

NORTH HILLS

COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

2023 Year-end Highlights

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Dear neighbors,

I'm delighted to share this year's progress with you. It has been quite a busy year of transition & reimagining our community's future. Our challenges and opportunities have never been greater. With your ongoing support and donations, we can accomplish much to enhance the lives of our North Hills community. We cannot do this alone. Please get involved however you can. We are stronger together!

—Dan Conolly, Chair

PUBLIC SAFETY

Lots of good and not so good this year...

New City Council Representative

I've been impressed with our new City Council representative, Janani Ramachandran, during her first year in office. She is not afraid to speak out about crucial public safety issues. She spoke frankly on 911 issues, noting that there had been 3,000 applicants for the 911 OPD Communications Dispatcher position who were never interviewed. When she offered that less-than-politically-correct assessment of Oakland Human Resources, I almost stood up and applauded.

Vegetation Management

After years of revisions, a Vegetation Management plan was presented to the Planning Commission. The city solicited our input and ***I hope you spoke up!*** The jury is still out on this. Two possible revenue-generating mechanisms: a city-wide tax or a Special Assessment District, including only areas in the Wildfire/Urban Interface (our NHCA residential zone).

Oakland Police Department (OPD)

There was a definite uptick in crime in our area. Robberies and burglaries for Area 2 averaged up 55-58% YTD. Our Area 2 Captain, Lisa Ausmus, has made herself available to neighborhoods and at NHCA Public Safety Meetings. She is candid, concerned and coping with the chronic understaffing of the OPD. Because of the well-publicized Oakland crime increase, the formation of Neighborhood Watch groups and attendance at Neighborhood Council Meetings in our area has increased. We must be vigilant and help our neighbors. Reporting incidents via online reporting (www.oaklandca.gov/services/report-a-crime-online) is important—it supplies our Captain with supportive statistics that validate her requests for more patrol officers in our area.

We have several OPD academies planned and one currently in progress. Realistically, it will take time to get our numbers to a level that we all want. We have an average of 5-6 officer retirements a month. The City of Oakland has a goal of 755 officers, but our current number is 712 (including 70 officers off with injuries.) We look forward to more new academy graduations.

Oakland Fire Department (OFD)

We welcomed the new Fire Chief Damon Covington. Coming up through the Oakland Fire Department ranks, he is dedicated to raising firefighter numbers and upgrading protective equipment. To date, he has been able to avoid closing any Fire Stations. He and former Chief Freeman worked closely together to ease past hiring bottlenecks.

—Carolyn Burgess, Public Safety Committee



Members of the NHCA Board at the August 2023 2nd Annual Ice Cream social [Photo: Nancy Mueller]

About Us

The North Hills Community Association (NHCA) serves approximately 10,000 residents of Oakland's North Hills communities (an area roughly contiguous with the Oakland Police Department's Beat 13Y) and adjacent areas of Berkeley.

Your Support is Vital

NHCA is a 100% volunteer-driven community organization. All residents within our area are automatically members. To function effectively for the benefit our neighborhood, we rely upon your financial support and involvement.

Please consider a contribution. bit.ly/NHCADonate

To learn more about our programs and volunteer opportunities, visit our website at www.northhillscommunity.org



Oakland Fire Dept. Station 7 [Photo: Nancy Mueller]

GARDENS & COMMUNITY

If you have been by the **Firestorm Memorial Garden** and the **Gateway Garden and Pavilion** lately, you will observe that they look incredible and are being very well maintained. Like all living things, the gardens take constant year-round attention (i.e., weeding, irrigation repair, mulching, litter pick up and graffiti removal). In 2015 the NHCA accepted responsibility for the maintenance of the gardens located at the two entrances to Hiller Highlands. Your support of our NHCA community makes these beautiful Oakland parks an essential part of our community. We appreciate our loyal volunteers and donors!

With the help of over 500 volunteers and 2,000 hours of labor, the NHCA Garden Committee has successfully executed a comprehensive two-year transformation strategy to reinvigorate the gardens, completed this fall. Volunteers included the local 'We Care' Hills Gardeners, students from the Cal Berkeley Project and Bentley School, and employees from the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation and Chevron Corporation. Yes, it does take a village and we had a very active year indeed!

Thanks go to **BrightView Landscape Services** and **Big Chief Tree Service** for their contracted services and/or in-kind donations of labor and material. These included the removal of over 25 truckloads of green waste and the addition of 15 loads of mulch to the gardens, along with the professional planning and expert services they have provided to our garden program.

The first **Grazing with the Goats** pop-up event was held in June. This event was strategically timed for when the goats were in the nearby hills doing important fire prevention work by eating away at the weeds and fire prone vegetation. **Martin Matarrese of Ecosystem Concepts** was present for a goat program overview, followed by a Q & A. Martin has managed the goat program and shepherds for some 30 years and knows well how best his goats can contribute to our fire prevention efforts.

In August the Garden Committee hosted its **2nd Annual Ice Cream Social/Plant Sale & Raffle** as a gesture of thanks to the community and a public display of the results of our gardening efforts. Well over 100 NHCA neighbors stopped by, along with District 4 Councilmember Janani Ramachandran and several leaders of the Oakland Police and Fire Departments. It was a wonderful day spent in the garden, meeting our neighbors and community leaders.

—Vicki Oliveira, Garden Committee

Your support is vital—Please consider a contribution!

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ADVOCACY

Crime proliferation has shaken the confidence of Oakland residents in all parts of the city. The focus of our advocacy has therefore been on public safety. We co-hosted a Community Forum with embattled Alameda County District Attorney Pamela Price. Unexpected publicity increased crowd size (in person and on Zoom). Many residents were shut out, which was frustrating. We did attempt to offer residents a chance to meet and question Ms. Price.

We endorsed our Councilmember Ramachandran's appeal to extend the Oakland Community Ambassador program, whose goal is to make commercial areas safer, to include District 4. Safety from wildfire remains a top priority. NHCA urged the City Council to allow the Oakland Fire Department to use drones to inspect hard-to-access non-compliant properties. We emphasized the importance of streamlining the hiring process for contractors to clean up hazardous, delinquent properties. We asked the Planning Commission to approve the newly revised Vegetation Management Plan. NHCA urged Oakland to apply for a state fuel reduction grant (it will). We've urged Ohana, the new owners of the Claremont Club and Spa, to continue to expand their native plant garden and minimize the potential fire hazard of its adjacent eucalyptus grove.

As in past years, the NHCA successfully promoted National Night Out. Bringing neighbors together is a primary aim of NHCA. In the year ahead, public safety (crime) and vegetation management will be key issues facing our North Hills community. We hope to expand neighborhood watch groups. We expect to be a key player in the campaign to win approval for a new Fire Suppression District. Stay tuned... and be ready to pitch in!

—David Kessler, Advocacy Committee



June 2023 "Grazing with the Goats" pop-up
[Photo: Dan Conolly]



NHCA Garden Committee Berkeley Project
volunteers [Photo: Cornelia Grimes]

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NEW BOARD MEMBER

Ken Cohen

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North Hills Community Association
(NHCA) is a registered 501(c)3
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Federal Tax ID #27-5088990