



THE Riviera Association

April 2026

www.rivieraassociation.org

P.O. Box 4235 • Santa Barbara, CA 93140-4235

Letter From the President

Hello Riviera friends,

A quick introduction to those that I haven't had the pleasure of meeting yet as I head into my fifth year on the Riviera Association Board and my first as president. I've enjoyed living here on the Riviera for fifteen years and from the first time I drove along APS and Mission Ridge taking in that incredible view, I knew that this was

a special place worth protecting.

As we head into 2026, your all-volunteer board has a clear mission: Continue to stay focused on communicating fire safety protocols while growing our Firewise community, deepen Riviera member engagement, and stay focused on the issues that matter most to those of us lucky enough to live in this beautiful neighborhood. You (and I)

are fortunate that the talented people on your board are up for the task!

As Santa Barbarians, we have some important topics to stay focused on from continued fire safety to upcoming city decisions that impact our hillsides and local quality of life. My personal hope is that we tackle these together with collaboration, good humor, and fun along the way. Community *Continued on page 2*

Riviera Association Spring General Meeting Sunday, May 17, 4-6 p.m.

The Riviera Ridge School • Battistone Hall, 911 Tremonto Road
Shuttle service to/from Mission Ridge & Tremonto parking lots

- Engage with your neighbors while enjoying great food & drinks.
- Hear from dynamic community leaders about "Building a Vibrant Arts & Culture Scene in the State Street Arts District." Learn about the exciting reasons to explore our Arts District downtown. Sharing their visions and encouraging us to visit will be:
 - Nicholas Walls, Chief Advancement Officer, Music Academy of the West will show us the plans for the new Music Academy Education and Performance space opening at State and Carrillo.
 - Robin Elander, Exec. Dir., Downtown Santa Barbara Improvement Association will discuss the many free events taking place downtown.
 - Lindsey Garrison, Dir. of Marketing and Comm., Santa Barbara Museum of Art.
- Plus other interesting arts leaders from our community sharing their stories.
- Please scan the QR code to preregister for the spring meeting.
- Join or renew your Riviera Association membership at www.rivieraassociation.org or at the meeting.



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involvement doesn't have to feel like a chore, but rather a joy. This will also be a big civic year. With our city council seat open, a mayoral race that will impact important local decisions, and state and national elections this fall—staying informed matters.

We plan to host candidate forums later in the year in

conjunction with other organizations to help keep our neighborhood engaged—and yes, we'll aim to keep them informative and fun as well. Look out for an email about this forum in the coming months.

Lastly, a heartfelt thank you to my predecessor, Peg Phelps. These are big shoes to fill—I may need hiking boots for this terrain—

but I'm grateful for her leadership and example. I'm looking forward to a thoughtful, engaged, informative fun year ahead.

Warmly,

Michael Erickson

Michael Erickson
2026 Riviera Association President

2026 Geology Walk is a Another Successful Event

On sunny Saturday, January 10th, twenty-five Riviera Association members attended another in a series of geology talks hosted by the Riviera Association and presented by our city council person, Kristen Sneddon. Kristen is a professor focusing on environmental geology at Santa Barbara City College.

From the top of La Playa Stadium as well as in a City College classroom, highlights included an explanation of sand flow, plans to address climate change along the coast, and an overview of resources available online about the geology of our region. We look forward to Professor Sneddon's next geology presentation on our local creeks sometime later this year.

Explore more local maps on your own [here](#).



The ocean view from Santa Barbara City College's La Playa Stadium.

Reddit/stadiumporn

Riviera Association Board of Directors

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Michael Erickson, *President*
Julie Chapman, *Vice President*
Bill Phelps, *Treasurer*
Rich Begert, *Secretary*

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Ray Avila
Christina Broderick

Marlene Ciatti
Kathy Langsam
Peg Phelps
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Communications Len Rosenthal
Fire & Safety Julie Chapman
Hospitality Marlene Ciatti
Membership Peg Phelps

Parks Ray Avila
Recruitment/Nominating Peg Phelps
Streets & Utilities Todd Yancey
Website Michael Erickson

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Update on Franceschi Park

There are many planned changes coming to Franceschi Park and we wanted to provide an update.

Reimagining Franceschi House

The Reimagining Franceschi House Project began in 2024 and is currently in the planning and design permit process with the city's Community Development Department. The project was initiated from a unanimous city council vote to replace Franceschi House with an open-air space in the same footprint that will honor the horticultural legacy of botanist Dr. Francesco Franceschi and the historical Franceschi House and park.

The majority of the Historic Landmarks Commission support deconstructing the house and favor the preliminary design, including new terrace overlook spaces to highlight the sweeping views of the city. The environmental review process will begin this year before final design and construction documents are prepared. For more information visit SantaBarbaraCA.gov/



santabarbaraparks.com

Views of Santa Barbara from Franceschi Park (above, and below).

Franceschi. General questions or comments can be emailed to Project Planner **Holly Garcin**.

Vegetation Management/ Wildfire Resiliency

A Biological Resource Assessment (BRA) for Franceschi Park was completed in 2023, followed by site work from December 2024 through January 2025 by a six-person city fire crew. Crews removed invasive vegetation (primarily eucalyptus), downed trees, and deadwood to reduce fuel loads and brushed

primary trails. As part of upcoming defensible space efforts, a herd of sheep will graze the park's north-western section to manage annual flashy fuels. Both crew and grazing defensible space work will occur in late spring to early summer, ahead of peak fire season. This work is funded through California State Coastal Conservancy and CAL FIRE grants.

Non-native Invasive Lower Franceschi/Restoration

Phase 3 of the Wildfire Resiliency Project focuses on habitat restoration and is funded through a second grant from the California State Coastal Conservancy.

Franceschi Park is currently undergoing both passive and active restoration efforts. Passive restoration includes the removal of two target invasive species—tree spurge (*Euphorbia dendroides*) and French broom (*Genista monspessulana*)—throughout the park. Active restoration is planned for lower Franceschi Park in areas where large contiguous patches of tree spurge were removed. Approximately 900 native, fire-resilient plants will be installed in fall 2026.



santabarbaraparks.com

City Considers Dramatic Increase in Property Transfer Tax

As some of you may have heard, the City of Santa Barbara is considering a significant increase in property transfer taxes that could have a disproportionate effect on Riviera homeowners. Due to budget shortfalls, the city is proposing increasing the taxes on sales of existing homes valued at three million dollars or higher. These homes are not just luxury properties, but are typically family homes that have appreciated in value over the years.

The **proposed increase** is from \$1.10 per \$1,000 to \$9.50 per \$1,000 for all homes sold over three million

dollars. This transfer tax is typically paid by the seller. As examples, the proposal would mean increased transfer taxes of \$25,200 on a three million dollar home or \$33,600 on a four million dollar home. If amortized over a thirty year mortgage, selling a home for three million dollars will lead to an additional \$750 to \$1,000 per year in taxes.

The Riviera Board is considering whether to support or oppose this increase via a formal letter to the city council. On the positive side, city revenues would be increased, relieving stress on the city budget to

provide more services to residents.

Nevertheless, we are concerned about the substantial extra expense that will hit retirees when they sell and others forced to sell their homes due to medical issues or estate settlement. This could have the further effect of reducing home inventory as it is a disincentive to sell or even to purchase within the city of Santa Barbara. This tax increase would not apply to homes sold in Goleta or Montecito. We will discuss this topic at our upcoming Riviera Association meeting and solicit direct input from members.



Thousands of homes in Santa Barbara may be impacted by the increased property transfer tax being considered by the city.

Please Join Us!

Your membership in the Riviera Association makes a big difference. Your support and participation, together with the support of our other 300+ household members, enables the association to preserve the unique character of our district and improve the safety and beauty of our neighborhoods. Your support also allows the association to stand up for Riviera interests more effectively at the Santa Barbara City Council and with other government bodies, based on the size and strength of our membership.

As a member, you get the following benefits:

- Free admission to our spring and fall general meetings and receptions, where you will enjoy premium wines and appetizers, meet and mingle with your neighbors, and hear from guest speakers on major issues and developments impacting our community.
- Exclusive or priority access to special events, such as organized walks exploring our local geology.
- The opportunity to participate in Riviera service events where members can give back and help improve our community.
- Frequent email updates on key issues facing the Riviera, along with the opportunity to make a difference by making your voice heard at city hall and in front of other governmental and community bodies.
- Access to our informative website and biannual newsletters, which your membership dues support.

The Riviera Association succeeds based on the strength and participation of our membership. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we rely on your support. Please visit rivieraassociation.org/join-now to join us as a new member or renew your membership for the current year.

Smart Action for Growth and Equality—Santa Barbara (SAGE–SB) Update on Two Proposed Projects

Smart Action for Growth & Equity—Santa Barbara (SAGE–SB) continues to monitor the status of the proposed “Builder’s Remedy” projects proposed for Grand Avenue and 505 E. Los Olivos Street (next to the Santa Barbara Mission).

Thanks to the overwhelming concern expressed by the community in over 400 comment letters received by the City of Santa Barbara regarding apprehensions about the Grand Avenue design, this project is essentially “on hold” for the time being. The city has reviewed the application and the extensive input they received from the public (thank you to all who commented), and notified the applicant that additional information is necessary, including responses to the city’s consistency determination which was sent to the applicant a year ago (March 27, 2025).

In order for the city to make a final determination regarding the



project, CEQA review will need to be completed. The city anticipates working with a CEQA consultant to prepare the following technical studies: Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Technical Report, Traffic Operations/Emergency Access and Evacuation Study, Construction Health Risk Assessment, Energy Analysis, Paleontological Resource Assessment, and a Noise and Vibration Study. The letter from the city to the applicant is easily

available for viewing on the [SAGESB.org](https://www.sagesb.org) website.

The project proposed for 505 E. Los Olivos Street remains stalled awaiting additional information from the applicant. This project will also require extensive CEQA review, but could move quickly if the applicant provides the needed information.

If you have not already done so, please [sign up for action alerts and the newsletter](#), which will include project updates.



More than 400 comments expressing concerns were sent to the City of Santa Barbara regarding the proposed Grand Avenue apartment complex, conceptually shown above. The city is now requiring the project to prepare a number of technical studies before final determination on the design is made.

Firewise Program Staff Makes Creating Firewise Communities Easy

Although I was sold on the benefits of a Firewise Community—hardening our street against fire and potentially reducing our homeowners insurance, I wasn't looking forward to the organizing process. But, step-by-step guidance from Community Resilience Program Associate Charles Harris from the Santa Barbara Fire Safe Council made the task very manageable. At Charles's suggestion, I recruited two neighbors to join me in organizing, as sharing the workload has been shown to make Firewise Communities more effective.

Charles suggested a boundary for our community, creating a map and providing informational brochures we could distribute. We invited neighbors to an informational meeting, putting flyers in our neighbors' mailboxes as we had limited contact information. At the meeting, over the requisite Santa Barbara wine and appetizers, Charles explained how the Firewise Community works, including the benefit of getting a fire prevention home evaluation by the fire department. You can get your free home inspection by emailing [Gustavo Agredano](#) or by [signing up at this link](#). Gustavo's inspection of our house was encouraging—our newly installed roof was firesafe as was our stucco construction. We just needed to remove vegetation against

our house and install finer wire in the vents along our roof line—embers entering the roofline is a big contributor to the spread of fire.

The next step in creating our Firewise Community was a neighborhood walk through led by Charles, where we assessed the fire risk of our streets. Ten neighbors attended this effort which took about ninety minutes. The final step was to create a Firewise Plan, using information gathered in our walk and an online template. It was surprisingly easy to create, especially with Charles's help. Our plan was approved in a mere six weeks. We will be sharing the plan with our neighbors in a community meeting next month with the goal of getting as many of our neighbors as possible to complete their Firewise Home Evaluations and make the recommended changes. An unexpected benefit of the effort has been getting to know our neighbors and increasing our sense of community. As a result, we are planning a neighborhood barbeque this summer with the new friends we have made.

Please reach out by emailing [Charles](#). If you want to get started on creating a Firewise Community or just have questions, feel free to [email me](#).

—Julie Chapman

These zones make up the 100' of Defensible Space required by law



Defensible space is required by law in the California Fire Code. Our local fire department can help explain additional defensible space or weed abatement ordinances. Zone 0 (0–5 feet); Zone 1 (5–30 feet); Zone 2 (30–100 feet); Zone 3 (0–10 feet along access roads); Zone 4 (100 feet and out).

Living with Raccoons in an Urban Environment Can be Challenging

There is nothing like getting up in the morning to put out the trash cans and finding the trash all over the place—mostly food cans, cartons from takeout, scraps you scraped from plates, and fruit rinds. You wonder if there is a whole family of raccoons around!

We all know what a pain that can be. On the other hand, raccoons do have an upside. They help control rodent populations, from mice and rats to rabbits. They target accessible rodent nests, and they contribute to seed dispersal when they eat fruit, supporting plant diversity as they trail the rinds around. They also **eat leftover food** that helps reduce organic waste.

Raccoons also eat insects, helping manage their numbers. By eating food waste, they consume garbage that rodents might consume. They break down food waste that might attract other pests and encourage humans to improve their **waste management habits**.

Their diet helps protect ornamental plants and gardens by reducing the populations of insects that feed on them. Raccoons are attracted to food sources, shelter, and easy access points around your home as they forage for insects. They not only raid trash cans and gardens, but when they get in, they can cause havoc in your kitchen, garage, or attic. They are extremely adaptable and can cause serious property damage as well as spreading disease.

Raccoons can chew through wires, tear insulation, and ruin your vents. They can be noisy if they get in the house and they will aggressively scratch or bite if they feel threatened. **The Environmental Blog** lists the most common signs that they are

about to be a problem. In addition, they are messy, curious, and bold. They leave footprints that look like a tiny human hand, with five toes on the front and back paws in muddy spots, garden beds, or dusty paths. If you suspect raccoons are lurking



A raccoon's cute face belies its destructive nature.

around, you can spread flour or baby powder around to catch fresh prints.

Of course, if your trash cans are pried open or if trash is scattered around, it is probably raccoons. They leave small, tubular feces, often found repeatedly in the same spot (called a raccoon latrine, according to **The Environmental Blog**). They scratch, thump, and chitter between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m., and they will dig for grubs and eat your vegetables—especially corn, often leaving it half-eaten. They can even take up residence in your home's HVAC system.

Raccoons are ranked among the smartest urban wildlife in North America, and their sense of smell is amazing. They can smell food from over a mile away. Their extreme curiosity drives them to explore attics, garages, and crawl spaces, especially in the winter when they are

seeking warm shelter, or in the early spring when the females are nesting.

Home advisor **Bob Vila** claims there is no foolproof way to get rid of raccoons. Aim for keeping them at bay instead. The fastest way of getting rid of raccoons in your house is nonlethal trapping. Unfortunately, wildlife trapping is against the law in California and is only permitted by licensed professionals. And by law, they must either euthanize the trapped animal on site or release it into the immediate area in which it was caught.

To get them away from your garden you can try startling them with motion-activated lights or sprinklers. But be careful! These devices are expensive and there are many reviews on the internet questioning their effectiveness.

If you see a nest, play a radio near it. Raccoons hate strange noises. There is also repellent

spray available for purchase, or you can

try vinegar, peppery sauce, cayenne, or garlic powder. They also hate ammonia, so put out a saucer of it. I have used coyote urine successfully and Bob Vila agrees that this is a good idea. Coyote urine is available at garden stores and nurseries. Remember to reapply whatever you use once it rains!

Pet food shouldn't be left outside and use a cleaner with bleach after eating or cooking outside. Remove any grubs from the yard and clean up fruit that falls from your trees.

Finally, if all else fails, or if you are confronting a nest inside your home, be careful. Raccoons can become extremely aggressive when they are protecting babies, so you may want to call a specialist.

— *Judy Stevens-Long*