THE Rockridge News
www.rockridge.org
VOL 36 • NO. 7 • ISSUE NO. 377 • JULY 4, 2020
CIRCULATION: 5,800 RESIDENCES; 200 BUSINESSES
Sponsored by the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) • 4900 Shattuck Ave., PO Box 22504, Oakland 94609

RCPC Annual Meeting and Board Election Rescheduled, Nominations Reopened — Candidates' Forum on Zoom

Annual Meeting and Board Election on September 24; Balloting Continues on September 26.

The board of directors of the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) has announced a new date for the 2020 Annual Meeting. The meeting, originally scheduled for April, was postponed due to the shelter-in-place order. The Annual Meeting, including election of directors to fill six board seats for two-year terms, will now be held on **Thursday, September 24, 2020, at 7pm**.

For those who cannot attend on the 24th, balloting will continue on **Saturday, September 26**. The meeting venue — possibly at an outdoor location — will be announced in the September edition of *The Rockridge News*, together with public health measures that will be in effect.

Updates will be posted online at rockridge.org and on the RCPC Facebook page.

Nominations Reopened, Intent-to-Run Statements due July 31.

RCPC bylaws require that, in all Board elections, the closing date for nominations shall be no later than 120 days before the election. Accordingly, the Board has voted to reopen the period for nominations through the end of July.

Rockridge residents who are interested in running for a board seat may declare their intent by sending an email to the RCPC Board of Directors, at info@rockridge.org, no later than **July 31, 2020**. To qualify, a candidate must be at least 18 years of age and have their principal residence within

RCPC Elections, see page 5



Photo by Anna L. Marks

Peaceful Protest Rally and March at Rockridge BART Calls for an End to Racism

On Saturday, June 13, residents and supporters gathered at the Rockridge BART station alongside SEIU Chapter 1021, organizers of the "Say Their Names" event. Hundreds came to hear speakers and march to UC Berkeley's Sproul Plaza to protest police violence and pervasive, systemic racism. ■



Henry loves customizing selections for those wanting exposure to different musical genres.

Photo by Anna L. Marks

Open Mind Music Curates Collections For Locals

— By Jorja Siemons

The temporary closure of Open Mind Music's storefront on College Avenue may be halting in-person shopping this summer, but the neighborhood store has found new ways to serve music lovers and record rookies alike. With the addition of the "Pick Pack," customers can virtually provide their budgets and specify their favorite genres, artists, and albums to receive expert guidance

Open Mind Music, see page 14

Artist Expresses Heartache through Chalk

— By Anna L. Marks

Rockridge artist Julie Franklin has been living in the neighborhood for more than 25 years and was deeply impacted by the killings of black Americans by police, in particular, the killing of George Floyd, and sketched his likeness in chalk in front of her home on Shafter.





Photos by Anna L. Marks



Franklin works for UC Berkeley's Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, and sees her street art as a way to help express her grief and build community.

"This has been going on for far too long and I felt like I needed to make him really big so people wouldn't forget his name. It's heartbreaking. I don't want to keep seeing my black and brown friends suffering."

Franklin has also sketched out Breonna Taylor, and plans to continue with others who have been killed unjustly. "I'd like to keep doing artwork of people who have been murdered at the hands of police in this country." ■



The Rockridge News

The Rockridge News was founded March 1986 by Don Kinkead, and is published monthly (except August). It 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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Judith Doner Berne ..... Eyes on Rockridge
Susan Montauk ..... Business Manager

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Contacting The Rockridge News

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

Articles and letters submitted for publication should be emailed to the editor. All submissions are limited to 600 words, and must include the author's name, phone number, email address, and city or neighborhood of residence.

All submissions are subject to editing for clarity and brevity. To submit content, or for reprints of an article, contact: editor@rockridge.org.

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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.

My Response to the Black Organizing Project: "The People's Plan for Police-Free Schools"

— By Jody London, President and District 1 Director, Oakland Unified School District

Note to readers: This article was submitted prior to the June 25 School Board meeting where the Board voted unanimously to eliminate the school district's police department.





Photos by Anna L. Marks

On June 10, six out of seven school board members, along with the Superintendent, said they support eliminating the school district police department. Personally, I support the Black Organizing Project (BOP) People's Plan for Police-Free Schools, which will give us the time we need "to create a detailed plan to eliminate the Oakland School Police Department (OSPD) by the end of 2020."

I support this timeline for several very pragmatic reasons outlined within BOP's People's Plan. To begin with, I agree that the BOP's People's Plan will be most successful if we take the time necessary to have a team of OUSD departments working in consultation with BOP and other community stakeholders to create a detailed plan to move the Campus Safety & Security Program, all by the end of 2020.

I also agree with BOP's People's Plan on the importance of change management to ensure that this transition goes smoothly. As the plan states: "As with any other reduction or reorganization, the district must work carefully with its Legal, Human Resources, Communications, and School Networks Supervision Teams to create a plan that incorporates change management best practices, and that includes appropriate resources to manage the change effectively. It is also critical that the $2.3 million budget of the OSPD be strategically reinvested in support systems and student safety — for the whole child as well as students with disabilities with an eye to supporting authentic student safety."

School Superintendent Johnson-Trammell has expressed that she is ready to develop an alternative school safety plan, and noted that right now everyone is very focused

Jody London, see page 13

Market Hall Takes Action on Building an Equitable Community

— By Myrna Walton

What can small businesses do to bring about social justice? In response to the Black Lives Matter movement, the owners and managers at Market Hall have issued a six-point call to solidarity and action against police brutality and for criminal justice reform.

Market Hall on College Avenue has long supported community-based programs but now wants to do more. "Today's issues have been going on so long and are so painful," said Sara Wilson, who opened the Hall with her two brothers in 1987.

"We have always strongly supported Get Out the Vote campaigns but have wanted to do more for voter registration, among other things," she noted.

As of June, the company adopted the following program to foster and sustain a more equitable community, including:

• Actively seek to support and amplify the voices of existing black-owned food producers — their companies, their stories and their products — as well as expanding the number of black participants within the food industry.

• Provide voter registration forms and voter education when hiring new staff (the ballot is not an exam — you don't have to fill out every line)

• Promote "Get Out the Vote" campaigns across the country, including in the home communities of our staff.

• Conduct a comprehensive review and benchmarking of our hiring practices, staff roles, and salary bands across our business to address inequalities.

• Commit all senior managers at Market Hall Foods to complete diversity and anti-bias training.

• Match staff donations given to pro-black, pro-equality, and civic engagement nonprofits.

The decision to match employee donations engendered many lengthy conversations among the staff. Staff and management are now working through which organizations are

Market Hall, see next page

Market Hall, from previous page

accountable and can effect change. They agreed to distribute the employer-matched donations to the NAACP-Legal Defense Fund and the ACLU, because they have solid histories of creating systemic change.

Market Hall has always included a mix of food stores — resembling a European marketplace — and there have been many changes over the years. "When my husband and I moved to Rockridge in 1990," says Wilson, "many of our neighbors were Italians." Market Hall Foods was originally called The Pasta Shop — making fresh pasta and specializing in Italian food products. As the neighborhood changed, so did the store, not only expanding the types and origins of products but strengthening its commitment to finding authentic sources.

Twenty to thirty percent of their 100-plus grocery accounts are owned by persons of color. Recent successful launches include Granola Guru, made by Rockridge resident **Ayana Kelly**, who had been selling her granola in farmers' markets before consulting with Market Hall buyers on how to ready her product for retail shelves.

"I began selling The Granola Guru at Market Hall last year. So far, cultivating a relationship with Market Hall has been a great experience. They truly provide the support to showcase and highlight new artisan brands like my own," Kelly said.



Ayana Kelly started Granola Guru two years ago and her products can be found in over 60 locations throughout Northern California.

The buyers taste and test each product and take into account how it would be used in the pantry of the home cook. There is a long list of ingredients they will not accept, mainly certain chemicals or preservatives, and rancid fat.

Summer Thompson, an employee with Market Hall for the last eight years and a grocery buyer for the past three, emphasizes this concern. "It can take six to eight months working with a potential supplier to make sure the product will be successful with the public, as well as sustainable. That's good for the supplier, good for us, and good for our customers. We look for long-term relationships."

Top sellers include Seka Hills Extra Virgin Olive Oil, produced by the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation from the Capay Valley. Market Hall was one of the first to carry the oil and was instrumental in its success nationwide. Other pivotal products include the spices from Diaspora Co., dedicated to decolonizing the spice trade so that profits go to the workers; and Pan's Mushroom Jerky, a plant-based product created from an updated Malaysian family recipe.

Currently, the buyers are working to bring additional products developed at La Cocina Incubator Kitchen in San Francisco, which assists low and very low-income entrepreneurs, women, immigrants, and people of color.

How well Market Hall will be able to translate their long-term goals into specifically increasing black participation and power within the food industry is "a challenge we want to meet," said Wilson.

"We work closely with the Good Food Merchants Alliance, the San Francisco-based organization dedicated to small producers and start-up food businesses. Also, the Specialty Food Association's outreach to historically under-represented communities has introduced us to some great new products, as well."

The challenge extends not only to suppliers but to staff as well. Wilson said, "We have a diverse staff but have never done an audit of the racial and ethnic breakdown of our 180 employees. Now we will do that audit." ■

Market Hall Foods has two locations: College Avenue in Rockridge, and 4th Street in Berkeley.

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Rockridge News Resumes Door-to-Door Delivery

— By Susan Montauk, The Rockridge News Business Manager

We wish to thank all our volunteers who have been working hard behind the scenes to spread the word about the online availability of *The Rockridge News* for the past three months at www.rockridge.org. These committed neighbors have been emailing their block lists and posting notices on social media sites, all in an effort to keep the newsletter in the public eye during the roughest months of the pandemic.

With this July issue, we are now back to door-to-door distribution, and we hope the community is as glad as we are, and as appreciative of the over 150 volunteers who will be participating each month in the process. Among those are two new volunteers who are taking over important routes — **Tim Hallahan** and **Judy Weiss** who are replacing **Claudine Jones and Rich Yurman**. We welcome them.

They were responsible for deliveries to most of the area east of College Avenue, between Chabot and Claremont. After a serious automobile accident, they decided to go carless and were then delivering many of the bundles on foot. We admire their stamina and their generous spirit, and wish them the very best in all their future endeavors.

Bundling Venue Needed

Another casualty of the pandemic is the loss of our bundling venue. **Jo and Ken Ellis** have provided their dining room table over the last 17 years to sort and prepare the newsletters for delivery. They have asked that we find a new home for the bundling, and we will miss their warm and vibrant spirits that welcomed numerous volunteers on the first Friday of every month. We need someone to step forward to be the sixth Rockridgian in the history of *The Rockridge News* to offer his/her home for a few hours on that first Friday of each month. Please contact Susan at smontauk@gmail.com or call (510) 547-3855.

Here's what's required:

A good size dining table; a decent size front porch (for volunteer boxes; a minimum number of steps up to the porch (5-8 is okay); receipt of newsletters the morning of the first Friday of each month (except August)

Delivering the newsletter to the Rockridge community requires a great deal of organization and community effort. We couldn't have done it these past 35 years without our wonderful volunteers and we hope to continue for the next 35 years. ■

City of Oakland Launches Flex Streets Initiative

The City of Oakland has relaxed restrictions for reopening indoor and outdoor dining by waiving all fees and streamlining permitting for businesses' use of public rights-of-way including sidewalks and parking lanes under a new program called Flex Streets. The goal is to spur equitable economic revitalization by making it easier for retailers, restaurants, and other businesses to use larger portions of the sidewalk, parking lanes, and streets. The program also includes an expedited permitting process for mobile food vendors. It is designed to help some of Oakland's smallest micro-businesses, that are often owned by low-income people of color, operate safely during the pandemic.

The City is also exploring how to provide opportunities for economic revitalization and community engagement through the creative and flexible use of privately owned parking lots and other open outdoor areas.

To participate in the Flex Street program and to use an adjacent sidewalk or parking space, businesses may apply for a permit online at www.oaklandca.gov/FlexStreets. ■

RCPC Elections, from front page

RCPC boundaries. (See rockridge.org/elections). IMPORTANT: Candidates who declared their candidacy during the original nomination period MUST re-confirm their intent to run by emailing the RCPC board at info@rockridge.org — also by **July 31, 2020**.

RCPC Election: Candidates' Forum to be Held Online, Mid-September.

During the week before RCPC's Annual Meeting and Board election, the Rockridge community will have an opportunity to hear from Board candidates, and pose questions in a Candidates' Forum. **This event will be held as a Zoom Webinar, on Thursday, September 17, at 7pm**. The event will also be streamed on various social media channels. Information on how to participate will appear in the September *Rockridge News* and will be posted online at rockridge.org, and on the RCPC Facebook page. A YouTube video of the forum will be posted at bit.ly/RCPCYouTube. ■

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Joint RCPC-NCPC Town Hall, June 2020

— By Karen Ivy, Secretary, Greater Rockridge NCPC

On June 11, the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) and Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) held their annual joint town hall, via Zoom. The meeting opened with comments from district Community Resource Officers (CROs) **Josiah Ladd** for Beat 12Y, and **Kristine Jurgens** for Beat 13X. Crime is down in both neighborhoods, largely due to the pandemic.

The first presenter, **Anne Janks** from the Coalition for Police Accountability, discussed the MACRO program (Mobile Assistance Community Responders of Oakland). MACRO is based on the Cahoots program in Eugene, OR, a 30-year-old program that sends teams of EMTs and social support personnel to respond to calls for services that do not involve crime, such as homeless complaints, with success in cost control and fewer arrests.

The MACRO proposal to the Police Commission asks that a one-year pilot program shall provide for a single 24x7 van to respond to 911 and non-emergency calls in East Oakland that do not involve violence or crime. Oakland Dispatch operators will decide where to route which calls, as they normally do. The response was very positive, including from the police in attendance.

We also had a presentation from **Sean Maher** of the Oakland Department of Transportation Slow Streets program. They've found that Slow Streets was less successful in East Oakland than North Oakland, as residents there said they need more safe ways to walk to essential services — food distribution, grocery stores, COVID testing. Slow Streets is now working on improving intersection access in those areas, and they have some new proposals that will be announced soon. They will be soliciting public comments.

The balance of the meeting began with a presentation from **Lt. Rob Rosin**, who sat in for **Captain Chris Bolton**. Rosin noted that while crime is down overall in North Oakland, violent crime is up in other areas, especially shootings, which are up 22 percent city-wide. In response to current protests and marches, he went on to say "It's important to say OPD as a whole was really shocked about the events in Minneapolis with the murder of Mr. Floyd, and we stand united against all police brutality. We're proud to report that your police department is probably one of the most progressive departments and forward thinking in the nation. Our chief, our union president, and all of us, have stood up against what happened." OPD's use-of-force policies are on the city website.

The availability of CROs have been stretched thin by recent demonstrations, and they had to leave the meeting early. The rest of the meeting was a general discussion of issues surrounding public safety, police hiring, use-of-force policies, and the recent demonstrations. ■

All are invited to the next NCPC meeting, currently scheduled for August 13; add to the agenda by emailing chair@rockridgencpc.com.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Density Allows for Diversity

I'm a designer. I value aesthetics. I love the beauty of Rockridge. But the price some in this community were willing to pay just to avoid seeing a tower in the neighborhood strikes me as shortsighted. Parking and traffic are also often cited by those opposed to new development. Are these truly more important than the more serious and long-term social and environmental consequences of continually refusing any increase in urban density?

So many of us care deeply about our neighborhood and I admire that, even if we disagree. To me, the CCA development seems like a major turning point. It's certainly not perfect, but it provides a rare opportunity to welcome many more neighbors into Rockridge. It asks us what kind of neighborhood we want to be. What kind of neighbors do we want to be?

I'm hoping those of us who are fortunate to live here consider factors beyond our personal interests, and the interests of existing homeowners, as we approach future development. We benefit from natural and historical beauty, transit proximity, and multiple lively commercial corridors. I strongly believe we should not keep these assets to ourselves, and that means being much more expansive in how we think about density.

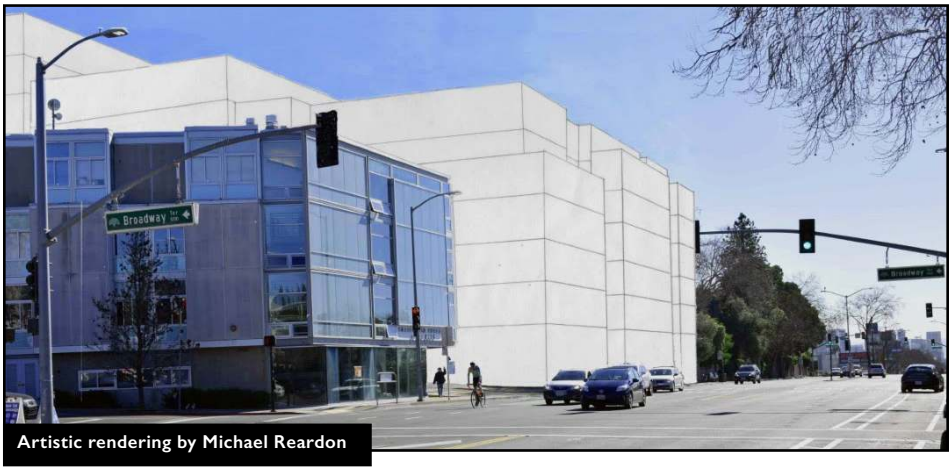
We can do this without giving up any part of what makes Rockridge great. Bringing in a more diverse population of all ages, racial backgrounds, and economic backgrounds will enhance Rockridge. The only way we can do this is by adding significant numbers of housing units of all types — and yes, including towers. ■

Stephen Coles
Miles Ave

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CCA Needs Input on Design Elements

As reported in June's issue of *The Rockridge News*, the developers of the proposed residential construction on the site of the College of the Arts (CCA) campus recently withdrew their original proposal for a 19-story tower on the site. The new project proposes residences, and some commercial development, from five to eight stories in height. This is a welcome improvement but there is more to be done.



Artistic rendering by Michael Reardon

In recent meetings with Rockridge-based community organizations, including Upper Broadway Advocates (UBA), the developers stated their willingness to cooperate and collaborate with the community on the refinement of the plans, including elements of design, now.

This is a great opportunity. We can't wait passively until September for the results of the environmental impact report (EIR), especially since the developers now appear to be seriously listening to the community. This is the time to resolve many of the unanswered questions about this proposal including, but not limited to the following:

• This project is slated for only 10 percent affordable units at best, and zero, at worst. How can we obtain more housing for the "missing middle" — those who don't qualify for housing assistance but who can't afford luxury rates — including people who work in the neighborhood such as teachers, nurses, and families?

• Can the architectural style in the final design be compatible with the neighborhood? And, if so, how?

• The new buildings will range from five stories tall on the corner of Broadway and Clifton, to seven and eight stories tall on the rest of the site. Is that still too high for the area?

• What can be done to better respect the historic, cultural, and architectural heritage of the site, including the wall and gate?

• How can the parking/traffic challenges be resolved in a transit-friendly manner, without overburdening neighborhoods and the intersections nearby?

• How to guarantee that the park will be open to the public in perpetuity?

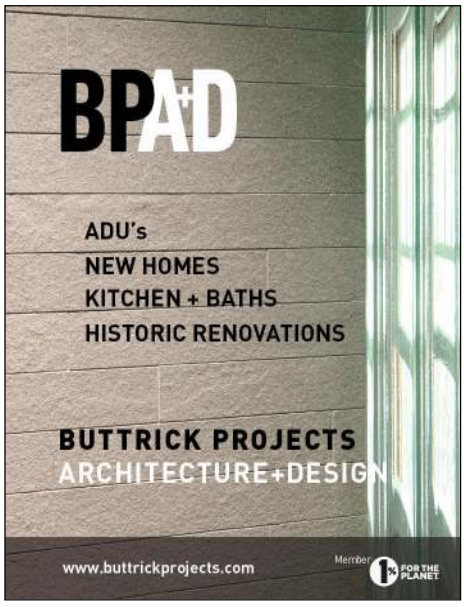
We are SIMBYs, Smart In My Back Yard. We want to see dense affordable housing in Rockridge that complements the existing neighborhood. To do that, we need to hear from the public and continue to engage the developers and CCA around the neighborhood issues most crucial to area residents.

To keep informed, sign up for our mailing list at UBAOakland@gmailcom, to learn of changes as they evolve. You can view the project proposal at 5212Broadway.com, or on the UBA website at UBAOakland.org. ■

Abby Pollak UBA Steering Committee member, South Rockridge Blvd







Redeveloping The CCA Campus: An Interview with Site Developer Marc Babsin of Emerald Fund

— Interviewed by Stuart Flashman, RCPC Land Use Committee chair

This project has been in process for a while. Last month you announced major changes. Why?

We first presented the project to Rockridge Community Planning Council nearly three years ago, in September 2017. In 2018, after many more community meetings and discussions, we submitted an application to the City. At that point, the project involved 589 homes, including a 19-story tower, a 1.5 acre public park, and several arts uses.

Over the next year we heard from many supporters and many critics — most notably about the tower. People also wanted the public park to be larger and less enclosed. Taking these comments to heart, we decided to eliminate the tower, reduce the maximum height from 190 ft. to 85 ft., expand the park from 1.5 to 1.85 acres, and remove a building that blocked views south from the park. We also reduced the project size to 462 homes.

Tell me about the challenges of the site's historic buildings. Did they help or hinder your plans? Could the City justify tearing any of them down?

They both help and hinder. There are two buildings on the campus that are on the National Register of Historic Structures: Macky Hall and the Carriage House. Both are preserved in all our development options. The site also has other historic areas and structures, and the City deemed the entire site to be an historical Area of Primary Importance (API). Working with the City, we thoroughly analyzed trying to save more historic structures, but there was a trade-off. Preserving 10 of the 12 structures and converting them to usable office space would cost $46 million.

Even if the office space fetched pre-COVID rents of about $54 per square foot, the preservation component didn't pencil out. Further, given the site's designation as an API, we aren't eligible for historic tax credits if any buildings are removed or density is added — and we need to do both if any housing can be built. The historic structures do make the site attractive, but the very high cost of conversion in comparison to the office rental revenue makes the significant preservation component financially infeasible.

The Oakland City Council will ultimately need to decide how to balance the value of preserving three or four additional buildings against the benefits of adding 130 to 150 more homes, 46 of which would be onsite affordable housing.

Your original plans called for making Clifton Hall into affordable artist housing. That's gone now?

Unfortunately, yes. The original plan included converting the dormitory into 35 affordable artist units. Our agreement with CCA only gave us limited time to obtain entitlements, and that time ran out. CCA is seeking funds as construction of the San Francisco campus is well underway, so it's selling off that building separately, and, without entitlements, we're not in a position to buy it. However, we still intend to help with building affordable housing.

Our base scenario, with 462 homes, includes 10 percent onsite moderate-income units for the "missing middle." This is an increase from the 6 percent of our original proposal. Under the two preservation options, while unable to subsidize onsite affordable housing, we would pay $6.5 to $7.4 million in Affordable Housing Fees that would allow for the creation of an estimated 26 to 30 affordable units elsewhere in the city.

Incidentally, as a show of good faith, we have opened our books and put our pricing and proformas up on the project website: www.5212broadway.com. We've never done that before, and we aren't aware of any developer





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that has. We invite the community to have a look at the numbers and to share their thoughts and questions.

What about CCA? Did they bump up the land cost so they could build their San Francisco campus?

No. It's not unusual for a nonprofit to use their land to help finance their continued existence. How much CCA receives for the land is impacted by the value of what is entitled. In the current economic climate, that may not be much. At the moment, it's not clear if any development scenario pencils out. Irrespective of the entitlement process, CCA is completing construction of its San Francisco campus expansion and is planning on completing the move by the Spring of 2022.

With less homes, there may be less traffic, but there will also be office space added. Can you tell me anything about traffic impacts? What about emergency access?

That's going to be addressed in the Draft EIR, which we expect will come some time in November or December. In response to public comments, it will cover intersections north of the project on Broadway. As for emergency vehicle access, our engineers have designed an emergency access plan that we believe meets fire code and is currently under review by the Oakland Fire Dept.

One of the project's big selling points is the publicly accessible park area. How will long-term public access be guaranteed? Will there be any protections against a future developer coming back in and proposing a "Phase II" project that would build on that space?

We are committed to providing a permanent public park for the community's enjoyment. Along with providing affordable housing, we see the public park as perhaps the most important community benefit the project will provide. In fact, responding to the community's enthusiasm, the park in the new plans is more than 20 percent larger than in our original proposal.

We expect that the project approvals will come with restrictions guaranteeing public access and usage. The project will be bound by those conditions. If a future developer wanted to build on the park area, it would need to convince the City to rescind those restrictions. However, much of the park area is also protected by the historic designation of the view corridor from Broadway to Macky Hall. I don't think a developer would be able to gain the approvals needed to build on that area.

As you know, the "Shops at the Ridge" project lies south of the CCA campus. Phase 1 of that project is finished but Phase 2 stalled. Have you had any discussions with TRC, the developer, about coordinating plans? Will the EIR take into account traffic from a future Phase 2 in analyzing traffic impacts?

We don't know much about what's happening with Phase 2 other than that it doesn't appear to be moving forward. We've tried to reach out to the developer, but without success, so, no, there have not been discussions about coordinating plans. We expect the EIR's traffic analysis will take into account the traffic from a future Phase 2 under the current plans unless the approvals for Phase 2 expire.

One last question: COVID-19 has raised many questions about the economy and urban areas. Have you taken that into account in the new proposal? If demand for housing and office space drops, could this project, like Shops at the Ridge, disappear?

Yes, if both residential and office markets "go south," this project would not be financeable, and the site might end up vacant and fallow — the larger the renovated office component, the greater the risk. We're optimistic, however, that this site, with its Rockridge location and BART accessibility, will continue to be a compelling residential site, and we intend to be in this for the long haul. ■

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Golden Squirrel Adapts to Challenging Times

— By Skip Fogarty

Selling groceries at the curb was never part of the plan, but it became a lifeline for one College Avenue business during the COVID lockdown. The Golden Squirrel, which took over the former site of Barclay's pub, has nimbly pivoted its business strategies to serve its customers — and to survive.

In the face of shortages at supermarkets, "we prepared grocery boxes with fresh fruit and vegetables, meats, and other ingredients that we could obtain from our suppliers," explains proprietor and co-owner Andrew Snow. Appreciative customers ordered by phone and boxes were handed off at the curb.

"We sold hundreds of pounds of flour and yeast to satisfy homebound bakers," Snow says. "It was one way we could help our customers and also keep the business afloat."

The pub also changed up its menu to be more "to-go" oriented and offered beer growlers and cocktails to carry out. Another menu innovation was the opportunity for customers to buy a ready-to-eat meal for an essential frontline worker.

"Once we had enough orders to serve an entire shift, we'd deliver the food to the emergency room at Highland and other area hospitals," Snow reports. The restaurant ended up providing over 750 meals.



Photo by Anna L. Marks

Owner Andrew Snow has created a casual gastropub that now offers additional outdoor seating.

Co-founded with Snow's cousin and lifelong pal Chris Foott, The Golden Squirrel is approaching its four-year anniversary. Snow and Foott are lifelong Rockridge residents, and both still live within walking distance to their establishment. Snow attended Head-Royce School, and Foott is a College Prep alum.

It had always been a dream to open their own place in the neighborhood. But after modernizing and remodeling the old space, the duo faced a months-long delay in getting their liquor license approved by the city.

Then, in the midst of the coronavirus shutdown, civil rights protests erupted in Oakland following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Like many College Avenue storefronts, the partners decided to board up to protect the business and building. But The Golden Squirrel turned this into another creative opportunity when they commissioned local artist Chris Granillo to create a beautiful, squirrel-themed mural on the plywood. They connected with Granillo through a nonprofit called Paint the Void (www.paintthevoid.org), with a mission of projecting hope and beauty to fill the void left by the pandemic.

Adding a final, difficult twist to these tumultuous times, the lockdown also disrupted Snow's marriage plans. "It's been a few long months, but maybe there's a light at the end of the tunnel now," he says. "But it's hard to complain because our staff and families are doing fine so far."

With restrictions easing, the Golden Squirrel began table service on its patio and sidewalk on June 19. Customers can now order food and drinks at the counter and receive a table assignment (masks can be removed once seated) and a runner will deliver the order to the table.

Sanitizing protocols and social distancing will be strictly observed and, as Snow puts it, "we will be emphasizing safety over volume" as they begin to rebuild their business. ■

Open daily (except Mondays) at 5940 College Ave. Visit them online at www.goldensquirrelpub.com for more info.



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Rockridge Professor Responds to A Brand New Awareness

— By Anna L. Marks

The time has come for a reckoning of institutionalized bias in American society, and this includes the inherent racism ingrained in the names and images of highly recognized food brands. For example, Uncle Ben's and Aunt Jemima are two of several popular consumer brands currently acknowledging the racist myths portrayed by their products, and finally doing something about it.

KTVU's story on June 17 highlighted this new progression and interviewed Rockridge resident Kellie McElhaney to provide some additional insight. Professor and founder of the Center for Equity, Gender and Leadership at the Haas School of Business, McElhaney firmly believes that diversification is the best way to overcome existing biases, but she is convinced that it can't stop there.



Photo by Anna L. Marks

Rockridge resident Kellie McElhaney speaks to Channel 2 reporters on the importance of diversity at the top.

"It's not enough to get those diverse heads in the door. The second part of that, and, I would say much more important, is inclusion. "It's actually making those heads count; asking for their opinions, input, listening to what they say," McElhaney told reporters.

Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream is following the trend by re-branding its Eskimo Pie due to its portrayal of an ethnic stereotype. Hopefully, all these changes are not just politically correct marketing ploys but rather restorative actions that will continue to build awareness around the harm caused by these portrayals. ■

ROCKRIDGE REAL ESTATE UPDATE

(Warning – This might not be good news for all readers. If you are being "gut punched" by all the bad things out there don't think ill of this messenger)

Wow, Rockridge Real Estate sales have been Roaring. Here are some very interesting Stats. Last year, for all of 2019, with Trumpy's quote "The Best US economy in over 1.2 Billion years" there was a home sale in Rockridge on average every 3 days. So far this year there has been a home sale on average every 3 days. That's just crazy.

Any Rockridge Real Estate pessimism is maybe already very old news by todays' Real Estate Market. Rockridge seems to continue operating outside of the problems the rest of the world is experiencing.

It might be a good time to rethink selling or leasing your home.

Note: This might become obsolete 24 hours after it is printed. 6.25.2020

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Scholar Or Working Attorney? Local Lawyer Finds His Passion

— By Judith Doner Berne

My last in-person interview, just days before Covid-19 sent us to shelter in place, was with attorney/mediator Fred Hertz who both lives and practices in Rockridge.

Hertz told me that he has always had an ongoing debate in his life. "I've always had two tensions professionally; wanting to be more of a scholar versus an active professional," he said, as we sat in his sizeable, one-room office in a rose-colored building along College Avenue.

A native of Minnesota, Hertz, now 67, graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Minnesota with a degree in philosophy. But following a year of graduate studies his practical side kicked in and he headed for law school at Cal Berkeley, graduating in 1981.

After clerking for a justice of the Supreme Court of Minnesota for a year, he returned to the East Bay, joining law firms that specialized in real estate and land use, and purchasing the first of his two Rockridge homes. "It was two houses from the Berkeley border, so I got involved with Oakland, not Berkeley."

eyes on Rockridge

Hertz opened his practice in 1988 devoted to family and real estate law, representing clients in property and asset suits. "I started getting calls from unmarried couples, both gay and straight, who were fighting over real estate." When his practical side allowed, he returned to Cal to study geography (M.A. 1991) with an emphasis on zoning and land-use practices. "I was also able to do the volunteer work I wanted to do."

Appointed to the Oakland Landmarks Preservation Board in the late 1980s, Hertz chaired its Historic Preservation Task Force. However, it was during his tenure that the 1989 Loma earthquake hit, forcing the task force to reconsider whether damaged buildings should be saved through retrofitting.

Then, in 1991, Hertz's house was one of the nearly 3,000 lost in the Oakland Firestorm. He and his partner of more than 30 years rebuilt, but moved to another house. "That took a year out of my life," he said. So it wasn't until 1994 that the Historic Preservation report was completed and adopted by the Oakland City Council. That was also the year he was quoted in a New York Times article on gay break-ups — a decade before gay marriage was legalized in any city or state, and 20 years before it became the law of the land.

"An agent called and wanted me to write a book on it," Hertz told me. "I went on the Oprah Winfrey show. And after that, it became the bulk of my work." Since then he has authored and co-authored several books; been featured in The Wall Street Journal, Forbes and Money magazines; and been interviewed by CNN, Talk of the Nation, NPR's All Things Considered, the Today Show and KQED's Forum, among others.

And although he has taught at several law schools, Hertz has resolved his self-imposed scholar vs. professional debate. "I find I can meet my intellectual needs by writing about the kind of law I'm in, rather than becoming an academic."

Over the past 15 years, Hertz has shifted his practice away from litigation to legalizing agreements for straight and gay couples, married and

Eyes on Rockridge, see next page


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Eyes on Rockridge, from previous page

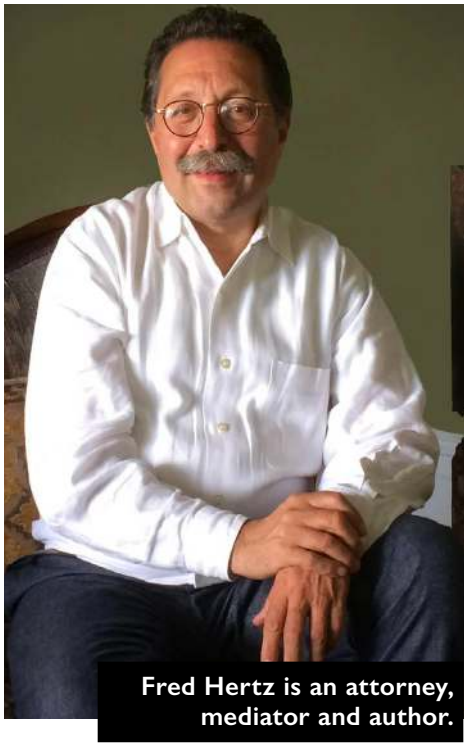
unmarried, and mediating family and co-tenant disputes over assets and property.

"The challenge is to come up with an arrangement that works for everyone," he said. Despite the impact of the Covid-19 virus, "My practice hasn't changed that much since I often work with phone and email and video calls — and that's what I'm doing now."

"I learned a lot from Fred about laws, retrofitting, and what we could do to protect old things," said Annalee Allen, a longtime Rockridge resident known for her work and writings on historic preservation. Preserving the former University High School, the architecturally important 1920s high school that now houses the North Oakland Senior Center, "would not have happened without Fred." Hertz also played a critical role in the installation of the Oakland Firestorm Mural, the series of tiles honoring those who died, that line two outdoor walls of the Rockridge BART station.

George Krevsky, a Rockridge resident and art dealer, met Hertz when both were serving on the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival board. "We developed our relationship coming home from board meetings on BART," Krevsky said. "I found him to be an extremely knowledgeable and caring person for many causes. He has such a curious mind and a great sense of community."

"Contrary to most of my neighbors,



Fred Hertz is an attorney, mediator and author.

I really believe the key to Oakland flourishing, including Rockridge, is basically to double its population," Hertz told me. "I can walk from my office to my house. Cole Hardware has solved major problems in my life." He sees density as the key to solving vacancies and low volume along College Avenue — a problem the shutdown has made worse. "A drop in real estate prices would help everyone," he said. "I want to live where school teachers can afford to live." ■

To comment or to suggest ideas for future columns please email judyberne@att.net.

Jody London, from page 3

on the start of the next school year this coming August 10. (Currently, there are seven committees working on different aspects of reopening schools.)

In summary, I stand with the Black Organizing Project, and I would prefer that the dates in the George Floyd Resolution coming to the School Board be modified to match those originally proposed in the BOP People's Plan. I suggest moving the launch date for the community-driven process from July 17 to August 25, and directing the District to establish an alternative peacekeeping plan and eliminate the school police force by no later than December 31, 2020.

I believe this timing will determine, in the words of BOP's People's Plan, "whether the change goes smoothly, or causes chaos" — and I thank the Black Organizing Project for all the hard work on The People's Plan for Police-Free Schools. ■

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Open Mind Music, from front page

that both suggests new music and fills specific requests. The result is a personalized collection that customers can enjoy at home.

"I can make recommendations and give people a remote record shop experience," says owner Henry Wimmer, whose contact information is on Open Mind Music's website so customers can reach out personally. After working with people to find exactly what they're looking for, Wimmer arranges a pickup time or directly mails the package out.

This new virtual way of business comes only three years after the opening of the College Avenue store. However, Wimmer has been working in the vinyl business for over thirty years, first starting out at 2nd Hand Tunes in Chicago in 1987 before establishing Open Mind Music's original San Francisco location in April 1994. "Over the course of my time there, I really established the store as an internationally renowned shop," he says, mentioning various DJs and musicians that visited.

Moving the record store to Oakland presented the challenge of once again establishing a loyal customer base, but Wimmer feels Open Mind Music has found its audience. "We got some awareness in the community and people started to come shop with us," he says. This prompted Wimmer to seek out an even larger space to sell records, turntables, speaker equipment, and vintage gear. The business soon moved two doors down, enabling Wimmer to add even more components to the store.

"The goal with the larger space was to have more opportunity to feature paintings and visual arts of visual artists," he says. Wimmer sees the gallery as a way to "give back to the community," especially during the present shutdown where artists and creatives are struggling to make ends meet.

Open Mind Music so far has showcased four artists, mainly targeting locals who do work tangential to music. This connection between the different mediums has proved successful, as Wimmer has sold two portraits by Piedmont resident Mike Welch, one of Motown icon Marvin Gaye and one of famous rock guitarist Jimi Hendrix.

In addition to selling records and artwork during this period of shelter-in-place, Wimmer has continued to contribute to KXSF 102.5 FM, a project of the San Francisco Community Radio. Wimmer's show "'The Open Mind Music Experience," airs every Wednesday from 10am to 2pm, and is a "free-flowing exploration of sounds familiar and foreign," according to the KXSF website.

Genre-less and full of anecdotes, the show not only explores music in all of its forms, but also showcases Wimmer's personal picks. When asked about his own tastes in music, Wimmer said it "runs the gamut from ABBA to Zappa," with some of his favorite musicians being Bob Dylan, Elvis Presley, Robyn Hitchcock, and John Coltrane. Radio lovers can listen to Wimmer everywhere via the KXSF app (available both on the Apple Store and on Google Play).

Wimmer's passion for music has remained constant his whole life, and he feels art's importance has grown, especially now with a society in pain from both a global pandemic and social unrest. "I think that people are looking for a sense of hope and community," Wimmer says. "The resonance of music can help people have the resolve to keep on pushing."

This is why Wimmer says it "means everything" when customers support Open Mind Music instead of shopping at online places like Amazon. To Wimmer, independent businesses like his can be equated to trees falling in a forest — they are unable to make a true sound without people around to listen. "We're only as good as our audience and the customers that come to us," he says.

Although times are tough for his business right now, and for so many others like his, Wimmer and everyone at Open Mind Music see incredible growth in the future, as well as the ability to provide something valuable. "As an Indie business, we are grateful that the community of Rockridge has been so supportive," Wimmer says. "We are in it for the long haul." ■





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Since the start of the shelter-in-place policy, the Oakland Public Library (OPL) has been offering numerous services through its digital library including e-books, audiobooks, and streaming movies — with over 140,000 digital materials checked out since March 16. The Rockridge Library is now also offering sidewalk pickup for books, DVDs, CDs, and even a Wi-Fi hotspot. Once orders are placed online, notifications will be sent out via phone, email, or text messages. Once notifications are received that the order is ready, they may be picked up at any of 5 locations from 10am-1pm. For more information, visit https://www.oaklandlibrary. ■



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