



PARK BEAT

The Pulse of Greater Boulevard Park

Boulevard Park Neighborhood Association # Box 163179, Sacramento 95816 # April 2020

A Brief Report from the BPNA Board

The agenda of the March board meeting included a discussion of the State Capitol Building Annex project. This controversial proposal involves the demolition of the 1950's era east side addition to the building (known as the Annex) and its replacement by a new larger, version along with more underground office space and a 200-car underground parking garage. Much disruption to Capitol Park is expected, and many wonderful trees will be lost, including part of the row of Deodar cedars planted on the west side of the Capitol in the early 1880s (see article on **page 2**). East Sacramento Preservation and other neighborhood groups are opposed to the project as designed. Our guest Sydnie Whitesel, field representative for State Assembly member Kevin McCarty, will make sure that he is aware of the Board's concerns. To learn more about this project, go to the government website (annex.assembly.ca.gov). See also the website of East Sacramento Preservation (<http://eastsacpreservation.org/tag/annex-project/>).

Jon Marshack told the other Board members about Sacramento History Museum's upcoming exhibition of Eleanor McClatchy's gold rush era ephemera, "California in Print" (its scheduled opening on March 20 has been postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak: the museum will be closed through March 31). Jon also updated the Board on the status of the Sacramento Valley Station project and the various changes planned for that area (website: <https://www.cityofsacramento.org/Public-Works/Sacramento-Valley-Station/Projects>).

He then reported on his attendance at a recent city hall meeting where he expressed the Board's concerns about proposed changes to City planning processes and procedures. Finally, he informed his fellow Board members about the 2020 California Preservation Conference that currently is scheduled to be held in Sacramento between May 17-20. The conference's theme will be "A Changing Climate for Preservation" (website: <https://californiapreservation.org/programs/conference/>). Among other events, a walking tour of Boulevard Park is planned (one of a series of Jane Jacobs Walking Tours, held annually). Dave Herbert then reported on efforts to ensure a smooth ownership transition of an SRO building at 515 21st Street. He had attended a neighborhood meeting during which representatives of Volunteers of America, the new property managers for this address, assured local residents that every effort will be made to keep this a well managed property and a good neighbor for the area.



**Attention, Please!
Block Captain
Needed to
Deliver Copies of
*Park Beat***

BPNA still needs a Block Captain to cover the area bordered by F, G, 23rd and 24th Streets.

If you can spare 15 minutes a month and like to walk and talk with your neighbors, please contact our Block Captain Coordinator, Joe Cress, at 916-698-7938 (cressj@saccounty.net).

Semi-Annual Neighborhood Yard Sale: Set Those Items Aside, Please!

BPNA's Board of Directors will host a neighborhood yard sale in mid-June (the exact date and times will be announced later). All funds raised will support the organization's outreach and service activities. We welcome household goods, collectibles, books, sports items, toys, garden tools, and small pieces of furniture (items that one person can easily carry). We cannot accept electronics. So, the next time you are engaged in Spring cleaning activities, set aside those gently used, salable items for the sake of your neighborhood. More information about yard sale item storage will appear in future issues of *Park Beat*.

The Trees of Midtown: The Deodar Cedar



The Deodar Cedar is an extremely graceful evergreen conifer seen in Sacramento parks and sometimes in our own backyards. It is a very large tree reaching over 80 feet tall with a trunk up to 10 feet in diameter and, when young, can grow up to 2 feet per year. The Deodar Cedar is native to parts of India, Pakistan, China, and other regions of the western Himalaya Mountains.

Among Hindus, Deodar is worshiped as a divine tree. Forests of Deodar, considered sacred places, were a favorite living place of ancient Indian sages, who performed difficult forms of meditation in these groves. Widely grown as an ornamental tree in parks, the Deodar can tolerate temperatures down to about minus 22 degrees.

Deodar wood is in great demand as a building material due to its durability, rot resistance, and fine close grain which can take a high polish. In its native regions, Deodar Cedar was used to build religious temples, houseboats, public buildings, bridges, and railway cars. Its brittle nature does limit its uses where a very strong wood is required. The inner wood is aromatic, making it useful in aromatherapy. It is also used to make incense and essential oil. Because of its antifungal and insect repellent properties, rooms made of Deodar Cedar are used for storing meat and food grains in some areas of the world.

To see some of Sacramento's excellent Deodar Cedar specimens, visit the park area in front of the west steps of the State Capitol building near 10th Street. As shown in the photo, these majestic trees are among the most dramatic trees in the central city. Several of the Capitol Park deodars were planted along 10th Street in 1882, and one of them has a marker identifying it as the largest of its species in California.

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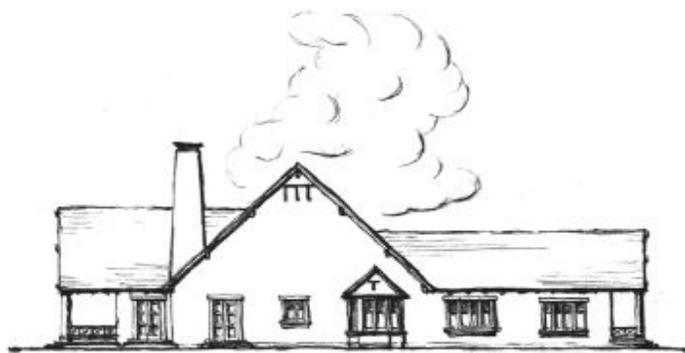
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Boulevard Park Neighborhood Association's purpose: The BPNA was created to support, promote, and improve the quality of life for the residents of the greater Boulevard Park neighborhood. By achieving this goal we strive to improve the quality of life for others who work and live in and around Boulevard Park, and therefore in Sacramento as a whole.

Committees

Membership: Ellen Hunt
Preservation, Planning, and Land Use: Jon Marshack

Park Beat Production Team

Newsletter Designer: Pete Bramson
Newsletter Editor: Catherine Turrill Lupi
Social Media: Sher Singh
Block Captain Coordinator: Joe Cress, (916) 698-7938
cressj@saccounty.net

Places to Go, People To See

NOTE: The information in this calendar was current as of March 26, but events may be canceled or postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Check the sponsors' websites.

Regular public events that often are listed in the *Park Beat* calendar, and which have been canceled as of March 26, include yoga in McKinley Park, the Second Saturday event hosted by Friends of the River Banks, guided tours in the Historic City Cemetery, and most shows and sales at the Shepard Garden & Art Center. Special April events that will not be held include Sacramento State's Festival of the Arts and many lectures and exhibitions that had been planned for Photography Month Sacramento (website: <https://www.photomonthsac.org>). Seasonal religious services also are likely to be impacted.

Every Saturday: Midtown Farmers' Market (8 a.m. to 1 p.m., 20th St. between J and L Streets). See COVID-19 notice on this page.

Tues., Apr. 7: BPNA Board Meeting: open to BPNA members and other interested neighbors (6:30-8 p.m.). Contact Dave Herbert for location or to suggest agenda items. **Note:** Contrary to the information printed in the March issue of *Park Beat*, most Board meetings will be held on the first **Tuesday** of each month.

Wed., Apr. 8: Passover

Sun., Apr. 12: Easter

Apr. 18 & 19: Sacramento Iris Society Show and Sale, Shepard Garden & Art Center (1-5 p.m. on Sat.; 10 a.m.-3 p.m. on Sun.).

Website: <http://www.sgaac.org/calendar.php> (also check: <https://sacramentoirissocietydotcom.wordpress.com>).

Sun., Apr. 19: Orthodox Easter
Fri., Apr. 24: Beginning of Ramadan

Sat., Apr. 25: Rossini's "Barber of Seville," semi-staged performance by the Sacramento Philharmonic & Opera, Memorial Auditorium, 1515 J St. (8 p.m.; admission charged). Website: <https://www.sacphilopera.org/production/opera-finale/>

Sun., Apr. 26: Sacramento Earth Day, Southside Park, 700 T St. (11 a.m.-4 p.m.; free admission). See article on **page 4**. Website: <https://www.ecosacramento.net/about-us/our-work/events/sacearthday/>

... **And, looking ahead to early May:**

Tues., May 5: BPNA Board Meeting: open to BPNA members and other interested neighbors (6:30-8 p.m.). Contact Dave Herbert for location or to suggest agenda items.



The Midtown Farmers' Market and Health Precautions

To help keep everyone safe at the Midtown Farmers Market, additional precautions are being taken in light of the current Coronavirus (COVID-19). Much like a grocery store, the Midtown Farmers Market plays a critical role in the community to maintain food access to shoppers of all income levels. It is important to support our local farmers, growers, and vendors at this time.

To help keep **everyone** safe, the Farmers Market has put several preventative measures in place, including:

- Being equipped with extra supplies and an additional hand-washing station
- Created extra space between vendors to allow for distancing
- Discontinued taste sampling from vendors
- Eliminated other non-essential activations such as gathering places and play areas
- Requesting vendors to pre-bag their products

If you plan to attend the Farmers Market, please practice social distancing, wash your hands with soap and water, and cover your cough. ***If you are sick, please stay home.***

(<http://exploreidowntown.org/midtown-farmers-market/>)

It's Everybody's Planet!

As of March 26, Sacramento's annual Earth Day celebration is still scheduled for Sunday, April 26 (11 a.m. to 4 p.m.). However, its sponsoring organization, the Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS), is monitoring the regional Coronavirus situation closely. Check the website for updates (<https://www.ecosacramento.net/about-us/our-work/events/sacearthday/about-sacramento-earth-day/>).

If all goes well, this free, family-friendly event will be held in Southside Park (700 T Street). As usual, the celebration will offer a wide range of educational and entertaining activities for people of all ages, including information about plant-based cuisine



and new energy innovations, electric vehicle test-drives, live music, locally-made goods, local artists, interactive educational games, and children's activities (including face-painting). Bicycle valet parking will be available. Food vendors will be on hand (or you can pick up some food at the Central Farmers' Market, under the freeway at W and 8th Streets; there will be a picnic area at the Park).

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This Month's Historic House: 2130 H Street

Built for "Stormy Jack" Lambert in 1907, 2130 H is best known to many Boulevard Park residents as the Bezdecheck House. Vincent ("Vince") and Donna Bezdecheck were among the "restoration pioneers" who purchased old homes in Sacramento's midtown during the 1970s and 1980s. They bought into our neighborhood in 1987 and soon were actively engaged in its improvement. Together with other residents, they took on issues such as calming traffic and improving street lighting. Vince also served as BPNA's co-chair in the 1990s. He died in 2012; Donna in 2020. Both are remembered fondly by their former neighbors.

The first owner of 2130 H, Luther Jackson Lambert, was working as a trainmaster for the Southern Pacific Railroad when he and his wife Leota purchased the corner lot at 22nd and H Streets in 1906. They lived only seven years in their new house. Later owner-occupants included Alice H. Geraty and her second husband, Henry Hoffelt (1914-26), followed by twin sisters Elizabeth and Anna Rothenbuecher, whose father Jacob was a veteran of the Civil War (1927-57). They operated 2130 H as a boarding house, renting furnished rooms to five or six lodgers at a time. According to one real estate advertisement from 1957, the house grossed \$145 a month in rental income. Thirty years later, when it was purchased by the Bezdechecks, it was sorely in need of renovation. As reported in an article in *Park Beat* in June 2012, Vince and Donna "lovingly and painstakingly restored" their historic home, which was one of seven Boulevard Park residences covered in SOCA's annual tour in September 2009. A Colonial Revival style "Foursquare" house, 2130 H features slender Ionic columns in its wrap-around front porch, two three-sided bays at ground-floor level, and deep-set eaves.

Remembering the Green Thumb Brigade

Long-time residents of Boulevard Park will remember them well, the intrepid band of gardeners who tended to the plantings in over 45 traffic circles, pedestrian islands, half-street closures, and portals positioned throughout the neighborhood. One of the key elements of the Neighborhood Preservation Transportation Plan (*aka* NPTP or Traffic Calming Plan) implemented in the late nineties, these “devices” were built by the City. Residents were given the option of having the City either fill the devices with brick or cement, or make them into planters, on the condition that the residents would maintain them. The residents on the NPTP Committee voted for the latter. That commitment led to the birth of the Green Thumb Brigade, a small group of BPNA and Marshall School NA members who promised to keep the planters in shape. The City provided drought-resistant plants, such as rock rose and lavender, with redbud trees in most of the traffic circles. The first plantings were done by December of 1999 to take advantage of the winter rains. A large group of residents



The photo above shows six members of The Green Thumb Brigade several years ago: Shelly Lusk, Daisy Mah, Sally Flory-O’Neil, David Roberts (the photographer), Marsha McCormick, and Margaret Buss.

met at Marshall School and divided into teams of two or three people. Each team was given plants for specific sites, and (as reported in the September/October 2006 issue of *Park Beat*), with shovels and gardening gloves in hand they set out to beautify our neighborhood. In the years that followed, residents living near the devices often put in additional plants and shrubs, also assuming responsibility for maintaining “their” miniature gardens throughout the year.

But the members of the Green Thumb Brigade met for two hours every second Saturday, nurturing the plantings throughout the Boulevard Park, Marshall School, and New Era Park neighborhoods. The Brigade varied in size, with a core group of six to eight members, and was originally led by the late Pat Baker. The “Thumbs” were easily spotted walking around the neighborhood, buckets and garden implements in hand. In the fall and winter, they cleaned leaves and other debris out of the traffic-calming devices, also sweeping the street immediately surrounding them. In early and mid-spring, they weeded the gardens. From late spring through mid-fall, until the rainy season began, they watered them. Neighbors living near the plantings lent hoses (with hook-ups to their waterlines), buckets, and waste containers. As noted above, some residents “adopted” the devices beside their homes and took responsibility for looking after the plants, a practice that has continued.

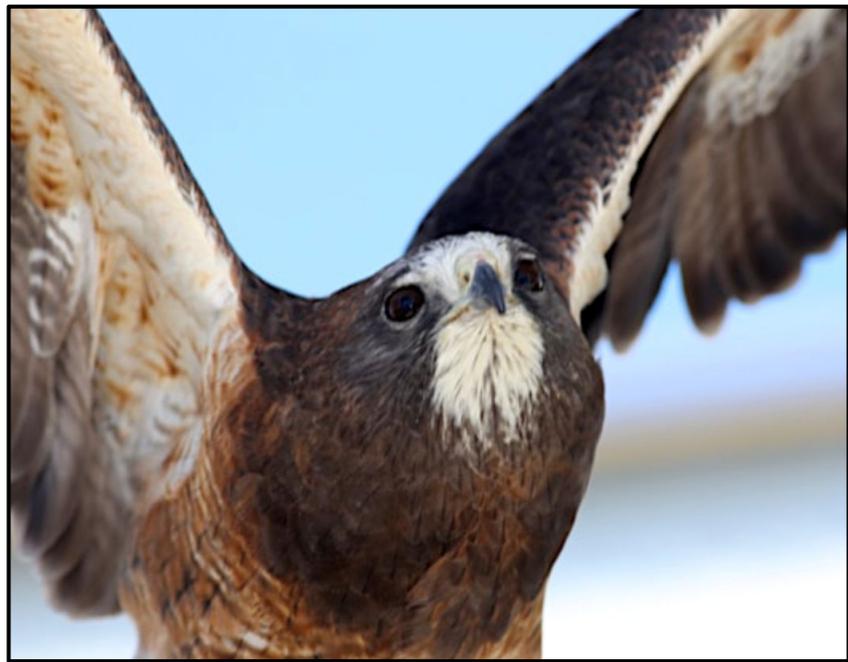
The Brigade reluctantly disbanded several years ago due to both a period of drought (making it difficult for them to secure water from neighbors) and a change in the City’s green waste management program. The group had relied on being able to pile up leaves and plant debris in the street. However, once the City stopped sending “the Claw” out on a weekly basis, they had no way to dispose of the large volume of green waste generated by the traffic circles (weeding and trimming a single pedestrian island easily filled a bin). Also, they did not have enough volunteers. The core group of six or seven gardeners could not handle more than one or two streets per month, and as a result many planters were left untended.



Perhaps there will be a “Green Thumb Brigade II” in our neighborhood’s future. In the meantime, we are grateful for the efforts of the residents who have continued to care for the gardens. We also appreciate the many flowering plants donated over the years, including the lovely “Naked Ladies” that Pat Baker procured from the late Les Hannibal, a famous Sacramento breeder of Amaryllis hybrids.

Finally, thanks to the residents who gave such a warm reception to the members of the Green Thumb Brigade and other volunteers, including the owner of the corner store on G Street who handed out bottles of water one hot summer morning, the florist who presented each of the “brigadiers” with a dozen long-stemmed white roses, the driver who stopped and donated all of the change in his pocket, the volunteer from the Senior Center who gave them each a cookie, and all the passersby who simply smiled, waved, or offered a thumbs-up to the neighborhood gardeners. The members of the Green Thumb Brigade also cherish recollections of the camaraderie they enjoyed while working together. Their reward was experiencing the joys and benefits of volunteering for a common cause.

Don't Forget to Welcome Swainson's Hawks!



Every Spring, the Friends of the River Banks have hosted a gathering to welcome Swainson's hawks back to Sutter's Landing, and also to educate humans of all ages about these returning raptors. This year's unexpected outbreak of the Coronavirus has meant the cancellation of the human side of that popular event, but the hawks should still be following their annual schedule. You can read more about them on the FORB website (<https://www.friendsoftheriverbanks.org>). As reported on that website last April, Swainson's hawks come back to our region every spring, and they should start nesting soon. We are fortunate to have these beautiful raptors among us here in Sacramento, one of two areas in northern California where they return every year (they have lost much of their original terrain to agriculture).

The adults build their nests in riparian areas, often selecting tall trees like cottonwoods, which grow along the banks of the American River (although you also will find them in the sycamores of Boulevard Park). The new crop of babies may be appearing in one to one and a half months from now. Several months later, in the early fall (between September and October), the hawks will depart for their southern wintering grounds, which range as far away as Argentina, Central America, and Mexico.

Ordinarily the California Raptor Center, located at UC Davis, sends human volunteers and live birds to Sutter's Landing for the FORB event. As of this writing the Raptor Center is closed, like other educational facilities, but you can learn about its activities by going to its website (<https://crc.vetmed.ucdavis.edu>). There even are profiles of the two non-releasable Swainson's hawks who often serve as "ambassador birds" for the Center: Grasshopper and Whistler, both of whom were brought to Sutter's Landing for the FORB event in April 2019 (one of them appears in the photo above). For a video about a family of Swainson's hawks that was filmed in Utah two years ago, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vL7Z3ToZ5KM>

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