

## **“Future Of The Valley”**

### **ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT PROP. A**

Our Homestead Community meeting March 21st was an opportunity for the Homestead Valley Community Association and the Land Trust Boards to present the need for a modest parcel assessment to be placed on the August 25th ballot, Proposition A. Residents were requested to submit questions regarding the proposed parcel assessment. It is the intention of the Boards and the volunteer committee to ensure residents are well informed, therefore, we are printing the answers to all questions received. Additional questions are welcome and should be directed to Helen Beck via email at [helenbeck@earthlink.net](mailto:helenbeck@earthlink.net). For more detailed information regarding the Future of the Valley proposal, visit [www.homesteadvalley.org](http://www.homesteadvalley.org) and click on the “Future of The Valley” heading on the right hand side of the page.

#### **Homestead Valley Community Association questions:**

**Q:** Why are you proposing a parcel assessment? This is the first time I heard of it

**A:** On a basic level, the main priorities of the proposed \$125 annual assessment are first and foremost safety (fire safety and safety of our facilities), accessibility, and maintenance of the open spaces and aging facilities. The Homestead Valley Community Association and Land Trust Boards are working diligently to ensure all residents are informed. The Homestead Headlines, which is mailed to all residents, has had information regarding the assessment in virtually every issue since December, 2008, which announced the Annual Community meeting held January 24th. Another Community meeting, held March 21st, was also announced in the Marin I.J. and the M.V. Herald, providing further information for discussion.

The April Headlines reported on "The Future of the Valley" plan and additional details were provided in the June Headlines. More information will be available to Homestead residents via the Headlines and community meetings leading up to the August Mail-In ballot.

**Q:** I don't really use the Community Center. Why should I have to pay for its upkeep and the community activities? Why should the many pay for the few?

**A:** It's understandable that one wouldn't want to pay for something not being used. However, it's important to know that this assessment would cover much more than *just* the community center. Funds raised would also support the Land Trust, allowing ongoing clearing of open spaces and trails for fire prevention (which is currently a significant risk in areas of Homestead Valley). Further, the Land Trust supports individual residents through chipper days and broader topographical maintenance that protects private homes as well.

Lastly, the Community Center is utilized by a surprising number of individuals in Homestead Valley. In addition to the many families who take advantage of the pool and surrounding areas, there are numerous groups, professionals and non-profits that use the facility for meetings and events – not to mention the fact that it's our voting headquarters. Homestead Valley is rich with opportunities to connect with neighbors through the community center and like a thriving city, our valley is just as vibrant, but needs monetary support to continue positive growth. It's also part of what makes our real estate more valuable than other areas.

**Q:** I own two parcels of land in Homestead Valley. Would I be assessed for both parcels?

**A:** Only parcels with homes on them will be assessed.

**Q:** I rent my home. Can I still vote for the assessment?

**A:** Yes, everyone registered to vote in Homestead will receive a ballot and is encouraged to vote for Proposition A in August.

**Q:** Has a bond issue, as an alternative to an assessment, been considered?

**A:** A bond issue was considered, but it requires a large amount of administrative fees which reduce the funds available for our projects. Therefore, it's an inefficient use of voter's money. The nominal parcel assessment, which won't be realized until 2010, will provide long-term support and allow for ongoing maintenance.

**Q:** What will be done with all the money on an annual basis? Is there an overly-ambitious plan to remodel the community center?

**A:** The 10-year budget shows that more money is necessary (merely to keep the center going) without spending anything on the necessary safety improvements. The current combined income of the HVCA and Land Trust Boards does not meet the maintenance and safety needs of the community. We do not pay Mill Valley taxes, so our annual assessment is lower than other Mill Valley residents. This makes our neighborhood very desirable, but we still need to pay a slight increase in our tax to maintain the benefits we all appreciate. A full disclosure of necessary upgrades, improvements and plans for the community center and Land Trust is available on the website at [www.homesteadvalley.org](http://www.homesteadvalley.org).

**LAND TRUST questions:**

**Q:** Will the fire safety work being done by the Land Trust Board help me with my fire insurance?

**A:** Proceeds would be used by HVLTL to further mitigate fire danger in the 90 acres of open space throughout Homestead Valley, an effort which is severely limited under current funding. Proceeds would assist HVLTL, in consultation with the Southern Marin Fire Department, in establishing critical fire fuel breaks and ladder fuel reductions. Homestead Valley is currently considered a critical wildfire zone and as a result, some residents have lost their fire insurance. The fire breaks and other brush clearing will improve the safety of homes in our area. In addition, the CERT committee of the HVCA can help individuals assess their defensible space and further conversations/support around fire insurance is also available.

**Q:** I read that the State government wants to keep tax money sent by the counties. Will our special funds become unavailable if this occurs for Marin County?

**A:** No, these funds are especially reserved for Homestead residents and they will be collected only for our stated purpose: Fire protection and upkeep of the Community Center

**Q:** Proposition A includes a 2% yearly inflation increase. I can understand that services and materials cost more each year but how will I know how the money is spent after the first few years?

**A:** The Community Center and Land Trust Boards have submitted budgets for the next 10 years to the County and to Homestead Valley residents for approval. It will be necessary to save some of the taxes collected over a few years to pay for large projects. It will take years to accomplish the goals of Proposition A. In addition, vegetation management and maintenance of trails and parks are an ongoing process. You can review the progress of community projects at any time by contacting the Board presidents and attending the Community and Land Trust Board meetings. County representatives will be working with us and will continue to monitor the use of funds collected by the assessment.