

THE STATE OF THE ESTATES

Woodridge Estates Homeowners Association Newsletter

December 2022

FELLOW RESIDENTS OF WOODRIDGE: May the New Year bring you all you deserve and nothing you don't. Cheers to 2023, and may we all remain mandate free.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Recent burglaries—what, where, and how to protect yourself and the community

Last call for Gatekeeper bonus contributions

Architectural Committee reminder

HOA Board nominations

Rooftop solar pros and cons

And more!

YOUR MONTHLY NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER IS BEING HAND DELIVERED THIS MONTH IN LIGHT OF THE URGENT NEED FOR CAUTION DUE TO RECENT CRIMINAL ACTIVITY IN THE AREA, AND TO REMIND YOU THAT THE NEWSLETTER WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED OF ALL COMMUNITY GOINGS-ON. YOU STILL WILL RECEIVE THE NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL, BUT THE POINT IS THAT *WHETHER YOU LOVE IT OR HATE IT, PLEASE READ IT!!*¹

HEADS UPs

● **Woodridge Burglaries.** Not sure there is much of anything else of such great interest this month, and our prior harangues about alarm systems and the like did not insulate our own Newsletter offices from being targeted. Read all about this, and how to protect your home, below.

● **Gateminder Holiday Bonuses:** By now you should have received several notices (including the one in last month's Newsletter!) about your HOA Board's creation of a fund for holiday cash bonuses for our gate personnel. Cash is much preferred over food baskets and such, according to the gate personnel themselves. Here's hoping everyone will participate by contributing to the fund this year. Here are the details:

In lieu of bringing snacks, treats, or gift cards, the Board will be collecting voluntary donations from residents and distributing those funds to the front gate personnel that work for our community. The amounts given to each greeter will vary based upon seniority, full time versus part time status, and a performance evaluation. Only personnel who are assigned to our community on a regular basis will receive a holiday bonus. *In addition to receiving a check they will also receive a holiday card that includes a list of all residents who contributed to the fund.*

¹ As Oliver Hardy famously said, "You can lead a horse to water, but a pencil must be lead." Drink up, friends.

To show your appreciation and make a voluntary contribution to this holiday fund, please write a check payable to Master Protection Security with a note that it is for the Woodridge Holiday Gate Personnel Fund and send it to:

*Property Management Professionals
C/O Julie Phan
515 Marin Street, Suite 404
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360*

HANDY NEIGHBORHOOD FACTOIDS

● **Emergencies:** Always call 911 first in a genuine emergency in or around the community. Our Gate access personnel are not paid to be “security guards”—they control entries and exits only. You can let them know of any security problems that arise, but first call 911 in any emergency.

Police: 805-654-9511

Fire: 805-371-1111 ext 34

● **Management Contact:** *Email your requests, concerns, and inquiries to PMP Community Care at care@pnpmanage.com to automatically open a “ticket.” If you need to speak with someone, call (805) 642-2400 and ask for Julie Phan. You also can submit a request via your PMP Management account at www.woosridgecommunityassociation.com and its “Dashboard.”*

● **Website:** The Woodridge community website is at www.woodridgestatesresident.com. Suggestions for the website are encouraged.

● **Get the GateKey app at www.gatekey.com/resident-login** . Tutorial access is on the site. *This is especially important for keeping heavy gate traffic moving during the holiday season!*

● **Help for the homeless:** Call the TO Police non-emergency response line, 805-654-9511, to report anyone you see anywhere in the city who seems to need medical care or non-emergency law enforcement intervention. (The professionals who work with and genuinely try to help the homeless, by the way, unanimously discourage handouts to people on street corners with sad signs, etc.—it does nothing to help them get real help and off our public spaces. Really.)

● **Hazardous Waste Disposal:** Please check out this website for good info on hazardous waste disposal (paint cans, electronics, Tesla batteries, election campaign signs, etc.): <https://www.toaks.org/departments/public-works/sustainability/trash-recycling/trash-recycling-residential-services/haz-waste-home-collection-program>

THE REST OF THE STORY

COMMUNITY BURGLARY REPORT

We here at your Newsletter have been providing information about how to protect (y)ourselves from crime for months now. **So of course the Newsletter office itself got burgled**—and not because we didn’t take our own advice!

Last year a house in our community on Eaglewood was burgled. A month ago a house adjacent to the Sunset Hills Country Club on just the other side of the 23 off Sunset Hills Boulevard was targeted. Three weeks ago a house on Willow Canyon/Morning Ridge was hit inside our community. Two weeks ago Eaglewood again was the target, and the very next evening the Newsletter Office on Country Home Court was violated.

Not enough for ya? Just one week ago a house in Lang Ranch on Whitechapel Place, east of the Erbes Road/Sunset Hills park and just below the dirt parking lot outside our front gate, was nailed. One suspect recently was chased out of the community from the Morning Ridge cul de sac (he scaled the fire road gate to get away), and another resident recently confronted suspicious persons on the east/west fire road behind Heavenly Ridge. And we all just experienced nearby police activity during the December 15 HOA meeting as a result of yet another burglary within Woodridge, this time on the south side of Sunset Hills between Heavenly Ridge and Morning Ridge—police were in the Eaglewood cul de sac looking for escaping badpersons on the adjacent trails during the HOA meeting, with helicopters overhead. The police hurried to the same area again this past Friday night!

Remember, you ain't paranoid if you turn around and someone is there watching you.

The commonality between all these burglaries is that each home struck is close if not adjacent to open space. That pretty much defines Woodridge—even Woodflower, for example, is pretty close to open space where it meets Heavenly Ridge. So none of us is immune.

The Ventura County Sheriff and Thousand Oaks police (staffed by the Sheriff) have been warning everyone about burglaries like this for some time. Blame is placed on "SATG," which stands for "South American Theft Gangs/Groups." Here is just one recent article covering the subject: <https://www.vcstar.com/story/news/local/communities/county/2022/10/19/south-american-theft-group-members-sentenced-more-ventura-county-news/10546626002/>. Go ahead and "Google" "SATG" and you will find a lot more information about these criminals who enter the US on guest visas and wreak havoc in communities throughout the country.²

The *modus operandi* of these miscreants is to watch from nearby open space for people leaving their homes in the late afternoon/early evening hours; the break-ins typically occur between 5 and 8 pm. The malefactors access open space from public trailheads where a getaway vehicle awaits them. Heavy brush and steep terrain do not deter them—the ne'er-do-wells who recently hit the home on the nearby golf course as clambered up some 400 yards of brush-covered hillside to gain home access. One or two crew members then seek access to a home by way of open doors or windows, or break a window or glass in a door. They are in and out within 3-5 minutes, searching specifically for jewelry, watches, and other small valuables they quickly can snatch up.

The perpetrators actually prefer second-story entry because many people do not alarm their upstairs as much as they do their downstairs. They are even known to search for floor plans

² Home burglaries are not their only endeavor. See <https://www.toacorn.com/articles/three-men-hit-with-robbery-charges/>.

online in order to go directly to the master bedroom and closet where valuables usually are kept.³

The Lang Ranch and Eaglewood burglaries referenced above most likely used the small dirt parking lot just outside the Woodridge front gates for open space access and getaway. The trail that starts there leads up the hill behind Eaglewood and above Lang Ranch, making both areas prime targets. Access for the Willow Canyon and Country Home Court burglaries most likely was from the trailhead east of Woodridge at the intersection of Wood Ranch Parkway and Long Canyon Road—one can easily get from there to the trail along the north side of Woodridge and to the east of Morning Ridge. We do not have any reports of burglaries on Heavenly Ridge, but the fire road that leads down to the Eagle Crest development south of Woodridge provides access behind all of Heavenly Ridge and the Eaglewood cul de sac. We can take no solace in the fact that the Eagle Crest development to our south is gated; there are many trails south of Woodridge that have wide open public access, and again, these guys are not afraid of a long walk.

Your Newsletter office was breached via the second floor in the rear. The cretins used outdoor furniture to climb up to a patio pergola, which in turn made the second-floor master bedroom balcony an easy mark. They busted a hole in the bottom of the glass in one of the french doors—they happened to pick the door that was adjacent to the vibration alarm unit and somehow managed to get in and out of that small hole (not quite half the size of the glass insert) without setting it off (they never opened a door or window after breaking the glass to get in). Muddy footprints suggest two of these losers climbed up, but only one entered. He/she/it rifled some drawers in the master bedroom and bathroom (nothing to find there) and then went into the master closet. He left an open purse untouched, but was selective in her review of a jewelry cabinet—in the wristwatch drawer it took only two of 7 watches, those being the two more expensive ones; the creature took several pieces of good jewelry, but left the costume stuff behind. One designer handbag was taken off a shelf, probably to carry the goods out—but this animal did choose a valuable vintage bag over several others of more ordinary quality.

All of this happened in the mere 40 minutes the Newsletter staff was gone on a quick drive down to Valentino's for some take-home pizza. To be clear, no alarm was triggered despite contact and vibration sensors throughout the home, and yes, the system was armed. We did not even discover the break-in until later in the evening when we first went upstairs after dinner (to work on the Newsletter, of course, and after turning off the USC game in disgust).

We are happy to report that the TO police responded very quickly once the burglary was discovered. They took some fingerprints and even DNA samples. They told us that most of the crews will run away if an alarm sounds—but some will get in and out quickly regardless of any alarm. Most, but not all, will run off if they learn someone is home, but usually they seek entry only when they believe nobody is home. Some crews will take firearms if they find them, but most will not because the penalties are greater if caught with a stolen weapon.⁴ Most crews will not take wallets because they don't want to be caught using a stolen credit card. They even are known to bypass visible cash—their primary focus is on jewelry, and they know the good

³ Safes may not be particularly useful—small safes, even when bolted down, are known to have been removed in some instances. A large safe recently was taken by thieves from a garage in the area.

⁴ Of course, this also requires actual prosecution, which is in short supply in California these days, even in Ventura County.

stuff from the costume stuff. What they take is being re-sold someplace in the downtown hellA jewelry district by the next day. Their stated goal is to be in and out within 3-5 minutes.

It also is to be noted that TO Police have captured some of these hoodlums: They caught the three involved in the golf course area burglary because the homeowner received a camera signal on his phone and called the police right away. TO Police also caught one reprobate involved in the Lang Ranch burglary, but the others got away—the guy they caught was in a getaway car parked in the lot near the Woodridge front gate. From the degenerates they do occasionally catch, the police learn a lot about whence they come (these days, mostly from Chile, some from Colombia) and about their planning and operations (as described above).

The three principal personal security takeaways are these:

- *Safekeep your good jewelry in someplace other than the master closet.*
- *Get and set an alarm system with some sort of camera system that alerts you.*
- *Make your home appear occupied at all times.*

See more below on alarm systems. **Meanwhile, your HOA Board encourages you to send a quick email requesting dusk-to-dawn closure of the Woodridge Loop trailhead parking lot on Sunset Hills Blvd. to the following:**

Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency Administrator Brian Stark at bstark@toaks.org and Analyst Anna Huber at ahuber@toaks.org

City of Thousand Oaks Mayor Kevin McNamee at kmcnamee@toaks.org⁵ and City Planner Clifford Finley at publicworks@toaks.org

*Your message does not require a lot of detail—what matters is that these folks all get a lot of emails requesting this action. So please send in your note asap!*⁶

Your HOA also is looking into the potential for brighter streetlight lamps in Woodridge. Meanwhile, **you are strongly encouraged to get your outdoor lights working and turned on from dusk to dawn**—we all have built-in outside lights, and light is a great disinfectant for the bugs that seek to invade our homes. **Please turn your outside lights on at night!**

ARE YOU ALARMED YET?

You undoubtedly know that myriad alarm systems are available to homeowners these days. Here is a quick primer on the kinds of alarms available and some strategies for their deployment:

⁵ Thousand Oaks Mayor is an annually rotating position among the 5 City Councilhumans. Mr. McNamee was next in line.

⁶ Please note that the local trails are not supposed to be used from dusk until dawn, *so if you see flashlights up there do not hesitate to call police dispatch at 805-654-9511*. TO Police will come a runnin', they really want to catch these evildoers.

Doorbell cameras: These generally are accessible from your phone and can alert you to “visitors” of all kinds when you are away from home. Some even allow you to speak to/shout at visitors remotely. These generally cover only your front door and porch pirates, however—helpful, but not complete.

Other cameras: Mounting multiple cameras can give you remote visual access all around your home. Some camera systems also might use motion lights and an alarm, but they can be triggered by mere wildlife or even heavy winds, thus sounding the alarm far more often than you (and your neighbors) might desire. However, outside cameras alone can give you an early warning of suspicious activity and can help the police respond quickly.

Motion lights: These help startle would-be intruders, and also give you visual access to the outside of your home. Not much of a deterrent alone, but definitely helpful in combination with other homesite hardening.

Contact alarms: These attach to windows and doors and are triggered when a door or window is opened and the magnetic contact is broken. Old school, and burglars know they can bypass these alarms fairly easily.

Vibration alarms: These usually now are part of a contact alarm device (since about 2019) and are supposed to detect a breaking window or door that might otherwise remain closed during the burglary. (Note: The Newsletter Office employed these in the area of its break-in, but they were not triggered by the smallish hole punctured in the adjacent door glass. So)

Interior motion sensors: These detect motion inside the home (and can be set to avoid being triggered by a family pet) if someone manages entry without setting off some other alarm. In a typical Woodridge home, one might put one of these facing the foyer, for example—they can cover an entire room. However, since burglars now are targeting smaller valuables and main bedrooms and closets, you may want to consider re-positioning these sensors and/or adding more—the lowlifes now may never reach your foyer because they are not taking larger objects and no longer a larger exit than entrance.

Glassbreak sound sensors: These are of more recent development and detect the sound of broken glass. (The Newsletter office could have used one of these!) Like interior motion sensors, these supposedly can cover an entire room.

Dogs: They are not just for companionship anymore—larger breeds, or small but noisy breeds, can be a deterrent. Of course, they also can be victimized.

Cats: They couldn’t care less about your jewelry and are too easily distracted by little laser lights.

Lions, tigers, and bears: Very effective, but oh my, not nearly selective enough in whom they choose to eat.

Tripwire firearms: Unfortunately illegal in California. (We asked a lawyer to confirm. Bummer.)

The foregoing is just to help you think through what might work in your home, but is no substitute for professional advice. Furthermore, your Newsletter is not in the business of promoting products or services, and we express no opinion about the utility of any one sort of device, system, or supplier over any other. That said, we simply pass along that if you are interested in a system provided by ADT, which for better or worse is used by the Newsletter, contact James Berkley at 818-435-3187 and you will

receive a 40% discount on equipment if you simply mention that you heard about him and the discount from the Woodridge Newsletter. (And no, the Newsletter does not receive any referral fee and we are not endorsing this system or service—we are just letting you know that if you are interested in that particular system provider, you might be able to save a few bucks.)

Friends, we hope you avoid the lessons learned the hard way by your Newsletter and several other of our neighbors in Woodridge. If you install or upgrade an alarm system, we hope someday you will consider it all to have been a waste of money because nothing ever happened. But let us assure you, once bitten is twice shy, even when a system already installed. Security is not cheap, but worry is even more costly. It is worth your time to think all this through and potentially avoid being victimized. 'Cause it sucks.

RULE OF THE MONTH: ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE REVIEW

We applaud everyone doing upgrade and repair work throughout the neighborhood! Please be reminded, however, that our community's Architectural Review Guidelines require most work to go through the HOA's Architectural Review Committee first. Your work itself may or may not need specific Architectural Review Committee approval, but the Guidelines also concern hours of work, work vehicle parking, equipment storage, noise, and similar matters that can impact the neighborhood—ARC review can help you and your contractors keep the community safe and peaceful for everyone while your work is being done (and avoid neighbor ire).

The Architectural Guidelines and forms for review can be found here:

<https://www.woodridgeestateresident.com/files/uqdfccec7c9127bcb5194ae792fccd3236b8ffc5.pdf>

Your observance of these guidelines—which notably include requirements mandated by city and county codes—can make your whole project go as smoothly as such things can go. The ARC promises that your inquiries and submissions will be responded to quickly—please let the Committee help you!

COMMON AREA LANDSCAPING UPDATE

The HOA Landscape Committee's excellent work on common area irrigation, both before and since the drought emergency restrictions, has led to great savings over this past year. That extra money will be helpful as the Committee develops drought tolerant plans for common areas within the community, for example the "park" near the front gate and the medians on Sunset Hills between the gate and Heavenly Ridge. The Committee continues to monitor water restrictions and will present specific plans in March or April when Spring has sprung. It is safe to say that drought toleration will be the order of the day for ground cover no matter how much rain we get or don't get this winter.

It also bears repeating that if your home shares a fence with open space or common area, your HOA will split some repair costs with you! Painting upkeep helps prevent fence deterioration and

looks great as well—for any cost sharing proposal please submit three bids to PMP for HOA Board advance approval.⁷

HOA BOARD ELECTION

Yeah, we know you thought elections were behind us for awhile. No such luck! At least two HOA Board seats are up for election in April 2023, and believe it or not, the preparatory timetable is a bit tight.

Nominations for the HOA Board can be submitted to PMP now. We encourage everyone to consider getting involved by running or by nominating someone else to do so. Your HOA Board does not have term limits, but it is a much healthier organization if new people get involved now and then—don't be shy, please volunteer to help with the hard work that keeps Woodridge safe and beautiful for all residents and visitors.

Please send any nominations to jphan@pmpmanage.com. We will have more election schedule and information in upcoming Newsletters, but put your thinking/nominating caps on now!

ASK THE NEWSLETTER

What the heck was that wet stuff falling from the sky earlier this month?

It's called "rain," and we have gotten nearly 2 inches during December so far. If it happens again, be sure to share it with the kiddies who may never have seen this phenomenon before!⁸

How come we have doggie-do stations with empty bag holders?

One of our neighbors with a dog responds as follows:

"We have a poop-bag burglar in our midst. Seems people just can't get enough of something when it's free. Can you put a note in the newsletter to the effect that poop bags are not to be used for water balloons, Molotov cocktails, puppet shows, or whatever else those that hoard the bags are doing with them? One bag per dog per poop, please." (Okay, maybe some bigger dogs need two bags. But that's it!)

Yes, faithful reader and now guest contributor, we *can* put this in the Newsletter and are happy to do so. We add that while we are sure that nobody sufficiently perspicacious to read this Newsletter would stoop so low as to steal community doggie-don't bags from their holding posts, we also know that somebody reading this and shaking their head along with us right now probably knows someone who is or could be doing this. C'mon, people, really? *Confessions not required—just please stop. And get help.*

⁷ One of your bids should be from Pedro Martinez, an HOA-favored painter who has done a lot of work in the community, and he can be reached at 805-908-1470.

⁸ Find info on the recent rainfall and snowfall in Ventura County here:

<https://www.vcstar.com/story/news/local/2022/12/12/rainfall-reaches-7-inches-in-mountains-runs-near-an-inch-on-coast/69719486007/>

Any suggestions for worthy causes this holiday season?

Thousand Oaks is home to a lot of seniors, and to a lot of seniors who live in our several mobile home communities. Some years ago the city brokered a deal between residents and mobile home park owners that capped rent increases at the previous year's Consumer Price Index. This worked great over the past 10 years or so when interest rates were negligible—but this year's significant cost of living jump will create a particular hardship for many local fixed-income seniors in 2023. Yes, they agreed to this, but that doesn't mean they can't use a helping hand. Visit www.gofundme.com, search for "Help Vulnerable Seniors in Thousand Oaks," and consider making a donation to help local seniors stay in their mobile homes until pensions and social security benefits catch up to the CPI. It's a mitzvah worthy of Hanukkah, Christmas, and any other seasonal celebration. #karmaisathing

All the other questions we got this month were about the burglaries, so now go back up to the long parts you skipped above.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Local Election Results Now Final:** Bob Engler won another term on the City Council, and we have two council newcomers in former Planning Commissioner David Newman and Mikey Taylor. Jeff Gorell is our area's new County Supervisor. Our state and federal representatives remain the same.

Final voter turnout was only 56% in Ventura County, and almost 90% of those votes were mailed in. Food for thought.

- **HOA holiday decoration rule reminder:**

Section 1.14 Holiday Decorations and Lights:

Winter holiday decorations may be displayed starting the week of Thanksgiving and must be removed by the end of the second weekend in January. Related sound elements are only permitted between the hours of 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Any decorations that impede any portion of the walkway or streets are prohibited. The ARC reserves the right to approve, disapprove, holiday displays.

- **Interested in rooftop solar?** The myriad pros and cons are changing, read all about them here: <https://www.vcstar.com/story/news/environment/2022/12/16/californias-residential-solar-rules-overhauled-after-debate/69733197007/>

MISCELLANEOUS

Holidays of Next Month: Monday, January 2, is the New Year holiday observance; banks, courts, and the Post Office will be closed, local bars will be open. Monday, January 16 is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, also a state, federal, and bank holiday.

NextDoor App Quote of the Month: "Does anyone know if the TO DMV is open today?" *How does one know how to use the NextDoor app but not an internet browser?*

*That's all s/he/it/they/we wrote for this month. **Please find a list of helpful local phone numbers at www.woodridgeestateresident.com/helpfulphonenumber**. (Let us know of any others you can suggest.) This month's un-helpful number is 1-555-opendooralarms.*

NEXT HOA BOARD MEETING: January 19, 6:30 pm by Zoom. Watch your email for an invitation and connection information a few days before the 19th.

TO PROVIDE INFORMATION AND IDEAS FOR THIS NEWSLETTER, WRITE jbriggs@jbriggslaw.com

SEND COMPLAINTS ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER TO cantmakeme@idunno.com

Hey, if you like this Newsletter and haven't been getting it in the past, send your email address to jbriggs@jbriggslaw.com and we will make sure you are on one or another of the email lists to whom the Newsletter is sent every month. Don't be shy!