



President's Letter



LOW KEY LODGING

My small house was bursting over the winter holidays. I hosted both family members grateful to be home (and out of the cold!) and a

Marianne Gawain longtime friend who had never before been to the area and who, unsurprisingly, was thoroughly smitten with its beauty. Another year I might lighten my hosting load by taking advantage of one of our Valley's "visitor-serving units," that is, one of our appropriately sited and sized motels or perhaps a homestay rental hosted by homeowners. Unlike the houses transformed by commercial operators into year-round mini-hotels-- operations that have disrupted quiet residential neighborhoods with noise, bright lights, and party traffic—low-key rural inns and lodges have long been a part of the economic fabric of the Valley. In the November *Carmel Valley Voice*, production manager Luana Conley recalled warm memories of the old Robles Del Rio Lodge. Search for postcards of Carmel Valley, and you will find depictions of other such motels in all their understated mid-twentieth-century glory.

Businesses operating in commercially-zoned areas, and in a style in keeping with the Valley's rural vibe and traditions, enhance the lives of residents and visitors. Let's support them! On the other hand, CVA members are keeping a close eye on several proposed motel re-openings lest they prove to be ambitiously upscale and out-of-scale ventures rather than simple revivals of traditional resorts. Where a substantial change in pre-existing use is envisioned, applicants must understand that they cannot merely reactivate a prior

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LAURELES GRADE ROUNDABOUT BECOMING A REALITY IN CARMEL VALLEY

by Mibs McCarthy



Image courtesy ghd.com

The Carmel Valley Road and Laureles Grade Roundabout will be a reality by the Fall of 2026 if things go as planned. The roundabout will replace the stop-sign-controlled "T" intersection. This project will improve safety and the flow of traffic from Laureles Grade onto Carmel Valley Road. The project includes widening Laureles Grade and Carmel Valley Road at the northeast and northwest corners of the existing intersection; however, it will not add lanes or increase the intersection's capacity.

A Town Hall Community Meeting was held on October 24, 2024. Supervisor Mary Adams introduced Michael Waxer, representing the Carmel Valley Road Advisory Committee. He explained that the committee worked on this project for ten years, conducting a corridor study that confirmed the Laureles Grade/Carmel Valley Road intersection the least safe intersection on Carmel Valley Road. The committee concluded the roundabout was the safest solution because all cars are slowed down when using it.

carmelvalleyassociation.org

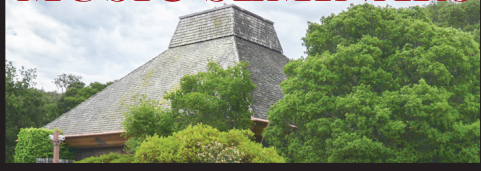
The roundabout project has completed all county approvals and has been put out for bid. The deadline to receive bids is February 13, after which the county council and staff will select the "lowest responsible and responsive bidder," according to Randy Ishii, Director of Monterey County Public Works Facilities and Parks. The earliest date for work to begin will be May, 2025.

Stage One of construction will occur on the northeast side of the intersection. This land was granted to the county by the Bernardus Lodge and Spa in 2016. It is expected that traffic will be able to flow through the intersection throughout the construction of the project.

Splitter islands or medians will be constructed on each artery of the roundabout to direct traffic. A runaway-truck-ramp will be constructed on the northwest side of Laureles Grade approaching the roundabout, and a walking and bike trail will be constructed on the south side of Carmel Valley Road passing by the roundabout.

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HIDDEN VALLEY MUSIC SEMINARS



Save the Date!

Hidden Valley Virtuosi

Led by Tien-Hsin Cindy Wu, Violin

Sunday April 13th

Masters' Concerts

Mark Kosower, Cello

Robert Walters, English Horn

Wednesday May 28th

Elaine Douvas, Oboe

Tuesday June 10th

Ali Ryerson Jazz Flute Quartet

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Sunday July 6th

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President's Letter, continued from Pg. 1

permit; instead, they must apply for a new use permit.

A matter of deepest concern in these first months of 2025 is the "builder's remedy," a so-called remedy that is surely worse than any problem it might address. As Monterey County's Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) housing opportunity map has still not yet received final approval from the state, the unincorporated county is vulnerable to this builder's remedy, whereby applicants must meet only minimal requirements to receive a building permit. This is essentially a form of collective punishment, making communities such as ours, which have constructively participated in the RHNA process, subject to the whims of developers even when it is the action or inaction of county and state staff that is delaying RHNA approval. We can only hope that individuals or businesses planning construction in Carmel Valley during this period make thoughtful choices as members of our community, designing structures that enhance rather than undermine the Valley's rural character. We should also expect that county authorities will exercise whatever tools remain at their disposal to encourage new projects to align with local design standards.

The successful expansion of Pure Water Monterey's water reclamation is expected to cause the state to lift its ban on new water hookups, thus opening the way for new construction in both incorporated and unincorporated Monterey County, including in Carmel Valley. It's a milestone to celebrate as new construction is vital if we are to make progress in providing affordable housing. Moreover, patient property owners will now have a long-awaited chance to build or expand to meet their housing or business needs. In the coming years as permit applications for construction in the Valley are presented to the zoning and planning commissions, the CVA will be busy participating in public review and comment sessions, helping to ensure that each proposal receives appropriate scrutiny. Please join us in our efforts!

Never fear, the new year is full of positive possibilities as well as challenges. Particularly in the area of natural resource conservation and protection, CVA is finding ways to collaborate with local non-

profits as well as governmental entities. I invite you to stay updated on CVA's activities through the quarterly *Carmel Valley Voice* and by subscribing to the weekly ebulletin. I also hope to meet many of you at our annual meeting in March.

Roundabout from Pg. 1

During the town hall meeting, then Supervisor-Elect Kate Daniels expressed concern about pedestrian and bicycle access to the roundabout. Bicycles would use the outer edge of the roundabout since roundabout lanes are wider than normal, but it is still unclear how pedestrians would cross Carmel Valley Road and reach the bus stop. There will be a pedestrian crosswalk on Laureles Grade before the roundabout. The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$5.4 million.



Smiles and laughter on December 14, 2024, Opening Day for the new Tatum's Treehouse accessible playground behind the Community Center on Ford Road. The project began with Tatum's Garden Foundation board and the CV Community Center board talking about possibilities in September 2018, and ended in celebrating the work of over 1,000 volunteers. Photos by Ed Lake.

PALO CORONA REGIONAL PARK TO UNDERGO RESTORATION

by Jake Smith

Soon, the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) will begin the Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project at Palo Corona Regional Park. Focusing on a one-mile stretch of the river and 40 acres of its floodplain, this innovative project will restore habitat for wildlife and provide long-term benefits to the community and visitors alike. As part of MPRPD's broader vision outlined in the 2018 Palo Corona Regional Park General Development Plan, we aim to transform a portion of the former Rancho Cañada Golf Course into a vibrant and resilient natural area and public park.

This project complements the nearby Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement (CRFREE) project, led by the Big Sur Land Trust, which will restore another section of the river's floodplain downstream near the Carmel River Lagoon. Both projects will serve as "nature-based solutions" to restore natural systems and prepare for challenges like climate change. Together, they will expand green space and improve water flow, providing benefits like flood mitigation, water supply protection, improved habitat connectivity, and increased carbon sequestration. These efforts represent historic investments in the health of our river, community, and future.

The Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project is vital for reconnecting the Carmel River to its historic floodplain, which has been profoundly altered by development. Historically, the river fanned out across the valley floor, supporting vibrant ecosystems and maintaining river flows. However, agriculture and development cleared riparian forests and disconnected the river, contributing to its decline. In fact, the Carmel River was once named one of America's most endangered rivers. MPRPD's acquisition of this former golf course property in 2018 allowed for permanent protection of the land and dedication of its water rights back to the river, setting the stage for future restoration and park improvements. Informed by a technical advisory committee of river restoration and wildlife experts, the project is designed to reconnect the river with its floodplain and reintroduce native species.

The Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project will bring lasting benefits for wildlife and the community, including:

▶ **Restoring Wildlife Habitat:** The project will improve habitat and migration corridors for endangered species like steelhead trout, as well as other wildlife dependent on a healthy Carmel River ecosystem. More than 30 native plant species will be planted, creating a diverse and thriving environment for fish, amphibians, birds, and more.

▶ **Increasing Nature-based Recreation Opportunities:** The restoration will create expansive natural spaces, including new accessible trails and a 260-foot-long pedestrian bridge, offering new opportunities for visitors to explore the park and experience nature.

▶ **Reducing Flood Risk:** Restoring the natural floodplain will give the river safe spaces for floodwater to occupy, reducing the severity of flooding for adjacent homes and properties.

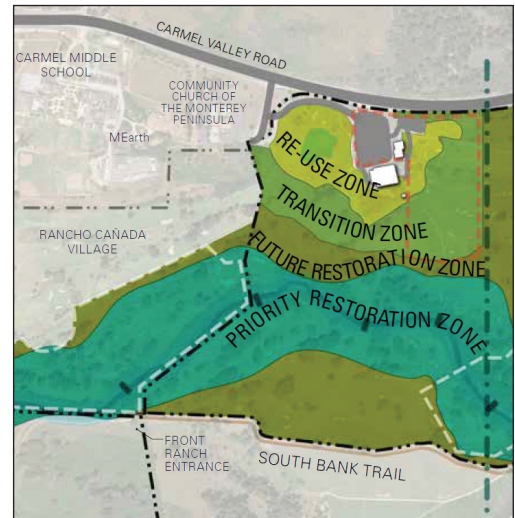
▶ **Building Climate Resilience:** This project will help buffer the watershed from extreme weather, create refuge for wildlife, protect our aquifer, and sequester carbon, making the region more resilient to climate change.

▶ **Attracting Investment in the Local Environment:** With key partners like the State Coastal Conservancy, MPRPD has secured \$35 million in state and federal grants that represent significant investments in our community's future.

Additionally, the Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project will celebrate and enhance the community's deep connections to nature. MPRPD will invite public participation through volunteer opportunities such as planting native species, removing invasive plants, and maintaining trails. Educational walks and workshops will be offered during and after construction to showcase the park's transformation and the benefits of floodplain restoration. MPRPD is also partnering with local schools and universities to provide students with hands-on learning opportunities, ensuring that the project's positive impact will extend to future generations.

Returning this altered property to a more natural state will necessarily involve a major landscape transformation and temporary disruptions at the park. The work requires major grading to reshape degraded areas of the park, removing much of the old deteriorating golf course infrastructure,

planting over 175,000 native riparian plants, which will flourish in the newly lowered floodplains, and creating new accessible trails and a bridge over the Carmel River. While some areas of the park will be temporarily closed during construction, key trail connections will be maintained, and new trails will be added to enhance visitor access once the project is complete. Construction is expected to begin in summer 2025 and continue through spring 2027, when the community will be able to see the park transform and help monitor changes.



The Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project is the largest initiative in MPRPD's history. As a small agency with limited resources, we are committed to making this transformative project a success—for the Carmel River watershed and the local community that values and relies on it. We are deeply grateful to our primary project partner, the State Coastal Conservancy, and to the many supporters who are making this possible. While there may be temporary disruptions during construction, we are dedicated to minimizing impacts and ensuring a smooth transition to a restored landscape that will benefit the community for generations to come. We appreciate your continued support as we take this historic step forward. We invite you to stay informed by visiting our website (www.mprpd.org) and following us on social media, where we'll share updates, volunteer opportunities, and ways you can get involved to make this project a success.

Jake Smith is the Planning and Conservation Program Manager at Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District.

HISTORIC ASSESSMENT PREPARED FOR THE CARMELO ATHLETIC AND SOCIAL CLUB

by Paola Berthoin

In November 2024, the Carmel Valley Association hired Dana Supernowicz of Historic Resources Associates to prepare a Historic Assessment of the Carmelo Athletic and Social Club. The building was formally evaluated using the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Criteria for Evaluation. These criteria for evaluation are described as “the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture found in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association.” The building must also meet one of the following criteria:

Criterion A: Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

Criterion B: Is associated with the lives of persons significant in the past; or

Criterion C: Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

Criterion D: Has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Using these criteria, Supernowicz states the following:

Location - The building retains its original location.

Design - The building remains largely unaltered since its construction in 1895. Most of the alterations, which are historical in themselves, include reroofing, several areas of replaced boards and battens, addition of several windows, rebuilding of stairs and landings, and the addition of a door to the west elevation.

Setting - The setting of the building has been somewhat altered by construction of an underpass to the east of the building, providing access to Carmel Valley Road. The setting to the west remains largely intact, dating to the 1940s-1960s.

Materials - The original materials of the building are largely representative of the period between 1895-1960. Material changes include a new asphalt shingle roof, replacement of damaged exterior boards and battens, several window replacements, replacement of stairs and landings, and a circa 1960s-1970s era door on the west elevation of the building.

Workmanship - The building remains largely intact with original workmanship during its period of significance, namely from 1895-1960.

Feeling - The building still evokes a strong sense of historic vernacular design reflective of the late nineteenth-century.

Association - Currently the building is not used as a social club or meeting house. However, both the exterior and interior reflect its historic use and association.

The building was also evaluated under the regulatory framework of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR).

According to Supernowicz, “The significance of the Carmelo Athletic and Social Club lies in its relationship with the history of Carmel Valley during the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century (1895-1960). Its construction in 1895 represents an important event in the history of Carmel Valley that brought together residents and visitors in a wide variety of social, cultural, and political events that were held at the Club building.

The Club building is one of the oldest

surviving structures in Carmel Valley, and, despite condition issues, most of which are relatively easy to address, the property retains overall good integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association. Because the Club building reflects vernacular or folk architecture, its historic use is equally, if not more, important than its outward appearance. The building is consistent with other vernacular architecture built in Carmel Valley from the 1850s through the first few decades of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, much of the early-day architecture in the valley has been demolished or extensively remodeled.”

In summary, according to Supernowicz, “The Carmelo Athletic and Social Club building appears to be eligible for the NRHP under Criteria A and C and eligible for the CRHR under Criteria 1 and 3 as an individual property and consequently appears to be a significant resource per CEQA.”

CVA will continue to advocate for the preservation of this significant building in its historic location for Carmel Valley and Monterey County.

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A BUSY YEAR CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY ON SANTA LUCIA PRESERVE

by Jamison Watts, Executive Director, Santa Lucia Conservancy

Nestled in one of the world's most biodiverse regions, the Santa Lucia Preserve and Carmel River Watershed are home to over 600 species of native plants and more than 270 wildlife species. Founded in 1995 as a 501(c)(3) conservation organization, the Santa Lucia Conservancy set as its mission to protect and steward, in perpetuity, the preserve's unique natural, cultural, and aesthetic resources and serve as a model of ecologically sustainable development to communities outside of the preserve. We accomplish our mission through ecological monitoring and research, adaptive land management, conservation easement stewardship, and environmental education programs.

In addition to supporting high species richness, the preserve is home to or has the potential to support more than 20 protected species. Some of these species include tricolored blackbird, California spotted owl, California red-legged frog, foothill yellow-legged frog, California tiger salamander, western pond turtle, Smith's blue butterfly, western monarch butterfly, Central Coast steelhead, American badger, and western burrowing owl. Consistent with its mission, the conservancy actively monitors several of these species but is currently seeking funding to perform



The Santa Lucia Preserve is located 5 miles inland from Monterey Bay and encompasses 20,000 acres of the northern Santa Lucia Range.

protocol-level surveys for additional plants and animals, which will allow us to better understand their distribution and maintain the specific habitat conditions they require.

In 2024, we advanced several exciting initiatives aimed at restoring and enhancing strategically important habitats. In San Francisquito Flats, we launched a beaver dam analog (BDA) project to mimic the natural engineering of beavers, repairing a severely degraded channel that supports local wetland hydrology and function. On Peñon Peak, a new grant-funded project is increasing reproductive habitat for the

western monarch butterfly and other important pollinators. In partnership with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), a mountain lion collaring and genetic sampling project was initiated to monitor this keystone species' movements, assess genetic diversity, and guide conservation strategies for maintaining healthy populations and connectivity throughout the region. Also this year we began actively managing redwood forest within the Soberanes burn scar, which is improving ecological health, wildfire resilience, and habitat for California spotted owl and a host of other species.

Meanwhile, our dedicated team continues tackling the most pressing environmental challenges of our day. Climate change adaptation strategies, including managing destructive invasive species like French broom and wild pig, and our state-recognized wildfire mitigation program continue to help safeguard both human and ecological communities in the region.

As co-stewards of this extraordinary landscape, we are truly inspired by its beauty and the local community committed to its preservation. Through ecological monitoring and research, adaptive land management, and community engagement, the conservancy is working to ensure that the Santa Lucia Preserve remains a sanctuary for native plants and animals and an example of ecologically sustainable development for generations to come.

To learn more about our initiatives or get involved, visit slconservancy.org.

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Front page banner photo of dramatic January skies, courtesy Ron Pierce.

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CVA ANNUAL MEETING

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Hidden Valley Music Seminars ~104 West Carmel Valley Road

Presentation: *A Vision of the Future that Draws on the Past*, Jeff Ohlson, CV Historical Society

Local issues Q & A with Kate Daniels, 5th District Supervisor

Appetizers by by Jerome Viel

It's time for our annual CVA Board of Directors' election. Current board members nominated for new three-year terms are Alex Brant, Kim Forrest, Sandra Schachter, Andy Sudol, and Jeff Wood.

In accordance with the CVA bylaws, any CVA member in good standing may nominate other candidates by gathering 15 member signatures and submitting them by mail, to be received by February 21st. If other candidates are submitted, ballots will be sent out by email (or mailed, if requested) by March 1st, with votes due back by March 14th. If there are no new petition candidates, the slate will automatically be appointed on March 15th. New terms begin on April 1, and board members will be introduced at the annual meeting.