

# BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

John King, BPA President



Welcome to fall, Barron Park! We had an active summer in the 'hood and are already enjoying our fall activities! This year's National Night Out event was on August 6 in Bol Park. A crowd of neighbors chatted with numerous First Responders from Police, Fire, Animal Services, and Emergency Services, along with our own Emergency Prep group. We asked questions and picked up brochures, snacks, and swag; kids clambered over the vehicles and handled snakes.

We held our back-to-school Ice Cream Social on September 22. Thank you to Karen and Amol Saxena and friends for picking up and scooping the ice cream! Gary Breitbard and Jena Rauti provided musical entertainment – Jena wearing a perfect ice cream cone headdress! Our local candidates for School Board, City Council, and State Assembly were invited to attend, and nearly all the candidates showed up! It was a great opportunity for Barron Park residents to get to know the folks running for office and to ask them pertinent questions. Later, we contacted City Council and Assembly candidates with six written questions specific to our area. Don't forget to check the BPA website for the City Council Candidates' answers at [bpapaloalto.org](http://bpapaloalto.org) before you vote in the November 5 election!

On October 13, at our annual Movie Night in Bol Park, we (of course) screened *Shrek*, where, in 2000, our famous donkey Perry served as the animators' model for the the

character Donkey. Our Perry – now over 30 – has been getting national press lately! (See [bpapaloalto.org](http://bpapaloalto.org)) What a fun night for neighbors and friends who filled the park to enjoy popcorn and a movie. Coming up on October 27, from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m., our Diwali celebration will be at Barron Park Elementary School. You are all invited to wear your colorful clothing (or not) to enjoy the excellent food, music, and dancing that celebrate this annual holiday! In mid-December, we are planning a winter holiday gathering in Bol Park. Details to be announced soon.

On recent nights, you have of course listened to the sweet sounds of repaving on El Camino Real. Isn't it great to ride on smooth roads again? Vehicle parking on El Camino will soon be replaced by bike lanes on both sides of the road. Watch for updates on your BPA email lists. Also, the wooden bridges along the Bol Park pathway are now repaired for smooth sailing across these well-travelled routes! To top it off, PAUSD has recently installed low-placed, robust lighting along the lower pathway near Gunn High, for safer biking and walking after dark.

The Board has been closely following two development proposals submitted to the City for the Creekside Inn property at 3400 El Camino, and across Matadero, at 3606 El Camino. Both were submitted as "builder's remedy" applications. We are requesting a representative from the P.A. Planning Department to join us at an upcoming Board meeting for an update on the City review process.



The Board will confirm that date: most likely, **Tuesday, November 12, 2024, on Zoom at 7:00 p.m.**

Please note that we are opening 2025 BPA memberships now. If you join or renew, your membership will be good for the rest of 2024 and all of 2025! To join, just go to [bpapaloalto.org](http://bpapaloalto.org) and follow the membership link. In addition, we are looking for Barron Park business advertisers for our website and the outstanding quarterly Newsletter! Just \$350 will give you top billing for the whole year. Single-ad business memberships are also available for \$50 per year. Also, during your first year, you may place a descriptive Newsletter article about your business.

Positions on the BPA Board are available, and we need committee volunteers. Come to a Board meeting to find out more! There are so many opportunities to give back to the neighborhood; we would love new support for your Barron Park Association. I also want to sincerely thank our current Board members and volunteers who do an incredible job of supporting the community. I appreciate all their hard work on behalf of the BPA.

My contact is: [johnwadeking@gmail.com](mailto:johnwadeking@gmail.com) Please consult p. 11 for the list of useful BPA email addresses and web links. See you around the neighborhood!

**2**  
[Donkey News](#)

**4**  
[Fence Lizards](#)

**5**  
[Hay Rake Revealed!](#)

**6**  
[Fence Makeover](#)

**8**  
[Time to Plant](#)

**9**  
[National Night Out](#)

# News from the Pasture: It's All About the Community!

By Jenny Kiratli, The Donkey Project

## Scouts' Work and an Eagle Scout Project

In recent years, there has been increasing community involvement with the Barron Park Donkey Project beyond the essential work of volunteer donkey handlers responsible for feeding, walking, and overall care. Last year, the Donkey Project provided many wheelbarrows full of excellent equine compost to the Bol Park Native Habitat Garden to enrich the soil for seedlings along the pathways and also contributed compost to Nathan Lee's Eagle Scout project to rebuild the planters around Bol Park. This year, three dedicated middle school students put in a combined 31 hours on weekends throughout the year to pull invasive horehound weed, the seedpods of which are extremely sticky burrs that tangle in the donkeys' hair – especially on their soft bellies. We also hosted a group of Girl Scouts from Troop 60420 who spent several hours working towards eradication of this nuisance plant during the Girl Scouts' annual "Day of Service."

However, our biggest community collaboration has been with Hongi (Chris) Shi for his Eagle Scout project to design and build a compost bin for the Donkey Project. Working with donkey handler Larry Reeves, Chris adapted a standard three-bin composter design into a four-bin design to accommodate the needs of the Donkey Project, allowing access to both sides with removable wooden slats on the front and back and wire sheeting between the sections, for maximum aeration. Chris was responsible for the structural design, determining his product list (e.g., how many boards of what lengths) and procuring the materials. Practicing good stewardship, he acquired approximately 100 redwood fence boards from a neighbor who had deconstructed a fence before replacing it. Prior to building, Chris mocked up the bin design in order to get input from his advisers and make any necessary design modifications. On building day, he was responsible for directing a crew of Scouts as they built the bin sections in his front yard. Finally, on April 28, 2024, he oversaw the Scout team that prepared the



Chris Shi's Eagle Scout project was to build a giant compost bin for managing donkey manure. Photos by Jenny Kiratli.

ground and constructed the compost bins. The donkeys were nearby throughout these activities, curious about these visitors and this new construction in their environment. The project allowed Chris to develop skills in design and leadership. The Donkey Project is extremely appreciative of his outstanding work on behalf of the donkeys and the community.

Manure management is of utmost importance in the Donkey Project. The donkeys' manure output is approximately 10 gallons per day. We collect it in one area and mix it with oak leaves to reduce the potential for flies to lay eggs, as flies (stable flies, not house flies) are a danger to the donkeys, biting their legs and drawing blood to the point of wounds. Until this year, we have used a row of piles for manure management: collecting it, mixing it with leaves, then turning, adding more leaves and watering; rotating through five piles (more turning and watering) over a period of five to six months; the final step is sifting out rocks, sticks, and debris. The

final pile consists of rich dirt derived from composting. Our new Eagle Scout composter has improved the consistent distribution of material over an even depth, creating more even watering and better aeration. We believe this is our best "product" ever! Don't forget that donkey compost is available for purchase, delivered to your door in Palo Alto and Los Altos. To order compost, contact [barronparkdonkeys@gmail.com](mailto:barronparkdonkeys@gmail.com) Your garden will thank you, and we thank Chris!!

## Medical Management and Maladies

Outstanding donkey care is provided by three dozen dedicated volunteer handlers who manage their daily care and feeding, including neighborhood walks. Beyond routine care, all our beloved donkeys have medical conditions that require expert veterinary attention (that of course adds to the cost of their care).

Our most recent addition, April, came to us a year and a half ago with chronic White Line Disease in her front right hoof, requiring visits to the UC Davis Veterinary Hospital





The three donkeys thank the Scouts for building a new compost bin that increases the quality of manure compost available for sale to the public.

every five weeks. I am glad to report that her condition has improved greatly, and we look forward to less frequent visits in the foreseeable future. She has also had a laparoscopic ovariectomy, so she will no longer cycle (that is, go into estrus). Buddy's ardor will no longer be triggered, thus no more chasing, biting, and mounting by him, and no more kicking by her! She has been wearing a white fly sheet throughout the summer as her incisions heal and her hair regrows – and to protect her from fly bites! Finally, April was given a diagnosis of insulin resistance when she first arrived, likely related to her being severely obese. Over this past year, she has lost nearly 80 pounds, and we are hopeful that her insulin values will have improved. She seems so much more lively, healthy, and happy than when she first arrived.

Buddy is now 24 years old and generally healthy, except that he still needs to lose a bit of weight. However, he was recently diagnosed with Equine Odontoclastic Tooth Resorptive Hypercementosis that led to two loose upper teeth with broken roots, necessitating surgical removal. We are glad his condition was caught early, as this disease can lead to very painful dental problems. Our vets will be monitoring him closely to catch any future issues.

Our famous senior citizen Perry has long-standing Cushing's Disease, a pituitary gland disorder that affects his metabolism and requires daily medication. He also has low iron which requires an oral dose of liquid iron supplement. He usually tries to refuse it, turning his head away and pursing his lips. But he doesn't fight us all that hard, and he may even understand that it is good for him. He also

has arthritis and laminitis which cause him to move more slowly and stiffly and not always want to do the full walk with his companions. When he doesn't feel like walking, a handler stays with him giving him extra attention and brushing so he doesn't feel left out even if left behind. Most importantly, Perry is prone to "choke" – a condition where something, usually food, gets lodged in the esophagus (= tube for food) and causes great discomfort to the donkey. It can progress to pneumonia if the donkey also aspirates food into the trachea (= tube for breathing) while trying to cough out the esophageal blockage. To prevent choke, all of Perry's food is made into a soupy mash. Note that he is in great danger if people feed him across the fence! Please never feed any of the donkeys anything – and ask others to stop if you witness them doing this! This is really essential for the health and wellness of all the donkeys, but especially for Perry.

#### Outcome of the Palo Alto Matching Grant

In May, the Palo Alto City Council voted to support the Barron Park Donkeys with a generous grant of \$10,000 to help offset the growing medical expenses, proposed as a matching grant if we raised \$10,000 between May 20 and June 23. The donkeys and news of the matching grant were featured in several newspapers around the country, most notably the *Washington Post* (June 14, 2024), which greatly enhanced our donor pool. I am thrilled to report that we received more than \$27,000 in donations over the match period, from 300 individual donors in 34 states, plus the District of Columbia, six countries (Brazil, Canada, Chile, Germany, Hungary, and the United Kingdom), as well as one donation

from an Armed Forces address (serviceperson living abroad). This overwhelming outpouring of community support for our little herd demonstrates the tremendous impact of these gentle creatures world-wide.

Our expenses are ongoing. If you can help, donations can be made online at [barronparkdonkeys.org/donate](http://barronparkdonkeys.org/donate) or by sending a check made out to: Palo Alto Humane Society with "Donkey Project" in the memo line. Mail to: PAHS, P.O. Box 60715, Palo Alto, CA 94306.

### Barron Park Association Newsletter,

**Winter Deadline:  
Sunday, December 1, 2024**

Please submit articles (in Word if possible) for the Winter 2024 issue of the BPA Newsletter, with photos/images separate from text, by **Sunday, December 1, 2024** to Myrna Rochester at: [mbrbpa@sonic.net](mailto:mbrbpa@sonic.net)

Make sure your BPA membership is current at: [barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com](mailto:barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com) You may want to send a query in advance with your ideas – for an article, story, report, update, interview, profile, announcement, review, anecdote, or artist's page – to [mbrbpa@sonic.net](mailto:mbrbpa@sonic.net)

Announcements for activities should be for events scheduled *after* January 15, 2025. The Winter issue will be available in January 2025, online to requesting members, and print copies by U.S. mail.

## BPA EMAIL LISTS

The Barron Park Association offers three Email Lists for any resident to post: (1) *bpa-news* for news, information, and announcements; *bpa-misc* for neighbor requests, queries, recommendations, freebies, etc.; and (3) *bpa-issues* to express opinions or initiate discussion on topics of interest. They are hosted on Google Groups. To join a list, go to: [bpapaloalto.org/bpa-email-lists/](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.

# The Western Fence Lizard

By Jeralyn Moran

just spotted a baby lizard! There's another one!



**Baby Western Fence Lizard.** Source: [coniferousforest.com/western-fence-lizard.htm](http://coniferousforest.com/western-fence-lizard.htm)

In our local area, you've likely been seeing lots of young Western Fence Lizards. I have memories of carefully crafting "lizard catchers" out of long pliable grasses, with a slip knot and loop at the narrow end, just right for catching a basking lizard. What a prize! Briefly holding them captive, rubbing their belly gently, seemed to cause them to "fall asleep" – but perhaps (and more likely) this was a "play dead" survival decision on the lizard's part!

**Scientific name:** *Sceloporus occidentalis*

Both coastline and inland are happy habitats for the Western Fence Lizard. This species is found mostly in California, with more and more being spotted in nearby regions of Oregon. California's chaparral, woodlands, and grasslands are ideal, but they also make their homes on farms and in neighborhood yards.

Surprisingly, this lizard is found at all elevations up to 10,800 feet!

This species grows to a maximum length of eight inches. Looking closely, you'll see not just a gray color, but also hints of brown and green amongst the scales that are specific to this lizard. Their most distinguishing characteristic is their bright blue bellies. They can



**Adult western fence lizard.** Source: [thepetenthusiast.com/lizards-in-california/](http://thepetenthusiast.com/lizards-in-california/)

change color from light grey or tan to nearly jet black for "thermo-regulation" while basking in the sunshine.

Being reptiles, Western Fence Lizards are cold-blooded (body heat varies with the ambient air temperature). Adults mate in late spring, with Mom laying a clutch of eggs about two to four weeks later. She can produce up to two more clutches in the same year, anywhere from 4 to 17 eggs in each clutch. Once hatched, these babies are about

one inch long, not including their tail (Scientists call this measurement "Snout to Vent Length" or "SVL.")

Some studies of Lyme disease have concluded that cases of Lyme are rarer in places where these lizards are found. Scientists believe that when ticks carrying Lyme disease feed on the blood of these lizards (which

ticks commonly do, especially around lizards' ears), a protein in the lizard's blood kills the bacterium in the tick that causes Lyme disease. The infection inside the tick's gut is therefore cleared, and the tick no longer carries Lyme disease! (One example, in lizard form, of a good neighbor.)

Sources:

[thepetenthusiast.com/lizards-in-california/](http://thepetenthusiast.com/lizards-in-california/)  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western\\_fence\\_lizard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_fence_lizard)

## MOVIE NIGHT



SUNDAY  
OCT 13TH

6:00 AT BOL PARK  
[bpapaloalto.org](http://bpapaloalto.org)



Bring a blanket and join your neighbors!





# Bol Park Hay Rake Revealed!

By Linda Elder and Douglas L. Graham

The historic Bol Park hay rake has long been hidden by brush and weeds. Thanks to Scout Troop 30, in a service project led by Sebastian Lawrence, we can once again see it from the surrounding walking and biking paths. Supervised by the BPA Native Habitat Committee, the Scouts recently cleared and sheet-mulched the area in Bol Park where the old, dilapidated fence and rusty farm equipment reside. Located near the bridge, the fence and equipment were obscured by invasive oxalis, bedstraw weed, non-native grasses, and overhanging branches. Sebastian's troop used arbor mulch sourced from the City of Palo Alto. The sheet-mulch will suppress the weeds and help to create healthy soil. The Native Habitat Committee will sow seeds of some shorter native plants, such as poppies and clarkia in sunny areas, and miner's lettuce in shady spots. In the future, we may also plant low-growing coyote bush and spreading ceanothus to outcompete the weeds.

The farm implements in the area are not junk! They are historic remnants of the Barron Estate and the Bol Farm, preserved from destruction when the park was landscaped in 1972. They serve as a connection to the agricultural past of our neighborhood.

One of the rusty metal implements is an old-fashioned hay rake. The one remaining here was a horse-drawn dump rake, a wide two-wheeled implement with curved teeth, operated from a seat mounted over the rake with a lever-operated lifting mechanism. It gathered cut hay into windrows – rows of hay cut to be dried – and required the operator to raise the rake, turn around, and drop the teeth to rake back and forth to form the windrow. One can imagine a farmer slowly moving back and forth in the hayfields on the Bol farm.

This hay rake is the very one that has become the Barron Park Association logo. (See illustration.) Some think the logo was created from a photograph taken between 1969 and 1972, using an intaglio printmaking technique called photoetching. It is a way of getting a photographic image onto a metal etching plate. The plate is printed using an etching press, in the same way as a traditional etching. The image does appear to be an etching, but



Led by Sebastian Lawrence, with supervision from the BPA Native Habitat Committee, Scout Troop 30 cleared and sheet-mulched the area in Bol Park where the old, dilapidated fence and rusty farm equipment reside. Photo by Linda Elder.

others believe it is hand drawn, inspired by a photograph. Either way, the logo evokes the history of Barron Park, and the farmlands, dairies, and orchards established in the early to mid-twentieth century.

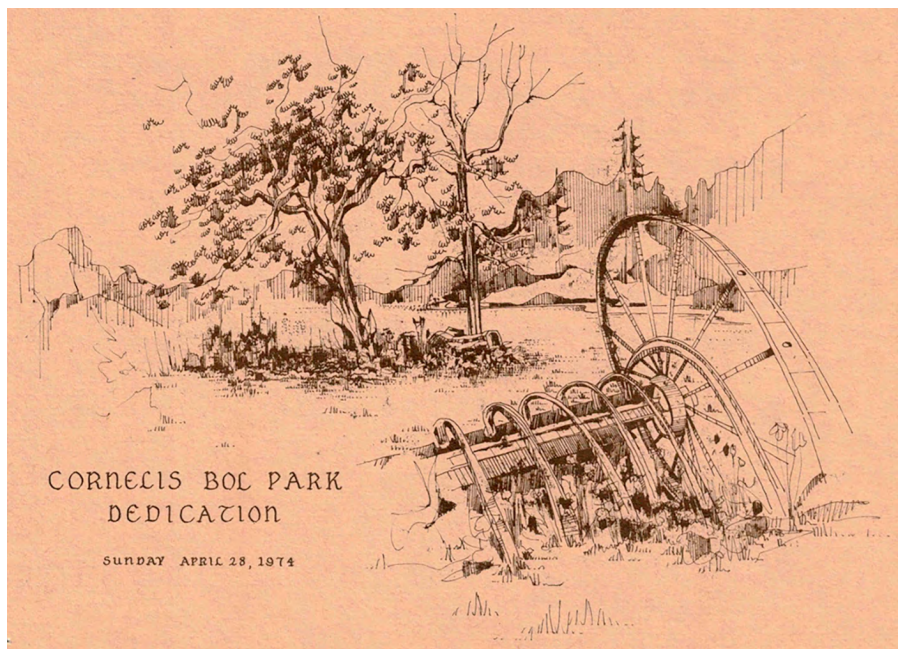
We tried to find out who created the logo or took the photograph used for the image, but he or she remains a mystery. Our Barron Park Historian, Doug Graham, has records of Barron Park residents – Sabra Driscoll, Bob England, Larry Stafford, and Joe Melena – who took photos of the original Bol donkey pasture

from 1962-72. The images on file include photos of the donkeys, the farm equipment and structures, including wooden fences and gates, and the “barn.” Doug remembers that the logo was approved by the BPA Board sometime between 1974 and 1978.

Ken Arutunian was the only professional artist serving on the Board at that time. He was also one of the two landscape architects who designed Bol Park. Could he have been the logo designer?

If anyone knows any more details about the logo's origin, please let us know at [bpnativegarden@gmail.com](mailto:bpnativegarden@gmail.com) or [dgrahampaca@gmail.com](mailto:dgrahampaca@gmail.com)

Learn more about the history and design of Bol Park starting on page 12!



Original image of Bol Park hay rake, 1974. Artist unknown.



# BPES Fence Gets a Makeover!

By Greta G. Olbrich



New fence painting by BPES Alum and artist Aubrey Fife. Photos by Greta Olbrich.

Hey, Barron Park. Have you noticed the changes to the black metal fence at Barron Park Elementary? If not, stroll on over and see for yourselves! The fence is getting a makeover thanks to Aubrey Fife (BPES, Class of 2014; Gunn HS, Class of 2021; and UC Berkeley, Class of 2025). Aubrey is repainting the fence, a beautiful way to honor her old elementary school.

When asked why she wanted to give the fence a revamp, Fife recalled that in the 2011-12 school year, she watched as Frank, one of the PAPPAs after-school art teachers, painted the confetti-meets-Jackson Pollock look on the black silhouettes of children. Though, at the time, Frank simply intended to add color and interest to the black fence with a mix of yellows, reds, oranges, and blues, a young Fife thought, "I want to do that, too!"

Fife's passion for painting and art stemmed from her time at Barron Park Elementary, but it took a stronger hold on her when she got to UC Berkeley. Noticing that "the City of Berkeley has lots of public art," she got to thinking more about the impact of public art and how it can beautify an otherwise bland or utilitarian space. This made her want to become more involved in her community through art.

Fife is currently pursuing a double major in Art Practice and Molecular and Cell Biology.

"I've always wanted to go into medicine and thought of art only as a hobby, but when I got to college, I realized how important creating was to me. So I added my art major, where I have taken on more challenging and time-consuming projects, pushing me to grow as an artist. After graduating, I hope to attend an MFA [Master of Fine Arts] program and then go to medical school. My mom jokes that the further I go down this road, I'm not going to want to go into medicine anymore."

So far, ceramics and painting have been Fife's main media in her Art major. "I make work inspired by my interests in medicine, science, and mental and physical health. I also volunteer in Art Therapy at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital, so I've been learning a lot about how art can be used as a conversation starter and expressive outlet."

When she returned home for summer break this year, she saw how much the BPES fence had faded over the decade since she graduated. And then the idea to repaint the silhouettes went off like a light bulb. "I contacted the Palo Alto Public Art Coordinators and the Barron Park principal with my sketch, and [the principal] was open to the idea, so we met in person, and it took off from there!" Fife said this project seemed like the perfect first public art project for her because she could

## View the BPA Newsletter in Full Color!

You can read this issue in full color and with live Web links, as soon as it's posted at: [bpapaloalto.org/bpa-newsletter/](http://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-newsletter/)

While you're there, check out our Archive of past Newsletters. You can easily review past activities in the 'hood and catch up on issues you may have missed.

Thanks! The Editors



Aubrey Fife working on the fence makeover.

also give back to the school where she has many fond memories.

Some of Fife's favorite memories of BPES are the school plays with the Palo Alto Children's Theatre Outreach. "I did the *Princess and the Pea* and *Alice in Wonderland*. It was so fun to spend more time with my friends at practice, dress in extravagant costumes, and perform for our parents and friends."

Fife said the inspiration for the refreshed fence design was to have the new image seamlessly blend into the grassy scenery behind it. She hopes this will provide engagement, liveliness, and joy. "I am featuring native California flowers such as poppies, sunflowers, asters, and lupines to honor the community and school roots." Each figure



will have a different flower, but they all come together to make one scene, symbolizing the Barron Park School's unity and diversity.

In late August, Fife boarded a flight to Florence, Italy, to join a semester-long study abroad program where she'll continue with her art courses. The time-intensive design of the fence and her departure date for Italy didn't allow her to finish the entire project before she left. She plans to complete the design when she returns to Palo Alto for her winter and spring breaks. "I want to add bees and butterflies in the sky. I also wanted to thank the original artist who made the metal silhouettes, and I hope to do their work justice!"

The black silhouettes on the fence originated a few years before Fife was even born. John Enos, BPES class of 2000, remembers when he and other BPES students modeled for those silhouettes. He recalls lying down on large pieces of white butcher paper, "We traced our body shape outlines, and the artist used those to make the metal figures."

The Administration building and adjacent classroom wing were originally built in 1947. In 1950, a second classroom wing and the Multipurpose buildings were added. A fire in 1977 destroyed much of the original wing and the Administration building, reconstructed in 1978 along with a new Multipurpose room.

Barron Park Elementary School opened under its current name in September 1998 when John Enos was eight. "I went there in its inaugural opening year for fourth grade. I think they must have done that fence project

anytime between fall 1998 (when I started) to spring 2000 (when I graduated). I'm guessing it was probably 1999! I also remember that the entire student body all voted on the school's mascot, and it was decided we'd be the Barron Park Bumblebees."

Stephanie Enos, John's mother, notes that El Carmelo Elementary School also did the same project on their fence around that time. The name of the original artist, who most likely did both schools' fences in the late '90s, has escaped everyone's memory. At El Carmelo, for all these years, the fence silhouettes have remained unadorned.

When asked what's been the most surprising comment Fife has received so far about the new fence design, she said, "I can't pick just one! Since this is my first time making art where other people can see the entire process, I was worried at first as to whether people would like my idea and painting, but everyone has been super nice! I've had people drive by and stop to tell me they love what I'm doing, which struck me because they're going out of their way to be kind and encouraging. I've also heard that it looks cheerful, which is exactly what I was going for. The comments from kids are always funny to hear, too. One told me that it looked easy, and another asked me how I like painting that much. My response to both was that you have to try it! Maybe one day, someone will grow up and bring new life to the fence again." It's also possible that someone from El Carmelo School might pass by BPES and become inspired to create something like Fife's artistic contribution to our community.



Aubrey's sketch of the mural.

# BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER FALL 2024

**Barron Park Association**  
724 Barron Avenue  
Palo Alto, California 94306

### EDITOR

Myrna Rochester

### LAYOUT

Hilary Glann

### PROOFREADERS

Christina Luce, Gwen Luce

### CONTRIBUTORS

Melanie Cross, Linda Elder,  
Douglas L. Graham,  
John W. King, Jenny Kiratli,  
Jeralyn Moran,  
Greta Gize Olbrich

### PHOTO/ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

BPA Native Habitat Committee,  
coniferousforest.com,  
Peter Cross, Frank Crossman, The  
Donkey Project,  
Paul Edwards, Linda Elder, Elster  
Family Collection, Sam Elster, Bob  
England, Douglas L. Graham, Mollie  
Graham, Patrick Muffler, Greta G.  
Olbrich, *Palo Alto Times*, Jaya Pandey,  
Myrna Rochester, Larry Stafford,  
thepetenthusiast.com

### PRINTER

Prodigy Press

## ARE YOU AN ARTIST OR WRITER?

Do you enjoy the creative work featured in the BPA Newsletter? Would you like to see your art, photography, crafts, music, published (or unpublished) writing, etc., in a future issue? Please send your idea with a draft Artist's Statement and reproducible samples or a description of your work to Myrna Rochester at: [mbrbpa@sonic.net](mailto:mbrbpa@sonic.net)

# Time to Plant!

By Melanie Cross, Native Habitat Committee

**F**all is finally here. When the heat of summer cools off, it is time to plant!

Waiting to plant until fall gives young plants a chance to grow without stress from heat and sun. Here is the planting strategy we have adopted at the Bol Park Native Garden.

## Installing Your New Plants

1) Hydrate the soil before digging planting holes. We have learned we can't dig in hard, dry soil, but we also can't work wet soil. For a large project with many small plants, thoroughly water the area – imagine a good rain measuring approximately two inches – then let it set for a few days. For more widely spaced plantings, we set a full five gallon bucket with a few tiny holes on the sides near the bottom over the planting spot, so that water slowly soaks into the soil. That is usually enough for a gallon (or smaller) size plant. If the soil is really dry or you have larger plants, do the soak a second time. The next day or the day after, the soil will be nicely diggable and also provide moisture to the roots of the new plant.

2) Dig a hole a bit larger than the container, with enough depth to backfill some soil at the bottom. Unless the soil is already well



Thoroughly hydrate your soil before digging holes for the new plants. All photos by Peter Cross.

hydrated, fill the hole with water and let it drain.

3) Remove the plant from the container. If its roots are not growing at the edges and bottom of the container, you can set it in the hole so that the soil at the top of the plant is about one inch higher than the surface of your patch. If the plant is root-bound in the container, some root pruning may be required. If roots are curling around, carefully straighten them out, and arrange



Remove the plant carefully from its container.

them over the backfilled soil in the hole.

4) You can mix a cup or so of compost into the soil that you move back around the plant, but generally native plants do not need to be fertilized.

5) A three-inch layer of wood chip mulch between the plants helps keep soil cool, conserves moisture, and keeps weed seeds from germinating. Don't mulch the area just around the stem of each plant.

6) Don't let the roots of the plant dry out. If there is an irrigation system, it may not reach the roots, so you will need to supplement rainfall with hand-held, hose-end watering.

7) For plants that require excellent drainage, it is best to create a raised berm to plant them in. Make sure to plant the crown of



Mix some compost into the soil that you move back around the plant, but generally native plants don't need fertilizer.

the plant a good one inch above the level of the soil. If the soil is compacted or heavy clay, the best soil amendment is to work compost into the area.

Once they are in the ground, you will need to water your plants so they don't dry out. Once the rains come (hopefully!), stop the extra watering so your new plants don't become waterlogged. You can use a moisture meter or your finger to determine when to water or not.

## Watering and Care During the First Year (or So)

With enough water from rain or irrigation to keep the soil moist but not soggy, the roots of your plants will grow during winter and spring. This growth helps them get established and ready to withstand the sun and heat of the following summer.

By the time late spring comes and the temperatures heat up, your plants will have developed larger roots and will be able to go two or three weeks between watering. Even drought-tolerant plants will need to be watered through their first (and probably second) summers. Water them deeply, and gradually extend the time between watering.



Know the requirements of the plants you have chosen. After they are established, some plants will require moist soil, some will need watering weekly – allowing the soil around them to dry in between waterings – while many drought-tolerant California natives can, over several years, grow sufficient roots that allow them to survive without supplemental watering. However, even drought-tolerant plants need to have deep soakings every two or three weeks during

their first (and usually second) summer until their roots can provide all that they need.

**You'll Want to Know**

If you hike in our local wild areas in late summer, you'll notice brown plants that have gone dormant. When the fall and winter rains come, those plants will turn green again.

Learn to cut your plants back so the new growth comes in properly.

Many landscapers recommend watering all plants at least once or twice monthly during the summer in order to keep them green. However, there are some native plants which, once established, do not want to have wet roots in hot weather. These include most *manzanitas*, *ceanothus*, and *fremontodendrons*.

Learn about your plants before planting, and group plants with similar needs together to make taking care of them easier.

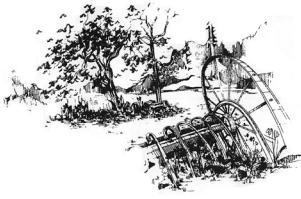
# NATIONAL NIGHT OUT IN BOL PARK



For the second year in a row, the Palo Alto Police Department (PAPD) decided to host a National Night Out (NNO) event in Bol Park on Tuesday, August 6, 2024. NNO is a nationwide event that takes place on the first Tuesday of August. Children enjoyed games and art projects at the event. Photos by Myrna Rochester.



Booths operated by Palo Alto Animal Control and Palo Alto Rangers proved popular with children and adults. Getting to know and hold a snake was a popular activity. Animal control and rangers also reminded residents to not feed birds and wildlife, because these "handouts" can change animal behavior, putting them at risk for more diseases as well as human/wildlife conflicts. For more information visit [vector.santaclaracounty.gov/vectors/wildlife](https://vector.santaclaracounty.gov/vectors/wildlife)



# 2025 Barron Park Association Membership

[bpapaloalto.org](http://bpapaloalto.org)

Thanks to all our members!

**2025 Membership Renewals will begin January 1, 2025.**

**(However, Memberships starting October 1, 2024, are valid through 2025.)**

You may join or renew your membership online with a credit card or PayPal at:  
[bpapaloalto.org/join-the-barron-park-association/](http://bpapaloalto.org/join-the-barron-park-association/)

To pay by personal check, mail this membership form and your check to:  
**BPA Treasurer, 724 Barron Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306**

To check your membership status please email: [barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com](mailto:barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com)

Name(s):	Primary email address:
Address:	Secondary email address:
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Newsletter:</b> I'd like the online edition ( <i>instead of a print copy for Spring, Summer, and Fall</i> )  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Email lists:</b> I'd like to join the BPA Email lists.	Phone:

**Sponsor**      \$100

**Patron**      \$50

**Additional Contribution:** \$\_\_\_\_\_

**Total Contribution:**      \$\_\_\_\_\_

**Member**      \$35

**Senior (62+)**      \$20

**Business**      \$50

If sending a personal check, please pay to: Barron Park Association.

---

## Calling Business Owners!

Do you have a business in Barron Park? Are you a business owner living in Barron Park? A **Barron Park Association Basic Business Membership (\$50/year)** gives you one free ad in the Spring, Summer, or Fall edition of the BPA Newsletter. You may also place a full-length "Spotlight" article about you and your business during your first year as a member. Plus, you'll be listed on the home page of the BPA Website.

At another level, **Business Sponsors (\$350/year)** may place an ad in each of our quarterly Newsletters. For more information, contact our BPA Business Liaison, Paul Yang at: [pabloyang@yahoo.com](mailto:pabloyang@yahoo.com)

The Barron Park Association is your volunteer neighborhood group that serves the interests of our very special community. All residents of Barron Park and Green Acres II are encouraged to join. If you have questions about the BPA or need to check your membership status, please email: [barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com](mailto:barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com)

Your BPA membership supports many Barron Park community events and interests including: May Fête, Movie Night in Bol Park, Ice Cream Socials, holiday celebrations to mark the year, Senior Connections, Emergency Preparedness, Quarterly Newsletters, and Email lists.





## BPA EMAILS AND WEB LINKS FALL 2024

- **BPA Website:** [bpapaloalto.org/](http://bpapaloalto.org/)
- **BPA Newsletter Archive:** [bpapaloalto.org/bpa-newsletter/](http://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-newsletter/)
- **BPA Membership (Join/Renew):** [bpapaloalto.org/join-the-barron-park-association/](http://bpapaloalto.org/join-the-barron-park-association/)
- **Membership Questions:** Lisa Berkowitz Landers at: [barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com](mailto:barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com)
- **BPA Email Lists:** Join at: [bpapaloalto.org/bpa-email-lists/](http://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-email-lists/) or write to: [listmanager@bpapaloalto.org](mailto:listmanager@bpapaloalto.org)
- **BPA President:** John W. King at: [johnwadeking@gmail.com](mailto:johnwadeking@gmail.com)
- **BPA Treasurer:** John W. King at: [johnwadeking@gmail.com](mailto:johnwadeking@gmail.com)
- **BPA Newsletter Editor:** Myrna Rochester at: [mbrbpa@sonic.net](mailto:mbrbpa@sonic.net)
- **BPA Business Liaison:** Paul Yang at: [pabloyang@yahoo.com](mailto:pabloyang@yahoo.com)
- **Support for Buena Vista Neighbors:** Karen Ratzlaff at: [karen.ratzlaff@hotmail.com](mailto:karen.ratzlaff@hotmail.com)  
Buena Vista Partners (non-profit) at: [buenavistapartners.org](http://buenavistapartners.org)
- **Welcoming Committee Chair:** Gwen Luce at: [gluce@cbnorcal.com](mailto:gluce@cbnorcal.com)
- **Emergency Services Volunteer Program:** Maurice Green at: [mauryg3@comcast.net](mailto:mauryg3@comcast.net)
- **Barron Park Historian:** Douglas L. Graham at: [dgrahampaca@gmail.com](mailto:dgrahampaca@gmail.com)
- **Senior Connections:** Pooja Punn at: [barronparkseniorconnections@gmail.com](mailto:barronparkseniorconnections@gmail.com)
- **BPA Webmaster:** Maurice Green at: [bpawebman@bpapaloalto.org](mailto:bpawebman@bpapaloalto.org)
- **Barron Park Donkeys:** To volunteer, donate, or purchase merchandise, go to: [barronparkdonkeys.org](http://barronparkdonkeys.org) or contact Jenny Kiratli at: [barronparkdonkeys@gmail.com](mailto:barronparkdonkeys@gmail.com)
- **Bol Park Native Habitat:** To volunteer, contact Rich Elder at: [rich.e.elder@gmail.com](mailto:rich.e.elder@gmail.com) Donate to the Native Garden through the "Bol Park Fund" at: [friendsofpaparks.org/donations2](http://friendsofpaparks.org/donations2)  
By mail or phone: Friends of the Palo Alto Parks (FOPAP), Bol Park Fund, 425 Grant Ave., Suite 27, Palo Alto, CA 94306; 650-327-7323.

# How the Neighborhood Created Bol Park

By Douglas L. Graham, Barron Park Historian

## How Bol Park Was Created: Summary

The Bol family began the process. Dr. Cornelis Bol and his wife Josina were both passionate about the idea of preserving the pasture between the railroad and the creek as permanent open land for their enjoyment and that of the neighborhood. In the 1950s and '60s, as land investors and owners, they were acutely aware of how quickly farms were disappearing and being replaced by suburban developments, and they hated to think of their bucolic pasture being replaced by houses. Many neighbors, including neighborhood leaders, were thinking along the same lines. Meetings were held, a rough plan was developed, and specific issues were investigated. The County was approached about possible ways and means. All this took a long time – several years. We tell the story in more detail below.



**Illustration 1: Josina and Cornelis Bol, from their 1964 family Christmas card. This is the only known photograph of them together. Photographer unidentified.**

### Cornelis Bol's Concept

Sixty-four years ago, in 1960, Dr. Cornelis Bol was a still-vigorous 75-year-old retired electrical engineer, inventor, and former research scientist in the Department of Physics at Stanford University. He and his wife Josina and their sons had lived in their comfortable home at 925 Roble Ridge since their emigration from Holland in 1936. For details

of Cornelis's fascinating life, read the five-part serialized story in the four issues of the 2023 BPA newsletter.

Cornelis's concept for the future of the pasture was simple: Find a way to ensure that the pasture would permanently remain open land for the enjoyment of the neighborhood. He first broached the idea with Laguna Court resident Sam Elster, whose large property included about 200 feet of frontage on Matadero Creek, adjacent to the proposed park.

### The Bols and Their "Donkey Pasture"

Dr. Bol was a kind and gentle man who invited the neighborhood children to come to the Bol donkey pasture to play with the donkeys. He even allowed some families to board their own donkeys there. The pasture had been established in early 1937. Only horses lived there until about 1962 when the first donkey, Negrita, was acquired as a companion for the last horse, who had become very lonely.



**Illustration 2: Negrita in about 1963, from the 1964 Christmas card. She was the first donkey born on the Bol property. Photographer unidentified, Cornelis Bol (?).**

Most of the original Bol donkeys were still there in 1965, as the Bol donkey pasture continued to be a popular fixture in the neighborhood, especially for children. Dr. Bol remained involved until the end of his life.

### Josina Bol's Role

The Bol "farm" was managed by Josina Bol after Cornelis's death in 1965, until her death in 1996 at the age of 94. As heir to their joint estate, she was immediately involved in the negotiations leading to the establishment of

Bol Park. All along, she personally ensured that the donkeys remained on the Bol property and accessible for the enjoyment of the neighborhood.

### "Mickey" Was Greatly Loved

The number of donkeys diminished until, after Josina's death in 1996, only Mickey remained. He was a character – extremely friendly and also noisy! He brayed at sunrise and sundown and many times in between. He brayed to greet visitors and, as they left, to call them back. When the park was being constructed in 1973-74, he had to be moved. The family arranged the part of the family residential lot (925 Roble Ridge) that extended south of the creek as a substitute donkey pasture. The property fragment Mickey lived on was triangle-shaped and could not be sold separately from the Bol residence because it was too small to be split off as a new lot. But it was an adequate size for a donkey paddock, nicely shaded by large trees along the boundary line with the Veterans Hospital property on one side, the creek on the second, and the railroad right-of-way on the third. The right-of-way was soon to be made a regional bike path during "Phase 2" of the new park. A drinking water line was run to the paddock and an old bathtub provided as a watering trough. Josina walked across every day to feed and pet Mickey. (See Illustration #3, photo of Josina Bol and Mickey, date uncertain, 1970s or '80s).

### The BPA's Role

In the early 1960s, the idea of a neighborhood park had first come up in the aforementioned conversation between Dr. Bol and neighbor Sam Elster, while they were watching neighborhood kids playing in the Bol family pool. Cornelis wanted very much to preserve the area as a park, especially for the children.

Sam Elster's large property on Laguna Oaks Place shared about 200 feet of creek frontage with the Bol donkey pasture to the west. Sam was a member of the Board of the Barron Park Improvement Association (BPIA, the immediate forerunner of the BPA), very involved in Barron Park community affairs throughout the 1960s and '70s. When Sam died almost 20 years ago, his daughter Paula





Illustration 3: Josina Bol with Mickey, date uncertain (1970s or '80s). Photographer unidentified.

inherited the property and still lives there. (See Illustration 4, photo of Sam and Paula Elster with donkey in 1969. Also see Illustration #5, 1969 poster to promote donations for the new park.)



Illustration 4: Sam Elster (r.) and Paula Elster (l.), with a donkey, 1970. Photo by Palo Alto Times, July 10, 1970, in an article about the upcoming election measure to tax the neighborhood for creation and maintenance of the park.

Richard Placone, who's lived at the east end of Chimalus Drive since the 1960s, was then the BPIA President, involved in developing a general plan for the community. The BPIA's main goal was to resist development then considered undesirable – particularly large apartment blocks along Barron Park's side streets off El Camino Real. However, the general plans of the day included all aspects of land use in the area covered. When the association produced the first general plan for Barron Park in 1966, in cooperation with the County Board of Supervisors, it contained

provisions for a public park at the north end of the neighborhood which designated all the vacant land along the recently abandoned Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way to be included in a 30-acre park. The biggest and most valuable parcel was the Bol donkey pasture that lay between the railroad and Matadero Creek. (See Illustration #6, map of Bol Park as designed by Ken Arutunian in 1971-72.)

When Dr. Bol died in July 1965, the family indicated that decisions on development of a park must be made soon, or rising tax pressures would force sale to a developer. There was then the last remaining undeveloped parcel of its size in Barron Park. The BPA, led by Richard Placone, worked with the County government to find a way to fund the park. In November 1967, negotiations led to a very generous offer by the Bol family to sell approximately five acres at half the market value – if its status as parkland could be guaranteed in perpetuity. (See Illustration #7, Community leaders, BPA President Richard Placone and Paul Wolff, in the Bol donkey pasture near Laguna Avenue, 1969. Also see Illustration #8, the Bol "Donkey Pasture" about 1970, before development of Bol Park.)

**Barron Park Taxes Itself**

The BPA set out to raise money within the community, and over \$11,000 was pledged almost immediately (equivalent to about \$104,000 in 2024). Additional funding came from the Water District, to perform necessary erosion control and landscaping work on Matadero Creek's west bank. A federal government matching grant was approved.

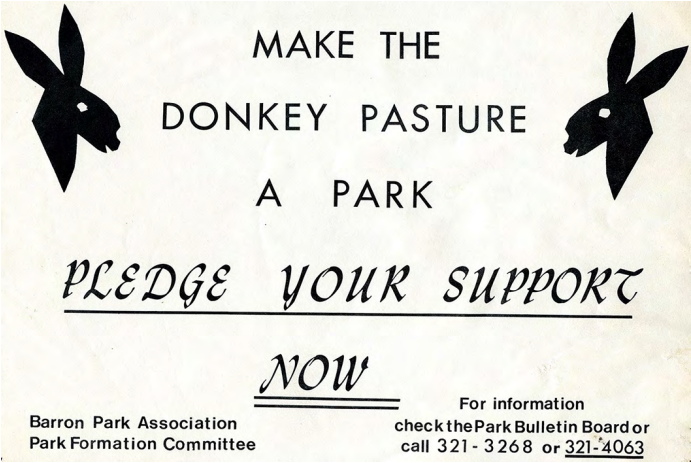


Illustration 5: BPA poster (approx. 1969) to promote donations for the park. From the Elster family collection.



Illustration 7. Community leaders BPA President Richard Placone (r.) and Paul Wolff (l.) in the Bol donkey pasture near Laguna Avenue in 1969. Photo: Palo Alto Times, September 18, 1969.

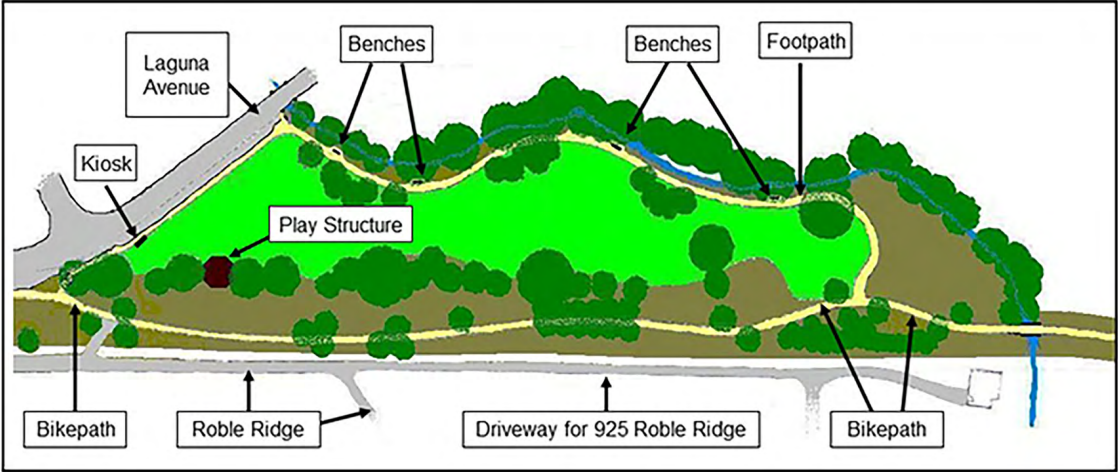
But the major funding was to come from a local tax source. In the spring of 1968, the BPA and Santa Clara County agreed to set up "County Special Service Area #1" to acquire land, develop, and maintain a neighborhood park for Barron Park. An election was held in Barron Park in July 1970 to approve a \$0.32 tax rate, which passed two-to-one, making the earlier pledges moot. In May 1971, the County acquired the land for \$68,750 (equivalent to about \$533,500 in 2024), and detailed planning began.

**The Barn Burns Down**

The Bol family had a small "barn" at the upstream (south) end of the pasture. Initially there were plans to incorporate this structure and about an acre of land surrounding it into the park as a 4-H Club demonstration project and domestic animal "petting zoo."



# Bol Park - 1974 Landscape Plan



Key:

<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightgreen;"></span> Irrigated Turf	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightblue;"></span> Matadero Creek
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightbrown;"></span> Semi-Natural Vegetation Areas	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:yellow;"></span> Bikepath and Footpaths
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:darkgreen;"></span> Trees	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:grey;"></span> Roads and Driveways

Note: Bikepath was actually part of Phase II, 1978-9

Updated 12 Mar 08

Illustration 6: Bol Park as designed by Ken Arutunian in 1971-72. Map by Doug Graham, 2008.

(See Illustration #9, the “Bol Barn,” about 1970. Also see Illustration #10, gate to barn area and horse paddock about 1970. This structure may date back to the Barron Estate days between 1873 and 1919.)

However, the barn burned on Washington’s birthday weekend in February 1973. The Barron Park Volunteer Fire Department (BPVFD) made a spectacularly inept attempt to put out the flames, and the barn burned to the ground. (See the details of that story in the Summer 2024 issue of the BPA Newsletter, which covered the proud history of the BPVFD.)

**Construction of Phase One**

Construction began on Phase One of the park in the fall of 1973. This included the creekbank, the irrigated turf, the play structure, and the pedestrian walk. The upstream end of the park (where the barn had been) was to remain undeveloped, and still is, in order to retain a little of the original rural feeling of the donkey pasture.

Longtime BP resident Ken Arutunian did the landscape design. Native northern California plants were used, and existing vegetation was disturbed as little as possible. Arutunian’s landscape plan is still considered a rousing

success. It features an 800-foot-long vista of turf bordered by trees on both sides which has grown more beautiful over the decades as the planted redwoods grew. The vista is unique among Palo Alto’s parks and is very impressive from the major entry point to the park on Laguna Avenue. Another of Arutunian’s concepts has also been highly popular – a broad stairway leading down to the creek at a gentle bend where the bank was not too steep. This is another unique feature of Bol Park: as the only place in Palo Alto where you can safely and legally enter a flowing creek to wade and enjoy the riparian environment and wildlife close up. Many people who enjoyed this spot as children now bring their children or grandchildren to have the same experiences. (See Illustration #11, Ken Arutunian with county officials in 1973.)

**Community Picnic and Park Dedication**

Hundreds of people turned out for a community picnic and dedication of Cornelis Bol Park on April 28, 1974. Josina Bol was present to accept the thanks and congratulations of grateful residents. It was at this gathering that the public perception of Josina began to shift: from the quiet housewife behind Cornelis – scientist, businessman, and community leader – to the equal partner of Cornelis,

nurturer of six successful sons, operations manager of the family business (the Bol Water Company), and persevering protector of the donkeys and the park-to-be. Because she ensured that Cornelis’s vision of the park would be carried out, Josina must now be considered Barron Park’s all-time “Most Valuable Benefactor.” (See Illustration #12, Josina Bol and Richard Placone at the Bol Park Dedication Ceremony, April 28, 1974. See also Illustration #13, photo of Bol Park in 1974, looking south from the middle of the park. Note the sapling redwood trees near the path, now about 100 feet tall.)



Illustration 9: The “Bol barn,” about 1970. Photo by Larry Stafford.



Illustration 10: The gate to the barn area, about 1970. Only remnants remain now. The structure may date from the Barron Estate days, 1873-1919. Photo by Larry Stafford.

**What’s in a Name?**

At the time, the spotlight was on Cornelis Bol’s earlier achievements, and the park’s name was chosen to specifically honor him. However, about 20 years ago we received a letter from a branch of the Bol family saying they felt it would be appropriate to rename the park for both Cornelis and Josina. This presumably could be done at any time.





**Illustration 8: The Bol donkey pasture about 1970, before development of Bol Park, looking north toward Laguna Avenue from the barn area. Photo by Larry Stafford.**

**But the Park Wasn't Finished Yet**

The Bol Park Advisory Committee had already been working on Phase Two – the acquisition and development of the old Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR) right-of-way, where the shared pathway runs today. This was more complicated than Phase One, because the railroad owned only a portion of the land that had originally been part of the old Barron Estate: between the Stanford Industrial Park at the north end and the Veterans' Administration (VA) hospital near Mickey's paddock at the south end. The remainder, from the paddock south past Gunn High School to Arastradero Road, belonged to Stanford with a long-term lease to the railroad.

**The SPRR Deeds Land for Phase Two**

Negotiations with the railroad were successful, and in April 1974, BPA negotiator Richard Placone was able to announce the railroad's gift to the County of approximately three acres of land in an 80-foot-wide strip. Shortly thereafter, Stanford University was persuaded to re-lease their portion to Santa Clara County. Plans for Phase Two were in full swing.



**Illustration 11: Ken Arutunian (pointing) with unidentified county officials in the park in 1973. Photo by Larry Stafford.**

**The People Choose to Tax Themselves**

At a community meeting in November 1974 attended by about 300 residents, overwhelming approval was voiced for a tax period extension to pay for development of Phase Two. The long-awaited federal funds then became available and provided up-front funding. The following March, Santa Clara County approved the Phase Two expansion.

The park advisory committee held many meetings to solicit and weigh community input. Design was done by another Barron Park landscape architect, Jack Buktenica. Money was forthcoming from the City of Palo Alto to fund the bike path, completing the overall Palo Alto plan. Then, on November 4, 1975, the citizens of Barron Park voted 936-478 to join Palo Alto, ending nearly 40 years of disagreement over



**Illustration 12: Josina Bol and Dick Placone at the Park Dedication, April 28, 1974. Photo by Bob England.**

incorporation. On November 25, the formal transfer of responsibility for the park, including the development of Phase Two, took place. Bol Park in Barron Park became Palo Alto's newest park – a gift by the citizens to the City.

**Phase Two Reaches Completion**

Meanwhile, Phase Two planning continued, and construction began in 1979. Finally, in May 1980, Phase Two was dedicated at a ceremony in the park. This created a regional bike path running south from the Stanford Industrial (now Research) Park to Arastradero Road. It encompassed nine acres of land, bringing the total acreage of the Bol Park-Regional Bike Path complex to 13.8 acres.

**The Play Structure 1973-2001**

The original wooden play structure had been designed and built by one or both of the landscape architects, assisted by Barron Park volunteers, including Paul Edwards and others. We don't have a record of its features, but a brief reference in the Winter 1993 BPA



**Illustration 13: Bol Park view, looking south from middle of park in 1974. Note the sapling redwood trees; they are now about 100 feet tall. Photo by Bob England.**





**Illustration 14: Will Beckett's gazebo and performers at the 1982 Fourth Fête. Photo by Sam Elster.**

Newsletter said, "The play structure in Bol Park has been the gathering place for young people from all over Barron Park for the last 19 years. It offers a wide range of uses, limited only by the imagination. Recently there was a family playing 'follow the leader' up the posts and over the deck." The 1993 article (possibly written by Paul Edwards) mentioned that "Although the structure is still very sound, after years of use and heavy weather damage, it is time to begin repairs . . . Much of the decking is being turned over to expose the smooth underside. Some of the wood is beyond repair and will need to be replaced. In addition to this, the City of Palo Alto has asked that safety improvements be made. Some rails will be added around the deck and a few new posts will be [added] to fill in where there are gaps."

**Fifty Years in Bol Park (1974-2024)**

**The USA Bicentennial Celebration**

In the late 1970s, new community traditions were born: fêtes in the park. The BPA organized a USA Bicentennial Celebration and Community Picnic in the park on July 4, 1976. Many people who turned out were enjoying the park for the first time. Jeff and Janet Rulifson, residents on El Centro Avenue, assembled a Barron Park history exhibit that inspired the amateur historian Doug Graham to become interested in neighborhood history. It also led directly to the construction of the permanent, portable Barron Park history exhibits that many have enjoyed ever since the late 1980s.

**The May Fêtes**

Paul and Patty Edwards launched the annual May Fête on a small scale in the mid-1970s.



**Illustration 15: Los Trancos Woods Community Marching Band at the 1985 May Fête. Photo by Paul Edwards.**

The first major fête sponsored by the BPA was held in May 1978. There were three Maypoles, several musical groups, and the Los Trancos Woods Community Marching Band put on a show. There were craft displays and face-painting, and Ken Arutunian began a ten-year tradition of Armenian-style barbecued shish kabobs. There were very successful May Fêtes in each of the next two years.

**The Fourth Fêtes**

After the rainy 1981 May Fête, the BPA decided to try an old-fashioned Fourth of July picnic, similar to the Bicentennial celebration. This was mainly an attempt to avoid the uncertainties of May weather. The first "Fourth Fête" in 1982 was a great success. Will Beckett built a gazebo that could be assembled and disassembled in two hours' time and which was used at all the fêtes for at least a decade. The stage section is still occasionally used today. (See Illustration #14,

Will Beckett's gazebo and performers at the 1982 Fourth Fête.)

In 1982 we had a program of speeches by local politicians, including Congressman Tom Lantos. The Fourth Fêtes were repeated in 1983, with Mayor Betsy Bechtel, and in 1984 with State Assemblyman Byron Sher.

Also in 1984, then BPA President Doug Graham organized a Bol Park Tenth Anniversary presentation honoring Josina Bol, Richard Placone, and others who had made the park possible. After 1984, the Board decided to bring back the May Fête and the Maypole dancing, our main focus since 1985. (See Illustration #15, Los Trancos Woods Marching Band at the 1985 May Fête. Also see Illustration #16, Maypole dance at the 2003 May Fête.)

**Memorial Redwoods and Benches**

Another Bol Park tradition was inaugurated in 1985-86 by then BPA President John Jojnt:

planting redwood trees in memory of the loved ones of some Barron Park residents. Rather than interfere with Ken Arutunian's original landscape design with a "memorial grove," the Board voted to add trees at the fringe of the redwood groupings. This tradition continued until 20 or so years ago, morphing into the installation of memorial park benches instead of trees. The benches are placed along the pedestrian walk and the bike path (now the shared pathway).

**Renovation and Revegetation**

Over the fifty years since the park's founding, improvements have been done at Bol Park and on the



**Illustration 16: Maypole dance at the 2003 May Fête. This may be the best photo ever taken of our Maypole dances. Photographer either Paul Edwards or Patrick Muffler.**





**Illustration 17: The torn-up bike path, used as a haul road in 1996 for the underground bypass flood culvert construction. Photo by Mollie Graham.**

associated shared pathway by the City of Palo Alto, the Santa Clara Water District, and BPA committees and volunteers, including many from nonprofits Acterra and Canopy. Several projects, summarized below, were written up in the BPA Newsletter (1993-2018).

**The Flood Control Project, 1994-2000**

In the late 1990s the bike path that had been carefully designed and built in 1978-80 was completely torn up and removed so that the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) could use the former railroad right-of-way to install the Barron Creek Diversion and Matadero Creek Bypass culverts. This project now protects Barron

Park from creek flooding. (See the BPA Newsletter, Winter 2015, for “The End of Creek Flooding in Barron Park?” and “How the BP Flood Control Projects Work.”) Fortunately, the SCVWD had promised to replace the bike path, including its curves and contours, as closely as possible to Jack Buktenica’s original design path users knew and liked. (See Illustration #17, the torn-up bike path used as a haul road in 1996 for the underground bypass flood culvert construction.)

When the contractors dug deep into the fill near Strawberry Hill, they made an interesting archeological find. Uncovering the old railroad bed, they found that some of the foundation fill consisted of debris from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. Occasionally, even now, walkers still find shards of broken crockery sticking out of the soil.

**What Happened to Mickey?**

In 1993, when the flood control project construction was scheduled to start, there was great concern among the donkey handlers and Mickey’s many friends about what would happen to him. One obvious solution was to relocate him temporarily. However, there was a general worry that, once relocated, he would never be returned – and there was also concern about his age: Would he receive daily care comparable to what he had been getting?

But an agreement was reached with the Water District to allow the official donkey handlers and his veterinarian, when necessary, access through the hard hat zone to visit, feed, and care for Mickey. Later on, the

Water District allowed a few small contingents of “unofficial” visitors to cross the construction zone so Mickey would not feel cut off from friendly contacts. However, to everyone’s surprise, Mickey was soon the pet of many construction workers who took time to see him every day. He thrived during the project, apparently finding the activity and noise interesting rather than disturbing.

**Complete Park Renovation in 2001-2002**

Finally, the neighborhood and the City jointly decided that a major renovation of Bol Park was in order. Barron Park was lucky in the choice of Parks Department Representative Kate Rooney (effectively the project manager). Kate was a native Barron Parker. According to a complete and readable account in the Winter 2002 BPA Newsletter by Christian Kalar (our BPA Park Committee Chair), “Kate grew up on Ilima Court in the ‘60s and ‘70s and attended both Barron Park Elementary and Gunn High Schools. Kate’s childhood experiences with the Bol property actually predate the creation of Bol Park. Ten-year-old Kate and her friends used to scamper across the park area when it was a giant donkey pasture – with donkeys Mickey and Jenny in hot pursuit [not the same Jenny as our more recent donkey]. At that time, the SPRR railroad line still ran through Barron Park, providing service to Los Altos and Los Gatos. With a train stop at the corner of Matadero and Laguna [“Neal Station”], the Rooney family was able to take a train ride outing to Clint’s in Los Altos for ice cream. At that time, the railroad [in 2002, the bike path] was visible all the way from the east end of Ilima Court, since houses had not yet been built on Ilima Way.” Kalar wrote that Kate’s appreciation for Barron Park’s history and culture really helped in the preparations for the park’s renovations.

The renovations would include three major park features. First, trees and turf – the park had evolved over the previous 28 years (1974-2002); small saplings had grown into large redwood groves. Christian went on to explain that the redwood groves – grassy areas 28 years ago – were being unnecessarily watered by the existing irrigation system, creating wet and swampy spots. A new irrigation system would improve coverage, eliminate overwatering, and include remote monitoring and control.

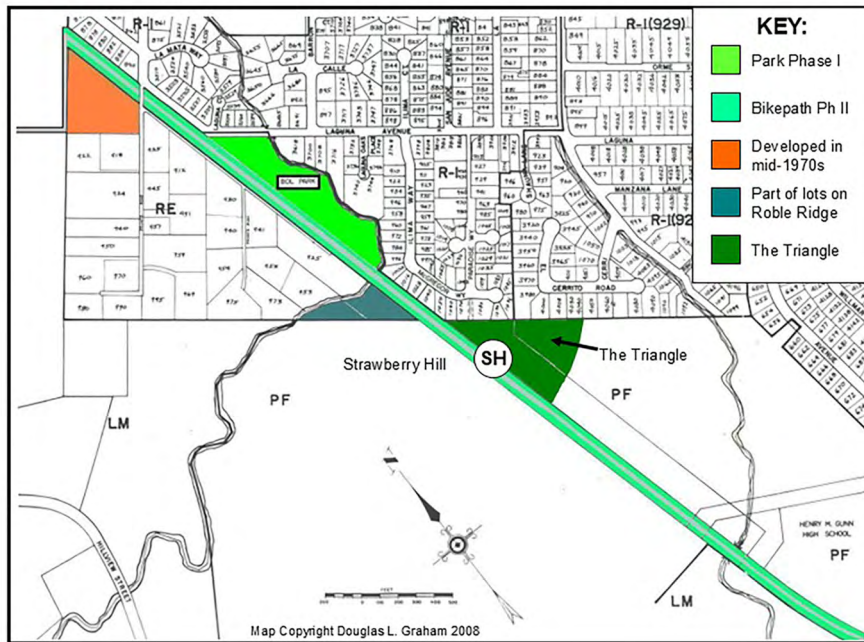
Second, pathways: The “sidewalk” parallel to Laguna Avenue, the pedestrian path along the creek, and the user-created informal path at the “undeveloped” south end along the creek to the shared pathway bridge would each be covered in crushed decomposed granite in Felton Gold. However, the user-created path did not get this treatment, instead receiving minor enhancements by the Acterra team.

Third, a replacement play structure was designed to meet the requirements of the then-new Americans with Disabilities Act



**Illustration 18: Bol Park Bike Path Committee volunteers planting native shrubs near Strawberry Hill in 2016. Photo by Frank Crossman.**

## The Original Plan for Additions to Bol Park



Updated 15 Mar 08

**Illustration 19: Map showing the original concept (late 1960s) of a park for the Barron Park neighborhood. Map by Doug Graham, 2008.**

and standards for playground safety. The Parks Department distributed 851 surveys to residents on their preferences for the play structure, getting a 35% response rate with clear guidance on many questions. The new structures would be made of earth-tone-colored materials and located at the edge of the turf area to avoid blocking the line of sight down the length of the park – one of its outstanding features. Additionally, benches, trash cans, a drinking fountain, a picnic table, underground power lines, and even “raptor perches” were planned.

The park was officially reopened June 20, 2002, with an ice cream social, according to Doug Moran in the Fall 2002 BPA Newsletter. City officials reported that the crowd was three times the size of that at any other park opening. Enthusiastic children mobbed the new play structures. Final pieces of play equipment arrived later: a tire swing, a pair of standard swings, and a pair of toddler swings. Also, two spring-mounted riding donkeys were installed in the sand pit.

### Native Plants Along the Bike Path

As far back as Phase Two in 1977-79, residents were commenting on the importance of including northern California native plants in the park landscaping. The plan did call

for some native plants along the bike path to be installed by the City, but the results were unimpressive, partly due to inadequate maintenance. When the bike path was torn up in 1993-94 for the flood control project, the SCVWD promised extensive plantings. But after the flood control structures were finished in 1995, they failed to meet those promises. A BPA Newsletter story in Summer 1997 gives the details. So, both attempts to provide native plants along the bike path were essentially failures.

The failed attempts by government agencies stimulated the BPA to create a Native Plant (now Native Habitat) Committee to work on this and other environmental issues. Perhaps Barron Park volunteers could succeed where the Water District and City fell short. Initially led by Doug Moran, Jill Beckett, and Inge Harding-Barlow, the committee made improvements to the semi-natural habitat stretching from the Gunn Sedimentation Basin (the ‘duck pond’) to the Stanford Industrial (now Research) Park boundary at Matadero Court. But with only a scattering of volunteers, consistent follow-up and maintenance was too difficult.

### Habitat Improvement

By 2015, a number of Barron Park residents, in cooperation with the City Parks

Department, were focusing on habitat restoration. Nonprofit Acterra had already been involved for years, with Claire Elliott leading volunteer groups, including many Barron Park neighbors, to eradicate invasive plants such as broom, periwinkle, stinkweed, various thistles, Algerian ivy, and cotoneaster. Invasives reduction was carried out along the bike path, on Strawberry Hill, and in the “undeveloped” open space at the southern corner of Bol Park proper. The Acterra-led groups also planted favored northern California species, especially bunch grasses, buckwheats, currants (*Ribes*), soap plant, and slender milkweed. This work involved the Habitat Committee, the Barron Park Green Team, as well as the BPA Board. (See Illustration #18, Bol Park Bike Path Committee volunteers planting native shrubs near Strawberry Hill in 2016.)

### The Bol Park Native Garden

The Native Plant Garden at the north end of the park (at Matadero and Laguna) also has a long history. In the late 1990s, after the Water District’s attempt exposed widespread misunderstanding and reluctance among some Barron Park residents to consider native plants in “our” park, Jill Beckett and other volunteers from the Garden Club proposed a California Native Plant demonstration garden.

The Native Plant garden was initially slow to take off, experiencing all the problems of the previous attempts, and even the outright hostility of some locals who anonymously pulled up native plants at night! The new garden had maintenance problems and often appeared, even to friendly eyes, as an unkempt weed patch. But the Native Garden group persevered with improved care and follow-up. Today, the beautiful, expanded garden is a thriving educational destination with interpretive signage, bee and owl houses, paths, and benches, lovingly tended by Melanie Cross, Richard and Linda Elder, Jeff Burch, and others from the Native Habitat Committee, neighbors, and volunteers from Grassroots Ecology (Acterra), along with school and Scout groups.

An article in the Winter 2018 BPA Newsletter by Richard Elder and Melanie Cross described the expansion of the Native Garden that now extends about 100 feet farther south along the shared pathway. The extension was done with the full cooperation of the Palo Alto Parks Department. Irrigation



was installed to get the plants through their first few years – once established, they require very little water. The 2018 article included a list of volunteers, residents, and students who made the addition possible. The committee also collaborated with Claire Elliott and Grassroots Ecology to construct and plant a “rain garden,” to replace the irrigated turf strip between the Native Garden and the shared pathway.

**Shared Pathway Revegetation 2014–2018**

This story would not be complete without recalling the excellent article in the Winter 2015 BPA Newsletter, “Bol Park Pathway – A Brief History,” by Richard Placone. Richard tells the story of the Bol Park Bike Path Committee formed after the VA Hospital shocked the Barron Park community, the bicycle commuters, and recreational users of the shared pathway, by stripping away most of the mature vegetation that had screened buildings, roads, and traffic from the pathway. It would be hard to imagine any worse esthetic disaster for the Gunn High School–Barron Park area than what they did, as Richard wrote, “one sunny morning in October [2015]. The mature California Live Oak trees, along with all other trees and shrubbery that bordered the pathway, but on the property of the adjacent Veterans Administration Hospital were being bulldozed and ripped out, leaving vast areas along the path open for the first time to vistas of the VA campus. Within a few hours, what was once an idyllic and bucolic environment [adjacent to] the pathway became a glaring scar.”

Placone wrote, “Neighbors Art Liberman, David Boxerman, and Richard Placone [met] to see what could be done. Talking to the VA staff, the group learned that the VA was beginning a multimillion-dollar expansion of the hospital, a project scheduled to be completed in about three years.” The group then worked with City Landscape Architect Peter Jensen, who subsequently “prepared a complete landscape plan for the entire length of the pathway [where it is] adjacent to the VA property. The City provided all the plant material, machinery, and staff to dig all the holes, and provided the planting mulch. A large contingent of Canopy staff and 60 volunteers from Canopy, Barron Park, and other neighborhoods turned out to do the actual planting.” Planting day was October 24, 2015, and “the VA was to provide the initial irrigation for two years at no cost to

the community.” The final resulting landscape environment was expected to be an improvement over what was there before the construction project began. Meanwhile, the committee turned its attention to improving the pathway itself, or at least introducing some useful safety features (mainly signage), which can be seen there today.

**The Future of Bol Park**

The future of the park seems assured by its dedication as parkland by the City of Palo Alto. The City has already renovated the park once and has indicated that it is planning to do so again in the near future. Regular maintenance is essential – several features have deteriorated significantly in recent decades from normal weathering and user wear-and-tear (for example, the pedestrian path and the stairs down to the creek). Wooden bridges are currently being repaired (Fall 2024).

In another sense, the future of the park lies in the same hands as in its past, the capable hands of the self-motivated citizens of Barron Park. The original concept of Bol Park has not yet been fully achieved: Three additional parcels were originally identified to be added to the park. One has been lost to development (four large residential parcels on Matadero Court, across Matadero Avenue, north of the shared pathway). The second parcel was the current donkey paddock, owned and generously rented to the nonprofit Barron Park Donkey Project by its owner James Witt.

The third parcel – the largest and possibly the best – could still be considered available, at least theoretically. It is “Strawberry Hill” along with the so-called “Gunn triangle” of open (undeveloped) land adjacent to McGregor Way. This area has been eyed for possible housing for teachers. Given both State and City pressure for housing, it might be difficult to justify keeping it forever as open space. (See Illustration #19, map showing original concept of a park for the Barron Park neighborhood.)

**To Reach the Historian**

If you have questions, comments, or corrections to this story, please contact me at [dgrahampaca@gmail.com](mailto:dgrahampaca@gmail.com); landline: (650) 493-0689; street address: 984 Ilima Way, Palo Alto CA 94306. I am not reachable by texting.

**BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Fall 2024**

- President, John W. King
- Secretary, Jaya Pandey
- Treasurer, John W. King
- Doug Burns
- Todd Collins
- Richard Elder
- Maurice Green
- Christian Kalar
- John W. King
- Lisa Berkowitz Landers
- Gwen Luce
- Jaya Pandey
- Myrna Rochester
- Paul Yang

**Committee /Activity Chairs**

- Business Liaison:* Paul Yang
- Communications:* Myrna Rochester
- Email Lists:* Richard Elder
- Environment:* Jaya Pandey
- Events:* Vacant
- Barron Park History:* Douglas L. Graham
- Membership:* Lisa Berkowitz Landers
- Neighborhood Safety & Emergency Preparedness:* Maurice Green
- Parks & Creeks:* Christian Kalar
- Native Habitat:* Richard Elder
- Shared Pathway:* Doug Burns
- Schools Liaison:* Todd Collins
- Senior Connections:* Pooja Punn
- Traffic & Streets:* Doug Burns
- Webmaster:* Maurice Green
- Welcoming:* Gwen Luce
- Zoning & Land Use:* Vacant
- P.A. Neighborhood (PAN) Liaison:* Doug Burns

**BPA Board Meetings** are held the 2nd Tuesday of most months at 7:00 p.m. All neighbors are welcome.

For schedule and location write to: [johnwadeking@gmail.com](mailto:johnwadeking@gmail.com)

[bpapaloalto.org](http://bpapaloalto.org)

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION  
724 Barron Avenue  
Palo Alto, California 94306  
[bpapaloalto.org](http://bpapaloalto.org)

PRSR STD  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PALO ALTO, CA  
PERMIT NO. 143

**50 YEARS**  
1974-2024

Thank you  
Barron Park  
for supporting  
us all these years.



Barron Park  
Playschool

[barronpark.com](http://barronpark.com)

**PIZZA Chicago**

Pick Up • Delivery • Eat In

3864 El Camino Real  
Palo Alto, CA 94306  
(650) 424-9400  
[pizzachicago.com](http://pizzachicago.com)

Sunday-Thursday: 10:30 AM - 9:30 PM  
Friday-Saturday: 10:30 AM - 10:00PM

**CAL PRESERVING**  
.com

**WOOD CARE**

**BARRON PARK'S LOCAL COPY SHOP**

DESKTOP PUBLISHING • LARGE FORMAT  
SELF SERVICE ON 100% RECYCLED PAPER  
LOCALLY OWNED AND OPERATED

Professional • Friendly • Reliable  
Affordable • Convenient



**Copy Factory**

650.856.2020 • [copyfactory.com](http://copyfactory.com)  
3929 El Camino Real, Palo Alto  
Between Los Robles and Ventura

**B&W • COLOR COPIES • FULL BINDERY**



**Foutz House Kitchen**

Nutritious meals delivered  
for free in Palo Alto  
every Tuesday!

Macro-focused, portion controlled, and  
prepared with high quality ingredients.

Contact Home Chef Monica Foutz at  
530-828-4617 or [Monica3@comcast.net](mailto:Monica3@comcast.net)

**GEDDES ULINSKAS ARCHITECTS**



Local Architects Serving the Silicon  
Valley Community for 20 Years.  
[www.ularch.com](http://www.ularch.com)  
415.904.0483

**Great American Framing Company**



Custom Picture Framing & Mirrors  
650/327-4521  
3866 El Camino Real, Palo Alto, CA 94306



**Creekside Inn**  
PALO ALTO

Thank you Creekside Inn for graciously  
providing well-equipped rooms for our  
Barron Park Association meetings!

3400 El Camino Real, Palo Alto  
650-493-2411  
[creekside-inn.com](http://creekside-inn.com)

**State of Mind**  
SLICE HOUSE

INSPIRED BY  
*The Golden State*

3850 El Camino Real, Palo Alto