

From: [Public Works](#)
To: [Gabon, Marichrisse](#)
Subject: FW: Mora Ortega Park Name
Date: Tuesday, May 07, 2019 4:35:14 PM

Hi Marichrisse,

PW received this in our inbox.

Thanks,
Rachna

From: Jesse Cupp
Sent: Tuesday, May 07, 2019 3:52 PM
To: , Public Works
Subject: Mora Ortega Park Name

Hello,

I'd like to suggest the name Frank Ramirez Park for this upcoming park near my house. Frank Ramirez was a community leader who owned Ramirez Grocery at corner of Fair Oaks and Stanford avenue (referenced in the April 29, 1965 San Jose Mercury newspaper, available at the history center) His grocery store was only 1,000 feet from the park site according to google maps. Here's a quote from the article:

"When city inspectors invaded Castro City about six months ago under the city-wide rehabilitation program, the residents really began to sweat. There are several non-conforming uses there. If the city ordered the buildings torn down, the owners wouldn't be able to build new ones. One of them was Frank Ramirez who has operated his tiny grocery store at the corner of Fair Oaks and Stanford. avenues for the past nine years. He wound up with a hefty repair order , but his building stayed up. 'The city told me they would give me the benefit of the doubt,' Ramirez said. 'They told me to make the repairs as soon as I could afford it.'"

I like the underdog story here of a small local grocery managing to make the necessary repairs to get up to code and avoid being condemned (a fate met by many other building in the area). I also found his obituary in the mercury news. Here's an excerpt:

"Frank "Pancho" Ramirez Entered into rest April 24, 2004. A long time Mountain View resident, Frank and his wife the late Atanacia Olmos Ramirez moved to Mountain View in 1942 from Yuma Az. where he was born in 1913. Together they opened Ramirez Grocery in Castro City, one of the first neighborhood stores. He was a retired member of the Operating Engineers Local No. 3. He also worked for Bahr and Ledoyen in Palo Alto for 15 years and was a member of the La Estrella in Mountain View for many years."

Here's the full obituary: <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/mercurynews/obituary.aspx?n=frank-ramirez-pancho&pid=2174442>

I think his obituary shows his Mountain View roots and how well he integrated into the community. Having one of the first neighborhood stores is quite an achievement as well! I hope you will Frank Ramirez Park, Ramirez Grocery Park, or something similar to recognize

this prominent self-made Latino community member and his achievements and involvement in the community.

I wish I could make it tomorrow, but I have a conflicting VAC meeting. I hope it goes well!

Thanks,

Jesse

Castro City May Get New Face

By RON MILLER
Staff Writer

MOUNTAIN VIEW—A squalid, dilapidated housing tract pretentiously dubbed "University Park" soon may cease being an embarrassment to the city.

Busy hammers are tapping, repair orders are flying and erstwhile developers are running to the banks with ambitious plans for the area everybody calls Castro City.

The reason is plain to see. Once a small settlement on the outskirts of town, Castro City is now flanked by classy apartment houses and the city's shiny new community center building and park.

A major widening job on Rengstorff avenue will start soon and the result should be another boost for the already soaring property values in the closest thing the city has to a slum.

But that doesn't mean it will happen overnight. Castro City still looks like an earthquake just shook it and city officials try to look in that direction about as often as they see the dark side of the moon.

In the beginning, the area was a peaceful adjunct to the large Castro family ranch. Dotted with sturdy oaks, the property then was one of the places Mountain View folk saw when they went for a buggy ride in the country.

But around the turn of the century, ambitious speculators bought up the land and heavily advertised it in San Francisco papers as a "country paradise." They split up the property in lots so small the county recorder had to put the map under a microscope.

Few of the absentee landowners built homes there, but some cottages that once surrounded a cannery in town were trucked out to the site and set up without any particular planning. It didn't take long for the uninspired pattern of today's Castro City to be set.

Almost a forgotten corner of the town today, Castro City is roughly a four block area between California and Alma streets, Rengstorff avenue and an open field.

Tagged with the "University Park" name by the tract promoters, Castro City still bears the mark of that poetic license. Among the streets are Stanford, College and University avenues.

But most of the people who live there today haven't been anywhere near a university all their lives and are mainly concerned about getting the money to pay their growing property taxes.

Dogs roam the rutted, poorly paved streets. There is almost as much cardboard in the windows as there is glass and the weeds grow nearly as tall as the few remaining oaks.

"The streets aren't maintained except in critical situations because they've never been accepted by the city," said Chief Building Inspector Charles Hinkley. "We're not too eager to get them in the present shape either."

The city follows a policy of encouraging property owners to

"Most of the people out here drive cars when they go out."

Hinkley claims nobody really knows who owns the numerous alleys that run behind the houses in Castro City. The city isn't anxious to take them on for maintenance either.

When city inspectors invaded Castro City about six months ago under the city-wide rehabilitation program, the residents really began to sweat. There are several non-conforming uses there. If the city ordered the buildings torn down, the owners wouldn't be able to build new ones.

One of them was Frank Ramirez, who has operated his tiny grocery store at the corner of Fair Oaks and Stanford avenues for the past nine years. He wound up with a hefty repair order, but his building stayed up.

"The city told me they would give me the benefit of the doubt," Ramirez said. "They told me to make the repairs as soon as I could afford it."

The city made 106 inspections in Castro City. Of those, 62 structures were ordered repaired and 20 were marked for demolition. Only 24 structures got by without an order of some kind. Residents are given almost unlimited time to make repairs since few have much capital.

"This program isn't going to make a striking difference in the appearance of the area," Hinkley said. "We could only be concerned with public safety, not appearance."

Still the rehabilitation program has started a flurry of activity in Castro City. New homes are springing up on lots where shacks once stood. But that itself is a problem.

Many lots are only 25 feet wide. The city requires five foot sideyards which means some of the new homes being built are only 15 feet wide. Some are even less.

"Once a man's lot is recorded in a subdivision, we can't prohibit him from building a house on it," Hinkley said. "All we can do is encourage him to combine lots with somebody else."

In an effort to prod Castro City residents into joining lots, Councilmen a few years ago rezoned the area for multiple family housing. They hoped apartments might be developed.

But the proposal failed when residents either did nothing or started adding apartments onto their already cramped lots. Councilmen quickly rezoned it to single family residential.

At least one Councilman, Joseph Musso, favors trying apartment zoning again, but the majority feel time will do the trick.

"When Rengstorff is widened into a first class street, I think you'll see the whole area improve," Councilman Charles M. Moore said. "That will be the key to open the whole thing up."

Planning Director Robert Lawrence agrees that the increasing value of Castro City land will encourage a developer to put a project together soon.

But Lawrence would rather see the people themselves improve the area, possibly in a

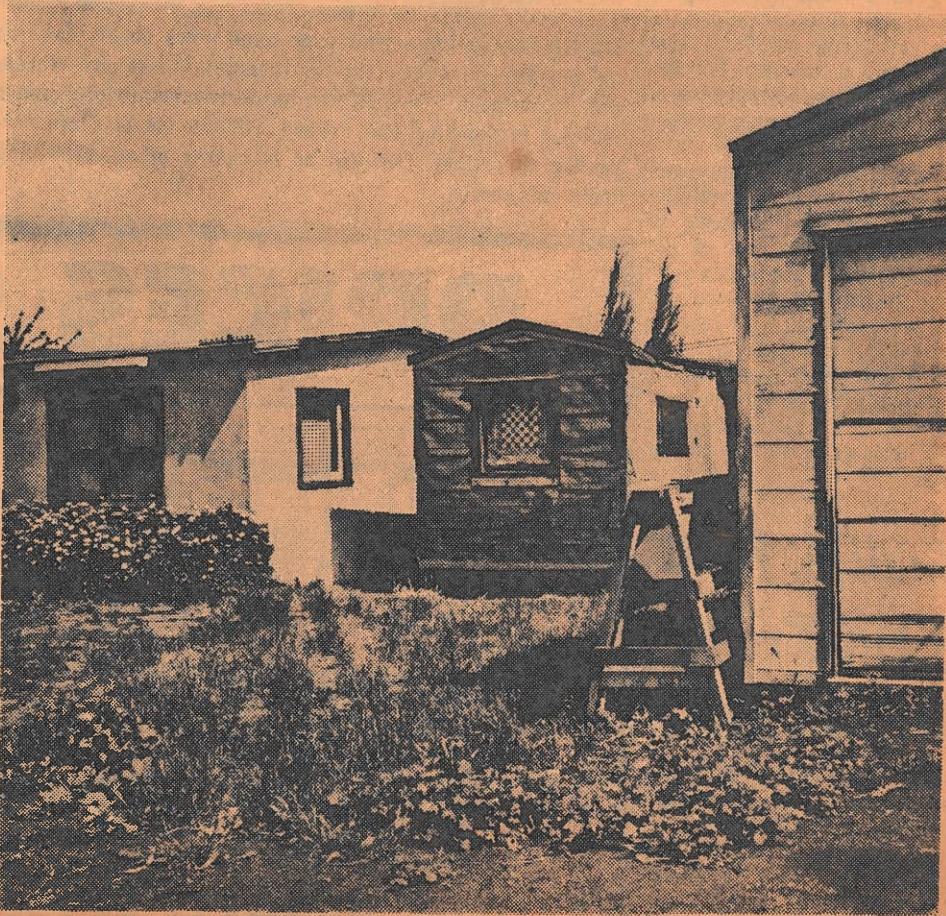


MARKET — The Ramirez market on Fair Oaks avenue in the old Castro City section of Mountain View has to

be repaired under the city's new rehabilitation program. Owner Frank Ramirez can't

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tear the store down and build a new one because zoning there has been changed since the grocery was built.



TARGET—A city-wide rehabilitation program being carried out by Mountain View is aim-

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ed at sub-standard structures like this tiny shack home between a garage and a home. Castro City, where this

picture was taken, is one of the prime targets of the city's program.

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The city follows a policy of encouraging property owners to form assessment districts to put in their curbs and gutters and other street improvements.

However, the majority of Castro City residents are not inclined to form an assessment district and for a good reason—they can't afford it.

"We older people don't want sidewalks anyway," said Mrs. Retta Cox, who has lived at 116 College Ave. for years.

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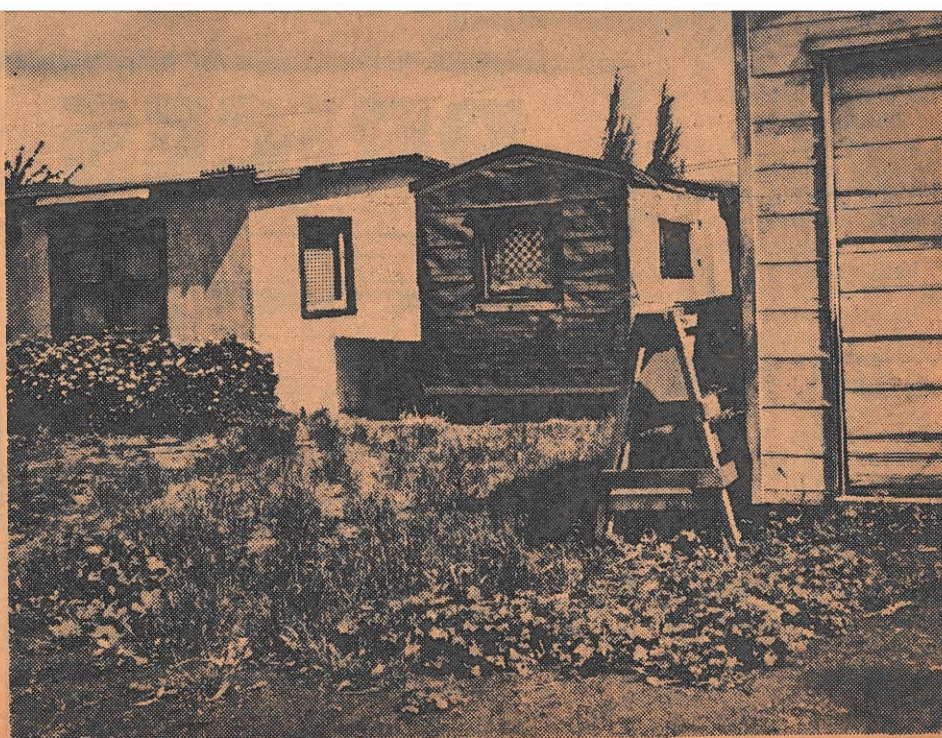
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But Lawrence would rather see the people themselves improve the area, possibly in a "common green" tract using the alleys as walkways and integrating small park areas. He said this will be studied as a part of the city's master plan.

"We hope something good will be coming soon," said Ramirez with a gesture toward his weatherbeaten grocery store. "I'm already paying \$1,200 in property taxes on that and it won't be less next year."



TARGET—A city-wide rehabilitation program being carried out by Mountain View is aim-

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ed at sub-standard structures like this tiny shack home between a garage and a home. Castro City, where this

picture was taken, is one of the prime targets of the city's program.

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RUINS — This mailbox is the only clue to the fact that anyone ever lived at this address in Castro City, Mountain

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View's slum - in - the - making. Behind the mailbox are the ruins of a sub-standard home

ordered demolished by the city under its rehabilitation program. A new home will be built on the lot.