The Rockridge News

Sponsored by the ROCKRIDGE COMMUNITY PLANNING COUNCIL, 6225 Ross Street, Oakland California

Vol. 2 No. 7 Issue No. 19 ★ November 14, 1987 ★ Circulation: 4,500 Residences; 200 Businesses

Com-muni-cation

Communication. A big word made up of little parts. Taken in one chunk, it's a word that can be a stumbling block for groups who want to work together to reach goals for the betterment of all. When we break it down and take things one step at a time, no one stumbles.

Much has been written in **The Rockridge News** about development of the Rockridge Area Specific Plan. Neighbors have been polled to learn their interests for the future of College Avenue and surrounding residential blocks. Members of the College Avenue Merchants Association (CAMA) have been asked for their thoughts, too. Occasionally the two groups have met together to discuss approaches to RASP concerns, but few merchants have time to take from their businesses to attend meetings to put their views forward, although all recognize the importance of planning for the future.

This issue of **The News** inaugurates a forum where merchants, businesspeople and property owners on College Avenue can present their views on Rockridge, commerce and planning. An effective plan supported by all can be reached if everyone has a say in putting it together.

Beginning on page 2, four individuals involved in College Avenue business offer their views of the current state of the Avenue, the direction it is headed, and planning for the future.

The Planning Process At Street Level, Part II

City Planning And RCPC

The October issue of The Rockridge News published part of a proposed Neighborhood Action Package (NAP) being prepared by RCPC for distribution to anyone interested in participating in the planning process.

NAP outlines procedures to follow when Neighbors have concerns about a project requiring a zoning application. Neighbors are encouraged to assume responsibility for information gathering, consensus-building, compromise, and public dialogue through the following steps:

1. Talk with the applicant/neighbor.
2. Get the facts.
3. Talk with other neighbors.
4. Invite applicant to a block meeting.
5. Attend public hearing.

This month, discussion of the proposed Neighborhood Action Plan focusses on RCPC's organizational role in this process. At what point does RCPC get involved in Zoning applications? What is the role of the Board of Directors? When do they get involved?

As stated last month, Board members are available at any time to discuss specific proposals and strategy, but often the zoning matters are best dealt with by the immediate neighbors or the block club.

When RCPC as an organization does get involved, at least three different scenarios are possible:

SCENARIO 1: RCPC Notifies Neighborhood Block Captain

RCPC is informed regularly about pending applications by twice-monthly mailings from the Planning Commission. In turn, the Chairperson notifies the appropriate Rockridge News distribution block captain about the application, and suggests that he/she discuss the matter with neighbors.

SCENARIO 2: RCPC Is Asked To Take A Position

Either the applicant or any other interested party contacts the Chairperson (Barbara Anderson, 655-3499) or any other Board member, and requests that the RCPC take a position and convey that position to the Planning Commission. The request can also be made at the regular General Membership monthly meeting (3rd Wednesday, 7:30 PM, College Avenue Presbyterian Church).

SCENARIO 3: RCPC Independently Initiates Action

The Board decides to consider a particular application because the proposal has policy implications for the larger Neighborhood.

See **"Planning", page 6**

Dates Calendar Events Calendar Dates

• **Tuesday**	**Nov 17**		**City Council Meeting**	Cancelled.
• **Wednesday**	**Nov 18**	**1:30 pm**	**Planning Commission Mtg.**	City Hall, Room 115. Regular meeting.
• **Wednesday**	**Nov 18**	**7:30 pm**	**RCPC General Meeting**	College Avenue Presbyterian Church Sanctuary. RASP, Zoning. INVITED: Officer Hugo Gonzales, College Avenue Beat Patrolman.
• **Wednesday**	**Nov 24**		**City Council Meeting**	Cancelled.
• **Tuesday**	**Dec 8**	**7:30 pm**	**City Council Meeting**	Council to vote on RCPC request for RASP funding from Community Development funds.

Business Looks at College Avenue and Rockridge

The comments in these columns are compiled from wide-ranging interviews held with each respondent. They were asked for their views on College Avenue, Rockridge, community communication, the role of the City, their assessment of City Planning and for general remarks.

All of the interviewees reviewed and approved their own comments prior to publication. Thanks to all for their time and help.

■ Ruth Giovanetti

Owner, Rockridge Realty
6019 College Avenue

Mrs. Giovanetti has been in business on College Avenue for 25 years. In addition to her Real Estate office, she has also owned two retail businesses on the Avenue. She raised her family in the area and still lives nearby.

I have seen many changes in this area in the last twenty-five years. For one thing, the name of the area has changed. It was formerly known as Temescal and ran from Shattuck Avenue up to College Avenue. Above College was called Lower Rockridge and higher up was called Rockridge. I have a photograph on my office wall showing the name Rockridge high up on the hill. The name gradually changed after I opened my office and called it Rockridge Realty.

Effect of Rapid Transit and the Freeway

Building BART and the freeway were real disasters for the area from the standpoint of loss of housing. People lost impeccable homes they and their children had planned on living in all their lives.

The area has always been popular. There has always been a shortage of housing, as there is now. Some of the housing shortage has been met by in-law apartments. A lot of in-law units were created from second kitchens and clean up areas the Italian families had designed into their homes to match their lifestyle.

This Has Always Been A Popular Area

College Avenue Changes

Other changes have occurred along College Avenue; it has improved a lot recently.

For example, foot traffic has increased because formerly large stores (like Knox' TV at Harwood and College) have been made into smaller stores. This brought more diversification to the Avenue: more variety among stores and more diversity of merchandise.

I give a great deal of the credit for this to Larry Olund. He is responsible for turning many of the old buildings on Piedmont and College Avenue into useable commercial space. The minute he buys a piece of property you can bet your boots it'll become a valuable piece of property. He tries to retain the flavor of the building and, as much as possible, he provides off-street parking. Otherwise, parking is even more of a problem.

Housing and Prices

However, as property changes ownership, prices go up. Housing becomes more expensive. We have lots of Senior citizens in the area living on fixed incomes. Where can they go when rents go up? There is always a scarcity of rentals anyway. The people who move in are young professionals, generally two income families. The net effect for the neighborhood is a younger, more affluent group. The quality of property goes up, but the quality of life... I'm not sure. I really wonder what's

Please see "Point of View", page 7

■ Steve Listug

***Manager**, First Federal*
Savings and Loan Association of San Rafael
6058 College Avenue

Mr. Listug grew up in Marin County and now makes his home there. He has been with First Federal for four years.

College Avenue pulls the Rockridge Area together. Rockridge is a busy and crowded area but it has a community feeling that comes from the style of businesses on College Avenue. There is a midwestern type of community feeling, the kind of place where you can walk down the street and meet people you know. Although close to San Francisco, the district does not feel at all like a suburb of the city; it is a community within itself.

Change and Planning

There are pressures that can change this — such as rising rents and increasing popularity — but planning can help keep the integrity of College Avenue intact. Planning can't do everything, though. We can't fight change, maybe only hide it for awhile. Ultimately, the market will dictate how the street as a whole turns out.

College Avenue: Glue For The Rockridge Area

Traffic, parking and housing are three critical areas that planning can help.

Traffic and parking problems stem from the general location: the area is a transportation hub for a larger network that stretches well beyond this part of Oakland.

Housing and rent costs are a problem for some new buyers and wage earners. As prices increase, how can new buyers afford a move into the area? The neighborhood will become too one sided financially and lose its appeal.

Growth and Control

Good management of current resources can control a too strong regional appeal and help keep costs down.

I can see the value of contols on growth to preserve an area, but it is hard to know where to draw the line to avoid excessive control. I altered my own belief in growth when I started spending too much time in stalled freeway traffic.

I think the Rockridge Area Specific Plan can be used to develop protections for aspects of College Avenue that we want to preserve. Still, planning controls can be weakened by exceptions such as variances. A variance here and a variance there and nobody really notices until one day the cumulative effect is apparent and people are shocked at changes they didn't expect or want.

The Future

I would like to see the active merchant and neighborhood associations continue their work. Active people are good for a neighborhood.

I would like to see College Avenue in the future remain a neighborhood oriented commercial area. If I could add a business, it would be a hardware store. I love hardware stores.

■ Jack Ripsteen

***Owner**, Shell Station*
College and Claremont

Mr. Ripsteen has lived in the Bay Area most of his life. He attended John Muir School, Willard Jr. High, Berkeley High and received his law degree from the University of California. Mr. Ripsteen is an attorney in San Francisco and lives in the Neighborhood with his family.

Merchants' pride in the Rockridge Area helps keep College Avenue clean and a desirable place for neighbors and merchants alike. It is essential that businesses feel good about the community and businesses feel supported by the neighborhood. I think we offer a lot as merchants. We do offer services but we also return something to the community: we make donations to public groups, events and charities and work hard to maintain moderate prices.

A Neighborhood Feeling

Because I live in the neighborhood, I have a strong sense of commitment to the community. I like the neighborhood feeling, I like the fact that people can walk to businesses and services. It is a nice feeling to be able to see your friends at a local store.

Merchant Pride Critical Ingredient In Success Of College Avenue

Whatever changes occur on College Avenue, I hope that that feeling does not change. It can change if we lose our community pride. The current zoning is pretty good. It helps to keep the mix of businesses now on the Avenue, but we need flexibility for the future.

Currently RCPC has been working on possible changes in the zoning. What would the Rockridge Area Specific Plan do? It's not clear to me yet. I think it's OK to tighten up elements of the existing business zone but I fear regulation by the City in a new plan could result in too much restriction that might not be beneficial to the neighborhood or business.

Development and College Avenue

Continued development on College Avenue won't be a problem if it meets zoning requirements. There is not a lot of room for new growth in terms of unimproved property. Certain development would be unacceptable. I'm thinking of fast food chains and other mass marketing types of chain stores. Not all chains are bad, though, and we should be open to some types on a case by case basis.

Parking will always be a problem and not necessarily because of development. Adding to the parking problem is the fact that we are a transportation hub.

Role of the City

The Planning Department is responsive to the neighborhood and business desires on planning issues. They appear to react to react to the issues surrounding each circumstance rather than putting their stamp on the area.

The police foot patrol has been a real plus and it is essential that we let the City know that we appreciate Officer Gonzales' fine efforts. The City must keep this patrol on College Avenue.

The community, both neighbors and merchants, can guide

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■ Warren Wincorn

***Co–Developer**, Rockridge Court*
5335 College Avenue

Mr. Wincorn, originally from Dallas, Texas, has lived in Oakland for 15 years. Working first as a property manager, he began buying, fixing up and selling apartment properties, then built a small restaurant and office building in Oakland. He owned his own construction business for 5 years before moving into development. He lives in Oakland.

My goal in developing Rockridge Court was to add an attractive, functional building to College Avenue. We were especially concerned that the building fit the area architecturally. My style, as well as that of my partner, John Knight, tends toward the understated. This was reflected in Daniel G. Smith's architectural design.

Since John has long been a merchant on the street (Rockridge Antiques and Mothers) we knew that the retail spaces would rent more easily than the second floor offices. As it turned out, that was the case. Almost all of the merchants and office users in the center live within minutes of their businesses and, with the exception of Cybelle's and the FitLab, this is their only location.

College Avenue Businesses Trends

We want businesses that add diversity to the neighborhood. One of the strengths of College Avenue is its lack of chain operations and its businesses that cater to ordinary as well as expensive tastes. I expect this trend to continue. Oakland has ordinances restricting the removal of rental housing and many ground floor businesses have apartments above.

My Goal Was An Attractive, Functional Building

Additionally, I don't expect College Avenue to become gentrified like Union Street in San Francisco; most of the customers come from nearby. There is no cohesive architecture or tourist trade to cause such changes. Certainly the street will be upgraded. As the older leases come up for renewal, some of the businesses requiring large square footage, easy parking or warehouse rents, will be forced to move.

Another trend which I expect will continue is the conflict caused by commercial establishments adjacent to residences. The Planning and Zoning Departments encourage local residents' participation in decision making. We spent many hours working out solutions to avoid delays caused by long battles with local residents. There is also no assurance that the Planning Commission or the City Council will follow staff recommendations when neighbors strongly oppose a project.

Planning and the Future

As for future planning, it seems coordination between City officials, developers, local residents and organizations such as RCPC is essential. Completing and implementing the Rockridge Area Specific Plan will be difficult. Compromises are needed as there are diverse issues to be resolved. It is important that pragmatism be the rule. Residents who live next to new developments or new businesses are less concerned with orderly development than the inconvenience of noise, increased traffic or

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Rats Plague Rockridge

Are you living with a rat?

No, no, no, not *that* one, bless your heart — the four legged variety.

Rats have been spotted by several Rockridge Neighbors lately and Mr. Joe Lambert, Alameda County Vector Control officer, has been assigned to clear up the problem.

According to Mr. Lambert, two types of rats cause concern in urban areas: the Norway, or wharf, rat and the Roof, or tree, rat. In addition to the danger they pose through the spread of disease and infection, rats may carry fleas capable of spreading the plague, although this has not happened in Alameda County.

The appearance and habits of each type of rat differ; if you are troubled by one of these creatures, you can at least know what you are up against. The Norway rat has a heavy body and a tail shorter than its head and body, while the Roof rat has a slender body and its tail is longer than its head and body. The Norway rat lives in nests and underground burrows. They also live in sewers and may enter houses through uncapped sewer lines and toilets. The Roof rat nests above ground and lives in ivy and blackberry vines as well as attics and garages. Norway rats leave droppings up to 3/4" in length while the Roof rat's are smaller, up to 1/2" long.

To prevent rat infestation in your home, remove their sources of food and water by storing garbage in tight metal containers, repairing leaky faucets, and putting away left over pet food. Remove their shelter by repairing broken or open sewers, stacking lumber and firewood 18 inches off the ground and away from walls and fences, and cleaning up accumulations of leaves and lawn clippings.

If rats have already moved in, carefully use traps and poisons to eliminate them. Details about rats and how to deal with them are available in a pamphlet supplied by Mr. Lambert that will be available at the RCPC General Meeting Wednesday, November 11, 7:30 pm at the College Avenue Presbyterian Church.

In addition to rats, the Alameda County Environmental Health Division, Vector Control Services, deals with bee and hornet infestations and with skunks.

Call 667–7557 for further information.

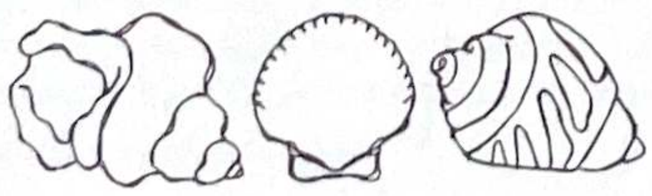
Oakland March and Rally For Righteousness

Mark your calendar and save Saturday, November 21 to join the March for Righteousness. This City-wide event has been organized by Oakland Churches to fight the epidemic of drugs gripping many Neighborhoods.

North Oaklanders assembling at 11:30 am at the North Oakland Baptist Church, 1060 32nd Street, will parade down Adeline Street to 7th Street, turn up 7th to Broadway and link up at City Hall with marchers who started from Allen Temple Baptist Church. They will join a Rally for Righteousness on the Oakland City Hall Lawn at 1 pm.

Live music and educational forums will be also be presented at City Hall.

Call Ms. Betita Coty at 261-2052 for more information.



Help Keep The Lights On!

Have you had a chance to see it yet? Lake Merritt, always the social and cultural focal point of the City, is now encircled by a dazzling, dizzying crown of lights— a spectacular view these Fall nights.

Sponsored by the Lake Merritt Breakfast Club, the Lake Merritt "Necklace of Lights" project did not come cheap! Some costs have been paid, but the project owes about $200,000.

Will you help? In exchange for your contribution of $25 or more, your name will be memorialized on a permanent recognition scroll which will be on display at the Lake Merritt Garden Center. Contributions are tax deductible and can be made in your own name or in the name of your parents, grandparents or any other honoree you choose.

Send checks payable to the Lite–A–Light campaign to Lake Merritt Breakfast Club Charitable Foundation, P.O. Box 31915, Oakland, CA 94604. Call 874-2572 for more information.

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RCPC Activity Review

Volunteers Needed To Review Dreyer's EIR

Oakland City Planning Staff is working on its preliminary review of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) submitted by Dreyer's in connection with the company's proposed College Avenue development.

Neighborhood volunteers with expertise in any of the following areas are needed to help review separate elements of the Draft EIR when it is released for public comment:

- Traffic, circulation and parking;
- Land use and relationship to city policies;
- Visual impacts;
- Noise;
- Air quality;
- Geology and hydrology;
- Energy;
- Public services and facilities.

If you can help, or for additional information, call RCPC Boardmember John Gussman at 654-9269 (evenings).

RCPC Design Review Committee

The RCPC Design Review Committee is headed by RCPC Boardmember and architect Richard W. Smith and by Mr. Glen Jarvis, also an architect. The committee meets whenever a design proposal pertaining to the Rockridge Area is submitted to the City by a developer or property owner.

Committee members are typically merchants and residents from the immediate project area, but the participation of architects, designers and planners, and residents and merchants from the Rockridge Area in general are welcome.

When drawings are submitted to the City for a new building, an addition or remodeling, the Design Review Committee reviews the application for conformance to specified design standards including general design theme and character, height and bulk of buildings, colors and materials, signs, location of required parking, views and view blockage, and relationship to open space, sidewalks and pedestrian circulation. These issues are examined from the perspective of the project itself and in terms of compatibility with the Neighborhood, block face and immediately adjacent buildings.

Call Richard Smith at 981-6076 (days) to help with this committee or for further information.

CAMA, RCPC Meet To Discuss Area Specific Plan

On Tuesday, November 3, RCPC Boardmember Kerry O'Banion met with the Board of Directors of the College Avenue Merchants Association (CAMA) to describe efforts to date on the Rockridge Area Specific Plan.

The next step in the process—establishing the basic goals of the Plan — is the single most important step in the entire process and the group discussed how CAMA and RCPC might best cooperate in this task.

A joint committee of residents and merchants will meet the first week in December to draft a set of goals which will then be presented to the RCPC and CAMA general memberships for review and adoption at their respective General Meetings.

Letters To The News

Dear Editor:

After you printed my open letter to the Rockridge Community in September's **Rockridge News** (titled, "What's Missing on College Avenue?"), many people spoke to me of their basic agreement with the sentiments expressed. That is, they too would like to see more cultural activity in Rockridge alongside the economic development already taking place.

I would therefore like to ask the people in Rockridge to start presenting ideas on how we can start enlivening our Neighborhood with different aspects of the arts. Do we want a performing center?...an art gallery?...live music – jazz, classical?...Sunday concerts at Chabot School park? I urge people to send their ideas in care of the newsletter or to call me at 654-4462.

Sincerely,

Margret Elson

Send Your Letters and Comments on Neighborhood issues to:

The Rockridge News
c/o Don Kinkead
5626 Oak Grove Avenue
Oakland 94618

We Want To Hear From You!

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Thank you!

Of General Interest:

City: Marge Gibson Haskell

Involvement — The Name of The Specific Plan's Game

The work that RCPC has done to advance the Rockridge Specific Plan has been substantial but, as I've written before, the organization can't do it all. The entire membership of the community must be touched and involved, from the children in school who need to be asked about the adequacy of the community resources they use to the elderly who need safety on the streets, security in their homes and accessible services. Questions to our youth might be general ones concerning their feelings and needs, or specific, such as would they use a bike/hiking trail between College Avenue and Temescal Park and the North Oakland Sports Center. Our seniors might value an inquiry about what special activities could be provided for them at the proposed library.

The merchants on College Avenue similarly need to become fully involved in the specific plan process. There is a strong track record of involvement by the College Avenue merchants which dates, at least as far as I know, to the early 1970's when Gordon and Anne Winchester owned Firehouse Fabrics on College Avenue and resided not far away. They made certain that residents and merchants worked together to rezone College Avenue and its environs.

This same energy from those on the Avenue is desperately needed today. The merchants would benefit from a specific plan that assured parking for those that live, work and shop around College Avenue, which might include a proposal for double decking of the BART parking lot. Similarly, if College Avenue gets a reputation as a place where traffic doesn't move, no one will benefit in that the residents will suffer from people trying to short-cut through side streets and the merchants will have reduced patronage.

The next stage in the planning process will require the merchants to consider what they need from the process and assure that their input is received, understood and considered. They may wish to have a brain-storming session within their group to ascertain their needs, then organize them and see that they are integrated into the specific plan process.

From this short discussion, I hope it is clear that everyone needs to participate in the formation of principles and policies for guiding future growth in the College Avenue area. Involvement may even include (as Rockridge representatives did when the Upper Telegraph Coalition appeared before the Council requesting approval to commence their specific plan process) working with others to achieve a plan. This is a recognition of the fact that one part of the City will not achieve its plan if others are blocked from achieving theirs. This approach will involve and benefit all.

RCPC and ***The Rockridge News*** *present these columns to assist regular communication from local officials. Give some thought to what you read here, then give a call:*

Marge Gibson-Haskell – 273-3266
City Council District 1

Rockridge Avenue/Inman & Doty



Examiner columnist, cartoonist and Rockridge Resident Bradley Inman has generously offered a selection of his work for use by The Rockridge News.
Will the real Rockridge Avenue please stand up...

Planning, from page 1

In either Scenario 2 or Scenario 3, the Board contacts the applicant and other interested parties to get the facts. Sometimes a written statement is requested. If scheduling permits, the Board may request that the matter be brought before the General Membership meeting or before the Executive Board of the College Avenue Merchants Association (1st Wed). When possible, the matter is presented also in **The Rockridge News.** Usually, the Board tries to get all parties together for a meeting. Frequently, the community works out a solution satisfactory to all, prior to going to the Planning Commission

Normally, the Board's decision is made at its regularly scheduled meeting (2nd Wednesday). The majority position of the Board is presented in writing and orally to the Planning Commission, and to the City Council, if necessary.

What kind of action or position might the Board be expected to take? The Board majority position may be "in favor" of approving the zoning application. Its position may be "opposed" to granting the application. Sometimes the Board supports "conditional" approval of the application, that is, only if certain conditions are met. Also, the Board may take still another, or compromise, position of "not opposed" which means that the Board is not willing as a body to advocate for a project, but at the same time, has no reason to oppose the project.

The Board's past actions reflect a primary concern that growth and change occur within the spirit and intent of existing zoning law.

Bits of Rockridge

Improvements For Ocean View Fire Hydrants?

Evaluation and testing of water flow problems affecting fire hydrants in the Ocean View–Manchester–Margarido area is underway, according to EBMUD Sr. Civil Engineer Leo O'Brien.

When tests in June showed water supply to some hydrants to be insufficient, EBMUD officials ordered an examination of the problem. Initial findings call for installation of a larger regulator valve to increase the amount of water for existing mains. Mr. O'Brien feels it is clear some mains will need to be replaced. Further testing will determine which are best to upgrade for overall improved flow.

"This process can take awhile," he said.

How Birch Court Brickwork Stacks Up

Work to restore the damaged brick pillar at the intersection of Birch Court and College Avenue is well underway.

Rockridge resident and volunteer brick mason Mr. Steve Pendergrast reports he has assembled the bricks and the help to do the job. His next step is to clean the bricks with muriatic acid and begin the actual rebuilding. The unique design of the pillar and the type of brick used mean the project will take some time.

Thank you, Steve!

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Continued from pages 2 – 3

Point of View

Giovanetti

going to happen when a few more of these buildings turn over. It's a difficult subject to speak to because it's so controversial.

Although I have a lifetime membership in the College Avenue Merchants Association, I have not been active lately. Once the merchants were more active than neighborhood groups. RCPC has been a good addition to what CAMA used to do.

I have mixed feelings about the effect of Planning on two areas: parking and in-law apartments. It would be helpful if residents could have some sort of assurance of parking space. Additional parking areas are needed and plans should take that into account. I am also concerned that Alvin James, Director of Planning, wants to enforce in-law unit rules and close them to rental opportunity. I think this will make the housing shortage worse. I really feel zoning has been refined about as much as it can be.

I think the City has done little to help College Avenue; they are putting all the resources into downtown.

For the future of College Avenue, more retail space should be available. It would help to control prices and maintain the current variety of shops and services.

Ripsteen

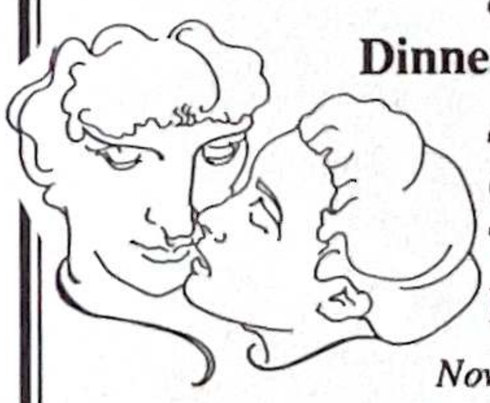
development with design review and general input. Actually, I'd like to see design review so that buildings fit with what is already here. It is necessary that we preserve the style and look of the area.

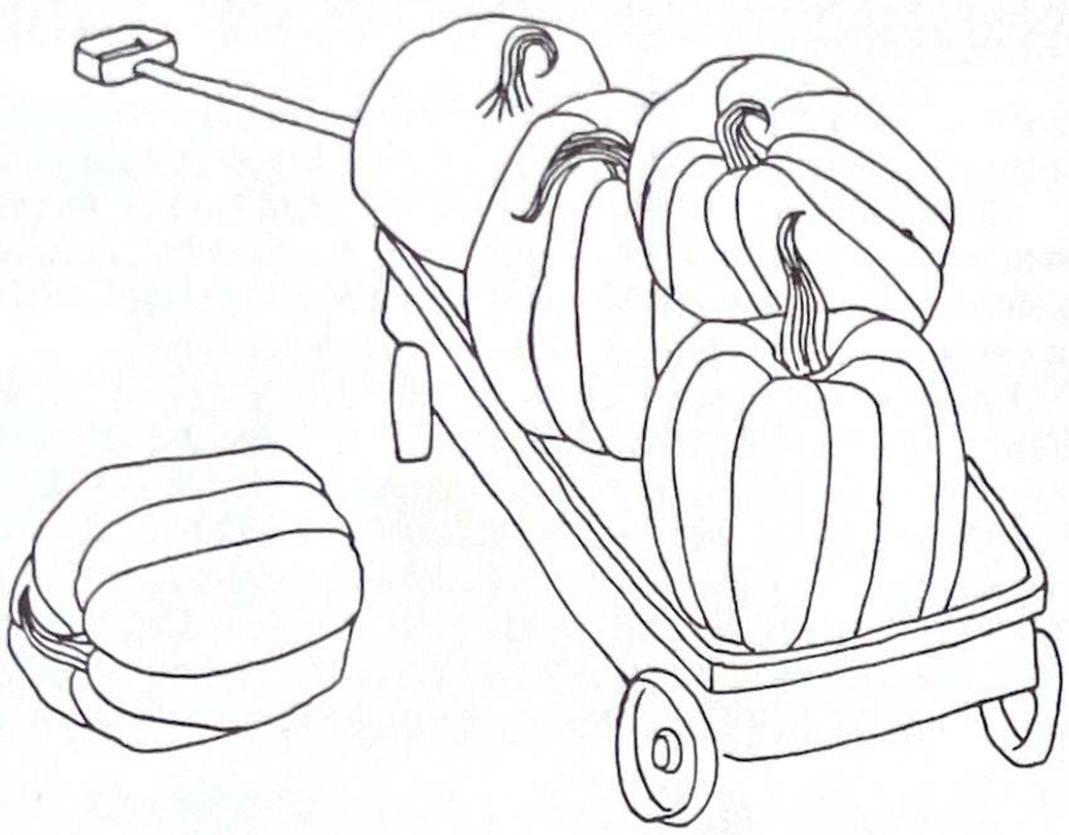
RCPC does not seem to me to be anti–business in general but some merchants do feel it is too neighborhood oriented and not considering the needs of the business community. I am pleased to see at the latest RCPC meetings that it is reaching out and asking to communicate more with merchants regarding the proposed Rockridge Area Specific Plan. I hope that other merchants who read these articles will take the time to review what is being proposed.

Wincorn

changes in the "feel" of their immediate environment. It is here that RCPC can play a moderating role.

We feel that the process of developing Rockridge Court was a successful one and that the businesses who located there are attractive additions to the street. We encourage local residents to come by and see for themselves what we have done.

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Beatrice Kinkead

Got something planned you'd like to have
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5626 Oak Grove Avenue,
Oakland 94618 (of course!) and let us know.
December issue deadline is December 5th.

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