



Greater Cement Hill Neighborhood Association

Protecting and preserving the rural qualities of our neighborhood by providing a forum for group action as needed.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Will Hart



Happy New Year!

While attending a holiday party in the community, a neighbor that I admire and

respect thanked me for my work on behalf of GCHNA. I have to admit that this happens very often, and it always takes me aback as I try to find something other than 'thank you and thanks for your support' to say. It's always humbling. He made me think once again about the importance of the job, and yes, it is really important.

As individuals we are each a cry in the dark, but as a group we have real power and the ability to affect change in greater ways than any single person can. Every time I stand before the City Council or the Board of Supervisors, they know that I speak for all of us and they listen. There are so many examples of this. The fact that we get a huge discount from Ferrellgas and a Firewise Community insurance discount are tangible effects that put money in our pockets.

But beyond that, we have affected the Superior Courthouse decision, the prevention of AT&T from pulling out of areas where there are no other phone options, we are working to purchase property to be reunited with Hirschman's Pond, and most recently we have affected the Nevada County Transportation Commission's plan for

Neighborhood Meetings 2026

Feb. 2, Apr. 6, June 1,
Aug. 3, Oct. 5 and Dec. 7.
7:00 pm to 8:30 pm
Madelyn Helling Library
Community Room

Highway 49 and the roundabouts. None of this would be possible for one person, but as GCHNA, all things are possible.

My job is really bigger than just one person. We have an incredible leadership committee who are devoted and hard working. These people keep us on track.

- Karen Wcislo leads the Firewise Committee, which keeps us a Firewise Community. It requires action plans and reporting, scheduling, and community outreach and with the Wildfire Ready Coalition of Nevada County.
- Ellen Hagan is our Secretary and she does the newsletter you're reading as well as records the minutes of our neighborhood meetings. She is also a member of the Firewise Committee.
- Janet Johnson is our Treasurer and keeps us financially honest and spending within our budget.
- Joy Elson is in charge of membership, but she is also a Firewise Committee member, manages the website, does the layout for the newsletter, and generally keeps GCHNA humming.

She is the leadership committee's 'go to' person and helps all the rest of us in our jobs.

- Many hands get our yearly Gathering together, but a few people are stand outs. Joy again, of course, and Yvette Young, Bob Aron, and Amanda and Rene Ringnald all make the yearly event memorable.
- Lastly but not least are the Road Reps that are everyone's closest contact.

It's a team effort. If you are not a member you are missing a lot. The savings you get from one Ferrellgas fill up would pay for 8-10 years of dues. We are a great community and everyone needs to be a part of it, even if it's just being informed about what is happening, because all the work we do affects you.

Once again, thanks to those who have put a little wind in my sails by encouraging the work that I do for the community.

All the best, Will

IN THIS ISSUE

- (1) President's Message
- (2) Steering Committee - New Reps
- (3) Treasurer's Report
- (3-5) Firewise News
- (6) Nevada City Retrospect, Membership News
- (7) Steering Committee List, Membership Form
- (8) Mission Statement, Contact Info



STEERING COMMITTEE NEWS - NEW ROAD REPRESENTATIVES!

GCHNA Steering Committee, 12/1/25



Susan Zdarko

New Applewood Rep



I moved to Nevada City two years ago to enjoy greater access to the outdoor life of hiking, mountain biking, and just being outside.

I moved from Land Park in Sacramento after retiring from being a School District Administrator for Special Education. When I first moved from Illinois to Sacramento in the early 1980's, I used to spend time in Nevada City. I enjoyed swimming in the Yuba River at Hoyt's Crossing, hiking in the area, and hanging out in town. After retiring and wanting to move to a more rural setting, Nevada City seemed the perfect place to look, above the fog and below the snow.

I purchased my home on Applewood Lane about a year and a half ago after renting a house up on Banner. It's so quiet, calm, and peaceful looking over the river canyon, seeing the hills, and mountains beyond. I am looking forward to being part of the community, learning more about the history, and volunteering in the area.

You might see my big blond dog, Luna, and me walking on the ditch trails and Cement Hill area daily as we are out and about exploring this wonderful beautiful neighborhood.

Brad Reynolds

New Lower Cement Hill Rep



I live on West Piper with my wife Linda. I have been in the area for 20 years, Linda has been here 40, and we are both retired. Maybe you have seen us playing cornhole while you were walking the ditch. I am a swimmer, hiker, and mountain biker. When not at the pool or on the trails, I am working on a house project or doing some form of woodworking.

I am continually blown away at the beautiful setting we live in, our great community, and our happening little town. One of my goals for 2026 is to make friends with the neighborhood ravens.

Todd Krein

New Airport Rep



I'm in my early 60's, having grown up in New England and up-state New York, and I attended college in New Hampshire. I moved to California the week after the earthquake in '89.

My wife and I moved to Nevada City about two years ago, from Loomis, after our girls graduated from college. We down-sized significantly as we head towards retirement. I'm an avid curler (yes, men with brooms, on ice, with beer) and love to restore old machining equipment, and my wife is quite the equestrian. We also restore old trailers, our current project being a 1972 Airstream which we completely gutted and rebuilt. We live in the old Yeager house, across the street from the PacBell substation with our four dogs.

Thank you to the outgoing Reps!

These new Reps are replacing Elena Rayo, Brian Waag, and Uli Paulin. We thank all three for their contributions and time spent as Neighborhood Reps and Steering Committee Members!



TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT

GCHNA YEAR 2025

by Janet Johnson, Treasurer

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES		
REVENUE	Unrestricted	Restricted
Member Dues	\$7,430.00	
Pello Project Fundraiser		\$6,453.30
Total Revenue	\$7,430.00	\$6,453.30
EXPENSES		
Annual Gathering	\$1,853.26	
Donations	\$100.00	
Firesafe Education	\$0.00	
Newsletters	\$917.73	
Meeting Room Rental	\$175.00	
Memberships	\$610.00	
Website, LGL Software	\$680.30	
Miscellaneous (PO Box, Printing, Supplies, PayPal Fees)	\$324.98	
Total Expenses	\$4,661.27	0.00
REVENUE LESS EXPENSES	\$2,768.73	6,453.30
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION		
Total Assets (Tri-Counties Bank)	\$17,372.45	
Temporarily Restricted Assets		
Firewise Fund	\$425.00	
Pello Project Fund	\$6,453.30	
Total	\$6,878.30	
Total Unrestricted Funds	\$10,494.15	
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$17,372.45	

THANK YOU FERRELLGAS!



For over 25 years Ferrellgas has partnered with GCHNA to provide our members with propane at a very competitive price. We appreciate their support!

Our "CostPlus" agreement means that the price we pay per gallon reimburses them at "Cost" to purchase propane, "Plus" a markup which includes their profit and overhead. "Cost" varies and changes weekly depending on supply and demand. In December 2025, Ferrellgas filled up Tim and Ellen Hagan's tank. The cost was \$2.25 per gallon. What are you paying?



FIREWISE COMMITTEE NEWS

Committee Update

by Karen Wcislo, Chair



GCHNA Firewise Committee Members:
(left to right) Joy Elson, Mark Ball, Karen Wcislo (Chair), Will Hart, Ellen Hagan and Josh Miller.
Not pictured, Cheryl Haines.

We are starting out this year with both Cement Hill Road and Airport Road roadside

vegetation cleared 10 feet from the road by the county – and it looks great! This will make evacuation safer in the event of a wildfire. The county clears the roadside every 5-7 years, so in the meantime, it is up to the homeowners to maintain it.

Our community has done a fantastic job of continuing to do ongoing defensible space and home hardening work. 140 households submitted mitigation forms for 2025, and we logged 18,414 hours of defensible space and home hardening activities, credited at \$37/hour. The total of money spent and hours invested came to \$1,801,291! This is almost exactly the same amount as last year, which shows an ongoing commitment to being prepared for wildfire.

Besides the significant vegetation removal (with thanks to OES for providing free chipping service for 40 properties, and two dumpsters for vegetation disposal) there was also a strong emphasis on home hardening.

This included many major projects: replacing wood siding with hardie backer, replacing doors and windows with fire resistant materials, changing vent screens to 1/8" or replacing with Vulcan vents, boxing in eaves/soffits, installing new fire-resistant roofs, replacing wood decks with fire resistant materials, installing new metal gutters with leaf guards, and installing a water tank and pump for fire suppression use.

These upgrades are a major financial investment, but have been shown to help prevent structures from burning in a wildfire event. They also may help qualify you for a reduction in your home insurance.

NEWS FROM THE FIREWISE COMMITTEE (cont.)

We have already set our 2026 goals. The emphasis this year is on neighbors supporting neighbors. In a rural area this is critical.

- **Continue** to facilitate the OES supported home chipping program and green waste dumpsters.
- **Place** a survey on the GCHNA website so community members can recommend service providers (land clearing, tree work, etc.) to share with our community. The survey link is now on GCHNA's Firewise Information webpage.
- **Increase** availability of defensible space advisory visits by having three more members trained to provide educational assessments.
- **Develop** work parties to do a Scotch Broom pull or assist neighbors unable to do clearing work themselves.
- **Investigate** the use of a pilot smoke detector and camera program as an early warning system for our community, particularly focused on the area above the Yuba River canyon.
- **Sponsor** neighborhood road walks with a defensible space advisor so neighbors can work together to make their roads safer in an emergency (coffee and snacks to be provided!).

As always, your ideas and input are invited. Working together is how we stay wildfire ready. Email us at firewise@gchna.com.

Discounts Available on Fire Insurance

By Ellen Hagan

GCHNA wants property owners living within the boundary of the Greater Cement Hill Neighborhood Association to know that discounts on fire insurance are available.

- Our Firewise Community residents are eligible for a 10% discount from the FAIR plan. The 2025 Certificate is on our website to download to present to your agent.
- If you have California FAIR Plan insurance, your policy will contain declarations explaining their Use of a Wildfire Risk Model and Consideration of Mitigation Factors. It states that you can reduce

the wildfire portion of your premium by up to 16.4% should you complete the mitigation efforts/measures listed. There is a mitigation discount for Protecting the Structure and another for Protecting the Immediate Surroundings of the dwelling. The specifics are listed in your policy declarations packet. Your property must meet all of the requirements. Work with your agent to make sure your policy suits your needs.

- The insurance industry has a new program that provides a checklist with proven steps to assess your home to reduce wildfire risk. The IBHS Wildfire Ready Home Checklist specifically lists the home hardening features and defensible space requirements necessary for discounts. Paying a \$125 fee, fulfilling all the requirements, and passing an inspection will earn you a designation certificate making you eligible for discounts. There is a link to the Checklist on GCHNA's Firewise Information web page, or you can get it on wildfirepreparedhome.org. For most of us, it will not be possible to fulfill all of the IBHS requirements within the 90 day period allotted, but the checklist is a useful tool for those who plan to make improvements over time. Our suggestion is to read the checklist and choose three things you might do this year.

Defensible Space Advisory Visits

How fire safe is your property?

Josh Miller, a GCHNA member on our Firewise Committee, who was born and raised on Excelsior Ditch Camp Road, has been trained by Cal Fire to be a Certified Defensible Space Advisor. Josh has worked in fire service for 26 years, and is a Battalion Chief/EMT for the Penn Valley Fire Department.

If you are interested in having him visit your property for an advisory/assessment of how fire safe your property is, go to gchna.com and complete a Defensible Space Advisory Request. This is a free service. It is not an inspection, but is for your personal use, and the report is given only to you.



What Is Leading Us To A Catastrophic Wildfire?



Large and small trees too close together can fuel a catastrophic crown fire.



**Inevitable
Wildfire
Outcome**



Space between the trees prevents wildfire from moving into the tree canopy.



Source: <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/washington/stories-in-washington/what-trees-know-fire-forest-health/>

Managing Your Burn Pile

*Healthier and safer trees result from broadcast burning, thinning trees, grazing, ladder fuel removal and **pile burning**.*

How do you burn when everything is so wet outside?



Make a starter pile.




Starter pile: before the big rains, cover a pile of dry sticks and tree cuttings with a tarp. Keep the wind from uncovering the tarp by weighing it down with rocks or tree branches.

Feeder piles: no need to keep them dry as the starter pile will get hot enough to burn anything added that is wet.

How do you stop the fire from spreading?



Here is what I do.



1st, I use hoe/rake to get most of the duff and twigs into the center.

2nd, I use a leaf blower to move any remaining flammable material into the center. Now I have a dirt rings around the fire.



3rd, I burn, with a water hose on hand.

4th, I add new material from my feeder piles I have staged nearby.

5th, I continue to use leaf blower and rake to push material into the burning center, maintaining the ring of dirt only.

Nominate a Neighbor Who Needs a Hand

Let's have a neighborhood workday of reducing fuels on their property! Would you like to help? Send an email to firewise@gchna.com

Check out these links:

burnpermit.fire.ca.gov
wildfirereadync.org



NEVADA CITY RETROSPECT by Spencer LeGate



At a most tender age, my first vision of Nevada City seemed out of fantasy: sidewalks above my head, structures planted where they felt like, meandering streets - leading where? I was born in an ordered grid of a valley town where buildings were placed rationally. I was bedazzled by it all. Apparent disorder can be appealing to a young mind. Had I then known of surrealism, the scene would not only tickle imagination but make perfect sense, which in time it did.

With youth's sharper senses, I became enchanted by the sights, smells and calming water and flora of Deer Creek. Against those pleasant senses was the acrid odor from sawmill smoke as wood trash was sent to the conical burners. Everywhere dust encrusted, leaky automobiles gave off their special smells, both inside and out. More pleasing scents rose from the fresh cut lumber itself, from the pine and Douglas fir. Dior should have captured those in a soap or cologne.

As I grew older, the city took shape and my life with it. Trips to town in my aunt's faded blue 1940's Dodge always meant a stop at the Food Palace grocery at the corner of York and Commercial. The owners, family friends, kept customer accounts, common before plastic purchasing. A summer afternoon visit would include watermelon, licorice whips, and popsicles that ran down our faces as we drove back to Cement Hill.

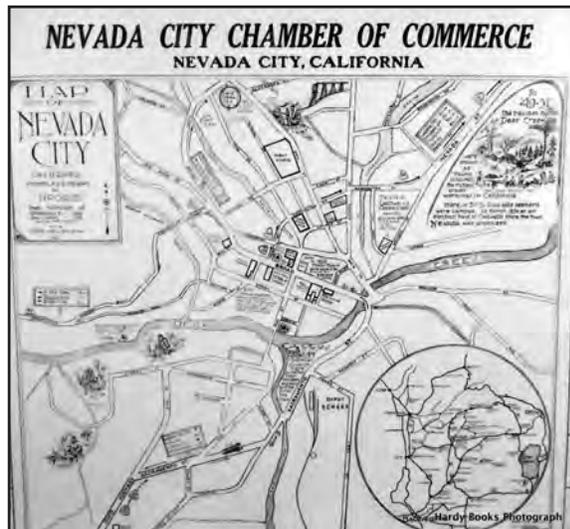
While riding to school in the fall of 1956, I saw along Empire Street a line of striking miners. It was shortly to be the end of the local industry that made Sierra foothill communities world famous. The Empire Mine soon closed forever.

Always a lively center of festival, art and culture, Nevada City may have begun a renaissance of sorts near the end of the 1950's. The historic Nevada theater of early gold rush fame ended its run as movie house in 1957. I think I attended the last showing. Its emptiness stirred local imaginations and in a decade was reopened to meet the

city's burgeoning cultural needs. The year 1959 I remember to be the first of the annual bicycle races in the city. Significantly, it was the year several Broad Street businesses partnered and founded SPD Supermarket up on Zion. Oh, it was also the year I graduated from Nevada Union High.

The most radical change to the city at the time was the Golden Chain freeway, construction beginning in the early 1960's. It was to

make Nevada City a destination and was instrumental in transforming the town into a living museum. There were costs. Some residents never reconciled to the changes the freeway wrought.



1939 H.P. Davis Map (Hardy Books)

MEMBERSHIP AND WEBSITE NEWS by Joy Elson

Thanks to all our members who support our neighborhood association! We now have payment history in our online database for five full years. In 2021, there were 236 member households. We are starting out 2026 with 262 current member households! This is 56% of our neighborhood (based on the approximately 467 households in our neighborhood area). We hope that the yearly increase of members continues!

Members support our website, email accounts, database software, and newsletters, enabling us to communicate effectively with our neighborhood residents. We are able to provide opportunities for us to get to know each other at meetings and social gatherings. Our Firewise Committee makes it possible for us to be a certified Firewise Community.

GCHNA is a respected voice to communicate and influence local policies of concern to our neighborhood. A big perk is the significant discount that Ferrellgas offers to our paid members.

The website (www.gchna.com) has a lot of useful information! You can find past newsletters, neighborhood meeting minutes, and who your Neighborhood Rep is. The Firewise Information page is full of helpful fire safety related info, including our emergency evacuation route, the Firewise Community certificate that qualifies you for a

discount with your insurance company, and helpful tips from our Firewise Committee. You can request free chipping from OES, a free Defensible Space Advisory visit, and recommend tree work, brush clearing, or landscaping people who you have had a good experience with (new). Check it out!

A current member list will be sent via email soon.



STEERING COMMITTEE LIST

Officers

- **President:** Will Hart
president@gchna.com
- **Secretary:** Ellen Hagan
- **Treasurer:** Janet Johnson
treasurer@gchna.com
- **Membership:** Joy Elson
membership@gchna.com

Committee Leaders

- **Firewise Committee:** Karen Wcislo
firewise@gchna.com
- **Events:** Open Position
*Interested in joining the Events Committee?
Send an email to members@gchna.com*

At Large

- Christy Barden
- Eileen Jorgensen
- Spencer LeGate

To reach a Steering Committee Member or Neighborhood Rep, please send an email to: members@gchna.com.

Neighborhood Representatives

Airport Road: Todd Krein (new!) (includes Tower Hill Road, West Airport Road, East Piper Lane and Sheriff Road)

Applewood Lane: Susan Zdarko (new!) (includes Indian Shack Road)

Augustine / Daisy Blue Mine / Excelsior Ditch Camp Road: Will Hart (includes Leisure Lane and Lazy Oaks Drive)

Gochine Drive: Dale Tom Creighton (includes Mt. Auburn Circle)

Sunrock Road: Marlene Widmann

Indian Flat Road: Joanne Brown (includes Indian Trails, Country Circle, Woods Ravine Ct. and Robinson King Road)

Wet Hill Road / Lower North Bloomfield Road: Sierra Buryan (includes Sierra Springs Circle and Elliot Way)

West End Cement Hill: Ellen Hagan (includes Sunshadow Circle, Cedarsong Road and Garesio Ranch Road)

Upper Cement Hill: Open Position (includes Pine Tree Place, Diamond Oak Drive, Bodie Ridge Road, Sky ranch Road and Elysian Way)

Central Cement Hill: Joy Elson (includes Golden Oaks, Crystal View, Whispering Oaks, Merryhill Way, Gold Court, Spanish Quartz, Ragon Road and Fox Hill Road.)

Lower Cement Hill: Brad Reynolds (new!) (includes West Piper, Deer Crest, Rancheria Court, Red Hill Road, Foster Driveway, Picton, Picton Way and Foster Road)

Southside Cement Hill: Debbie Wandro (Highway 49, including Columbine Court, Delphine Lane, Shoshoni Trail, Old Faithful Court, Carli Way, Crooked Arrow Lane, John Barleycorn Rd., Frost Court and Cavanaugh Lane)

GCHNA MEMBERSHIP - JOIN OR RENEW

Dues: \$30/year

(If you are unsure of your renewal date, email an inquiry to members@gchna.com.)

Pay online at www.gchna.com or mail this form with your check to GCHNA, PO Box 1343, Nevada City, CA 95959

Name(s) _____

Property Address _____

Mailing Address (if different) _____

Phone(s) _____

Email(s) _____

What year did you purchase your property or start living in our Cement Hill neighborhood? _____

- I am / We are: Owners Renters • Do you live here full time? yes no
- Interested in becoming involved? yes • Would you like to help plan the next neighborhood gathering? yes



WINTER 2026 NEWSLETTER



Greater Cement Hill Neighborhood Association

PO Box 1343, Nevada City, CA 95959

GCHNA Mission Statement

To protect and preserve the rural qualities of our neighborhood by providing a forum for group action as needed.

Purpose

- Communicate information quickly and efficiently about matters of neighborhood interest to its members and associates.
- Raise funds and supply volunteer labor for projects that enhance or improve our neighborhood.
- Be an organization through which our neighbors can meet and get to know each other in meetings and social gatherings.
- Work to reduce fire hazards in our community.
- Promote safety on Cement Hill Road and local trails.
- Collaborate and communicate with Nevada County Board of Supervisors and Departments.
- Identify and help preserve historic sites in the area.
- Represent and provide balance of diverse interests in reviewing and prioritizing projects or issues of concern to our neighborhood.
- Support other neighborhood associations as their interests coincide with GCHNA.

Newsletter Team

Editor: Ellen Hagan **Design & Layout:** Joy Elson

Previous Issues are available on our website.

Thank you to all of our authors and photographers!

Contact Information

GCHNA

President:

president@gchna.com

Treasurer:

treasurer@gchna.com

Membership / Website:

members@gchna.com

Firewise Committee:

firewise@gchna.com

OTHER

Ferrellgas: 530-265-5896

www.ferrellgas.com

**Wildfire Ready Coalition
of Nevada County**

<https://wildfirereadync.org/>

