by some to be a social visionary and commissioned designs primarily for middle-class Americans.”

Saying “NO” to Anti-Semitic and “Jim Crow” Builders

In the 1940s and '50s, many (perhaps most) homes sold in Barron Park carried deeds that banned sale to anyone who was not White.

Eichler ignored these. He was the first major American builder to adopt a non-discrimination policy, and sold homes to anyone of any religion or race.” In 1958, he resigned from the National Association of Home Builders when they refused to support a non-discrimination policy.



Joseph Eichler.
Photo: <https://www.eichlernetwork.com>

Inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright

Paul Adamson wrote that “... the entire conceptual basis for Eichler Homes was almost unbelievably idealistic for the notoriously competitive home-building industry.” One of his founding partners said: “Everything about them was different.” During the World War II years, Eichler himself rented a Frank-Lloyd-Wright-designed home in Hillsborough. He lived there with his wife and two sons, and the experience apparently changed his life. He was intrigued by “the spatial complexities of the house – the overlapping of exterior and interior, and the way daylight filtered in from so many directions, changing the mood of each room throughout the day.” Several years later, after successfully developing ordinary tracts in Southern California, Eichler hired the respected architect and Wright disciple Robert Anshen to design the initial Eichlers.

California Modernism – “Bringing the Outside In”

Eichler homes are examples of an architectural style that has come to be known as “California Modernism.” They “... typically feature glass walls, post-and-beam construction, and open

floor plans in a style indebted to Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe. Eichler home exteriors featured flat or low-sloping A-framed roofs, vertical two-inch pattern wood siding, and spartan facades with clean geometric lines. One of Eichler’s signature concepts was to “bring the outside in, achieved via skylights and floor-to-ceiling windows with glass transoms looking out on protected and private outdoor rooms, patios, atriums, gardens and swimming pools. Also, of note is that most Eichler homes feature few, if any, front-facing (i.e., street-facing) windows; instead house fronts have either small, ceiling-level windows or small, rectangular windows with frosted glass. Many other architectural designs have large windows on all front-facing rooms.”



Example of an Eichler Home, El Centro Gardens 2, 1950s. Photo: Original courtesy Anshen & Allen Architects, circa 1950; reprinted in Wally Fields, *Eichlerholc Musings*, Summer/Fall, circa 2005.

Inside: More Innovation

“... Numerous unorthodox and innovative features” included “exposed post-and-beam construction; tongue and groove decking for the ceilings following the roofline; concrete slab floors with integral radiant heating; lauan (Philippine mahogany) paneling; sliding doors for rooms, closets and cabinets; and typically, a second bathroom located in the master bedroom. Later models introduced the distinctive Eichler entry atriums, an open-air enclosed entry foyer designed to further advance the concept of integrating outdoor and indoor spaces.”

Pioneer Eichler Developments

Although Barron Park is not the site of the very first Eichlers, it is home to two of his “very first pioneering developments” – University Gardens and El Centro Gardens, the latter a proving ground for his initial architect-designed efforts.

How to Find the Barron Park Eichlers of Josina Avenue

There are 132 Eichlers in Barron Park. They constitute about 9% of our R-1 housing stock. Most of them were built in four tracts, described below. Genuine “Eichlerholics” and those who are simply curious can easily view Eichlers in our neighborhood. A caveat: starting in about 1990 many Eichlers were extensively modified, and the trend continues today. The fastest and easiest way to see our Eichlers is to drive, bike, or walk up Josina Avenue from Matadero Avenue at the bridge over Matadero Creek along the winding 0.3-mile-long street to its end at Barron Avenue next to the Barron Park Elementary School driveway. It’s a beautiful street that happens to contain many modified Eichlers. A personal note: when my wife and I visited in the late summer of 1972, I fell in love with the area; we were so impressed that we decided to concentrate our house search in Barron Park.

El Centro Gardens

The Eichlers of El Centro Gardens are very early designs which lack many of the characteristic Eichler features that were fully developed later on. Some of the early designs had dark, rich redwood interiors and full-height walls, causing one owner to say they “feel more solid” (than the later Eichlers). The windows were smaller, and siding was horizontal, but the flat roofs, post-and-beam construction, open floor plans, and other features are enough to identify them as genuine Eichlers. Another owner “... described them as ‘transitional,’ referring to the evolutionary course of the Eichler design.” El Centro Gardens included 16 properties on El Centro and Paul Avenues, designated County Tract #413, filed in November 1947. See map above showing both El Centro Gardens and El Centro Gardens #2.

University Gardens

Apparently, University Gardens was the name given to the Bol Tract when marketing and sales began. “Gardens” in the name appears to have been a brand-development device. University Gardens included 68 properties, mainly on Josina and Kendall Avenues, with some on Barron and La Donna Avenues, and was filed as Tract #533 in May 1948. The land had been owned by the Bol Family. Cornelis and Josina Bol emigrated from Holland in 1933 to escape a future they felt would be dominated by Hitler’s Nazi Germany. They



The first Eichler tracts in Barron Park. Fragment of City of Palo Alto map, circa 2010; tract boundaries and labeling by Doug Graham, 2020.

bought a property on Roble Ridge where they lived, and then acquired the property that became “the donkey pasture” between the railroad and Laguna Avenue (today’s Bol Park). After the death of Cornelis Bol, who was a Stanford researcher and renowned inventor, Josina arranged the sale of the donkey pasture at a fraction of market value as a park for the neighborhood. The Bols also owned the land on the south side of Matadero Creek that became the site of Barron Park Elementary School and also University Gardens, both built in 1948. Josina, the principal street in the tract, was named for Mrs. Bol.

Heavenly homes ... Out of this world!

“Heavenly homes ... Out of this world!” read Eichler’s May 1949 ad in the *Palo Alto Times* (according to Marty Arbunich in his article, “Eichler’s Early Years: 1949-’50”). “Never before have Californians been offered such truly up-to-the-minute modern homes.” The ad copy went on, accentuating “values” and “extras”: 1,230 square feet with three bedrooms, a two-car garage, one-and-one-half baths, a brick fireplace, parquet oak floors, and central heating. All for \$600 down. Promoted in the *Times* as a “new, efficiently planned, quality community of streamlined modern homes,” they “featured complex roof planes that interlocked and extended over

one another. Eichler’s new plans also brought new prices ... University Gardens opened in September for \$10,950.”

Treichler on the Eichlers of Josina Avenue

John Treichler, now a resident of Los Altos Hills, lived for many years in an Eichler at 718 Josina Avenue. He sent me two notable e-mails in April 2009. In the first he said the original building permit, dated 1949, indicates that 718 Josina (which backs up to the creek) cost \$9,500. In the second, he offered some interesting information: “I thought I’d pass on to you what the folks we bought the house from in 1979 told us. True or not, I don’t know. They told me that the houses along Josina were Joe Eichler’s first attempts at building houses and he nearly went broke as a result.” (I’m sure John meant that this was Eichler’s first attempt at controlling the cost of his innovative design features. Joe had had serious problems with that in Southern California.) John went on to write that “The houses on both sides of Josina had the now classical Eichler no-attic flat or slanted roof style but he built them on concrete piers, he used central air for heating, they had windows of more or less typical California size (i.e., much smaller than the “classical” Eichler), and had standard sheet rock for the inside walls. The former owners told me that they

cost Eichler enough that he had to ask \$9,500 for them, more than most folks, including returning veterans on the GI bill, could afford, and therefore he had a hard time selling them. I was told that his reaction to this was to ‘cheapen up’ Eichler Version 2.0 across the railroad tracks in South Palo Alto by \$1,500 to \$2,000. He did this by (1) dropping the floor onto a concrete slab, (2) (providing) the heating through the floor, and (3) using glass and mahogany plywood as cheaper alternatives to the interior and exterior siding. With the price lower, he sold a lot more houses, or so I was told.”

Views of Kendall Avenue

The only photographs we have from the Eichler construction days in University Gardens were taken by the first owners of 748 Kendall Avenue. Below is a rear view of 748 Kendall, showing the large amount of glass facing the private back yard, a classic Eichler feature.



748 Kendall Avenue, rear view.

The photo to the right shows the front view of 748 Kendall. Note the paucity of glass facing the street, another classic feature. The photo also shows the gorgeous old Valley oak that has unfortunately not survived.

El Centro Gardens #2

The third Eichler development in Barron Park was El Centro Gardens #2, which included 16 properties on La Jennifer Way. A one-sentence write-up in *The Streets of Palo Alto* says the street was named for “... Jennifer Hill, the daughter of property owners.” Eichler planned the development in a cruciform shape, unique, I believe, in Palo Alto. It presaged some of Eichler’s later attempts to create planned communities in South Palo Alto (especially Greenmeadow). El Centro Gardens #2 was honored nationally in 1950, along with Green Gables and Greer Park in Palo Alto, by *Architectural Forum Magazine* as “Subdivisions of the Year.” The development was designated Tract #714 and filed in January 1950. Home prices had apparently risen sharply from the



748 Kendall Avenue, front view with oak tree.

previous levels, as you can see in this 1950s ad, offering Eichler homes for \$14,500 each.



El Centro Gardens 2, 1950s. Ad in *Palo Alto Times*, circa 1950; reprinted in Wally Fields, *Eichlerholic Musings*, Summer/Fall, circa 2005

The Single-Story Overlay Zone Fight

Overlay zoning – i.e., the “single-story overlay zone” – was adopted by the Palo Alto City Council in 1992 as a way to allow neighborhoods as small as a few dozen homes to control the design and size of new building proposals by, for example, discouraging second-story additions, with a 17-foot height restriction on new residential construction. Owners of homes in Eichler clusters were the first to sign on.

The residents of Barron Park’s El Centro Gardens #2 found themselves involved in such a property rights dispute in 1998 when a new owner proposed replacing a single-story Eichler with a two-story house, much larger, in a totally different design, with windows allowing occupants to view their neighbors’

previously unviewable back yards. As a result, homeowners on La Jennifer Way became the seventh group to join the overlay zoning areas of Palo Alto. Indeed, with a few exceptions, the houses on La Jennifer Way have retained their Eichler identities.

The Facebook Intrusion

In 2011, La Jennifer Way enjoyed a new kind of intrusion. Mark Zuckerberg rented 819 La Jennifer Way and moved in with his crew of students and young graduates from Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he had been imagining a new way to meet people – which then, of course, morphed into the Facebook app. Beefed up with new team members from Stanford and Silicon Valley, the basic coding work was done for Facebook at La Jennifer Way before Mark and his famous crew moved out and upwards. Before they left, they managed to damage the home’s chimney with their improvised backyard zip-line. Barron Park had never seen anything quite like it. It was stimulating to say the least.

Maybell Gardens

The last Eichler development tract in Barron Park was Maybell Gardens, filed as Tract #970 in August 1952. It included 30 properties on Amaranta Avenue and Amaranta Court, and on Georgia Avenue. By this time, there were few properties left in the Barron Park area large enough to be interesting to Eichler Homes, Inc. The last extensive apricot orchards in the area were being cleared to build Green Acres 2. Amaranta Avenue had been pushed through from Encina Grande Park to Maybell Avenue, opening what is still the only north-south route through the southern part of Barron Park. Loma Vista Elementary School (today’s Juana Briones) would open in September 1952. The attention of the Eichler company swung to South Palo Alto, which still had a lot of bean fields and other truck-gardening areas open to the bulldozers.

Selling Eichlers to Post-War Home-Buyers

This story has two themes: first, the evolution of the Eichler design to respond to the fraction of the buying public that was interested in “modernist” home features, and second, the difficulties encountered in selling the concepts to the general mass of potential home-buyers. Rosalie Price, when selling her original Eichler, summed up buyers’ reactions: “There were two types who visited our home, the ones that said it looked like a shack, and the ones who

said ‘Wow!’” Eichler’s strategy of price reductions alone had backfired and almost put him out of business. Design improvements and exciting new features seemed to bring more success.

The “Last” Barron Park Eichlers?

Several years ago, I talked with Tom and his late wife Cassandra Moore, whose large Eichler is built on a flag lot at 3766 La Donna. Both the Moores’ house and their neighbor’s

Eichler on the flag lot next door were built in 1974 – the year of Joseph Eichler’s death at the age of 74. The Moores’ house is classic Eichler in design, larger than most, and situated on a large lot. It is probably one of the last Eichlers built in Palo Alto, as well as in Barron Park. It is a bit ironic that its lot nearly touches the corner of El Centro Gardens and is only 100 yards from the closest lot in University Gardens – the first two Eichler developments in our neighborhood.

Historian’s Note

I hope you have enjoyed this story about the Eichler homes of Barron Park. If you have additional information or photographs that I should add to the record, or corrections or questions, please contact me: dgrahampaca@gmail.com, 984 Ilima Way, Palo Alto CA 94306, (650) 493-0689.

What’s that Sound? What’s Happening?

By Justin Kitch, James Witt, Tina Tang, and Xin Liu

If you hear a loud grumbling sound while walking the Barron Park bike path at night, it means summer is almost here! That’s because a few years ago, our neighbors at the VA Hospital installed an industrial cooling tower directly behind the donkey pasture. It runs for days at a time throughout the summer, making a low-pitched roar that sounds to some like a hovering flying helicopter, to others like an idling refrigerator truck or propeller plane. Repeated attempts to inquire about the operation and purpose of the tower – made by several of our Barron Park neighbors – have all gone unanswered.

What we do know is that the cooling tower (pictured here) is called a “Marley AV” and is manufactured by SPX Cooling. It is a massive structure standing three stories tall. These cooling towers are used for a variety of applications, all involving the disbursement of excess heat from mechanical plants, large HVAC systems, and nuclear medicine operations.

Alarming, towers like this one are linked to a variety of health ailments – besides just the headaches, irritation, and peace-disruption caused by noise pollution. The most notorious disease spread by cooling towers is Legionnaires’ disease, so named because the pathogen was first discovered after 29 people died during a Legionnaires’ Convention in Philadelphia in 1976. The culprit was a contaminated cooling tower on top of the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel where the 2000+ American Legion attendees were staying.

Other large Legionnaires’ disease (LD) outbreaks caused by cooling towers occurred



The VA Hospital cooling tower near Barron Park. Photo: Justin Kitch

in England in 1985 (a cooling tower on the roof of a hospital, resulting in 28 deaths), the Netherlands in 1999 (a cooling tower at a convention, resulting in 32 deaths), and Spain in 2001 (16,000 people in total were infected, with a 1% mortality rate). In 2005, 17 residents of a nursing home in Canada died after 127 residents became ill, a 13% mortality rate. The source of that outbreak was traced to a cooling tower on the nursing facility’s roof.

Closer to home, across the Bay at San Quentin Prison, a major outbreak occurred in 2015. Eighty-one inmates and employees. Even the “Happiest Place on Earth” has recently battled LD, with a 2017 Disneyland outbreak from a cooling tower sickening 22 visitors.

LD is not the only pathogen that can be spread by cooling towers. But since LD

cannot be transmitted from person to person, only by aerosolized water droplets, it’s the perfect bug for researchers to track the radius of cooling tower transmissions. An important study found that incidents of LD increased tenfold in a radius of one kilometer and reached six to seven kilometers from contaminated cooling towers. A 1 km radius from the VA’s cooling tower includes Gunn High School, Barron Park Elementary, and much of the Barron Park neighborhood between Matadero and Los Robles.

If you still aren’t convinced we have a potential health risk in our back yard, consider that the manufacturer of the cooling tower, SPX Cooling Systems, has donated millions of dollars towards research on LD. Like tobacco company research, which attempted to show that lung disease was caused by an array of factors, this research attempts to prove that

LD outbreaks can come from many sources besides cooling towers. Much like tobacco research, these studies read like press releases instead of peer-reviewed research.

Besides the scary prospect of an improperly maintained tower causing a deadly disease, the cooling tower presents other environmental problems. Neighbors along the creek have noticed a significant decrease of bird and insect activity whenever the tower is running. And the donkeys aren't happy about the noise either! Decibel readings taken along the bike path and creek when the tower is operating range from 60 dB to 85 dB depending on the wind and how fast the tower is running. Readings inside of houses bordering the creek and bike path have registered 65 dB, which is 25 dB higher than the ambient sound of our idyllic neighborhood.

The Palo Alto City Code regulates any noise higher than 10 dB above the ambient sound level as a public nuisance, but refuses to approach the VA about this issue. In the words of one officer, who requested anonymity, "What are little old Palo Alto police officers going to do to the big, bad VA?" Also, anonymously, one VA employee of the physical plant told us that the cooling tower would never pass proper permitting, but isn't subject to local building restrictions since it is on government land. This same source said that the VA knows it is an issue since it relocated the tower from a more subterranean location closer to Foothill Expressway, but won't do anything about it unless there is "significant

pressure," likely from our Congressperson."

So, let's create significant pressure! If you are concerned about the cooling tower's noise pollution and possible health risks, as we've described them here, please contact Congresswoman Anna Eshoo and let her know that we are ready to get some answers from the VA. Mail or phone:

Congresswoman Anna Eshoo
698 Emerson Street
Palo Alto, CA 94301
Phone: (650) 323-2984
Fax: (650) 323-3498

For email messages, use the contact form: <https://eshoo.house.gov/contact/email-me>
If you would like to do your own research, please see some helpful starting points below:

- Legionnaires' disease (Wikipedia): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legionnaires%27_disease
- The Journal of Infectious Diseases: <https://bit.ly/3dFACUu>
- SPX Cooling product page: <https://spxcooling.com/cooling-towers/marley-av/>
- More PubMed articles on cooling towers and Legionnaires' disease: <https://bit.ly/340cnCG>
- In the meantime, we welcome any suggestions that you have to keep our Barron Park neighborhood wild, peaceful, and safe! Write to Justin Kitch at: jkitch@gmail.com or James Witt at: jw@jameswitt.com

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BPA Board Meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of most months at 7:15 p.m. Neighbors are welcome.

BPA Community Happy Hours are held the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 6:00 p.m.

For Meeting and Happy Hour schedules write to: president@bpapaloalto.org

www.bpapaloalto.org

Compliments of Sarah Vue and James Witt

El Camino Business Update, Spring 2020

By Bob Moss

Since my last report in November 2019 there continue to be changes in occupancy on El Camino Real between Adobe Creek and Page Mill Road, plus a change in vacancies, but overall vacancy rates are still low. Retail vacancy rates are increasing in general due in part to Internet competition.

On the Barron Park side:

The CPI site at 3300 El Camino is starting construction of a residential development.

The former Jewish Study Network offices at 3626 and 3628 El Camino, and Marine Recruiting at 3666B, are vacant and have been so for several years.

The status of Palo Alto Tailoring at 3700, corner of Barron Avenue, was clarified in a recent article in the *Palo Alto Weekly*. There is still equipment in the store and clothes on

racks and benches, but they have been closed for several years. The operator finally admitted the business is gone and the site has been vacated.

Fowl Play Roadside Chicken at 3850 closed abruptly in the Fall. The former Baron Barista site at 3990C, at El Camino and Los Robles, is still vacant. The new Su Zhe Eatery has opened at 4256 El Camino, replacing Su Hong Restaurant. (A five-story hotel, approved several years ago for that site, has not begun construction.)

On the Ventura side:

A proposal to redevelop the former Mike's Bikes site at 3001 El Camino with 19,800 sq. ft. of ground floor retail and 30 apartments, plus 20 apartments in a building behind the retail, was approved long ago, but is still not under construction. CleverTech (Apple

computer repair) now occupies 3159.

The Foot Locker site at 3225, at Portage, was demolished last summer and a mixed-use project with a four-story building that will have 6,513 sq. ft. of ground floor retail and six housing units, plus a two-story rear building with 2,061 sq. ft. of ground floor retail and 1,826 sq. ft. of second floor offices is under construction.

From Europe with Love (skin care) is on the second floor at 3483 El Camino; Victoria Ballet & beyond is upstairs at 3485. (Both are above Dumpling City at 3487.) Spring Spa Massage replaced Clout House at 3489. Monsoon Dance Company (Bollywood and Indian Contemporary) moved into the vacant site at 3527.

Redevelopment of 3703-3709 at Wilton to a five-story, 61-unit apartment project, with housing for lower income and handicapped residents and a small amount of ground floor retail, is likely to begin this summer. Treasure Island Stamps and Coins, Nouvelle Bridal, and Euromart grocery will be leaving.

The site at 3877 (the former Compadres Restaurant) is being demolished and will be replaced by 4,027 sq. ft. of retail and 17 condos. The Chicago Pizza building at 4115 was demolished and will be replaced by a three-story mixed-use building with seven apartments, ground floor retail, and offices. (Chicago Pizza is now located at the corner of El Camino and Cambridge Avenue.) 4153A El Camino Way, the former site of Instrumental, Inc., is still vacant.

Vacancy rates under 5% are considered full occupancy. There are seven vacancies on the Barron Park side: 3516, 3626, 3628, 3632, 3666, 3850, and 3990C, totaling 17,108 sq. ft. The lots at 3710 and the Thain lot at 4146 have been vacant for decades. Each had several developments approved, but nothing was built. Although several townhouse projects were approved for 4146, nothing is under construction.

There are six vacancies on the Ventura side: 3001, 3011, 3877, 4115, 4117, and 4131, totaling 23,738 sq. ft. The Combes lot at 3585 has been vacant for more than 40 years. The former Curves site at 4117 closed about five years ago.

Vacancy rates	Aug. '17	Aug. '18	Feb. '19	Nov. '19	Mar.'20
El Camino, Ventura Side	6.7%	5.2%	5.2%	5.5%	4.6%
El Camino, Barron Park Side	3.6%	2.2%	2.8%	3.0%	3.1%
El Camino Way	9.3%	3.5%	4.8%	4.6%	2.4%
Total Vacancy incl. El Camino Way	5.0%	3.2%	3.8%	3.8%	3.8%

BPA ADDRESS REMINDERS

- **Membership:** Lisa Berkowitz Landers at barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com
- **BPA President:** John W. King at president@bpapaloalto.org
- **BPA Treasurer:** John W. King at johnwadeking@gmail.com
- **BPA Newsletter Editor:** Myrna Rochester at mrbpa@sonic.net or newsletter@bpapaloalto.org
- **BPA Business Liaison:** Paul Yang at pabloyang@yahoo.com
- **Welcoming Committee Chair:** Gwen Luce at gluce@cbtnorcal.com
- **Emergency Services Volunteer Program:** Maurice Green at mauryg3@comcast.net or Lydia Kou at lydiakou@gmail.com
- **BPA Sitter/Childcare:** For subscribers: to download or be listed: <https://bit.ly/2UP5GPY>

- **Webmaster:** Maurice Green at bpawebman@bpapaloalto.org
- **BPA Newsletter Archive:** <http://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-newsletter/>
- **Barron Park Donkeys:** For more info, to volunteer, donate, or to purchase merchandise visit <http://barronparkdonkeys.org/>
- **BPA Historian:** Douglas L. Graham at dgrahampaca@gmail.com
- **Bol Park Native Habitat Project Volunteers:** Contact Rich Elder at rich.e.elder@gmail.com
- **Bol Park Native Habitat Financial Support:** Direct your gift by mail or phone, payable to "Friends of the Palo Alto Parks (FOPAP), for Bol Park Fund," FOPAP, 425 Grant Ave., Suite 27, Palo Alto, CA 94306, (650) 327-7323. Or online to the "Bol Park Fund" at www.friendsofpaparks.org/donations/

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
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