REFERENCE


# Rockridge News

www.rockridge.org

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# RCPC Board Memberships Available: Join the Roster Now

RCPC's bylaws call for the organization to be governed by a 14-member board of directors. There is a constant ebb and flow of directors, but the board now finds itself with nine members, and looking for more.

What is it that draws someone to join other community members to help maintain the charm, the strengths, and the future of Rockridge? Ask the current nine and get nine different answers, each anchored by the desire to contribute to the community.

The Rockridge News has invited current board members to discuss how they came to seek board positions. Long-time member and current board chair Stuart Flashman opens the discussion at right.

## Why I Joined the RCPC Board

***by Stuart Flashman, RCPC Board Chair***



My family and I moved to Rockridge from Emeryville in 1992. Our older daughter was only two years old when we moved, and our younger daughter was no more than a possibility.

While we had liked the little street we lived on in Emeryville, almost anything we wanted, from groceries to parks, from banks to restaurants or a laundromat, required driving somewhere. Our house was quite small, and Emeryville was still mostly known for its cardrooms and crime. Living just off San Pablo Avenue, where muggings were not uncommon, it didn't feel like a safe place to bring up a family.

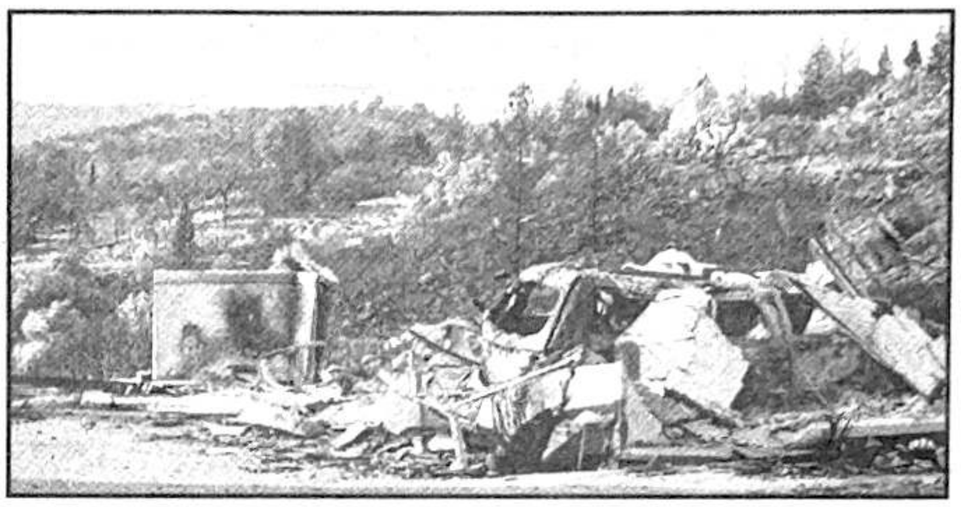
**Why I Joined the RCPC Board, page 2**

# An Oakland Firefighter in Santa Rosa: Mutual Aid at Work

***by Zac Unger, Oakland firefighter and Rockridge resident***

The recent North Bay fires—combined with an October that was spookily reminiscent of 1991—have raised questions about how a giant fire like that would be handled here at home. Are we ready? Would we get the help we need? Should we all give up and move to Antarctica today? I'll try to answer a few of those questions.

I'm an Oakland firefighter, Vice President of our Union, and I was deployed to Santa Rosa last month. I'm not speaking on behalf of the Oakland Fire Department, just as a fellow Rockridgian who, like you, doesn't entirely understand his homeowner's policy and would rather never have to find out what it really means.



**Fire damage in Santa Rosa left a landscape similar to that of Oakland's in 1991.**

**Mutual Aid, page 12**

rockridge district association

About RDA: http://rockridgedistrict.com/About_Us

## The Rockridge District Association (RDA) Presents Free Holiday Events at the Rockridge BART Plaza

**— Saturday, December 9 —**

- 12:30 to 1 PM., come enjoy Holiday Tunes with the Clifton Street Regulars.*
- 1 to 1:15 PM, Tap Dancing Christmas Trees;
- 1:15 to 2 PM: Clifton Street Regulars (return);
- 2 to 4 PM: Photos with Santa,
- 4 to 6 PM. Strolling Carolers.

* Read about the Clifton Street Regulars in Judy Berne's "Eyes on Rockridge" column, page 6.

## Preview Notice: Mark Your Calendar
## New Year Town Hall | January 18, 2018

**1. BART - Rockridge Station Tree Replacement**

BART reports a **Rockridge Station Hazard Tree Assessment** was completed by an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist in 2017. The results require BART to replace hazardous trees adjacent to the parking lots inside the station. The identified tree hazards include one dead coast redwood at the corner of Forest Street and Shafter Avenue, and 16 red ironbark eucalyptus along Keith and Shafter Avenues. Community members will be invited to participate in a selection process for replacement trees in Spring 2018. For additional information, please contact Richard Fuentes, Principal Representative of Government and Community Relations, at rfuente@bart.gov.

**2. Sarah Fine, City Transportation Planner, will discuss plans for Traffic Circles as presented in the November issue of The Rockridge News.**

**3. Update on the Claremont Hotel Condominium Project from "Save Our Claremont."** *(See OpEd, page 9.)*

# Why I Joined the RCPC Board

from page 1

Rockridge, by contrast, had almost everything we wanted within walking distance. There was a Lucky Supermarket (now Trader Joe's), the Such a Business toy store, a variety of restaurants, a small library in a portable classroom (soon to be replaced by the current Rockridge branch, its development spearheaded by Rockridge neighbors), and an excellent elementary school. Our family settled in and we enjoyed our new neighborhood—and reading monthly issues of The Rockridge News.

As time went on, we became aware of the fact that Rockridge hadn't just happened. There was a mysterious group, the Rockridge Community Planning Council, aka RCPC, that seemed to have played a fundamental role in creating this neighborhood. Stories in The Rockridge News described ongoing discussions of the neighborhood's part in building a local park and a new branch library building, and fighting to maintain College Avenue's mixed-use retail/residential environment—with enabling zoning established by RCPC in the 1970s—against encroachment by ever-larger commercial buildings.

**As time went on, we became aware of the fact that Rockridge hadn't just happened.**

After 15 years as a Rockridge resident and feeling increasingly guilty about reaping the fruits of other people's work, I offered RCPC my expertise as a land use attorney and was appointed to a vacant board seat. I soon joined the Planning and Project Review Committee (now the Land Use Committee). The following year, I agreed to become the board's chairperson, with the promise of mentoring and guidance from more experienced board members.

Now, I'm in my ninth year on the board (with a one-year gap required by term limits). During that time, RCPC has seen many issues come and go, while others continue to demand RCPC's attention.

The board has had the benefit of many members with varying backgrounds, expertise, and opinions, all of whom have helped shape RCPC policies and provided guidance to the City as Rockridge continues to evolve.

RCPC has worked closely with other Rockridge groups, including the merchants of the Rockridge District Association (RDA), the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC, now an entity separate from RCPC), public schools and their PTAs, as well as several other community groups RCPC has helped create and then spun off as separate entities.

If helping to guide Rockridge's future is something that appeals to you, there are many ways to do so through RCPC. The most pressing at this point, however, is that RCPC is looking for candidates to run for its Board of Directors in April. If this sounds of interest, email me at chair@rockridge.org, or give me a call at 510/652-5373 and we can talk about it.

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Library program details/hours: Calendar, page 15

THE Rockridge News

The Rockridge News, founded March 1986 by Don Kinkead, is published monthly (except in August) and is sponsored by the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC), a nonprofit public benefit organization founded to: preserve and enhance the unique character of the Rockridge neighborhood; promote the health, safety and quality of life of its residents; furnish a forum for community involvement; and provide leadership and representation of neighborhood interests.

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Jo Ellis.....Advertising & Community Calendar
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**Contacting The Rockridge News**

Are there community issues you'd like to see covered in **The Rockridge News**? • Do you have questions about newsletter distribution? • Want to volunteer to be a **Rockridge News** block captain? • Would you like to write a letter to the Editor?

**Contact us at one of the following:**

**Editor:** editor@rockridge.org;
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**Articles submitted for publication** may be emailed to the editor or mailed to the addresses above. Submissions are limited to 600 words, must include the author's name, phone number, email address, and city or neighborhood of residence, and are subject to editing. Views expressed in articles accepted for publication do not necessarily reflect those of The Rockridge News, its editor, or the board of directors of the Rockridge Community Planning Council. To reprint a Rockridge News article, contact the editor.

**Newsletter Advertising/Deadline**

**Publication date of the January issue is:**

- **January 6, 2018.**
- **Submission deadline: December 21, 2017.**

**Advertising rates are $26/column inch. Six month pre-pay rate available. For display ads, call Jo Ellis at 653-3210 (after noon), or email joellis1@hotmail.com. RCPC reserves the right to refuse any display or classified ad that it deems inappropriate. (Classified ad contact, page 14.)**




RCPC: Town Halls; supports community & newsletter. RCPC Donations: www.rockridge.org. Check: Mail/ Payto: RCPC, 4123 Broadway, PMB #311, Oakland, 94611.




FROG Park Online: www.frogpark.org/donate/ Mail/ Payto: FROG Park, 4123 Broadway, PMB #311, Oakland, 94611. See Pg 10.




Hardy Dog Park improvements continue with the help of wonderful volunteers. See story below. Visit http://hardydogpark.org/donate-volunteer.

*Volunteers with these community groups work year-round for Rockridge. Your tax-deductable donation will help support their efforts.*

## RCPC Land Use Committee

The next Land Use Committee meeting ***may*** be Wednesday, December 20, 7:30 p.m., at the Rockridge Branch Library upstairs meeting room. **Meeting details or plans may change!** Please check the **rockridge.org website** the week before to confirm that a meeting will occur. Meetings are generally open to the public.

## RCPC Land Use Committee Update – December 2017

### ■ Redfield Cider Bar and Bottle Shop, 5815/5817 College Avenue

At a special Board meeting November 11, the RCPC Board of Directors voted not to oppose this proposal.

### ■ Proposal for 4 Story Mixed-use Building: File PLN17269; 5353 College Avenue, currently Better Homes Realty

At its November 11 meeting, the Board voted to oppose granting a variance to place the existing one-story bungalow as a fourth story on the new project. Otherwise, the Board thinks that the project conformed to the zoning and would fit well with the existing surrounding buildings on College Avenue. The Board believes that, barring exceptional circumstances, a fourth floor should be limited to projects including guaranteed affordable housing, which this project did not.

### ■ Shops at the Ridge, Phase II, Corner of Broadway and Pleasant Valley Avenue

The chair of the land use committee and representatives of the Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League (PANIL), met with representatives of TRC, Inc., project developers. TRC intends to restart razing the old Chase Bank building once demolition plans are approved by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). Demolition should be complete by the end of the year.

TRC is still rethinking Phase II. It plans to landscape the site for aesthetics, but does not expect to start construction until later in 2018. PANIL and RCPC urged TRC to consider asking the property owner to permit residential uses in the project, and to consider allowing interim use of the site as, for example, a public art exhibit in collaboration with the California College of Art, rather than letting the site stay dormant and vacant. The TRC representatives agreed to take the suggestion back to their management in Southern California.

## NCPC December Meeting: Burglary Prevention, Community Patrols

**7:30 PM Rockridge Library College and Manila**

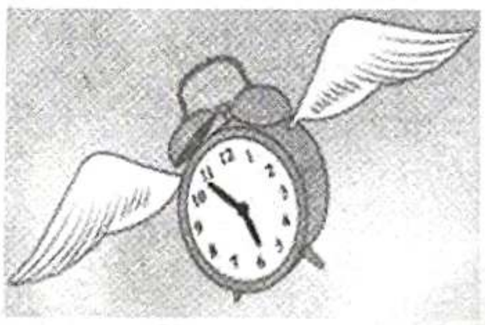
On **Thursday, December 14**, the Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) meeting will include presentations on burglary prevention and community patrols. Representatives from the Upper Rockridge Neighborhood Association and SaferRockridge, both of whom sponsor patrols in our district, will be present along with representatives from Bay Alarm and PPS, the contracted patrol companies. A question and answer session will follow the presentations.

## Hardy Dog Park: History & Volunteers

*by Linda Zunas*

The Hardy Dog Park was created in 1995, when a piece of land under Highway 24 became available to the community. The Caltrans-owned land was vacant after completion of Loma Prieta repairs. The City of Oakland signed a long-term lease for the land from Caltrans and volunteers mobilized to create the park. Funds were raised, a community process worked through, and the City Council approved the creation of Oakland's first-ever dog park. Dog parks were a fairly new concept at that time, with the first one opening in New York City in 1990, and Hardy Dog Park became the inspiration for other dog parks in Oakland and Dog Park News, page 15

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# Mobile Mayor Brings Information, Answers to Rockridge

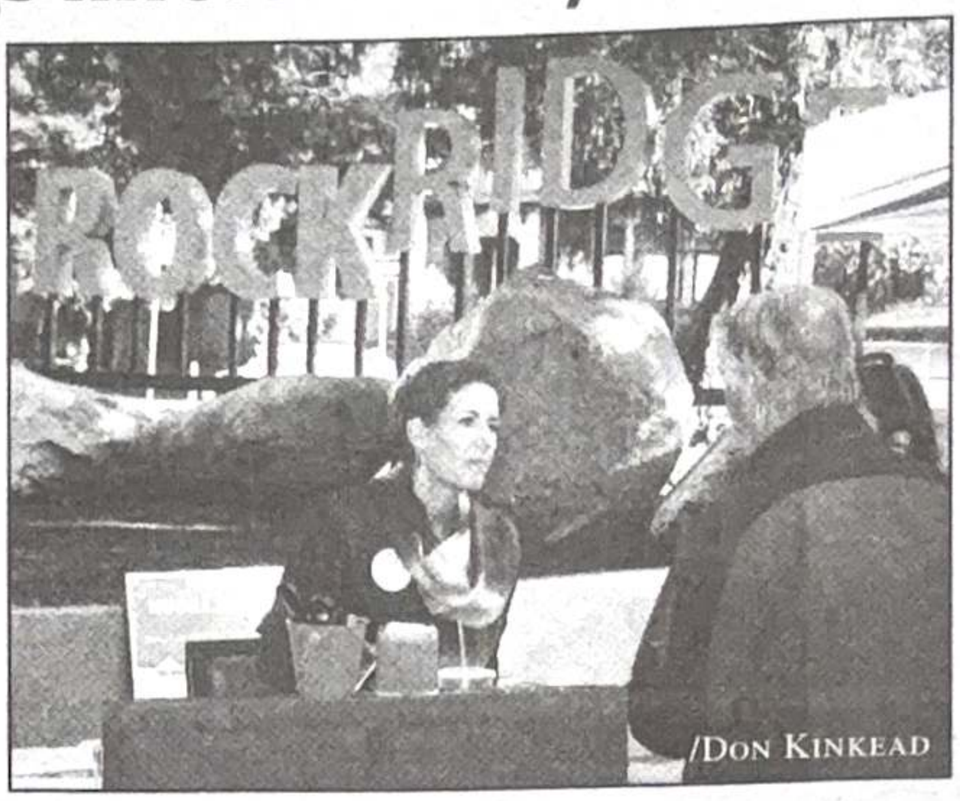
*by Judith Donor Berne*

Sometimes more people crowded around the adjacent pet adoption booth than were waiting to chat with Mayor Libby Schaaf, who brought her Mobile Mayor program to the Rockridge BART Plaza on the sunny, brisk Saturday before Thanksgiving.

Schaaf has been traveling to various Oakland neighborhoods to reach out to residents and boost their awareness of and access to city services.

In spite of the pet adoption distractions, a steady stream of people took the opportunity to spend five to 10 minutes with Schaaf, who had an assistant writing down their concerns. We asked them what they had come for as they waited their turn.

The largest contingent–three–were there because the new Ford GoBike bike share racks are not limited to major thoroughfares. "Why are they in residential neighborhoods?" Rockridge resident Chuck Afflerbach wanted to know, and "What does the city get out of this?"




**Mayor Libby Schaff listens as Rockridge resident Tim Smith explains his neighborhood's concerns about commercial bike rack placements in residential neighborhoods.**

Tim Smith is annoyed by the rack of bikes directly in front of his Rockridge house on a residential street. "We've offered two alternatives including the nearby DMV," he said, but to no avail. "Our biggest thing is being part of the process."

"They're not involving the citizens and the merchants," seconded Anna Dair, who lives two doors down from Smith. "But we're not against the program." They seemed somewhat encouraged that Schaaf gave them the name of someone to contact who might have more authority than their previous contacts.

Rockridge resident Marge, who didn't want to give her last name, was there to request "immediate help for the homeless; people who need help

Mobile Mayor, page 13

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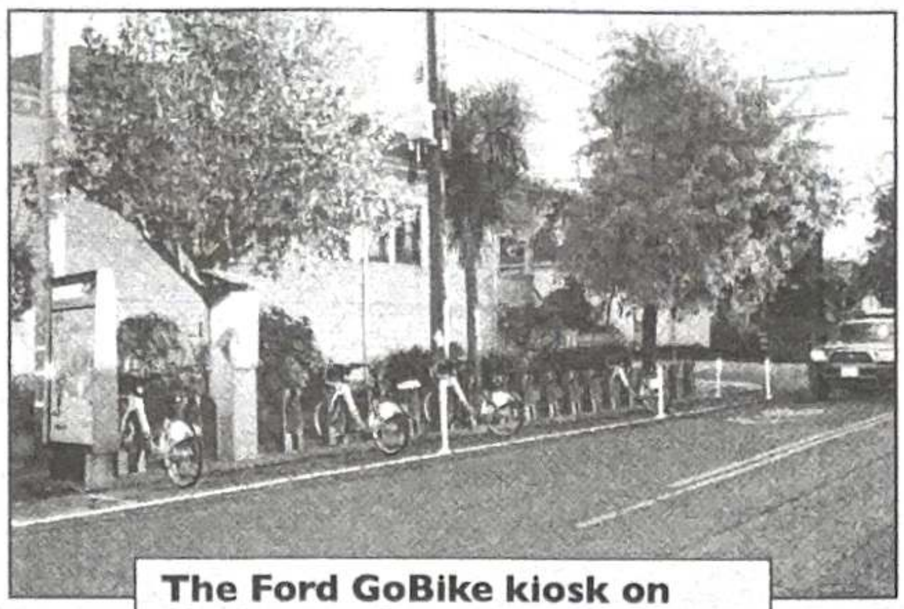
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# Bike Rental Stations in Rockridge Raise Questions

*by Chuck Afflerbach, RN Contributor*

If you travel the streets of Rockridge, you've seen those Ford GoBike stations in what were once parking places on public streets. At any rack you can rent a bike for an hour, a day, or a year membership. Each station covers a fifty-five-foot stretch with dull gray racks, bright blue bikes, a payment kiosk, and a billboard with maps and advertisements standing seven feet tall and forty inches wide. There are already three stations in the first mile of College Avenue's commercial strip. But when this commercial venture popped up on a residential street last month, red flags and questions were raised.

The controversial site on Shafter Avenue at the corner of Cavour Street has met with strong opposition from unhappy residents. First they called the bike company, then city hall; next they launched a website and a petition (which has gathered more than 200 signatures). Their website (5200Shafter.com) provides detailed information about the issue, their efforts, and a lively debate from both sides. The dispute has spilled into online posts on the Nextdoor Rockridge website as well. The questions are wide-ranging: Cars or bikes? Private enterprise or public property? Individual rights or the greater good?



**The Ford GoBike kiosk on Shafter at Cavour.** /D. Kinkead

The GoBike stations are managed by a company called Motivate. The company frames it as a question of who benefits. In one email a spokeswoman states, "Bike share is one of the many ways the City of Oakland can help increase mobility for Oaklanders, as well as meet our sustainability goals, without increasing traffic and congestion. Bike share stations serve more people than parking."

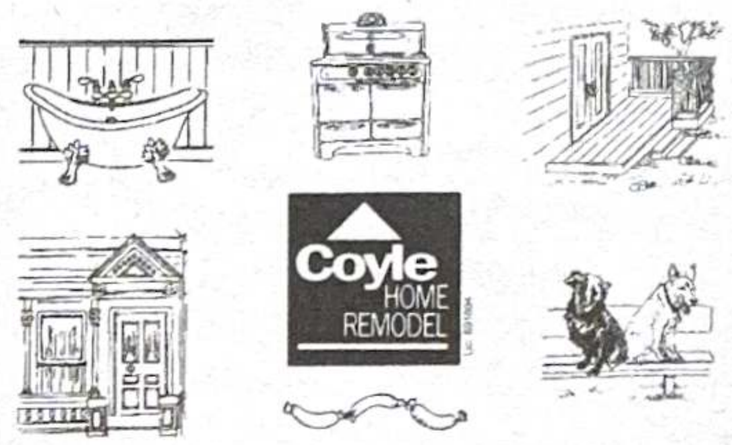
Shafter resident Anna Dair argues it isn't just a matter of not-in-my-back-yard (or front yard, or side yard, depending on where the bikes are stationed). "Each particular resident may have different issues with why the station doesn't work for them in this location," she says, "but the point is, we all align on the fact that this program did not provide a community input process to voice our individual concerns."

That question of who decides, and how, is what prompted me to go see Mayor Libby Schaaf at her Mobile Mayor event held at the Rockridge BART station two weeks ago.

In line ahead of me were Anna Dair and her neighbor Tim Smith. The bikes are

GoBikes, page 13

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# Eyes on Rockridge

## Clifton Street Regulars Exemplify It's Never Too Late to Make Music

*by Judith Doner Berne*

Now that I know where they are on Wednesday evenings, I may regularly find an excuse to walk the couple of blocks to linger outside the Rockridge house where the Clifton Street Regulars (CSR) hold their weekly practices.

The jazz quintet, which you can hear from 12:30-2 p.m. Saturday, December 9, at the Rockridge District Association's Holiday Events in Rockridge at BART Plaza, rehearses in the low-ceilinged, dimly lit, partially paneled basement of drummer Patrick Kitchin, located—you guessed it—on Clifton Street.

The low ceiling forces 6'1" bassist John Anderson to play in his stocking feet and drop the endpin on his instrument to its lowest level. "I play without my shoes in order to lower my body position to better match the lowered bass placement," he said. "Oh, the things we do for love."

"These are five people who are so passionate about jazz," confirmed Kitchin, a San Francisco employment law attorney. "We're a pretty well-established band, playing jazz standards at two to three gigs a month." At the same time, "No one is going to give up their day jobs to try and make it in New York. We have such a really vibrant jazz scene here in the Bay Area."

"We've booked the Clifton Street Regulars for a number of our festivals and they've been a huge hit," said Samee Roberts, president of Oakland's Heart of the Town Events, producers of Rockridge Out & About—which featured the band the last two years—and several other East Bay festivals.

"We were initially intrigued to learn that there was a jazz band out of Rockridge," Roberts said. "After hearing them perform, it was clear that they were not amateurs but a professional-level quintet with a distinct sound all their own. They are also wonderful, community-minded people who support local causes and events," recently playing for free at the Autumn Lights Festival to benefit the nonprofit Friends of the Gardens at Lake Merritt.

The band formed in 2013 when its five original members met at the Berkeley Jazzschool now housed within the California Jazz Conservatory, an accredited, independent music conservatory dedicated to the study and performance of jazz.

"We met in classes together," Kitchin said. The group located in his Rockridge basement because a drum set is awkward to move around and a piano stands in the corner. "For our first gig, I don't think we even had a name." Since then, Kitchin, Jeff Weiss on saxophone and Paul Mathes at the piano/keyboard have welcomed the band's two newest members, bassist Anderson and Jason Whiting on guitar.

"We all fooled around with instruments as kids, but began to take it seriously later in life," Kitchin said. "Most of us are grandparents—or have adult children; Jason still has high school kids at home." They rarely miss a practice and always work on new material, said Kitchin, who administers the group, creating the set lists and arrangements. "You'll see the dedication."

Kitchin, who with his wife moved to Rockridge from Alameda six years ago, played drums in his high school marching band. "I never played in front of a drum kit (set)," which is what he does now. But then he is known for pursuing new challenges: He had finished all but his doctoral dissertation in medical anthropology when he decided to become a lawyer. "No regrets," he said.

Weiss was in his late 50s when he took up basic saxophone at the Jazzschool. "I began playing in ensembles there and for the last five years with my CSR buddies," the Oakland resident said.

A tax attorney with two adult daughters, Weiss hadn't played a musical instrument since the age of 14, and then it had been classical piano and guitar. "Rehearsals are a weekly shot of adrenaline and give me the opportunity to play, perform and hone my improvisational skills with the group," Weiss said.

Mathes, the piano/keyboardist, played violin as a kid influenced, perhaps, by his violinist grandfather. "Then as a teenager, I discovered jazz," he said. "I fooled around

Clifton Musicians, page 7

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# Clifton Musicians

from page 6

with piano but married, started teaching, had our son, and was too busy for music."

When the former Spanish teacher, now retired from administration at UC Berkeley's School of Public Health, had what he termed "my mid-life crisis in my 40s, I decided to try to pursue what I loved – jazz." He rented a tenor sax and started taking lessons. "I took jazz courses at Laney College, hung out at the jam sessions. Eventually I started applying the theory I was learning to my piano playing, realizing I could express myself better on the piano."

Anderson, who lives in Alameda and works for a small manufacturing company in Oakland, started studying jazz and double bass about four years ago. "We've always had music in our home," he said, "always a piano or guitar nearby. As the children (four) have launched, I have found more time to dedicate to more formal musical study." His eldest daughter teaches music and has performed at Carnegie Hall, as her great-great-grandmother did before her.

"It was great to be asked to join the Clifton Street Regulars," Anderson said. "It's a great group of gentlemen and it's fun to be able to contribute to the music-making."

Whiting, an Oakland IT manager, began playing with CSR about a year ago, sitting in when their regular guitarist couldn't make a gig. He became a full-time member in May. Whiting took up guitar in high school, played in rock-and-roll bands through college, but then turned to jazz. "I took a break while raising my two kids and have just picked it up over the last few years."



**The Clifton Street Regulars (left to right): Jeff Weiss, Jason Whiting, Paul Mathes, John Anderson and drummer Patrick Kitchin pause for a photo at their weekly practice.**

/Judith Doner Berne

A Dublin resident, "I lived on Lawton Avenue in Rockridge some 20 years ago," Whiting said. "I find it funny how I used to live only a couple of blocks away from where we rehearse every week."

Brooke Levin, Kitchin's across-the-street neighbor, has heard the band play both at his home and at events. She can make out faint strains when they practice, only if she happens to be walking by. "It's a nice sound. You kind of want it in your living room."

"We're very respectful of our neighbors," Kitchin said. "We rehearse from 6-8 p.m. Our former next-door neighbors' child called it 'Jazzy Wednesday.'"

"Whether rehearsing or playing a gig," Mathes said, "we're always trying for those magic moments when we're all in sync, the rhythm is pulsing along and we're able to take a solo and express those musical ideas which are in our head."

To comment on this column or to suggest a story about you, your neighbor or your Rockridge neighborhood, email judyberne@att.net.








# Letters to the Editor

The Rockridge News welcomes posted letters and emails to the editor. Your name, address, phone number, email address and city/neighborhood must be included in either for verification. Only your name will appear with your letter. Letters may be edited for clarity and brevity at the editor's discretion. Views expressed in any letter are the writer's own, and may not necessarily be shared by the editor or by RCPC.

### "I am totally fed up with my car window getting smashed in Oakland"

**Dear Dan Kalb:**

This is the first email I have ever written to an Oakland representative. That tells you how mad I am. I have lived in Rockridge for 15 years. This year vandals have smashed my side rear window four times while I was parked on the street in Oakland; twice in Rockridge (including a recent night when I was at the Ramen Shop), once downtown and once by Piedmont Avenue. Three times nothing was stolen since I know not to leave things exposed in my car. The other time a laptop was stolen from the back of the car (it was not visible). Three of the four times, I was only away from my car for two hours, out to eat at a restaurant. Each time I pay $200 – $300 to get my window replaced. This does not count lost time from work dealing with it—or the stress. I have filed a police report online after each break-in.

From now on, I am NOT going to eat out in Oakland (particularly Rockridge). This vandalism is out of hand and I am tired of it. I do not have this problem in any other town. I beg you to meet with OPD to solve this terrible problem. Street cameras? More local security guards? Surely OPD can catch these people by hiding on some rooftops at dinner time along College Avenue.

I have had all I can take of this. For the sake of the local economy, I beg you to fix this problem.

***— Jenn Hyman***

### Reply from Dan Kalb's Office

**Dear Jenn:**

I am so sorry to hear about your troubles with auto break-ins. It's true that Oakland has a huge problem with car theft and break-ins. Dan is very aware of this and has made Public Safety one of his biggest platforms during his time in City Council. We will report this to the Area 2 Captain and may hopefully hear of some leads.

***— Monica Harris, Community Liaison, Councilmember Dan Kalb***

### Affected Businesses Received No Bicycle Kiosk Placement Notice

**Editor:**

Chris Jackson of the Rockridge District Association (RDA) recently sent an email out notifying RDA members that three to five parking spaces would be lost at College and Bryant to the Ford GoBike program. We own a property in the 5300 block of College Avenue and we let our office and retail tenants know about the loss in parking spaces. They were understandably unhappy on behalf of their patients/clients/patrons. I learned from the Ford GoBike website that their intent for bicycle density is to have stations/kiosks within a 5 minute walk of each other. Why? If you are biking or enjoying a pedestrian-friendly shopping area, why do the bike kiosks need to be within a 5 minute walk of each other?

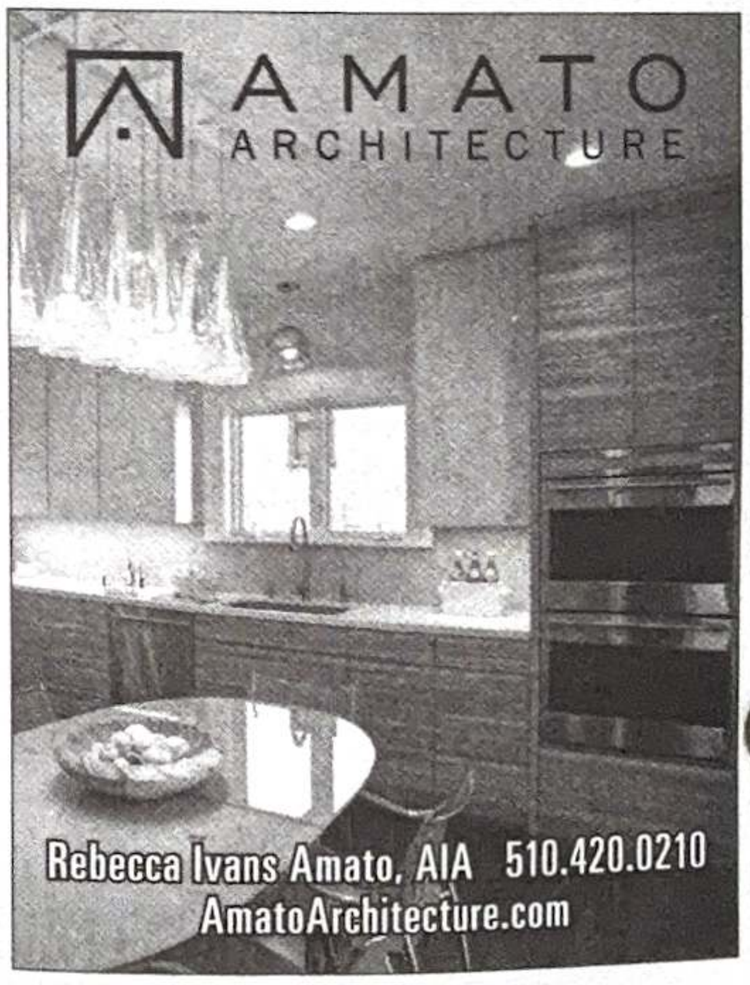
My biggest concern is the lack of input from impacted businesses. Small businesses, which lease space and pay business taxes to the City, were not sufficiently notified and I am not aware that we were allowed input regarding the placement—aka loss— of parking spaces along College Avenue. There are already so few parking spaces on the block which houses the Rockridge Branch Library that a loss of another three parking spaces on College Avenue seems a business-unfriendly move. Two of the tenants in our building serve autistic children and their families; a third, a chiropractic business, serves folks who need to drive due to ongoing health issues. Getting folks out of their cars sounds like a great idea, but what if the businesses that are thriving have clients that need to arrive in cars?

I've sent one set of emails to Danielle Due, Michael Ford, Ryan Russo, City Bikeshare, Mayor Schaaf and two emails to Dan Kalb's office. I've looked at the RCPC website to see whether I've missed meetings about the Bike Share program and I found one meeting on April 9, 2016. Did I miss other meetings? I know from Chris Jackson that the RDA did not notify any of the businesses.

No Kiosk Notice, page 9

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# No Kiosk Notice

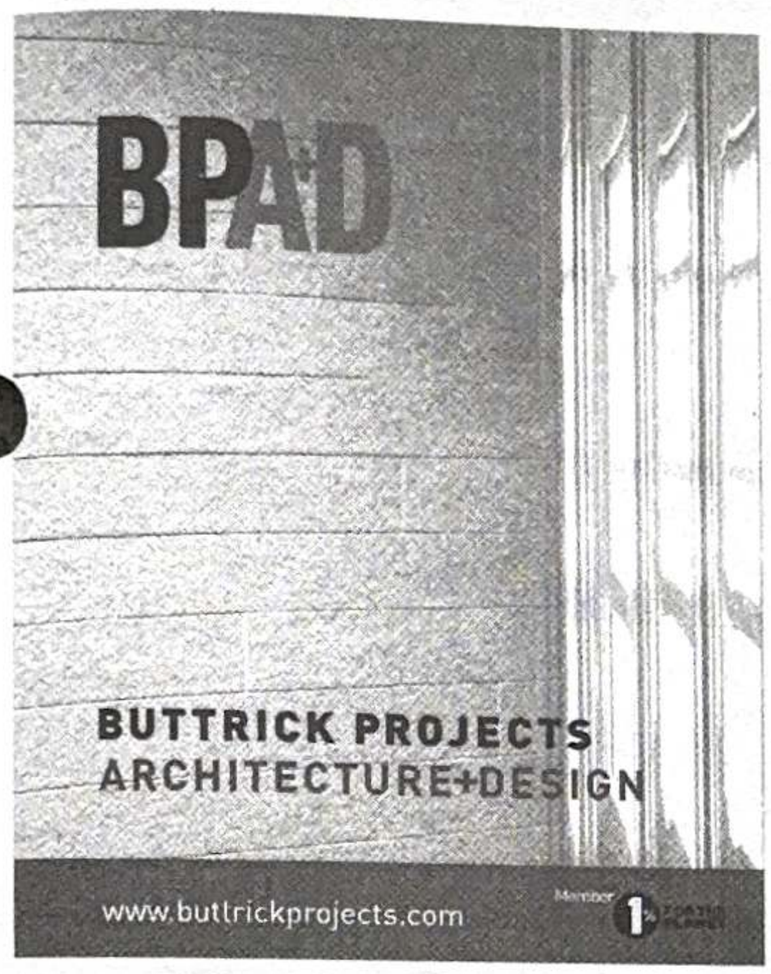
from page 8

I hope the density and locations of the bicycles can be opened again for discussion. College and Bryant have so few parking spaces with all the restaurants and the Library, some compromise could be considered.

As a concerned business owner, operating on College Avenue since 1993, and a mixed use building owner on College and Bryant since 2000, I would like to have input into these discussions and I'd like to know how to participate.

Also, where are the bike helmets?

***— A business and property owner on College Avenue. Name withheld by request.***




## Has OakDot Considered Public Involvement and Roundabout Side Effects?

**Editor:** Following is a copy of a letter I sent to Council Member Dan Kalb and Senior Transportation Planner Sarah Fine expressing my concerns about the Roundabout planning process:

This is in response to the article about "Mini-Roundabouts Coming Soon to Shafter" that staff of the Oakland Department of Transportation (OakDOT) published in the November 2017 issue of The Rockridge News.

First, a disclosure/disclaimer: I am a member of the board of RCPC, the Rockridge Community Planning Council. However, I am writing only as a citizen of Oakland and resident of Rockridge. The board has taken no position on the matters discussed in the OakDOT article.

Individuals whose opinions I respect have expressed support for the proposed roundabouts. I am concerned how well they would work at the intersections in question, but am open to being persuaded.

However, merits aside, this has not been a model of effective public involvement, nor is there satisfactory evidence that OakDOT has taken appropriate account of side effects, such as diversion of traffic to streets parallel to Shafter. Since OakDOT is a new city agency, I hope its managers will take this as an opportunity to improve its processes for interacting with neighborhoods on local transportation issues.

In the article, OakDOT declares that it "wants to be sure we're talking with

Roundabouts, page 14

# Op Ed

# Development Challenge for Claremont Hotel

***by David Kessler, steering committee member of the "Save Our Claremont" organization.***

Signature Development Group and investor Richard Blum, at the behest of one of the largest international hotel chains in the world, propose building a 43-unit condominium complex right next to the historic Claremont Hotel, and adding 250 memberships to the hotel's Club & Spa.

The "Historic Resource Evaluation," prepared by Signature and presented to the Oakland Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board in May and June, suggested stripping the area where they wish to build the condominium complex of its status as a state historic resource. This is a blatant attempt to circumvent the public review and CEQA protections that listing on the California Register of Historic Resources affords the landmark hotel and its grounds.

The Oakland Planning Commission will consider the Historic Resource Evaluation findings and is expected to release and review a Draft Environmental Impact Report

Claremont Hotel, page 11

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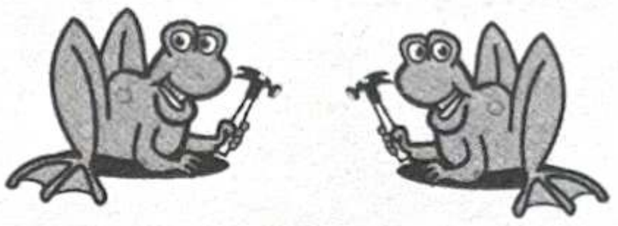
FROG has much to be thankful for: you, the community, for all your support; volunteerism; and everyone's patience as we obtained city and parks commissions approvals, grants, and permits in 2017. Now we await our third and final permit approval for the "Swings and More+" project. The bid and build phases are in sight for mid-2018.

**FROG on the Move:** FROG will soon move its nonprofit affiliation to the Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation (OPRF), a non-profit. After considering several options, including becoming a 501(c)3 ourselves, we decided to seek fiscal sponsorship through OPRF as our top choice of a like-minded organization, focused on improving parks across the City. During the Big Build, OPRF (known at that time as Friends of Oakland Parks and Recreation) was our first and original fiscal sponsor.

We made a formal request to join OPRF and presented to the OPRF board in November. I'm pleased to say our application has been accepted and we are finalizing the contact agreements. Our official move is expected in early 2018. Please stay tuned!

To volunteer, email chair@frogpark.org. To make a tax-deductible donation to FROG, click here: www.frogpark.org/donate/

— ***Carol Behr,*** FROG Chair (Friends of the Rockridge-Temescal Greenbelt)



# Rockridge Halloween Parade Founder Pleased by Parade's Growth, Evolution

*by Theresa Nelson*

Watching the 25th annual Halloween Parade in Rockridge brought back wonderful memories of when I founded it, as the mother of a two-year-old daughter. A group of parents had been trying to get the unsafe play structure at Colby Park replaced so there would be someplace for us to take our young ones in the neighborhood, instead of going to Berkeley, Montclair, or Piedmont. We ran into some opposition, and folks were discouraged, so I thought we should do something fun and positive. And what do toddlers and preschoolers like better than dressing up? Thus was born the Rockridge Halloween Parade.



**Theresa Nelson**

The first year we had about 40 children, the next year about 75, and we added volunteer crossing guards at major intersections, and then soon it was hundreds. We learned that the youngest kids really did not understand trick-or-treat or the candy; they were mostly interested in walking around in their costumes. Older ones,of course, were wise to the opportunity for early Halloween treats.

Over the years, the parade has evolved, sometimes with music, sometimes storytelling, and with different merchants participating, but one thing is constant: the adorableness and sweetness of these young children dressed up and parading around. It makes me glad to see that this tradition has survived 25 years, and I hope it will be going strong 25 years from now.



**Halloween Parade Trick-or-Treaters on College Avenue, 2017.** /Ronnie Spitzer

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There will be plaids a-plenty, as Scots

Revels, page 11

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# Claremont Hotel

from page 9

in the coming months.

Should this project be built, it would have a significant impact on Rockridge. It would increase congestion (and consequently air, noise and light pollution) in the Tunnel Road corridor between Contra Costa County and coastal East Bay locations, as well as along Claremont Avenue and local streets.

In addition, since the hotel is served by only a single bus route but is near freeways, it would invite new residents to use automobiles. The added vehicular traffic would imperil evacuation routes in the event of a disaster like the 1991 fire; add to parking congestion; delay commutes; and endanger pedestrians and cyclists.

In addition, the visual impact upon the majestic landmarked hotel would be irreversible and unsightly. It is another reason why this project deserves the closest scrutiny.

While we can all agree that more housing is needed, luxury units far from a transit hub do not meet the need. There are, moreover, no data to support the notion that trickle down operates with respect to housing development.

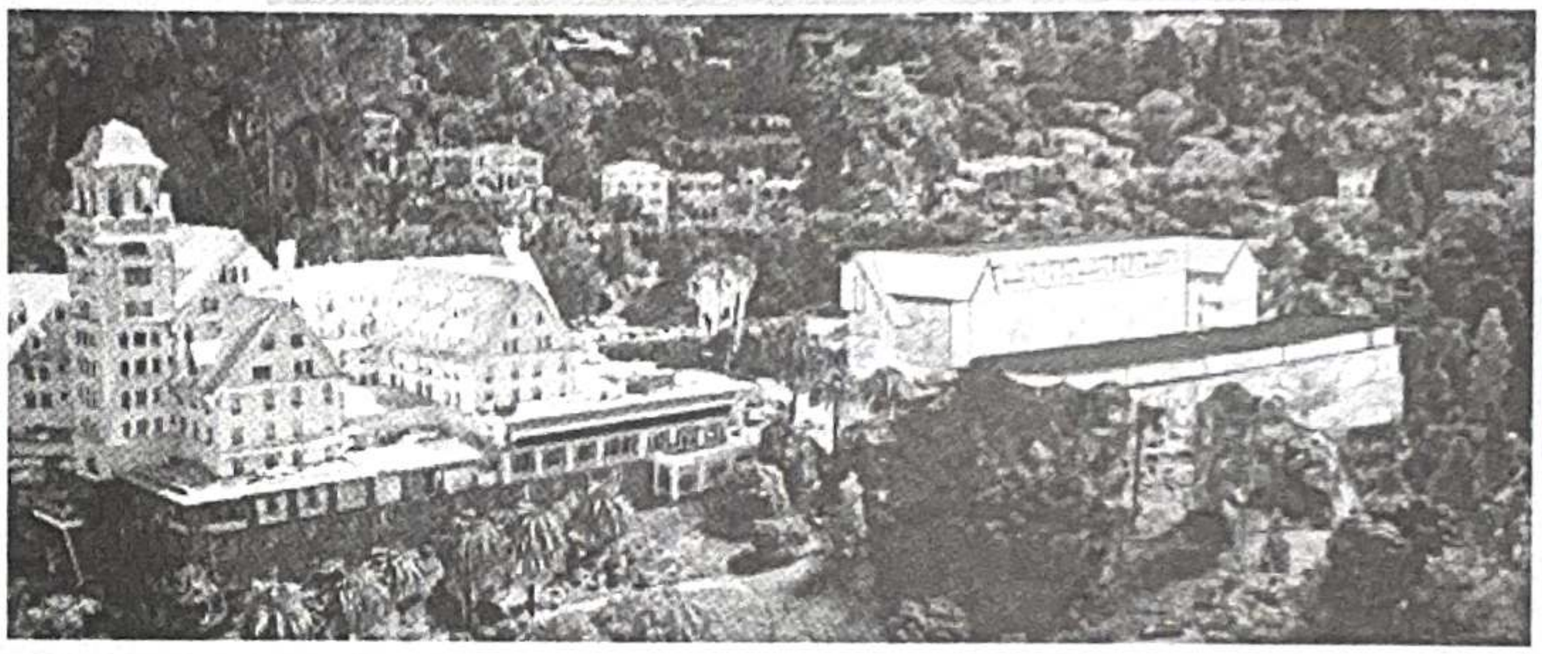
Community opposition in past decades has defeated projects very similar to this. We hope you will consider adding your voice to those who question the wisdom of building these condominiums and vastly enlarging club membership.

Please follow the progress of the project via our website: saveourclaremont.org.

**Ed. Note:** Signature Development Group will be invited to respond to this Op-Ed piece in the February issue of The Rockridge News.

**Below: Aerial perspective (from the west) of the proposed condominium as it would appear beside the Hotel. (Image courtesy Save Our Claremont.)**

## Condoplex at the Claremont?



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# Mutual Aid

from page 1

All fires start out under the control of the local agency, but as they grow, County and State take over. Cities have Mutual Aid agreements that quickly bring in resources from neighboring cities, and Cal Fire coordinates all air responses. I worked the fire at Leona Quarry a few weeks back and found myself alongside firefighters from as far away as the Santa Cruz mountains. It's almost impossible to get a box of pencils delivered to the firehouse, but when it counted we ordered up six air tankers and two Skycrane helicopters to Oakland within minutes. During the summer months, Cal Fire has crews up and down the state and they take charge at all major incidents.

On our way to Santa Rosa, Cal Fire told us to meet four other engines from around the Bay Area to become a "strike team." We were given unique identifying rig numbers that we wrote on our windows with grease paint, and we were assigned radio channels to communicate with each other and with Command. Radio communications are hit and miss at the best of times, and in Santa Rosa we were occasionally unable to communicate with base. Cell phones help, and are also a useful reminder to feel guilty that you haven't called home in 36 hours.

All emergency responders use the Incident Command System, which gives us common terminology and tactics so a firefighter from Oakland can communicate immediately with a cop from Alabama. (That only goes so far; when we talk politics there are still a lot of blank stares on both sides.)

If you were here during the Firestorm in 1991, you probably remember stories of mutual aid units arriving and being unable to hook up to our hydrants. We've fixed that. All cities in California have commonly-sized fittings or at least carry adapters so that they can easily adjust to local equipment.

When we send rigs out of county, we usually send engines (the short ones with the water) rather than trucks (the long ones with the ladders and the firefighter driving the back wheels and acting all cool). There's not much work for ladder trucks on a wildland or urban interface fire, whereas the engines can lay hose and protect structures. But most of the work is done with hand tools: the laborious work of scratching protective lines down to bare mineral soil in order to deprive the fire of fuel. You fight a fire like that with a million hours of digging, a thousand air drops, and the occasional lucky break in the weather.




The mutual aid system isn't perfect, but it's enormously better than it was. With wildfires on the increase, municipalities have to balance their generosity with the need to hold rigs back to protect home turf.

Everyone's job gets easier if residents do their part: maintain your defensible space; park off-street so we can get by; and don't juggle your flaming batons in the high grass. But that won't necessarily be enough; remember that the 1991 Firestorm jumped an eight-lane freeway, so just keeping your grass mowed won't cut it. Take the time to educate yourself about fire policy and then keep the pressure on your elected officials. Don't let them reduce staffing or let equipment fall into disrepair. Tell the City and the School District and Caltrans that they need to keep their properties well-maintained just like you keep yours. Encourage the City to update the emergency alert system so we can all receive warning texts and calls telling us when it's time to bug out.

All told, Oakland sent about 25 people northwards last month. Not just cannon fodder firefighters like me, but also specialists such as bulldozer operators, communications specialists, and helicopter operations managers. Fires are a fact of life in California, and we have to work together as a state to protect ourselves. To keep ourselves safe at home we need to start thinking of our fire department as part of a much larger patchwork of resources. Even then there are no guarantees. Enjoy the rainy winter!



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# GoBikes

from page 5

alongside Tim's house, twelve feet from his kitchen window, and he wants them moved two blocks away to the DMV parking lot. He says he found an anonymous note on his door saying, "If you don't like the bikes, why don't you move?" He's lived there thirty years; that question, he told me, "made my wife cry."

After their chat with the Mayor, I had my five minutes to ask questions, on the record for The Rockridge News. I started with: what was the city's share of the venture? Her reply: "There is no city money in this endeavor at all." So why do it? I asked. For the environment, she explained. "It's seen as an amenity, and a way to get people out of their cars."

Unexpected information about the city money, but technically true. I later looked up and read (most of) the city's Franchise Agreement. There among the "Whereas"es is mention of $660,616.00 in funding from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District for an Oakland bikeshare program. There's no mention of where that money went, but the document does get Oakland into the GoBike program, administered by the multi-county Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). GoBike gets 20 per cent of the proceeds; 80 per cent goes to the MTC to be divvied up among participating cities according to each city's share of bike rentals. Oakland will then tuck its take back into its own "Bay Area Air Quality Management District Fund (2166)." So it sounds like it's not actually the city's money until it comes out the other end of the endeavor.

In all fairness to Mayor Schaaf, I must point out that she didn't vote for the agreement—she didn't have to. It was passed unanimously by the City Council in 2016. But then it became her job to make it work, so I asked about all the questions that have come up. She acknowledged there have been complaints, "but this is the first organized protest."

Indeed, there have been complaints. Merchants along College Avenue are trying to get bike racks moved into red zones and onto sidewalk extensions. "It's all about parking, that's the issue," says Chris Jackson, manager of the Rockridge District Association of local businesses.

And, on the flip side, there is even a petition to bring back a bike rack. It was removed for construction on 14th Street near Chinatown, and those two dozen local residents want it returned to the neighborhood.

"Contacting your elected officials is always a valid first step," the Mayor told me. So what about getting a bike rack moved? "I was assured it is very easy to move these stations," she said. Physically, yes. But politically is a different question. Mayor Schaaf suggested that Motivate might respond to public pressure. "The experience that Oaklanders have is important to them," she said, referring to Motivate.

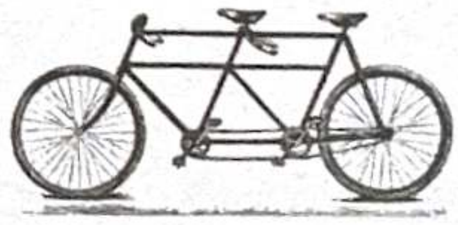
If that doesn't work, there is still Section 23 of the Franchise Agreement: It grants the city the right to make Motivate relocate up to one tenth of its stations at the company's own expense. So perhaps Motivate will be motivated to take a mulligan and try again.

Meanwhile, there are more GoBikes yet to come, including at Rockridge BART and the corner of College and Alcatraz. The Franchise Agreement calls for a total of at least 70 stations in Oakland, each within half a mile of another. (The full map is available on the Ford GoBike website: https://member.fordgobike.com/map/)

But for now, it appears the company is digging in its heels about the Shafter rack. In its official response, Motivate says, "We will monitor this location on a regular basis to ensure it's well taken care of and serves the community—and in a year, recommend changes if needed."

And there was one line in that statement that caused me to raise an eyebrow, and another question. "The city's curb spaces are hidden assets in plain sight."

Whose assets are we talking about?



# Mobile Mayor

from page 4

right now." She also is against building the new Oakland A's stadium on Laney College property. It will uproot, she said, the Chinese community "for the benefit of people from the suburbs."

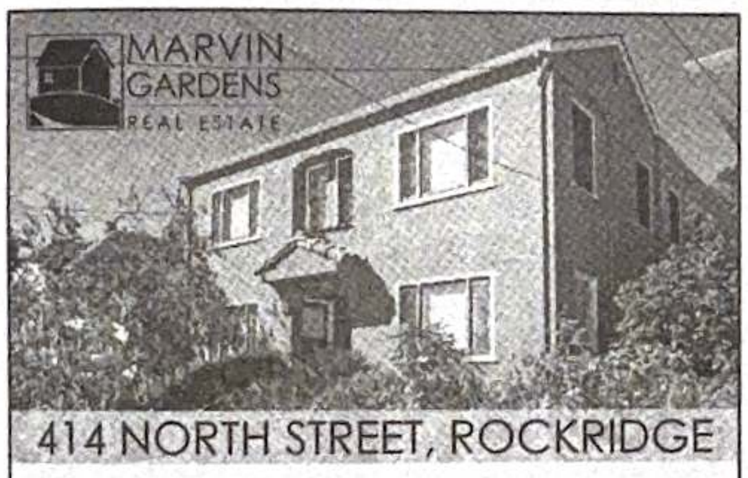
Rick Davis from Redwood Heights said he stopped to say "hi" to the mayor "for my mother on her birthday" and to tell Schaaf to keep up the fight against coal in Oakland.

George Krevsky, also from Rockridge, had a string of quick questions: where did Schaaf think the current East Bay Jewish Community Center should relocate; express his concerns about potholes and Oakland schools; and ask: "How can I help with her re-election campaign?"

Caroline Stern, a Rockridge artist, had mistakenly come to meet the mayor at 10 a.m., but back she came at 1:30, "trying to advocate for art. We're the richest neighborhood," she told me, "but we have no murals."

Ron Cohen, who came over from Temescal and works at Children's Hospital, wanted to "just chat. It adds to my day," he said.

And then there was Greg Pasquali, a former RCPC board member and local builder, who brought his small daughter, Eleanor, to meet Schaaf. "I want to show her that it's completely normal to have a woman in charge," he said.



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# Roundabouts

**from page 9**

neighbors whenever we do projects" and "[w]e are happy to hear suggestions from neighbors concerning the need for safety treatments." Yet the agency's plans for Shafter and roundabouts are already firming up, as Shafter's repaving looms just a few months off. There was no previous outreach to either RCPC or The Rockridge News, which would have been appropriate to advise the neighborhood of staff's preliminary thinking and gain feedback before OakDOT formulated the present proposal.

As justification for its proposal, the article briefly describes and quotes from a survey distributed along Shafter and vaguely referred-to "intersecting blocks." I live on an intersecting street a few blocks from Shafter, but to my knowledge no one near me received the survey (before The Rockridge News article appeared). The article contains repeated assertions that "many" and "most" provided various responses, but includes no details to support these characterizations. Basic questions include: When and how were the surveys distributed? How many were distributed? How many were returned? How many supported the proposed roundabouts?

Other considerations that the article does not address: Has the Fire Department weighed in on whether its equipment could negotiate the roundabouts without impairing response time? And what about the many large, heavy trucks that come up Clifton (off Hwy 24's Claremont exit) toward College?

Plans for maintaining the roundabouts, should they be incorporated, are critical, but seem to be lacking. The article solicits volunteers to "adopt the mini-gardens." What plantings does OakDOT have in mind? How does OakDOT plan to ensure adequate watering? Appealing as the Seattle experience may be, this is a drier and hotter area than Seattle, and even drought-tolerant plantings must be irrigated for the first year or two to get established. Does OakDOT contemplate running underground water to the roundabouts, or expect that neighborhood volunteers will dodge traffic to make watering can runs into the intersections? If these aspects are not thought through, the roundabouts could quickly become eyesores.

The article mentions the $350 million in Measure KK bond funds that will support repaving of Shafter and other streets. This was a substantial added obligation approved by the voters just last year to repair streets and sidewalks, because this city's streets are in such woeful shape. Were roundabouts specifically authorized uses of this funding? How much would each roundabout cost to install? How many blocks must be left unpaved per roundabout? And which blocks does OakDOT have in mind as designated losers? Residents of not only Rockridge but also other Oakland neighborhoods deserve answers to these questions well before staff starts firming up plans.

I look forward to your response on these issues.

***— Laura Schlichtmann***

***Ed. Note:*** *The letter was edited lightly for publication in the newsletter.*

**Revels** **from page 11**

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

### District 1 Councilman Dan Kalb

**Drop-in Community Office Hours:** Temescal Farmers' Market, 5300 Claremont Ave. (off Teleg.) at DMV parking lot. 3rd Sunday each month,10:30am-12:30pm. Times/locations of other office hrs. or more info: mmharris@oakland.net or www.dankalb.net/contactdan.

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**FOR CHILDREN**

- **Family Story Time:** Stories/songs/rhymes (for all ages); Saturdays, 10:30am.
- **Toddler Story Time:** Songs, active rhymes and stories (for 9 months to 2 years), Thursdays, 10:30am, **upstairs.**
- **Pre-School Story Time:** Read-alouds, songs, and rhymes (ages 2 to 5); Thursdays, 10:30am.

**All story times followed by Play Time;** parents and caregivers invited.

**Note: no story times between 12/22 and 1/5.**

**Special Events:**

- **Needle Felting Craft:** Make a cuddly or scratchy creature out of felt – for yourself or gift. Saturdays in December; 2:30-4pm. All ages welcome! Best for kids ages 7 & up who can handle sharp objects.
- **Lego Engineering with Play-Well TEKnologies:** Design & build, explore your engineering ideas. Best for age 5 and up. Tues, 12/12, 6:30-7:45pm.
- **Winter Bingo:** Get your Winter Bingo Card at any Oakland Library. Complete 5 activities in a row, and get your PRIZE BOOK. Prizes available 12/27/17 to 1/13/18. Toddlers up to 5th graders.
- **Winter Puzzles & Games:** Ask at the Children's Desk any time for puzzles, memory games, and tricky art or word challenges. 12/19 thru 1/6.

**FOR TEENS**

- **Study Room Hours:** Do your homework at the library. A high school tutor is available for homework questions. Tues & Thurs, 4 - 5pm; Wed: 3 - 4:30 pm.
- **Teen Advisory Board (ages 14-18):** Help advise the library how to better serve teens; **get community service credit for school.** 2nd Sat. each month, 1 to 2pm.
- **Teen 'Scape Program:** Play video & board games; make crafts. Every Tues, Thurs, and Fri 3:30 to 5pm; Wed 1:30 to 5pm.
- **Yu-Gi-Oh Card Game Club:** Beginners welcome. Every Friday 3:30 - 5pm.
- **Make a Holiday Bookmark:** to celebrate upcoming winter holidays: 12/6, 2pm.
- **Make a Terrarium:** Learn how to create a mini Terrarium for yourself or as a holiday gift. **All supplies provided**, 12/13, 2pm

**FOR ADULTS**

- **Ready, Set, Connect!** One on One computer help. Tuesdays 5:30-7:30pm and Saturdays 11am to 1pm. Call 597-5017 for appt.
- **eBook Help:** Work one-on-one with a librarian to download ebooks; get started using amazing collection of digital resources. Fridays, 2 -3:30pm. Make appt. online or call 597-5017.
- **Writers Support/Critique Group:** Bring 15 copies of up to 5 pgs. (double-spaced, MS margins) of any prose for on-site reading/discussion (OK to come empty-handed). Sat, 12/16, 1 to 5pm; wheelchair-accessible. Info: 420-8775 or Writefox@aol.com. Call to confirm.
- **Lawyers in the Library: Free legal info and referral. 1st Tues each month;** 6pm-8pm. Sign-up for lottery starting 5pm; lottery at 5:45 pm. Call day of program to confirm.
- **Origami Workshop:** Learn to make origami box lights and decorative geometric shapes. Instruction by Taro's Origami. All ages and all levels welcome. Sat, 12/16, 2-3:30pm.
- **Knitting Workshop & Meet-Up:** Learn to knit or ask questions about your project. **All levels welcome.** Supplies provided. Sat, 12/16, 3-4:30pm.

**Art Exhibits:**

**Gallery**

Dec: **Kathy Goss:** Glimpse of Nature; watercolors.

Jan: **Oakland Arts Association**

**Lobby Display Case**

Dec: Origami

Jan: TBD

**LIBRARY HOURS**
**Tues, 12:30 to 8pm.**
**Wed, Thurs & Sat: 10am to 5:30pm.**
**Fri, 12 to 5:30pm.**
**Closed: Sun and Mon. Also: Sat,12/23 and Tues, 12/26 and 1/2.**

### The Women's Antique Vocal Ensemble (WAVE) Christmas Concert

**The Three Wise Ones:** Medieval and Renaissance music related to the characters we have come to know as the three kings. Tunes familiar and evocative to transport you back through the centuries and across the far-flung lands west and east of Bethlehem. Fri, Dec 15, 8pm. (Tickets: $20; Seniors/Students $15; 18 & under $5). St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 2300 Bancroft Way, Berkeley. Call 1-800-838-3006 to purchase tickets or for more concert info, or https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3134981.

### Square Dance in North Oakland

Music by The Squirrelly String Band. **Calling by Jordan Ruyle.** 1st Fridays each month, 8 – 10pm. All levels welcome; all dances taught on the spot. Come alone or bring friends. $5-10 sliding scale donation. The Niebyl-Proctor Marxist Library, 6501 Telegraph Ave. Info: squirrellystringband.com.

### North Oakland Senior Center

Mon. – Fri., 9am to 4:30pm. 5714 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way: 597- 5085

**Programs include:** Arts/crafts; health counseling; dancing and exercise; trips, tours and theater outings; Alzheimer's support groups, computer classes/more.

- "ALL ABOARD FOR YOSEMITE": 3 day trip planned for May 8 thru 10, 2018. Registration opens Monday, Dec. 4th, with deposit of $150 per person. Call 597- 5085 for details.

Seniors age 55+ join for $12 annual dues to get discount and other benefits. Receive "The North Oakland Senior Times" for full schedule of classes/events, lunch menus, and volunteer opportunities. More info at 597-5085.

### Temescal Farmers' Market

**Open Sundays, 9am to 1pm (all year).** Locally grown fruits and vegetables; fresh ranch eggs; home-made bakery items; fresh cut flowers; unique prepared foods, fresh locally caught fish, handcrafts and more. Sample the goods; meet the grower. **Live music. Bring reusable bags.** 5300 Claremont Ave. (off Telegraph) at DMV parking lot.

## Dog Park News

**from page 3**

neighboring cities. We are now raising funds to conduct the first major renovations to the park since it was built more than 20 years ago. Hardy Dog Park maintenance continues with wonderful volunteers. Our park users meet on the first Saturday of every month at 9 a.m. to help clean and maintain the park. We are proud that our maintenance has prevented any flooding this winter, for the first time in a long time. We installed a lovely handmade bench last month, along with new bins for clean newspaper bag donations.

For more information, please visit HardyDogPark.org.



**Hardy Dog Park Volunteers Barney, left, Richard and Joanne testing out the new, hand-made donated bench.**

/Linda Zunas

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What do you like most about Rockridge that you want others to know about? Contact: editor@rockridge.org.

## I KNOW ROCKRIDGE

I want to tell you how thankful I am this year. My business in Rockridge has grown every year. I just went over the $150,000,000 mark in sales of homes in Rockridge alone. I have sold and closed over 160 transactions in Rockridge and since I live and work here, it makes this success even better.

One of the biggest joys is how the RCPC News has changed since I moved here in 1987. In 1987, no one ever mentioned a public school in Rockridge. I found this fascinating. And now, after all of these long years and tireless efforts of many neighborhood families, it seems that every issue is full of news about Peralta, Chabot, Claremont and Oakland Tech. My son has graduated from Oakland Tech and I could not be more proud of him and the other students there. He accomplished so much at a great and often under-appreciated school. It has given him every possible chance to succeed. He will be able to land anywhere in the world with excellent social skills and a good education. There is so much to be thankful for living here in Rockridge. Thank You Rockridge.

## I KNOW ROCKRIDGE


*Happy Holidays*

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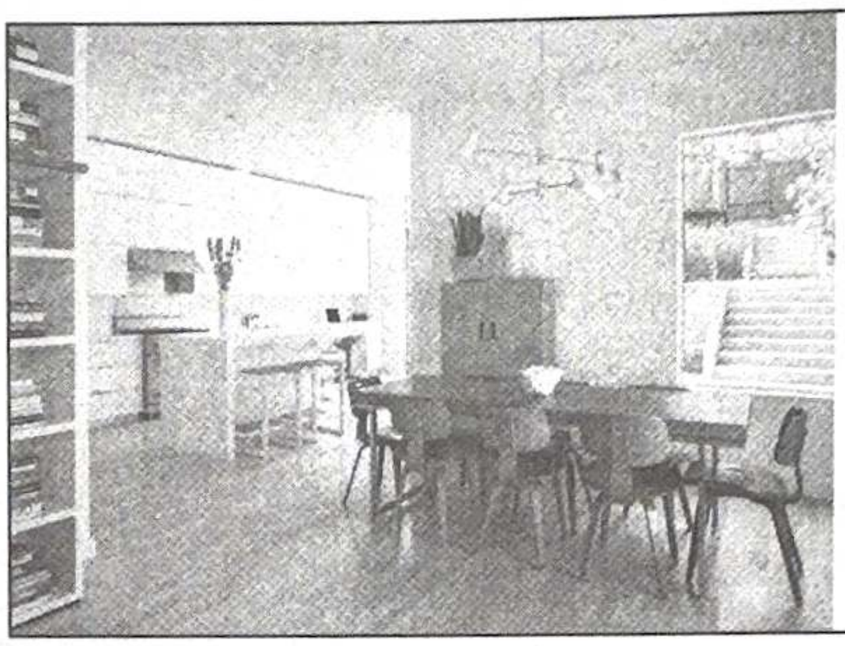
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*Wishing you and your family a happy holiday season!*



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