

SAN MATEO PARK NEWSLETTER

FALL 2026

THE PARK

In this Newsletter:

- President's Message
- City Updates: Zoning, Leaf blower ban
- Haloween in the Park
- Trees & Islands: Working With the City, New Plan
- Turkey Trot: Nov 26, 8:45am
- Annual General Meeting February 10, 7pm

HELLO, NEIGHBOR!

Fall is here in The Park, and with it comes a chance to look back on a great year and ahead to what's next.

New energy for our trees and islands. In addition to our great neighbors, our trees and islands are the heart of what makes The Park special, and this year we are doubling down on caring for them with more time, more focus, and more of our resources. **John Adams** has taken over as chair of our Trees & Islands Committee, and enlisted the help of neighbors **Emily and Yvonne Detert as well as Robert Weeks** to join the committee. This isn't a change of direction so much as a stronger commitment to the same vision that has guided our neighborhood for more than a century.

John has already made real progress. He has built strong new working relationships with the City of San Mateo and secured preliminary agreement on the permits we need to move ahead with a number of large island clean-up projects over the next year. Look for many developments coming to an island near you! You can read more about our plans in this issue, and if you'd like to lend a hand, we'd love to hear from you.

Our 2nd Annual Summer Block Party was a huge success! More than 200 neighbors came out, and it is quickly becoming the cornerstone of our community calendar. A huge thanks to Brittney, Bob and all the board who helped in making this a prized annual event that will create lasting neighborhood connections.

A warm welcome to **Meg Galetti,** our newest member of the San Mateo Park Board, and a special thank you to **Alicia Woodfall-Jones**, who is stepping down as Treasurer. Alicia worked tirelessly to improve our financial reporting and leaves us with a system that will make things much easier for the next Treasurer.

If you're interested in being Treasurer, or know someone who might be, please reach out. We are always looking for new board members to help build and care for our neighborhood.

Chris Kusber, President
San Mateo Park Neighborhood Association

The SMPNA is dedicated to preserving the beauty, character and heritage of the San Mateo Park neighborhood while fostering a thriving and connected community.

CITY HALL UPDATE

Historic Preservation & Zoning Changes

San Mateo is updating its historic preservation guidance to clarify which properties qualify as historic resources and what requirements apply to renovations and improvements. Of particular interest to San Mateo Park homeowners, the City is also undertaking a comprehensive Zoning Code update. A draft is expected next spring, with a Planning Commission study session scheduled for November 17.
Learn more at
www.cityofsanmateo.org/historicresources



CITY HALL (cont'd)

Preparing for Winter Storms

With potentially severe winter weather approaching, San Mateo is cleaning thousands of storm drains and pipes, dredging Marina Lagoon, and maintaining flood-control infrastructure. Residents are encouraged to clear gutters and drains, sign up for SMC Alert, and take advantage of free City sandbag stations.
Visit www.cityofsanmateo.org/stormprep

City Finances Under Pressure

San Mateo entered the fiscal year facing a projected $16.9 million General Fund budget gap. Uncertainty over State funding, including a $12.9 million Vehicle License Fee revenue shortfall, complicates the City's financial outlook.

Details about the City's Fiscal Sustainability Plan are here: http://www.cityofsanmateo.org/financialsustainability

CITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gas Leaf Blower Ban Begins January 1, 2027

Upgrade your equipment now and take advantage of the City's Electric Leaf Blower rebate program. Residents can receive up to $100 and landscaping businesses can receive up to $500. Electric leaf blowers help address air quality and noise impacts, while also reducing your carbon footprint. www.cityofsanmateo.org/leafblowers

Skating in San Mateo Central Park

San Mateo will open its popular skating rink in the park from Saturday November 14th until Sunday January 10th. Cost is $15 per person with rental.

FREE Skating Dates (sponsored)

Episcopal Day School: Nov 19, 3-5pm / 6-9pm
Laura Bryant: Dec 10, 3-5pm / 6-9pm

SMPNA is a nonpartisan nonprofit. We don't endorse candidates or ballot measures. We share this information so residents can research issues affecting the Park.

HALLOWEEN 2026

NOBODY does it like THE PARK!













San Mateo Park Neighborhood Assn.



TREES & ISLANDS

A New Chapter for Our Trees and Islands

San Mateo Park's landscaped islands and the carefully curated trees that line our winding boulevards make our neighborhood unmistakable. For years, keeping them healthy has been a shared effort between the City and SMPNA. I'm pleased to report that this effort is about to take a major step forward.

Over the last month, I have met several times with City officials to lay the groundwork for a more formal partnership between the City and SMPNA. Those conversations have produced preliminary City support in terms of the permits we need to go ahead with significant improvements to our islands.

We are now gathering bids for a program covering **15 islands**, with work beginning this winter and continuing through 2027. Depending on what each island needs, **crews will carry out pruning and deadwood removal, new tree planting, careful ivy removal, fresh wood chips, and cleanup and renewal of existing plantings.** Many of these islands have not had this kind of attention in years. Contractor proposals will firm up costs, priorities and schedule, and our goal is to bring every one of the 15 islands back to health.

With municipal budgets stretched thin, this partnership lets SMPNA do far more than the City could on its own. It also means we can finally put our resources to work. SMPNA has been saving up resources for a large project for some time, and **with the City's support, it's time to spend a large portion of that money and see serious progress over the next year.**

Your help still matters. Neighborhood contributions let us extend this work further and sustain it well beyond 2027, so please consider supporting SMPNA [scan QR code at right to donate].

I also want your eyes and ears. Is there an island you love, or one that has seen better days? Please let me know at jadamz@sanmateopark.org. Your observations will help guide our priorities as we move forward together.

John Adams, Chair
Tree and Island Committee

TREES & ISLANDS FAQ

Whose street tree is it? The City generally maintains street trees that it has a record of planting. Those records go back to 1963 and may be incomplete, so if yours are unclear, ask the City to confirm before arranging any work.

Do I need a permit? Yes. To plant, prune or remove a street tree. The permit is free, and you need City approval before work begins. Big trees on your own property may be protected "heritage" trees and need a permit too.

Can I choose my street tree? The City's street tree master plan sets the species for each street, which keeps plantings true to John McLaren's historic design. Check with the City for the approved species before planting. Flowers and shrubs are fine in the strip if they don't block the sidewalk.

Who prunes street trees? The City generally prunes only hazards. Anything else is up to you: hire a qualified, licensed contractor at your own expense, with the permit in hand.

My street tree is dead. Now what? Contact the City's Tree Division for an inspection and to confirm who handles removal. You can also request a free replacement; timing depends on City resources.

Who waters? Island trees are on the City's schedule, and SMPNA supports the effort. For your street tree, extra water in dry weather helps: let a hose drip slowly at the base for about 45 minutes.

Why are the island watering bags often empty? They are designed to be. Each bag releases water slowly, usually over about eight hours, then sits empty until its next scheduled refill. Call the City if a tree looks stressed or a bag is damaged.

Tree questions or permits: trees@cityofsanmateo.org or 650-522-7420



ANOTHER GREAT SMPNA BLOCK PARTY!

Our 2nd Annual San Mateo Park Neighborhood Association Block Party was a wonderful success, with more than 200 neighbors joining us for an afternoon of fun and community!

With perfect weather, neighbors enjoyed the Devil's Canyon Brewing Company Beer Bus, kids' kickball, a bounce obstacle course, face painting, and—of course—Mr. Softee, a definite crowd favorite! More than anything, it was a great opportunity to catch up with old friends, meet new neighbors, and enjoy time together.



We were also excited to debut our new "The Park" hats, which were distributed with a donation to SMPNA. It has been so much fun to see neighbors sporting their hats around town and showing their support and pride for our neighborhood!

A special thank you to all of our SMPNA members. Your annual dues help make gatherings like this possible and allow us to continue creating opportunities that bring our neighborhood together.





With such a wonderful turnout, great conversation, and strong sense of community, the afternoon was a great reminder of what a joy it is to live in San Mateo Park. We're already looking forward to next year!





BOARD UPDATES

Our Annual General Meeting takes place on February 10th at 7pm and is open to all Park residents.

If you haven't yet registered your name/email with us, please fill out the short form online at sanmateopark.org or scan this QR code and watch out for the handful of announcements we send out each year.

For a full breakdown of 2026 spending and goals, see our Spring Newsletter coming in April of 2027.



Pictured at the Spring Block Party (L-R) Brittney Aitken, Chris Kusber, John Adams, Alicia Woodfall-Jones, Emily Gonsenheim, Michael Coulson, David Long

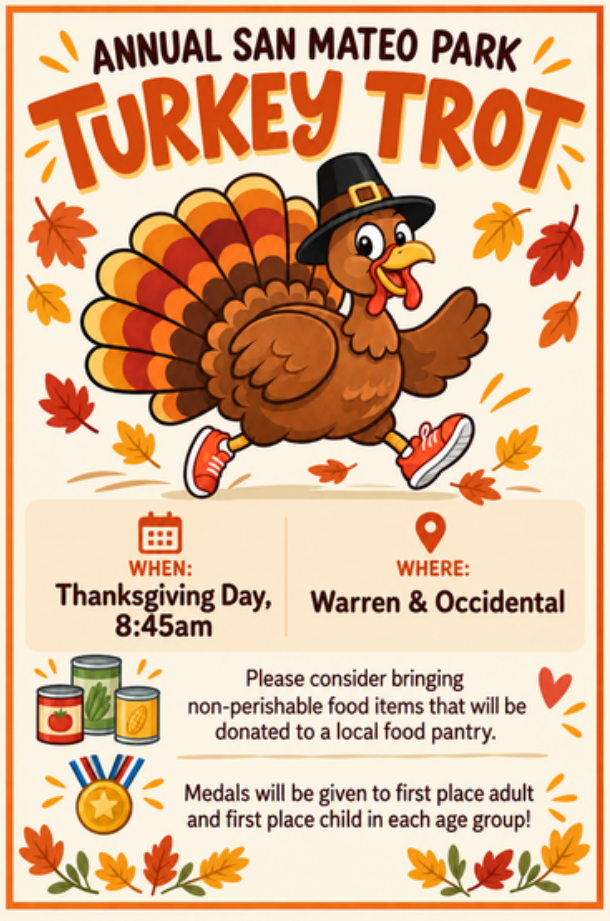
YOUR SAN MATEO PARK BOARD

President:	Chris Kusber
Secretary:	Emily Gonsenheim
Treasurer:	Alicia Woodfall-Jones
Communications:	Michael Coulson
Social Committee:	Bob Baumann
Welcome Committee:	John Adams
Neighborhood Outreach:	Brittney Aitken
Civic Liaison:	David Long
Trees & Islands Committee:	John Adams

BOARD VACANCY

SMPNA is looking for a new Treasurer. This is a great opportunity to join a fun and energetic non-profit board! The requirement is less than a couple of days a month, with a focus on record keeping, expense management, and annual tax and corporate filings.

Contact **board@sanmateopark.org** or Alicia 650-703-8050 to learn more.





HISTORY: SAN MATEO PARK WAS PLANNED TO FEEL UNPLANNED

San Mateo Park's winding streets, planted islands and mature trees grew out of a plan for a neighborhood that would feel like the countryside.

Stand at almost any corner in San Mateo Park and the street ahead bends with the land, slips around a planted island, and disappears beneath mature trees. When the neighborhood was founded in 1901, those curves and islands were part of the plan.

San Mateo Park occupies about 400 acres of the former Rancho San Mateo. As California passed from Mexican to U.S. rule, San Francisco merchants William D. M. Howard and Henry Mellus bought the rancho from Cayetano Arenas, a clerk to Mexican California's governor, Pío Pico. The tract later became Stephen B. Whipple's horse ranch and passed to Charles Clark in the 1890s.

The San Mateo Park Neighborhood Association dates the design work to 1896, when architect George H. Howard Jr. and horticulturist John McLaren began collaborating. McLaren had worked at the Howard family's El Cerrito estate. A National Park Service nomination says he returned from Golden Gate Park in 1902 to supervise design work.

In 1902, developers Baldwin & Howell hired civil engineer Davenport Bromfield to survey and lay out the subdivision. Bromfield designed his roads to follow the contours of the land. On May 10, 97 villa lots went to auction. In 1904, Bromfield built his own house at 537 Occidental Avenue.



Trustees Resent Burlingame's Act

COMPLAIN THAT THE ATTEMPT TO TAKE SAN MATEO PARK IS A BREACH OF FAITH.

This Board in September last appointed a committee to look into the matter of annexing San Mateo Park to San Mateo, and has publicly proclaimed the intention to do so. On April 3d a public meeting with the residents of the Park was held to consider the question and no protest was ever raised by the trusters of Burlingame as to the propriety of the move. On the 5th of April the Burlingame trustees passed a resolution calling an election to vote upon annexation of San Mateo Park, among other territory, to Burlingame. This Board deems such action as an unfriendly act to this Board, and the City of San Mateo, and not in accord with the courtesy which should prevail between the two Boards.

The members of this Board are appointed a committee to communicate to the Burlingame Board their views and regret at the action and requesting of our neighboring lawmakers the recall of its action toward the annexation of San Mateo Park.

The resolution was adopted, and the San Mateo Board will pay a fraternal visit to the Burlingame Board tomorrow night.

San Mateo Leader, April 14, 1909

McLaren's planting plan mixed native oaks and redwoods with elms, palms, cork oaks, olive trees, and other species. Distinctive plantings on the 62 islands gave the neighborhood the character of an arboretum.

San Mateo Park was an early example of the park-like approach to residential design later seen in San Francisco residence parks such as Jordan Park, Forest Hill, St. Francis Wood, and Sea Cliff.

From 1909 to 1911, Burlingame sought to annex San Mateo Park, but the effort failed after Park residents voted against it. Since the 1970s, the San Mateo Park Neighborhood Association has worked with the city to care for the planted islands and remain committed to McLaren and Howard's original vision.

From ranch to winding suburb

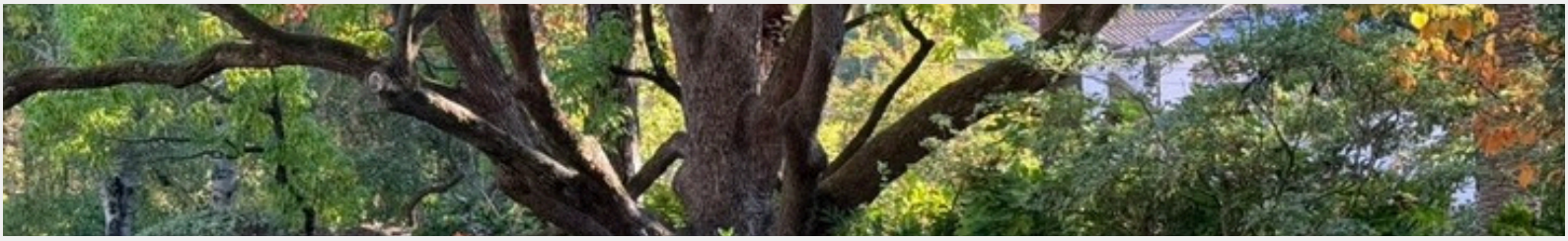
1847
William D. M. Howard and Henry Mellus buy Rancho San Mateo from Cayetano Arenas

1890's
The tract passes to Charles Clark. Howard and McLaren begin design work.

1901
San Mateo Park is founded. Bromfield lays out the subdivision. On May 10 1902, 97 lots are sold.

1909-1911
Burlingame tried to annex the Park. Residents vote against it.

1970s-Today
Neighbors organize to maintain the area's planted-island design.



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

(CURRENT TO END SEPTEMBER 2026)

PARK CONSERVATORS / TREE FUND
$1000+

John and Melinda Adams
Gerald and Sky Hill
Flo and Don Kristofferson
Valeryia Spreng
Ron and Faye Star
Todd and Linda Zucker

PARK PATRONS
$200+

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Brendan and Morgan Aiello
Brittney and Patrick Aitken
Rakhi and Ganesh Bell
Ronald and Elaina Bland
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Gordon and Lynn Tuthill
Alan and Sophia Waldman
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Robert and Leeann Weeks
Steven Williams
William and Elaine Yang
Charles Young and Julie Wong

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$100+

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Betty Bernstein
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Kimberly & David Bottoms
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Luis and Kathi Iglesias
Hartmut Koeppen
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Landis and Sarah Nasser
Mark Newman
Anna Rabinowicz
Peter and Deni Schaul
Luke and Adrienne Siegfried
Jeffrey and Maureen Smith
Daniel and Julie Switky
Roger and Deep Testa

DONATE NOW

Circa 1901
San Mateo Park
Neighborhood Assn.
PO Box 1271
San Mateo, CA 94402

San Mateo Park NEWSLETTER

FALL 2026

SAVE THE DATES

2nd Annual Turkey Trot
8:45am Thanksgiving Day
Warren & Occidental

Annual General Meeting
7-8:30pm February 10
Park School

SAN MATEO PARK DONATIONS

Go to sanmateopark.org/donate or scan the QR code at right to donate. We accept Zelle PayPal, Venmo, Visa, Mastercard. Prefer to write a check? Mail this form with a check payable to San Mateo Park Neighborhood Association, P.O. Box 1271, San Mateo CA 94401. **We now support corporate matching through Benevity & Cybergrants - check with your employer!**

DONATE ONLINE

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

SELECT DONATION LEVEL

☐ **$1000+ PARK CONSERVATOR** ☐ **$200 PARK PATRON** ☐ **$100 MCLAREN MEMBER**

☐ **$50 PARK SUPPORTER** **OTHER AMOUNT $ _____**

Donations are voluntary, and not a condition of membership in the organization. Donations are tax deductible, Fed EIN 56-2631949.

THANK YOUR FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF SAN MATEO PARK!