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City Residents Pitch In to Fund Repairs to Damaged Fountain

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Contribution Writer

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photo/Michael Seeman

The Marin Circle fountain in North Berkeley will be repaired thanks to the Friends of the Fountain and Walk. The group is one of many neighborhood activist groups in Berkeley.

A North Berkeley neighborhood group will donate more than \$1,000 to the city council tonight to help restore a damaged piece of public art.

Friends of the Fountain and Walk, a non-profit organization of about 15 volunteers, has raised \$1,685 to repair damages done to protective bollards around the long-standing fountain in Marin Circle, said group member Sara Holmes.

The fountain's bollards, which are short, rounded cement posts that surround the fountain, have been seriously damaged twice in the past year and a half, most recently in March by a truck that changed directions too quickly, she said.

The money raised, however, is actually intended to pay back the city for replacing 13 of the fountain's bollards that were intentionally damaged by a truck in June 2005, Holmes said.

"The city is strapped," she said. "They're doing the best they can, but times have changed. It gets harder and harder."

The organization raised money from concerned volunteers and realtors who recognized the fountain as a valuable visual asset to the neighborhood, she said.

"People are very connected to (the fountain)," she said. "Those who don't live here don't realize how much it is a part of our community's life."

The fountain was originally built in 1911, but was badly maintained afterward and removed after a runaway truck ran into it in the 1950s. Friends of the Fountain and Walk was founded in the 1990s with the purpose of rebuilding the fountain and has raised \$100,000, Holmes said.

Since then, Holmes and other volunteers have formed what she said was a "good working relationship" with the city regarding the fountain's maintenance.

Other Berkeley community groups have also been active alongside the city in pursuing community projects.

The Willard Neighborhood Association in Southside has three members on the People's Park Community Advisory Board and has a committee which participates in the UC Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneau's task force on student-neighbor relations, said association president George Beier.

The association plans to create a forum on AC Transit's proposal to convert one traffic lane on Telegraph Avenue to a bus-only lane, Beier said.

"We work closely with the city," Beier said. "The staff come to our meetings and we write letters to our district member."

The city has always been responsive to the association's requests, he said.

"They told us it should be a complaint-driven system, and we learned to complain," Beier said.

Berkeley neighborhoods are known to be especially active, said Taj Johns, neighborhood liaison for Northside, who works with both neighborhood groups and the city.

"(Berkeley residents) know how city government works and they're making it work for them," she said.

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