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 Susan McCasland – Communications & Publications (C&P)
 Elizabeth Edgren – Community Service & Membership (CS&M)
 Randy Tripp – Finance Committee (FC)
 Dale Arendt – Nominating Committee (NC)
 Joe Boyce – Environment & Safety Committee (E&S)

Office Staff
 Betsy Rodriguez – Lead Administrator
 Anna Diaz – Administrator

SHHA Office
 12700 San Rafael Avenue NE, Ste. 3
 Albuquerque, NM 87122

Office Hours: M–F, 9 AM – 4 PM
Closed on federal holidays
Phone: 505-797-7793
Fax: 505-856-8544
Website: www.sandiahomeowners.org
Emails: sandiaheights@comcast.net
shha@sandiahomeowners.org

A Farewell & A Welcome

Far too soon, we bid farewell to office administrator Teresa Gonzales, a smiling face welcoming all to the SHHA office. Though we are sorry to see her go, we understand that for personal reasons she must leave the office. Teresa is a Sandia Heights resident, so you will still see her around the 'hood. All the best to you, Teresa.

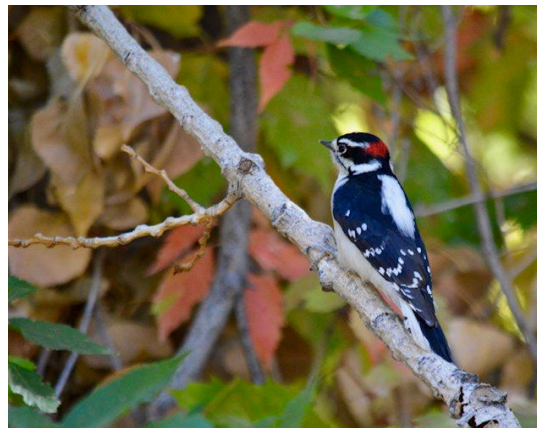
We welcome Anna Diaz to the office admin position. Anna has extensive experience in real estate and HOA offices. She will be a tremendous asset to the SHHA. Stop in and say “hi” to Anna if you get a chance.

Help Update Our Bylaws

We are seeking SHHA resident volunteers for an SHHA bylaws review, looking at them from legal aspects and for clarity and grammar. If you're interested, contact the office—contact information is in the left column.

Neighborhood Birds

Photos by Victoria Pennamen



Springtime Garden Page

By Elizabeth Edgren, Community Service & Membership Committee chair

Online Learning Event by NMSU— Urban Conservation: Creating Gardens for Wildlife, Pollinators and People

On Wednesday, April 6 at 6:00 PM, landscape ecologist and conservationist Dr. Shaun McCoshum, will take you beyond the flowers and discuss all of the habitat needs to encourage pollinators and wildlife in your garden.

Register for this on-line event at:

<https://nmsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcoceqvpz8jGto6Ou4LGOjt6DZ6CCPm-pdZ>

Springtime Landscape Thoughts

I, probably like many of you, am so ready for springtime's flowering and renewal. Since I'm still new to this environment, I want advice and inspiration, and reminders of what I should be doing out there. Should I plant or prune? How much should I water what, and when?

SHHA aims to preserve Sandia Heights' unique natural environment, as well as minimize the risk of devastating wildfire. But that does not mean leaving our space to be overrun with yucca and rabbitbrush (chamisa), or clear-cutting the whole space around our homes. How can we maintain and beautify our own space and our neighborhood?

I found easy access to old NMSU Southwest Yard and Garden articles at [NMSU: Southwest Yard & Garden -](#)

[2021](#). The articles are organized by year and by month, so I can find information on season-specific topics. For example, last year's April articles covered seed-starting, hummingbirds, and drought-friendly flowers. For folks who love the big picture, you can browse pieces from any season, any year back to 1996.

If you want a lively but water-wise landscape, you can find inspiration and advice in *The Enchanted Xeriscape: A Guide to Water-wise Landscaping in New Mexico* [Enchanted Xeriscape 04 \(state.nm.us\)](#). This guide covers planning and designing, soil preparation, plant choices, irrigation, mulching, and maintaining a low-water-use landscape.

A local nursery landscaping consultant gave me a print copy of *Xeriscaping: The Complete How-To Guide*, an informative, easy-to-use resource that helped me figure out how to improve our landscaping. You can find everything in that magazine plus so much more at [505 Outside | Your resource for beautiful desert friendly landscapes.](#) (or <https://www.505outside.com>)

One more thing, if your pruning shears are looking impatient—A good rule of thumb for pruning flowering plants: if it blooms in spring, it blooms on old wood, so prune once blooms have finished. If it blooms in summer, it blooms on new wood, so prune in the fall or very early spring.

Please, if you have favorite, tried-and-true landscaping resources, share them with *The GRIT* readership through our email at thegritshha@gmail.com.



Photo by Travis Rich



Photo by Diane Dekker



Sandia Heights Lighting

By the Covenant Support Committee (CSC)

Among the many pleasures of residing in Sandia Heights are the dark skies which allow stargazing, watching the moon rise over the mountains and enjoying the distant sparkling night lights of Albuquerque. These activities are possible in large part because of the light regulations of both Bernalillo County and our Sandia Heights Unit Covenants.

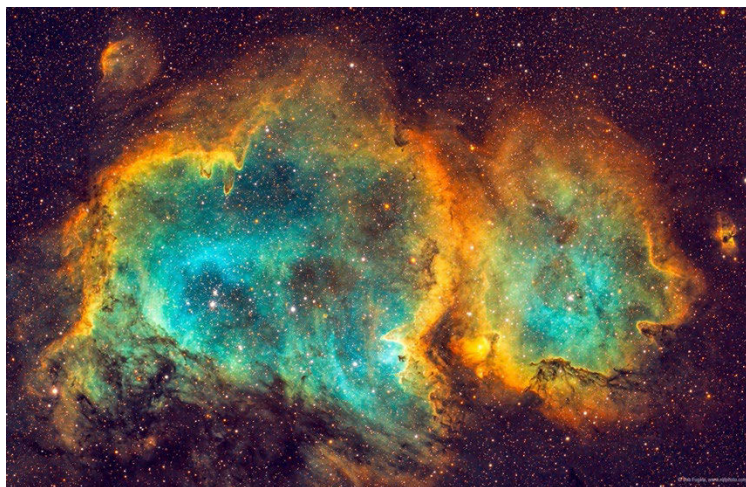
Per the **North Albuquerque Acres and Sandia Heights Light Pollution Ordinance** of the Bernalillo County Code, all exterior light fixtures shall be aimable, shielded fixtures so that excessive light does not cross into adjacent properties or point up into the sky, be equipped with motion sensors or automatic timing devices, and remain off between 11:00 PM and sunrise except for illuminating walkways or driveways. More detailed information can be found at:

https://library.municode.com/nm/bernalillo_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?no-deId=BECOCO_CH30EN_ARTVILIPO_DIV2OULIFI-NOALACSAHEAR

The various Unit Covenants may have different wording, but all are trying to accomplish the same purpose: minimizing the effects of outdoor lighting on one's neighbors. Covenant documents for each Unit may be found at:

<http://sandiahomeowners.com/unit-covenants>.

When planning new or assessing your current outdoor lighting, in addition to consulting the above regulations, think about what impact your lighting will have on your neighbors. Will it shine into their windows or onto their patio? A little consideration can avoid a complaint to the Covenant Support Committee and/or to Bernalillo County. We have a wonderful, unique neighborhood—let's keep it that way!



All photos are by Bob Fugate and were made within the past year from his back yard in High Desert, our neighbors to the south. Yes, the dark-sky restrictions help. Do your part to keep our skies dark.

FEBRUARY CALLS TO SANDIA HEIGHTS SECURITY PATROL

The following statistics are the latest provided by Sandia Heights Security since the last GRIT. **Please be reminded that Sandia Heights Services (they provide water, sewer, trash and recycle collection, and security services) is a subscription service separate from Sandia Heights Homeowners Association membership.** Also, Membership in SHHA does not include Sandia Heights Security membership. You can call Security to confirm your membership with them. If you have questions, please call **Sandia Heights Security** at 505-856-6347, **mobile** 505-263-4654.

February	# of calls		# of calls
Alarms	10	Special Extra Patrol	3
Animal Control Assist	1	Special Request/Vacation	52
Attempted Breaking & Entering	2	Suspicious Activity	3
Customer Assist	2	Suspicious Person	4
Fire/Smoke	2	Suspicious Vehicle	5
Home Burglary	1	Theft	2
Newspaper/Package Pickup	1	Vandalism	1
Noise Complaint/Suspicious Noise	1	Welfare Check	1
Open Door/Window/Garage	1	Total Calls	92

Useful Numbers: Emergency Police/Fire/Rescue: 9-1-1 (Be sure to let the operator know you are in Sandia Heights – an unincorporated area of Bernalillo County) **Bernalillo County Sheriff Non-Emergency:** 505-798-7000 **Bernalillo County Fire Department Non-Emergency:** 505-468-1310 **SHS Water/Sewer Emergencies (M-F 7AM – 4PM):** 505-856-6345 **SHS Water/Sewer Emergencies After Hours:** 505-888-5336 **NM Gas Co. Emergencies:** 505-697-3335 **PNM Outage & Emergencies:** 1-888-342-5766

Announcements & Notices:

- **Office hours:** Monday – Friday 9 AM – 4 PM.
- **Board Meeting:** scheduled April 13, 2022, at 6:30 pm via Zoom Meeting.
- **Office Closures for Holiday(s)** None.
- **Notary services (except on Fridays), copies (20 per month) and faxes, e-mail alerts, and contractor evaluation binder** are free to members. **Also, voter registration in office.**
- **Committee meeting dates** are posted on our website calendar: www.sandiahomeowners.org.
- **Classified ads** can be found on the website on the top bar menu under Notices and Information/Classifieds.
- **Safety vests for sale** in the SHHA Office. \$2.50 per vest for members, cash or check only.
- **Tram passes for sale** in the SHHA Office. \$7.50 per ticket for members on a **first-come first-served basis**. Cash or check only. Tickets purchased must be for one date at a time per residence. To view the Tram Pass Procedures for SHHA Members go to <http://sandiahomeowners.org/notices-and-information/notices-and-information/96-tram-passes>.

ACC Color Reference Guide is available to borrow in the SHHA Office for up to 30 days. \$20 refundable deposit is required. Cash or check only.

SHHA Member Benefits:

Check out the entire SHHA Member Benefits Program and the discounts offered to SHHA members at www.sandiahomeowners.org, under the **Notices and Information** tab. Each participating merchant offers a discount to SHHA members. The following is a list of currently participating merchants:

Criel and Associates, LLC
Jade Enterprises Inc.
Remax Select – Pete Veres
Tutor Doctor
Waterstone Mortgage



SOLD SANDIA HEIGHTS SOLD



21 Cedar Hill
Road NE
List Price \$585,000

2961 Square Feet
4 Bedrooms
2.5 Baths
2 Car Garage



11108 Bobcat
Place NE
List Price \$675,000

2488 Square Feet
4 Bedrooms
3 Baths
3 Car Garage



133 Juniper Hill
Road NE
List Price \$750,000

3468 Square Feet
4 Bedrooms
3.5 Baths
3 Car Garage



1014 Tramway
Lane NE
List Price \$409,000

1.89 +/- Acre Lot



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Sandia Heights home values increase by 48%

SOLD!



43 Cedar Hill PI NE \$1,395,000



Sandia Heights
Year to Date
Market Stats

Closed Sales

13

-43% from 2021

Average Sale Price

\$808,274

+ 48% from 2021

Total New Listings

21

-27% from 2021

Avg Price per sq.ft.

\$257.02

Year to date comparison this year 1/1/2022 - 3/11/2022 to last year 1/1/2021 - 3/11/2021

single family homes

Sandia Heights Homes SOLD by ABQ Dream Homes

43 Cedar Hill Place NE \$1,395,000

59 ROCK POINT Place NE \$1,160,000

9114 Lynx LP NE \$850,000

532 Roadrunner Lane NE \$830,500

1570 Eagle Ridge Court NE \$785,000

24 Sandia Heights Drive NE \$760,000

1567 EAGLE RIDGE Court \$651,000

2724 Tramway Circle NE \$399,000

Call for a 15 minute over the phone market analysis of your home 505.440.8956

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Sandia Heights Resident



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Veronica Gonzales
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File a Bernalillo County Complaint Online, by Phone, or In-person Covenant Support Committee

Bernalillo County's enforcement jurisdiction lies outside of the City of Albuquerque limits—this includes Sandia Heights. Quoted from its website, “The Code Enforcement team provides services to residents in the unincorporated area of Bernalillo County which ensure safe, sustainable communities and preservation of our natural resources. We respond to requests from residents to investigate concerns and educate the public about County codes in order to gain voluntary compliance.” The County encourages you to use the online complaint system. You can even check the status of your complaints online.

Online: <http://epermits.bernco.gov/CitizenAccess/>

Phone: 505-314-0350.

In-person: 111 Union Square St. SE, Albuquerque, NM 87102.

Some zoning issues that the complaint form covers:

- Noise, including excessive dog barking
- Non-compliant exterior lighting
- Construction without a permit
- Storage of a commercial vehicle on a residential property
- Open storage of trash, junk, inoperative vehicles and/or auto parts
- Overgrown weeds
- Using trailers or RVs as residences
- Excessive numbers of animals
- Abandoned, inoperable, and junk vehicles
- Storage and/or dumping of solid waste
- Restaurant and pool sanitation
- Businesses operating without a permit (residential & commercial)

Some environmental issues the complaint form covers:

- Trash dumping outside a landfill
- Discharge of waste into county drainages
- Surfacing sewage/failed septic systems
- Waste water (such as water runoff from sprinklers, time of day)

The County says new complaints are inspected as soon as physically possible, usually within one business day. The County requests that you have available the address of the property suspected of a violation. Your name and phone number are not required unless you need the County to contact you for clarification or information regarding the complaint.

Before filing a complaint with the County, check your Unit Covenants for violations that may be handled by the Covenant Support Committee. The covenants are posted on the SHHA web page.

SH Tips & Hacks

This month's hack helps remove those pesky calcium deposits in your toilets and sinks. It is citric acid. In addition to being in citrus fruit and a commercial food additive, it makes a great cleaner: effective, natural, and environmentally friendly. Your septic bugs will thank you, too.

Use the powdered form and mix with water or, for even more zing, with water and bicarbonate of soda. It is effective on soap scum, calcium deposits, lime, rust stains, and rust itself. It kills bacteria, mold and mildew, but not viruses. You can use it as an alternative to bleach, oven cleaners, dishwasher cleaners, bathroom cleaners, carpet cleaners, dish soap, laundry detergent, window cleaners and stain removers. And for replacing all those harsh cleaners that would normally go into your septic tank, the bacterial colony living there will thank you. (Did I mention that already?) If used according to the manufacturer's specifications, by the time the citric acid reaches the septic tank, it's harmless.

Avoid using citric acid on natural stone or marble (corrosive), wood floors and furniture (can leave coatings looking cloudy), or electronic screens (breaks down the coating meant to reduce smudges and exposes layers meant to be protected). And try to keep it out of your eyes.



If you have a suggestion for a tip or hack for your neighbors, send it to TheGRITSHHA@gmail.com. We will credit you for the suggestion.



ACC Activity Log

Summary of **Approved Projects** activity since the last GRIT:

11 Juniper Hill Loop – Replace HVAC Units
38 Rock Ridge Drive – Re-stucco
54 Rock Point Place – Outdoor Pool Remodel
190 Big Horn Ridge Drive – Replace Swamp with AC
198 Big Horn Ridge – Additions to House
359 Big Horn Ridge Drive – Roof Mounted Photovoltaic Panels Installation
518 Black Bear Loop – Relocation of Some Roof Mounted Photovoltaic Panels
567 Black Bear Road – Woodshop/Studio Addition
754 Tramway Lane – Paint Garage Door
795-C Tramway Lane – Reroof
795-P Tramway Lane – Reroof
808 Tramway Lane – Landscaping
908 Tramway Lane – Resurface Asphalt Driveway
993 Lynx Loop – Stucco Repair and Elastomeric Stucco-Coating
1019 Tramway Lane – RM PV Panels Installation
1155 Laurel Loop – Garage Addition with Sun-Shaded Deck Structure
1166 Laurel Loop – Replace Stuccoed Maibox
1240 Rockrose Road – Reroof, Re-stucco, Replace Windows/Doors and Miscellaneous
1865 Tramway Terrace Loop – Replace Windows
1949 Quail Run Loop – Replace Outdoor Light Fixtures
2017 Quail Run Drive – Weather Monitoring Device Installation
2305 Calle de Rafael – Reroof
2440 Tramway Terrace Court – Raise Height of Wall
2513 Tramway Terrace Court – Replace Fence with Stuccoed Block Wall and Miscellaneous
2581 Spring Creek Place – New Construction
2723 Tramway Circle – Reroof and Re-stucco
2725 Tramway Lane – Reroof
2750 Cliffrose Drive – Construction of Block Wall

7732 Cedar Canyon Road – Replace Concrete Courtyard Slab and Entry Sidewalk

8245 Raintree Drive – Extend Current Block Wall

9100 Lynx Loop – New Stuccoed Block Wall and Courtyard

Visit the website: www.sandiahomeowners.org to read about all projects currently under ACC management.

Happy Easter!



Chag Pesach Samech!



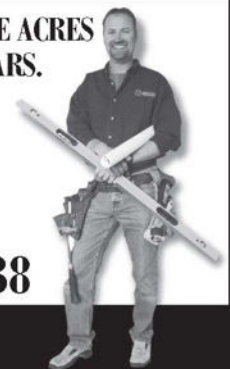
Ramadan Mubarak!



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TAX SEASON 2022

What You Need to Know

Standard Deductions

FILING STATUS	2020	2021
Single	\$12,400	\$12,500
Married—Filing Jointly	\$24,800	\$25,100
Married—Filing Separately	\$12,400	\$12,500
Head of Household	\$18,650	\$18,800

Important Dates

APRIL
15

Deadline to file
 and pay taxes
 or request an
 extension.

OCTOBER
15

Last day to file
 a tax return if
 you received an
 extension from
 the IRS.

The Pandemic and Your Taxes

Unemployment Benefits

While the first \$10,200 of unemployment benefits were made tax-free in 2020, this does not apply in 2021. So plan to pay taxes if you were unemployed in 2021 and did not have taxes withheld from your unemployment payments.¹

Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loans

In an effort to help small business owners stay afloat, the government offered them Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans. These loans will be fully forgiven as long as they were used for payroll costs, interest on mortgages, rent and/or utilities.²

Stimulus Checks

Good news: If you received a stimulus check, it does not count as taxable income.³

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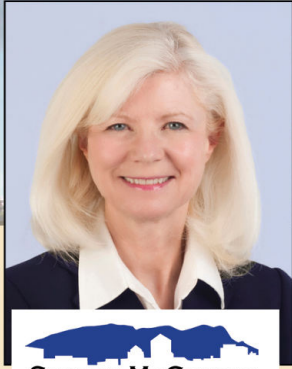


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Sandia Heights MARKET UPDATE PAST YEAR 3/2021 to 3/2022

2 Larger homes For Sale on Larger Lots | Avg Asking price \$774,000 Avg Asking price/sf \$285.76
 6 homes Pending | Avg Asking Price \$707,833 | Avg Asking price/sf \$257.98
 57 Homes Closed past year to date | Avg Sold Price \$832,709 | Avg Sold price/sf. 228.14
 1 Smaller homes on smaller lots | Avg Asking price \$425,000 Avg Asking price/sf 211.78
 3 homes pending | Avg Asking Price \$348,333 | Avg Asking price/sf \$207.15
 45 Homes Closed past year to date | Avg Sold Price \$399,848 | Avg Sold price/sf 224.40
 Note Every Home Is Unique . Price is always based on condition, updates, location and views.
 Current Interest rates hovering around 4% for 30 year conventional & 4% 30 year VA!



San Rafael PI NE



Bobcat Blvd NE



Indigo Court NE



Rock Ridge Court NE

930 TRAMWAY LANE NE ASKING PRICE \$600,000 PENDING ! LOCATION | GREAT VALUE | ACREAGE | VIEWS | CUSTOM HOME ! NATURE !



Quality Home!



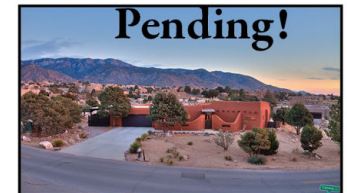
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Understated Elegance!



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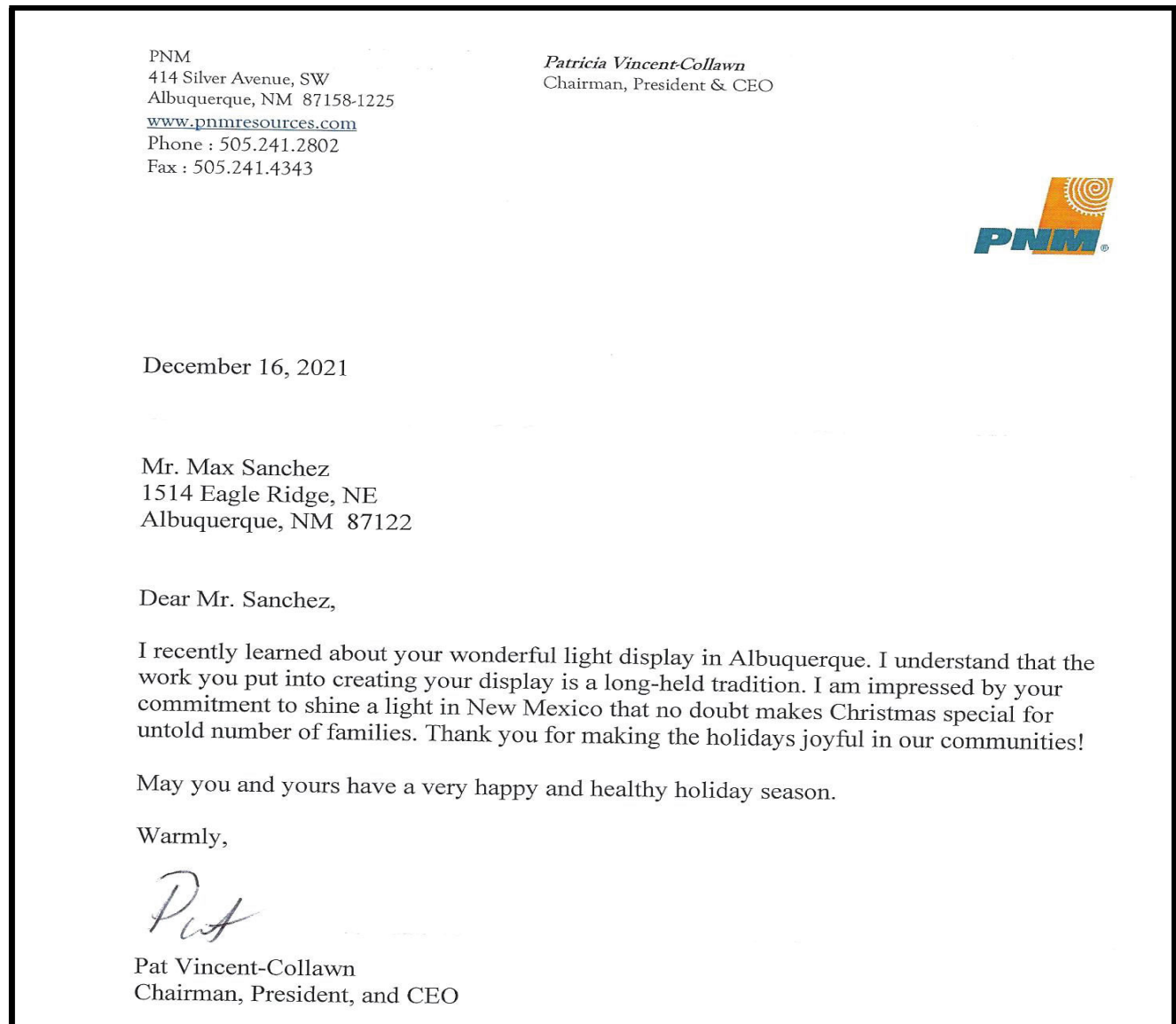
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Thank-you letter received by Sandia Heights member Max Sanchez from the CEO of PNM:



Monthly Fun Fact

There is evidence that those pillows of goodness—the sopapilla—were first made and devoured right here in the Albuquerque area over 200 years ago. Sopapilla is a modified form of “sopaipa,” a Spanish word that came from the Mozarabic language “xopaipa” which means bread soaked in oil.



Pets & Covid

We've certainly been through a world-wide wringer the past couple of years. Now here's something else to pay attention to with respect to Covid: your pets.

The Covid-19 virus can spread from people to animals during close contact. Pets can become seriously ill from a Covid infection. The following symptoms may be exhibited by pets sick with Covid:

- Fever
- Coughing
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Lethargy
- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Eye discharge
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

How to protect your pet from Covid:

- Limit contact between your pet and people outside the household as much as possible
- Keep pets indoors, if possible
- Walk dogs on a leash and maintain at least 6 feet from other people and animals
- Avoid crowded dog parks or public places
- Regularly wash food and water dishes, toys, and bedding
- Cats are particularly susceptible to infection with Covid—people and pets should avoid contact with strays
- Create an emergency plan for your pet in case you get sick with Covid
- Have at least a two-week supply of pet food, treats, and cat litter
- Have a 30-day supply of pet medication

- Ensure pet medical records are up-to-date, including microchip and vaccine information

What **NOT** to do:

- Don't mask your pets
- Don't wipe or bathe pets with chemical disinfectants, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, hand sanitizer, counter-cleaning wipes, or other industrial or surface cleaners.

If you are sick with Covid:

- Avoid the following forms of contact with pets: petting, snuggling, kissing, sharing food, sleeping with
- Wash your hands before and after interacting with pets and their food, waste, and supplies
- Wear a face mask around your pets
- Avoid sharing food, eating utensils, cups, bedding and other items with pets

If your pet becomes sick with Covid:

- Isolate your pet at home, except for medical care
- Call ahead before taking your pet to the veterinary clinic
- Call your veterinarian and ask for a telemedicine consultation
- Follow all care instructions provided by your veterinarian
- Monitor your pet's symptoms

All information in this article is from *Pet News Daily's* Covid-19 and Pet Health Safety website (<https://petnewsdaily.com/covid-19-and-pet-health-safety/>) which, in turn, uses the following sources: Federal Emergency Management Agency, World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Food and Drug Administration, and the World Wildlife Fund.



Types of animals that have been infected with Covid

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MARKET TRENDS

Listing Inventory for Greater ABQ Area

Class R1 & R2 (Existing Single-Family Detached & Condo/Townhome Attached)

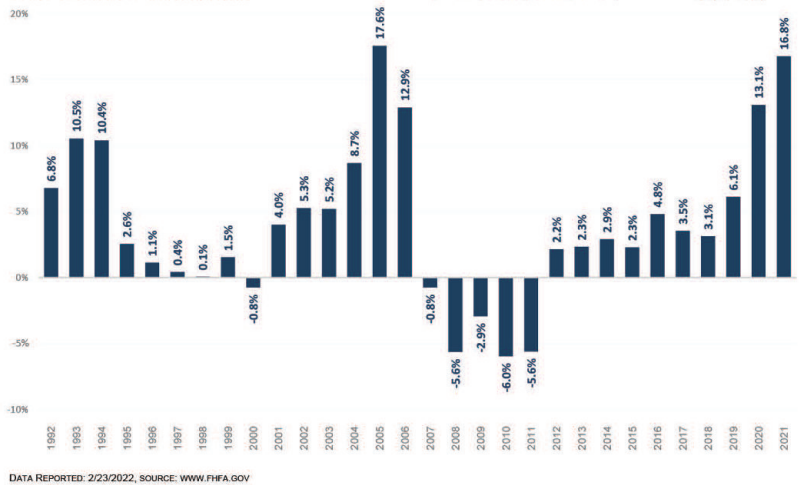
	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2005	2,267	2,156	2,276	2,099	2,206	2,243	2,377	2,350	2,319	2,298	2,263	2,211
2006	2,198	2,302	2,558	2,678	3,180	3,602	4,031	4,407	4,695	4,618	4,363	4,098
2007	4,191	4,465	4,881	5,428	5,729	6,106	6,404	6,675	6,718	6,708	6,534	6,066
2008	6,076	6,147	6,434	6,555	6,873	7,074	7,082	7,065	6,856	6,617	6,346	5,821
2009	5,925	6,037	5,995	6,054	6,082	6,114	6,128	5,902	5,574	5,528	5,413	5,176
2010	5,332	5,518	5,717	5,651	6,045	6,346	6,471	6,408	6,375	6,099	5,684	5,320
2011	5,296	5,334	5,444	5,511	5,625	5,552	5,636	5,511	5,249	4,977	4,643	4,216
2012	4,163	4,089	4,117	4,239	4,415	4,528	4,580	4,534	4,518	4,520	4,322	3,980
2013	4,007	4,062	4,227	4,372	4,531	4,795	4,910	5,007	5,035	4,868	4,657	4,232
2014	4,272	4,320	4,619	4,858	5,150	5,402	5,428	5,474	5,390	5,148	4,741	4,212
2015	4,098	4,027	4,156	4,335	4,369	4,490	4,487	4,353	4,216	4,100	3,813	3,407
2016	3,342	3,426	3,527	3,613	3,706	3,919	4,412	4,344	4,264	4,025	3,712	3,247
2017	3,178	3,145	3,187	3,283	3,565	3,769	3,883	3,854	3,793	3,641	3,350	2,982
2018	2,905	2,839	2,886	3,067	3,297	3,570	3,637	3,624	3,580	3,422	3,191	2,779
2019	2,661	2,301	2,276	2,357	2,495	2,665	2,614	2,633	2,605	3,112	2,264	1,901
2020	1,765	1,688	1,784	1,737	1,636	1,354	1,377	1,304	1,311	1,412	1,181	950
2021	823	701	673	752	747	898	1062	1072	1016	958	778	639
2022	626											
2023												

This Is Why Our Market Is Red Hot!

Low Inventory and Low Interest Rates (historically)

ANNUAL APPRECIATION: ALBUQUERQUE, NM

1992 - 2021 HOME PRICE INDEX
**APPRECIATION BASED ON PURCHASE ONLY DATA
AVERAGE ANNUAL APPRECIATION: 4.2%



Average 30-year mortgage rate trends

For some perspective on today's mortgage interest rates, here's how average 30-year rates have changed from year to year over the past four decades.

Year	Average 30-Year Rate	Year	Average 30-Year Rate	Year	Average 30-Year Rate
1974	9.19%	1990	10.13%	2006	6.41%
1975	9.05%	1991	9.25%	2007	6.34%
1976	8.87%	1992	8.33%	2008	6.03%
1977	8.85%	1993	7.31%	2009	5.04%
1978	9.6%	1994	8.38%	2010	4.69%
1979	11.20%	1995	7.93%	2011	4.45%
1980	13.74%	1996	7.81%	2012	3.66%
1981	16.63%	1997	7.60%	2013	3.98%
1982	16.04%	1998	6.94%	2014	4.17%
1983	13.24%	1999	7.44%	2015	3.85%
1984	13.88%	2000	8.05%	2016	3.65%
1985	12.43%	2001	6.97%	2017	3.99%
1986	10.19%	2002	6.54%	2018	4.54%
1987	10.21%	2003	5.83%	2019	3.94%
1988	10.34%	2004	5.84%	2020	3.10%
1989	10.32%	2005	5.87%	2021	2.96%

Source: Freddie Mac

DATA REPORTED: 2/23/2022, SOURCE: WWW.FHFA.GOV

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\$50 goes to the person who emails me the closest Appreciation % for Albuquerque in 2022. Results will be given by January 15th, 2023.

\$50 goes to the person who emails me the closest interest rate prediction for December 31, 2022.



939 Bobcat Blvd. NE
3,106 SQ FT 3BR 2BA



302 Spring Creek Pl. NE
3,581 SQ FT 3BR 2.5BA



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Proper Septic System Care Makes Environmental and Economic Sense

Historical article from May 1992 GRIT

[Ed: the more things change the more they stay the same. Obviously after 30 years, the numbers in the original Editor's Note have changed, but the message is still quite relevant for today's residents.]

Editor's Note: Septic systems are the primary method of waste disposal in Sandia Heights. Of the some 1,600 residences in the community, approximately 1,000 households have a septic tank and drainfield somewhere on their property. If you are in doubt as to whether you have sewer services or a septic system, please call Sandia Heights Services... for information.

"Haven't pumped my septic tank in the 10 years I've lived in Sandia Heights, and it's never given me a bit of trouble. So, I leave well enough alone."

Many Sandia Heights residents have either heard or spoken these same, or similar, words many times. The fact is that septic tanks that aren't pumped out regularly may force effluent out of the underground septic tank and into the drainfield before the tank's bacteria had sufficient time to do their work. This increases the chance of dispersing insufficiently treated effluent into the drainfield and raises the possibility that harmful contaminants may be released into the soil and eventually reach the groundwater.

Another common misconception is that regular pumping may harm the balance of bacteria in the tank and create the need for more frequent pumping or even cause system failure. Actually, not pumping out the tank frequently enough can be a primary cause of system failure and thousands of dollars in repairs. The worst part is the absence of any warning signs before the system fails. So don't make the mistake of presuming that a properly functioning system means that the tank doesn't need to be pumped out.

Basic Septic Tank Chemistry

All the wastewater from your house is received by the septic tank. When liquid and solid wastes enter the tank, the bacteria that live in the tank use the organic materials as food. They, in turn produce their own wastes which are mostly inorganic materials that can be used as food by plant and animal organisms normally present in the soil.

The bacteria doesn't [sic] eat everything that comes into the tank, so there's a slow accumulation of solid material—or sludge—at the bottom of the tank. This is the septage that must be pumped out regularly to keep your septic system operating properly.

Drainfield Operation

When new wastewater is received by the septic tank, it forces the effluent that's been in the tank for the longest period of time into an outlet pipe which leads to the drainfield. How long the effluent stays in the tank before going into the drainfield depends on the size of tank, the amount of wastewater the tank receives, and the amount of sludge accumulation at the bottom of the tank.

The drainfield receives the water (effluent) that overflows into the outlet pipe of the septic tank. Long perforated pipes drain this water into beds of gravel which are buried in long trenches. The effluent seeps through the gravel and into the soil where it is treated by being filtered through the soil particles and where the organisms normally present in the soil devour a portion of the bacteria.

Sludge/Scum Inspection

Septic tanks should be inspected once a year to monitor the accumulation of scum and sludge. When half of the capacity of the tank is taken up by solids, it's time to pump the tank. For a fee, septic tank pumping services will perform an inspection for you. Following are instructions for conducting your own scum and sludge inspection. [Ed: this section has not been field tested. Use at your own risk. Better yet, call in a septic pumping company.]

To measure the scum accumulation, nail a three inch square block to a pole and poke the block through the scum layer. Carefully move the pole up and down to feel the resistance as you move the block up against the bottom surface of the scum layer. Mark that place on the pole which is level with the ground. Then feel around for the bottom of the outlet pipe and mark that level on the pole. If the two marks are three inches or less apart, your tank needs to be pumped out.

Next wrap an old towel around the bottom of the pole and fasten it with string or tape. Push the towel down into the bottom of the tank and twirl it around several times. Mark the pole at ground level. After a minute or so, pull the pole out and measure the distance between the top of the sludge layer (the top

Community Events Bulletin Board

These groups are not sponsored by SHHA. Information is provided to keep residents informed.

Sandia Heights “Cork & Fork” Dining Activity: We are happy to announce that Cork & Fork has resumed our bimonthly dinners. We gather in the homes of our members. Each small dinner group is typically 6–8 people, including the hosts. The host decides the menu theme and prepares a main dish, with attendees contributing to some part of the meal—along with a wine to go with their dish. The emphasis is on food and fun rather than formal elegance. Though most of the dinners are smaller, there are 2 whole-group dinners during the year. All adult Sandia Heights residents are welcome. To inquire or join any time of year, call Rene Kessel at (505) 504-3886 or email at rene.kessel@cblegacy.com.

Coming this fall!! Once again, the **Sandia Heights Artists** will sponsor an art tour that will feature artists in many different media. Stay tuned.

Notice: Any corrections to the printed version of the GRIT can be found on the website: www.sandiahomeowners.org. We always welcome Letters to the Editor and your response to articles in *The GRIT*. Email us at thegritshha@gmail.com.

... continued from p. 14

of the black material on the towel) and the bottom of the outlet pipe. If this distance is twelve inches or less, your tank needs to be pumped out.

Don't Abuse Your Septic System!

Poisoning. Many household items if used excessively can poison your septic system including drain cleaners, toilet bowl cleaners, and other chemicals marked “Poison” or “Caustic”. Even bleach can cause problems, although small quantities used in washing machines shouldn't be harmful. Another potential poison is the salt used in regenerating water softeners.

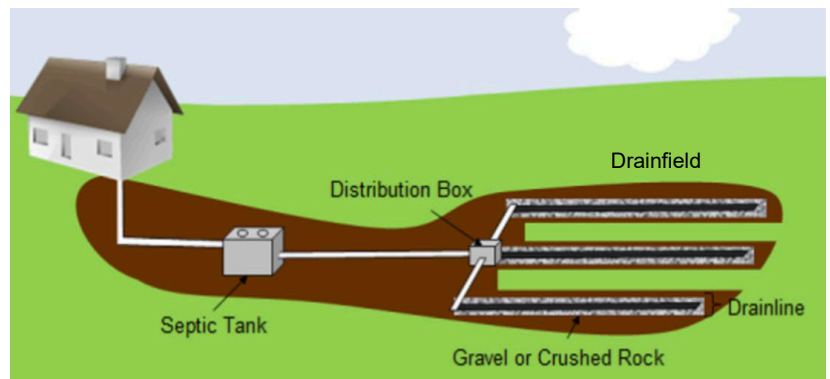
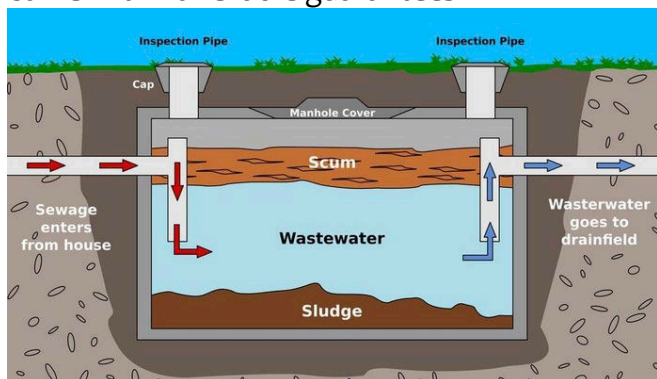
Choking. Another thing that should be avoided is adding solids to the tank that cannot be decomposed by the bacteria. Newspaper, paper towels, rags, and coffee ground will accumulate and can clog the pipes or force you to have your tank pumped more frequently.

Drowning. Excess water can lead to problems and failure of the tank or the drainfield. Be sure that plumbing fixtures are operating correctly. Even leaking faucets or toilets that don't shut off properly after flushing can cause system failure due to excess water. Surface runoff that drains into the tank and tree roots can also cause the system to fail.

Suffocating. Be very sure where your system's drainfield is located before expanding or adding driveways, patios, pool decks, tennis courts, etc. Drainfields require oxygen to function properly and any nonpermeable material on top of the field (asphalt, concrete) will suffocate the system.

Overworking. If you purchased a home that was previously occupied by fewer people or if the number of people in your home has increased for any reason, you may need to enlarge both the tank and drainfield. Call a company that specializes in septic tank installation and repair if you have doubts about the adequacy of your septic system.

One final warning: Always beware of magic elixirs advertised to revitalize your septic system but which come with no reliable guarantees!





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