

Fountaingrove II Gazette

Volume VI, Issue I

Winter 2009

Crime is on the Rise — Can It Happen to You?

The sad state of our economy affects everyone, and sometimes it creates a climate where people perform desperate acts.

The most frightening acts lately have been a series of home and car break-ins. Approximately 10 Fountaingrove homes have experienced some type of home break-in during recent weeks (others have had cars vandalized), at various times of the day and night.

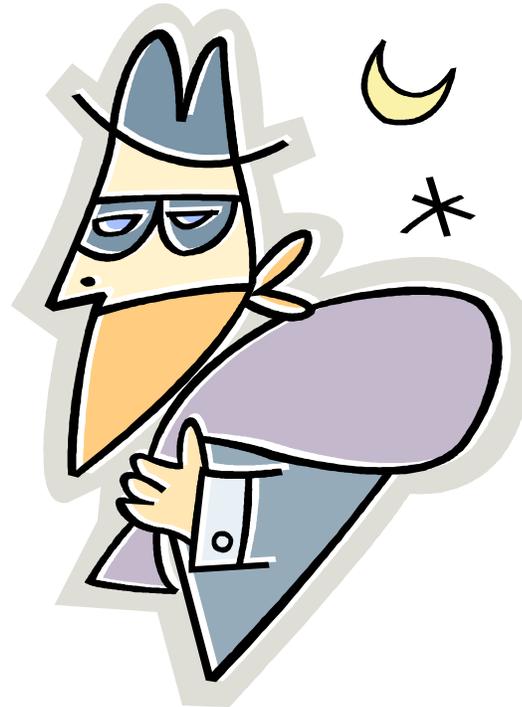
The majority of homeowners affected by break-ins came home to a broken rear or side window, but there have been reports of an intruder squeezing under a slightly open garage door or gaining entry using the realtor's lock box. Sometimes the intruder has left without removing anything. Other times residents have reported a theft. Jewelry has been taken on more than one occasion. One family's fire safe was taken, another had an expensive home theater system stolen.

As reports of these crimes have circulated, many neighbors have sent stories of suspicious circumstances of which we should be aware. More than one resident has reported being called by someone claiming to be with a security company asking about the state of their alarm system. Unknown vehicles or parked occupied vehicles have also been reported.

Also noteworthy: door-to-door salespeople must be registered with the City and be able to present their permit to you. Should you answer the door for someone selling something, ask for the permit issued to them by the City. If they cannot provide one, end the conversation, go

inside and contact the police using the non-emergency number. They will want a description of the person along with the direction in which he or she was heading.

How can we take steps to avoid becoming victims ourselves? There are some pretty basic steps everyone can take...



- Lock every door (including the door from your garage into your house) and every window—both when you're home and when you're away. The longer it takes a criminal to gain entrance, the more likely he will target another victim.
- Lock your gates. If your yard is unfenced, be particularly vigilant.
- Use your alarm, even if you'll be gone for just a short time.
- Install motion-detecting lights.
- Leave a radio and lights on whenever you leave your home. Use a timer if necessary.
- Do not answer any questions asked by an unsolicited caller.
- Be alert and aware of what is happening in your neighborhood. Does your neighbor's gardener

or cleaning service come on a particular day? Whose car is that?

- Report any suspicious activity to the police immediately using their non-emergency number: **528-5222**. They may not be receptive, as they have many pressing concerns, but be persistent.
- Make sure you're on the Fountaingrove II email update list. Electronic alerts are timely, efficient and effective. Contact Kim Nielsen-Glynn at glynn@sonic.net.

More helpful information follows inside this newsletter on Page 7.

Board Changes...

Jeff Schween was re-elected to the OSMA Board of Directors during the fall election, however, he has since been forced to resign his position due to the subsequent sale of his home. Many thanks to Jeff for his several years of dedicated service to the OSMA and its homeowners!

The OSMA Board of Directors has appointed Bruce McConnell to fill the two-year term left open by Jeff's departure. Bruce has been active in the OSMA for many years, particularly in the area of landscaping. Welcome, Bruce !

Landscaping at the Summit

Creekbridge Homes, the builder at the Summit Development, is currently landscaping a rather large swath along Fountaingrove Parkway as part of their commitment to the City before their final departure from the project.

Creekbridge and their landscaper have kindly consulted the OSMA along the way, asking for input and suggested revisions to the design plans approved by the City several years ago. Some of the changes include leaving all of the native Manzanita that have thrived since the development's construction, thinning of the abundant Douglas Firs and installation of more native Oaks.



Some 2008 Firebreak Stats

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Total Firebreak Work | Over \$100,000 |
| Weed Abatement..... | \$55,000 |
| Re-Growth Treatment | \$30,000 |
| Firebreak Expansion..... | \$12,000 |
| Weed Whack Fire Roads | \$ 3,000 |

Landscaping Team To Do's

In other OSMA news, the Landscaping Team will be requesting bids for the landscaping maintenance contracts. Landscape maintenance includes tending of all irrigated parcels of the OSMA properties. The Board will award the annual maintenance contracts at their April Board meeting.

The Landscape Team has elected to forgo spring planting in this, a year of drought and water rationing, but will continue planning for planting in the fall.

Are You a Team Player?

Did you know there are lots of opportunities for you to make an impact in your neighborhood? There are several teams/committees helping to improve Fountaingrove II. If you're interested, contact Focus Real Estate & Investments and join one of these great groups: Landscape Team, Finance Team, Fire & Safety Team, Hospitality Team and Graffiti Task Force.

It's a new year and now is the time to get involved! Volunteering your time and expertise is always a rewarding, worthwhile experience - and it helps improve your neighborhood!

Got a Hankering for a Hike?

The OSMA will be assembling the Fire & Safety Team soon to review the 2009 plans, assist in walking the firebreaks, and to assess fire and safety issues that need to be addressed and prioritized.

If you would like to be a part of the Team, to help assess the projects and check the firebreak contractor's work, please contact Focus Real Estate or Dennis Searles (528-6636 / dennis@bpfinance.com). Walking the firebreaks is great exercise and offers some great views, but the terrain can be challenging in several areas, so get out your hiking boots and be ready for a few hiking challenges.

Our Firebreaks and Dying Trees - A New Plan

The existing firebreaks in the Fountaingrove II open space began their existence at 30 feet in depth. Between the years of 2004 to 2006 most of those firebreaks were expanded from 30 feet to 100 feet to meet the state's newer mandated guidelines. This expansion resulted in about 55 of our 200 acres of open space becoming firebreaks, and was undertaken with support from an April 2004 review of the fire threat in Fountaingrove II conducted by the Sonoma County Fire Division.

In March of this year, that 2004 report will be updated to reflect the work done since 2004, and to review the OSMA's current fire safety practices. The 2009 report will provide updated guidance in setting priorities to manage fire safety in the firebreaks and forest in an effective and efficient manner.

The Fire Report, supplemented by information from other experts, also will include recommendations on how to manage the dead and dying trees in our firebreaks and forest. Over 200 dead trees were identified and tagged last year, and logged for review with fire experts and the City of Santa Rosa. The City has told us that they want a permit application for cutting each standing dead tree. We will approach the City in the near term in hopes of working out an acceptable compromise forest management plan, and one that recognizes the large size and unique nature of our open space.

With over 200 dead trees currently standing in our open space and firebreaks, it would not be financially possible to remove all or even most of those trees, nor would it be advisable. Forestry experts maintain that a certain number of standing dead trees (snags) are required for a healthy forest environment. Moreover, the Guidelines for Fountaingrove II state that snags will not be cut at all.



Conditions have changed since those Guidelines were written, however. Today, our forests must contend with Sudden Oak Death Syndrome and a variety of other pests, fungi and diseases. Although neither the Guidelines nor the City will allow the removal of all dead trees in our open space, the OSMA will include the topic of forest health issues in discussions regarding our forestry management plan.

Whatever the outcome of the forestry management plan, priority will be assigned prior to cutting and removing any dead trees. First priority will be given to removing dead trees that are a safety threat to homes and people, and those which are near fence lines or streets. Where possible, the cut trees will be completely removed. For some trees this will not be feasible, as some areas of the forest are too rugged or inaccessible. Also, preliminary conversations with some experts indicate that standing

dead trees may not be a safety issue if they have been properly limbed. We will have a better consensus of the matter when we have gathered more input.

Homeowners should be aware that the City of Santa Rosa prohibits the removal of most types of live trees in excess of 4" diameter without a permit, and has the authority to levy civil and criminal penalties, and/or require that several additional trees be replanted to mitigate any cutting of live trees. Have a dead tree on your property? Make sure to talk to the City about whether or not you will need a permit to remove it.



Expanded Firebreak Work

In 2008, the Board approved funds for fuel reduction work to further expand the firebreaks. In Fountaingrove II West, below Parker Hill Road and between Manor Park Place and the Fountaingrove Parkway, a large area was cleared of brush, fallen trees, dense stands of small firs and various invasive plants. In Fountaingrove II East, the interior forested island off Beauford and Dafford had its firebreak widened from 30 feet to 60 feet, creating additional firebreak space.



Firebreak behind Parker Hill and Manor Park Place

The open space parcel designated as Firebreak 15 that runs from lower Crown Hill to lower Hanover Place was cleared in January of many downed trees and brush. This awkward parcel of 36,000 square feet was designated as a firebreak but had never been cleared properly.

It was not only a fire threat, but had on occasion been shelter to squatters living within the confines of the jumble of trees and brush. In total, these projects cleared an additional 104,000 square feet or 2.4 acres of fuel that was highly combustible.

The Board is currently requesting bids for widening the portion of Firebreak 14 in Fountaingrove II West, the interior island area behind Giorno, Palazzo, Bellagio and Incantare Courts. This is the largest firebreak section not yet widened



Firebreak 15 between lower Crown Hill and Hanover Place

from 30 feet to 100 feet (an additional 77,000 square feet or 1.8 acres). This area is on a steep slope and contains dense fuel that could threaten the community. If an acceptable bid can be obtained, work could start on this project in February. All thinning work will be done by hand and to rigid specifications. The OSMA must protect the hillside from damage, as well as ensure we save native plants in the process so the hillside will not become barren and subject to erosion. Our target will be to reduce the fuel by 50% after re-growth has occurred for the native plants.

If money allows, the Board will also look at additional widening of other firebreak areas, depending on the recommendations of the Sonoma Fire Report.

Smoke Detectors

Did you know that you should change out all of your smoke detectors when they reach the ripe old age of 10? That's right! Now that many of our area homes are reaching the decade mark, (boy, time flies) we should think about updating our smoke detectors, not just their batteries.

Weed and Rubbish Abatement - Everyone's Job

Every year we are reminded of the fire danger that exists behind their fences, as well. The second pass to cut weeds in our hills as the green grasses turn to straw. This year, especially, the fire danger will be more severe than ever, as the rain we hoped would materialize early in winter failed to do so. The City of Santa Rosa requires businesses and citizens with fewer than five acres to keep weeds and grasses shorn to 4" or less from the start of the fire season through the end of it. This year, the City announced that weed abatement must be completed by May 1st, and that inspections and non-compliance fines starting at \$210 will be implemented immediately thereafter. The City's inspections will continue until the end of the fire season in the November timeframe.

In addition to keeping weeds and grasses below 4", property owners are also required to clear their lots of rubbish, dead vegetation and pruning debris. We are only as strong as our weakest link. If you see a yard that is not in compliance, please speak to the owner, and if necessary, report the fire safety matter to the Fire Department as indicated below.

Weed abatement rules apply to the OSMA as well. Fuel reduction work in our firebreaks will start in April, so the familiar seasonal hum of weed trimmers will begin soon, and homeowners will be seeing workers

In addition to weed whacking, the West Ridge (areas behind Rocky Point, Boulder Point, Hadley Hill, Newbury Court and Banbury Court) will also undergo treatment of re-growth in the firebreaks. Re-growth treatment includes removal of tree limbs at or below 10' in height, size permitting, cutting small shrubs to the ground, pruning manzanita and other desirable plants, and removing fallen limbs and trees. This work will be done during the same time frame as the weed whacking, but at separate times and, perhaps, with a different contractor. Most of our existing contractors wear company uniforms, and we will request all existing and any new contractors to follow this practice.

To report a weed or fire hazard in your area, you can phone 543-3540, fax 543-3520 or email weeds@santarosafd.com. Include the property address, the owner's/tenant's name and a description of what the fire inspector will find there, along with your name, address and email.



Propagating Our Own Natives



One of the OSMA's mandates is to preserve the native endangered plants in our open space. Last fall, the OSMA Board approved funds for the propagation of 400 of our rare native plants. In the fall of this year, 200 Rincon Manzanita and 200 Rincon Ridge Ceanothus will be ready for planting in our landscaped areas and open space. With the coming water conservation demands, it is imperative that the OSMA incorporate drought resistant plants into our landscape. Our own native plants are the



perfect solution. They all thrive in our rocky clay soil without summer watering. What's more, they provide food and shelter to our native wildlife.

Invasive Plants

Spring is upon us and those green thumbs among us are itching to get out in the dirt and add some color and new foliage to their landscapes. Unfortunately, some of the plants that are readily available right down the road at Home Depot or many other nurseries are decidedly invasive and troublesome plants.

Broom is in garden centers now, beckoning with its cheery yellow blooms, but it has become a menace to open spaces all over the west coast. It has no value to wildlife (it's poisonous) and its seeds spread readily and can survive for years before sprouting prolifically.

Want to save the OSMA money in the coming years? Be a responsible gardener. Broom, Fountain Grass, Pampas Grass, Acacia and Eucalyptus are just a few of the popular plants that provide nothing but trouble for our open space wild lands. Last year the OSMA spent \$6,000 combating invasive plants, and more will be spent this year.

So, when you're at the garden center, avoid the invasive plant trap. Choose your garden additions wisely.



Graffiti Problem - An Update

Last fall Fountaingrove II was plagued with scores of graffiti hits, prompting the OSMA to establish a Graffiti Task Force to try to combat the problem. The Task Force researched and utilized removal tools, communicated regularly with police, preformed nighttime watches and documented instances of vandalism. Their efforts were very effective - many homeowners had no idea the problem was so rampant because tags were cleaned up so quickly and cleanly.

Due in no small part to the cooperation of these Fountaingrove II residents, along with the dogged determination of Santa Rosa Graffiti Abatement Program Coordinator Georgia Pedgrift, the Santa Rosa Police had enough evidence to charge and arrest a suspect earlier this year. (Unfortunately, it looks like the City's budget crisis will eliminate most of their graffiti abatement program.)

Thank you to everyone on the Graffiti Task Force for your concern and involvement in our community!

Don Allcock, Max Bridges, Jim Cook, Dan Cummins, Felis Domingues, JPaul Dumont, Mark Essman, Dave Lichtenstern, Dennis Searles, Bruni and Roy Thylin.



More Crime Problems and Prevention...

Mailboxes have been a target of identity thieves for years, and it is happening now in our neighborhoods. Mail theft is easy. Open a non-locking mailbox and everything in it is yours for the taking. It is so simple for homeowners to prevent this type of theft that no one in our neighborhoods should become a victim. Locking mailboxes are available many places, including Home Depot.

Auto break-ins are also an ongoing problem. Never leave anything in your car you might want to keep, and never ever leave anything in your car that will help a would-be thief get into your home and/or steal your identity. It's so easy to leave that garage door remote or credit card in that tidy little hideaway spot in your vehicle. Don't be tempted. Take everything of value with you whenever you exit your car.

Make Bad Guys Stick Out Like a Sore Thumb

How? Keep your cars in your garage! **The Association's CC&Rs specifically prohibit the parking of vehicles on the street overnight.** Park in your driveway if you must, but keep your cars off the street. If your neighbors are repeat offenders of this rule, contact your area's Architectural Review Committee. Fines can be levied. Keeping our streets safe and "uncluttered" will make it a whole lot easier for us to watch out for each other and will keep our neighborhoods more attractive to boot!

Crime Abatement Coordinator

Fountaingrove II has a new contact person you can go to with your reports of crime and ideas on how to combat it. Mark Essman, a homeowner with a varied background and training perfect for this volunteer position, has agreed to help as the central point of contact for all incidents of vandalism, theft, etc. He is looking forward to working with residents and city officials to fight crime in our area. You can contact Mark at nokiemon@sbcglobal.net or at 718-2975.

Is It Time to Start Neighborhood Watch Where You Live?

You've been encouraged for years to start a Neighborhood Watch program, but maybe you thought it would be too difficult. You were worried that none of the neighbors wanted to get involved or help out with the process. Well, these days our neighborhoods are under siege. The police department doesn't have the resources to post officers at our doorsteps. It's up to us to protect our homes and property, and help the police catch the criminals.

Now is the time to act. Get your neighbors together and start something positive. If just three of you show up for the first meeting, that's three more than you had before! What's more, you'll make some new friends and meet some wonderful people.

One Fountaingrove II Neighborhood Watch group has its own booklet containing all the residents' names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. It also includes important phone numbers (police, animal control, city services, etc.) and a map of their neighborhood. How handy!

If you are thinking about being the hero in your neighborhood, there's help available!! Just contact OSMA Board member Kim Nielsen-Glynn (glynn@sonic.net or 544-7871) for more tips and information, or if you'd like to contact the City for a formal presentation, contact the Community Outreach Team at 543-3653.

A Giant Thank You to...

Max Bridges - a member of the Fire & Safety and Graffiti Teams for his recent efforts in obtaining the "as built" Fountaingrove II improvement plans and subdivision maps consisting of 510 images for the East and West, and 45 images of the "in development" plans and maps for the Summit. Max downloaded these 555 images and created soft copy files for the OSMA's reference and use. He also created hard copy indexes summarizing the topics of the images. He utilized that information and accessed data on the Sonoma County Assessor's office website to identify 50 parcels which are the property of the OSMA. He then went to the County Assessor's office and obtained copies of the parcel maps creating several binders for the Board, Focus Real Estate & Investments and Committees for use, reference and their review for possible additions or clarifications. Sound like a lot of work? You bet! Max, we appreciate all of your efforts and time spent on behalf of Fountaingrove II!

The Fountaingrove II Gazette

The Fountaingrove II Gazette is published quarterly by the Fountaingrove II OSMA. Any submission information/requests may be directed to the OSMA Board through its property management company:
Focus Real Estate and Investments, Inc.
3936 Mayette Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95405
Phone: 707-544-9443
Fax: 707-544-5418
E-mail: focusre@sonic.net
Kim Nielsen-Glynn, Newsletter Editor
editor@fountaingrove2.com

Stay Informed - Via Email

Be sure your name is on our email update list. Get timely and important neighborhood update notification. Your name and e-mail address will not be shared with anyone else, and it will be hidden in group e-mails. Simply send an e-mail with your name to: editor@fountaingrove2.com and state that you want to be on the update list.

Contacts

See a problem? Illegal dumping or unauthorized use of open space?
A broken irrigation pipe?
Contact Focus Real Estate & Investments at 544-9443.

2009 OSMA Board:
President, Dennis Searles
Vice President, Dan Cummins
Treasurer, JPaul Dumont
Secretary, Kim Nielsen-Glynn
Member-at-Large, Bruce McConnell
OSMA Board meetings are usually held at 3:30 on the third Wednesday of the month
at Focus Real Estate & Investments ,3936 Mayette Ave.
Call 544-9443 to confirm.

In the Next Issue...

A report on our crime fighting campaign and updates on firebreak work.

Visit Our Web Site: www.fountaingrove2.com

**Fountaingrove II
Open Space Maintenance Association**
c/o Focus Real Estate & Investments
3936 Mayette Ave.
Santa Rosa, CA 95405