THE Rockridge News
www.rockridge.org
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Sponsored by the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) • 4900 Shattuck Ave., PO Box 22504, Oakland 94609

RCPC JANUARY TOWN HALL MEETING

Thursday, January 20, at 7pm, online via Zoom

January's Town Hall meeting focuses on the Rockridge community. RCPC board members will provide updates on current board projects, as discussed in the Chair's message *(see article on right)*. We will then invite the community to discuss and prioritize the issues that the organization's board will tackle in 2022. In the past, such meetings have led to fulfilled visions such as the Rockridge Branch Library and Frog Park.

If you have not attended a Rockridge community meeting before, this is a perfect opportunity to join friends and neighbors to learn what is happening in your neighborhood and to help the board set its goals for this coming year. ■

Agenda: RCPC Town Hall Listening Meeting

- **Become informed on current RCPC board projects**
- **Help set the RCPC board priorities for 2022**
- **Hear ideas and concerns from the community and RCPC's board**

Zoom meeting information:

To join the Zoom meeting via video, use: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88183499972?pwd=dVhjc3MrSnJLVTM2RUJN1Z2bWFMUT09

(meeting link is also available on rockridge.org or by request by emailing townhall@rockridge.org)

To join the Zoom meeting via phone, call: +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
Meeting ID: 881 8349 9972
Passcode: 776017

RCPC ELECTIONS IN APRIL



Wednesday, March 2, 2022, is the deadline to declare candidacy in the 2022 election for the Rockridge Community Planning Council's Board of Directors. **The Annual Meeting and election will be held on Thursday, April 21, with alternate polling on Saturday, April 23.**

Six Board seats will be up for election. Any person 18 years or older, whose principal residence is within the RCPC boundaries (see Rockridge.org), is eligible to stand for election. Candidates will be asked to provide documentation of eligibility (a driver's license or utility bill with Rockridge address will usually suffice).

For additional information about RCPC Board service, contact election@rockridge.org. To declare candidacy, send a statement of intent to run to chair@rockridge.org by 11:59pm on **March 2, 2022**. Late submissions cannot be accepted. ■

Message from the RCPC Chair:

Dear Rockridge Community, Happy New Year! Last year had some challenges, and the directors and members of the Rockridge Community Planning Council stepped up to meet them enthusiastically.

During the last three months of 2021, our Ad Hoc Committee on Redistricting, made up of board members and Rockridge residents, worked successfully to persuade the Oakland Redistricting Commission to keep our neighborhood from being split into two City Council districts. At the state level, we prevented the split of the neighborhood into two Assembly districts. Ordinary citizens can make their voices heard — we just proved it!

In April 2021, RCPC conducted its second Covid-safe outdoor Annual Meeting and board of directors election with the largest turnout seen in many years. And in the autumn, 13 residents expressed interest, and 10 applied, to fill the vacancies left by the departure from the board of Michelle Boyd and Matt Levy. The board appointed three new members, filling Michelle's and Matt's seats, and the long-vacant appointed 13th seat. A renewed spirit of service to the neighborhood is clearly on display.

In 2020, Covid halted some of Rockridge's favorite neighborhood traditions, but 2021 saw them resume. The Halloween Parade, this year on the big day itself, had the largest attendance that Chris Jackson of the Rockridge District Association, co-sponsor of the parade, could remember. While the annual Rockridge Out-and-About wasn't held last year, the Rock-and-Stroll events

Message from Chair, see next page

Message from the Chair, from front page

proved to be very popular.

What's in store for 2022? As the community continues to develop ways to work around Covid, I look forward to events like the FROG Park 20th Anniversary celebration; a resumption of the Kitchen Tour; another neighborhood-wide cleanup like the one RCPC sponsored in March 2021; and more Town Halls addressing issues and ideas important to the community.

Finally, I'd like to thank everyone in Rockridge for making my three elected terms on the board and four years as Chair an interesting, lively, and often fun experience. I will be leaving the board when my term ends in April 2022.

I plan to continue serving Rockridge in whatever ways I can and wish all of my friends and neighbors a safe, happy, and healthy 2022. ■

Leonora Sea, RCPC Chair

Survey Says?

by Ashley Pandya, RCPC Communications Chair

This past November and December, nearly 400 Rockridge residents filled out a survey that was posted in the *Rockridge News* as a way to express their preferences regarding how the vacant land at the Ridge Shopping Plaza (51st and Broadway) can best benefit our local community. The intent of the survey, administered by the Rockridge Community Planning Council, was to answer three questions:

1- What are the most popular and least popular ways that our community would like to see the land at the Ridge used?

2- How do these answers differ by demographics, if at all?

3- More generally, what issues are most important to our community?

We learned that the most popular options for land use were, in order of preference: housing, small-scale retail, and restaurants. The least popular options were auto dealerships, fast food chains, and big-box retail. Interestingly, these results were consistent across all demographics — in other words, regardless of respondents' age group, length of Rockridge residency, or renters vs. owners, Rockridge residents are broadly in agreement about how they would like to see this land developed.

Of these results, housing was far and away the most popular way that our community believes the land should be used. Over 60 percent of respondents indicated that housing was their first choice, which was 3.5x more popular than the second-most popular option (small-scale retail). Housing also came up in free-text responses as the issue that is most important to our community. After housing, in order of importance, were homelessness, crime/safety, support for small businesses, parks, and transit.

There was, of course, some nuance to the specific interests and concerns that arose. For example, some residents were concerned that more housing might damage the character of the neighborhood, whereas others were concerned that lack of additional housing would continue to keep Rockridge unaffordable for most families. Others saw housing as a moral

Survey Says, see next page

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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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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? We'd love to hear from you.

All letters must be limited to 350 words and are published at the discretion of the Editor. Send them to: editor@rockridge.org. Please be sure to include your name, email address, and city and street of residence. **All submissions accepted for publication are subject to editing for clarity and brevity.**

The Rockridge News reserves the right to refuse any articles, letters, display ads, or classified ads.

Newsletter Subscriptions

To subscribe to *The Rockridge News*, send your check for $20, payable to *RCPC* with "Rockridge News" noted on the memo line.

Mail payment to: **RCPC,** 4900 Shattuck Avenue, PO Box 22504, Oakland, CA, 94609

Display Advertising Deadline for February: January 20, 2022

Advertising rates are $28/column inch. Six-month pre-pay rate available. For display ads, call Jo Ellis at 510-653-3210 (**after noon**), or email joellis1@hotmail.com. Email Susan Montauk at smontauk@gmail.com for information regarding classified ads.

Views expressed in published articles do not necessarily reflect those of The Rockridge News, its editor, or the board of directors of the Rockridge Community Planning Council.

FORL Board Calls for New Volunteers

by Alona Rivord

Expanded shelving in the children's room, new chairs in the reading area, activities galore in the Teen Zone, prizes for the summer reading program, supplies for letters to library pen pals around the world, and funding for other children, teen, and adult programs — these are just some of the things that the Friends of the Rockridge Library (FORL) have supported that aren't covered by the City budget.

In close collaboration with library staff, FORL helps identify ways to improve branch facilities and support programming. In addition to fundraising, board members also give of their time, such as hosting branch staff coffee klatches to brainstorm and share ideas, boothing at Out and About, and organizing volunteer cleaning events. FORL members don't work in the library or choose circulation materials, but rather support library staff decisions and activities.

FORL is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and is seeking additional adult volunteers to join its board of directors for a two-year term. The group meets monthly, currently virtually, but plans to resume in-person meetings at the branch at some point.

In 2021, FORL added a student representative position on the board with a 9-month term, mirroring the school year. Looking ahead to fall 2022, a vacancy will be available to be filled by a local middle or high school student. This is an excellent opportunity for a young person to share their enthusiasm for the library and gain valuable nonprofit board experience.

While FORL is interested in hearing from all potential volunteers, it has a particular need for technological expertise to help manage web hosting, email server, and other digital properties.

Interested in learning more? Contact FORL at rockridgelibrary.friends@yahoo.com. ■

Land Use Committee Meeting

The next meeting of the RCPC Land Use Committee will be held on Wednesday, January 26, at 7:30pm, via Zoom.

Email landuse@rockridge.org, or call (510) 652-5373 to attend.

The meeting is open to the public. Check www.Rockridge.org for details.

Greater NCPC Meeting

The Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council will not meet in January.

The next meeting will be held on February 10, 2022, at 7pm, on Zoom pending further notice.

Please email subject suggestions to: chair@rockridgencpc.com

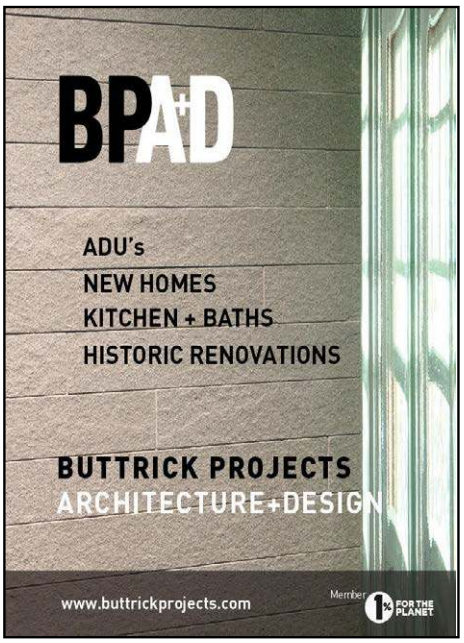
Survey Says, from previous page

imperative for keeping our unhoused population safe. Still, others expressed despair and frustration over the growing homeless encampments.

Ultimately, what's clear is that one survey over a two-month period is not enough to effectively engage our community, spark continued thoughtful, nuanced conversation, and explore ideas about these important issues and their potential solutions.

Over the next few months, we are hoping to re-launch virtual and in-person town hall meetings around these topic areas to learn more. We'll start with a **Virtual Town Hall Meeting on January 20** where participants can break into groups to discuss some of these issues in more detail. We plan to continue the conversations with facilitated dialogue, a speaker series, and more. Stay tuned. ■





Open Delivery Route for College Avenue

by Susan Montauk, Rockridge News Business Manager

Joy Kummer is giving up her College Avenue route. We thank her for her service as Block Captain to businesses along her route, and for her continued service as a Block Captain in her neighborhood. Her route, described below, requires delivering the newsletter to businesses from BART to Claremont Avenue. Shopping along the way is permitted and encouraged. We have another opening (below) that we hope to fill soon.

Route Cav1: Businesses and apartments along College Avenue from Claremont Ave to BART. Stacks at Zachary's and Crossroads (sharing stands with East Bay Express), 1951, Supercuts, and the Golden Squirrel block.

Route 03C: Along Eucalyptus, Oakland boundaries (23 houses)

Captains deliver newsletters door-to-door. The newsletter is published the first weekend of each month, except August, and your bundle will be delivered directly to your doorstep.

Call (510) 547-3855 or email Susan at smontauk@gmail.com to volunteer, and please be sure to mention the route number when you do. ■



City Council Passes Ordinance, Authored by Dan Kalb, Requiring Proof of Vaccination at Oakland Establishments as of February 1, 2022

On December 21, 2021, the Oakland City Council unanimously approved an ordinance, written by North Oakland representative, Dan Kalb, that prevents Oakland residents who are not fully vaccinated from accessing indoor restaurants, bars, coffee shops, clubs, gyms, fitness centers, yoga studios, concert venues, museums, senior care facilities and City Hall, among other establishments (however, no one can be prevented from attending official City meetings). Outdoor dining is not affected.

Indoor events with less than 500 attendees are exempt from the ordinance, and, over Kalb's objection, so are libraries and dental offices. Retail shops, such as nail salons, that do not serve food or drink are also exempt.

"We looked at the other jurisdictions to see the commonalities in which types of businesses are covered. We will monitor this and if there is vocal support for including spas and nail salons, for example, we may add those in later in the spring," said Kalb.

Proof of full vaccination (two doses of Pfizer or Moderna; or one dose of J&J) and a current ID will be required as of February 1, 2022, for all adults; children 12 and older need only show proof of being fully vaccinated.

"We may amend the ordinance in the spring to include boosters once we see when most people have gotten their booster shot," Kalb confirmed.

Kalb continued, "Business owners who do not comply are subject to a civil or administrative fine. This will be enforced by our Code Enforcement bureau. First-time offenders will likely receive a written warning; after that repeat offenders will be fined. Individuals will not be cited unless they get caught using a fake proof of vaccination card."

Those with medical exemptions need to provide a recent negative test (within 72 hours) to comply with the ordinance. No exemptions will be made for those who obtained natural immunity through previous exposure, or for those with religious reasons.

According to Councilmember Kalb, "This Emergency Ordinance will be in effect as long as we are under our local state of emergency. The City of Oakland will likely lift our state of emergency when the County does."

CovidActNow (covidactnow.org), shows Alameda County has an overall vaccination rate of 83.1 percent with overall deaths trending downwards since Jan/Feb of 2021, https://covid-19.acgov.org/data.page?#vax-status. ■



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

YIMBY to NIMBY

DEAR EDITOR: We know that the *Rockridge News* wants to present different viewpoints, and, as Star Lightner's letter *(December 2021)* expressed her own personal thoughts, this leaves room for a different point of view.

There is a spectrum of opinions between ultra YIMBY and extreme NIMBY positions. Name-calling and denigrating people who like, or live, in single-family homes is not useful, nor is insulting them by calling them "wannabe Piedmonters." Rockridge can certainly accommodate more people, but what demographic? In what numbers? In what manner? These questions are worth asking.

In Adams Point before WWII, many big homes were divided into apartments, and new multi-unit buildings were added, increasing the density without radically changing the look and feel of the neighborhood. The insertion of many flimsy postwar "dingbat" apartment buildings made a lovely neighborhood rather ugly. Historic European cities are full of wonderful dense neighborhoods — unfortunately, however, America is best at destroying such places. "Urban Renewal" is a bad memory for many people.

Lightner is confusing housing prices with "character." The charming feel of Rockridge is largely the result of the charming architecture, not a result of the people occupying these homes. If a radical change occurs, it is likely to be imposed on the neighborhood by disinterested developers seeking to profit from providing expensive housing for a new wave of residents. The subsequent reduced "quality of life" includes little or no accommodation for the people who need affordable housing most.

The question remains, how can today's inevitable change be shaped for a better outcome? Balanced discussion can help. Nobody alive today wrote the racist housing codes of yore, and the majority of us want to see more affordable housing built. What do we want Rockridge to grow into over 10, 20, or 30 years? Let's talk about it. ■

Kirk Peterson
College Avenue

More Harm Than Good

DEAR EDITOR: In order to justify Oakland's Vaccine Passport ordinance, Dan Kalb claims that "there are benefits here even if it will temporarily cause someone not to go to their favorite bar." His condescension is a disservice to the people he was elected to represent. The benefits are negligible and overwhelmed by the negative consequences.

• Alameda County already has a vaccination rate of nearly 85 percent. Many of the unvaccinated have natural immunity from having already contracted Covid. The City widely provides testing and vaccinations for those who want them, and the vaccination rate is increasing without the ordinance.

• Per the Alameda County Health website, Covid deaths have dropped significantly https://covid-19.acgov.org/data.page. Hospitals are not overwhelmed. Given this progress, the benefits of the ordinance do not outweigh the costs.

• People of color and those who are economically disadvantaged have lower vaccination rates. This policy has a disparate impact upon them.

• By claiming that the underserved communities need to be able to use libraries and other public services, the city exempts itself from enforcement and pushes the burden upon the private sector. Small businesses are still struggling; many have closed due to the shutdowns and mandates. Increasing their costs while driving away any of their customers or employees will only cause more financial hardship.

• We need to address diseases of despair and deferred medical treatments due to Covid policies. Suicides, substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health problems, and child abuse have all risen significantly. Forcing someone to lose their livelihood or to sink into isolation due to lack of a vaccination passport puts them at risk in these areas.

• The impact of such government overreach on our civil liberties cannot be overstated. Individuals should not be coerced into medical treatments against their free will. Nor should they be forced to show proof of compliance to move freely in society. ■

Deborah Eudaley
Buena Vista Avenue

A reliable source of facts on COVID-19 and its prevention within the USA can be found at the Center for Disease Control website, www.CDC.gov.

The opinions represented in the Letters to the Editor do not necessarily reflect the views of The Rockridge News, the Rockridge Community Planning Council, or the RCPC Board of Directors.

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Choosing Rockridge

by Ben Friedman



Ben and Lauren, both transplants, choose Rockridge to put down roots.

For the past four years, my wife Lauren and I rented an apartment just off College and Alcatraz. This fall, we bought our first home — a little house near Colby Park. Lauren was raised in Seattle and I hail from New York City, but we have found belonging and identity here in the East Bay, and so we are making it official. We choose Rockridge. As we put down roots, I'd like to express gratitude for the many reasons that contributed to our decision.

There are too many joys of Rockridge to mention in-depth, but here are a few. Thanks to the crew at Yasai for your shelves and kindness. Three cheers to Ver Brugge for your hand-painted signs and center-cut bacon. Kudos to the stores and homes alike across our community that publicly declare that Black Lives Matter, honor science, inclusion, and love, and celebrate our frontline workers.

Hooray Rockridge BART for its spectacular city views and for the gift of public transit. A tip of the cap to the abiding crowd at Cole Coffee — I don't know what you're always plotting, but it makes me smile. I love our neighborhood's holiday cheer, including spooktacular Halloween decorations, an even better Halloween parade, and dazzling Christmas lights. Finally, huge thanks to the *Rockridge News*, which has helped me understand our neighborhood and its affairs as much as anything.

I'm grateful for Boichik Bagel, which continues to give this sometimes-homesick New Yorker a deep connection to my roots. As good as the bagels are, I'd argue the best service Boichik provides is the Proustian scent of bagels boiling and baking that perfume the late night and early morning air. In truth, I'm thankful for all of "Carb Alley" — the spectacular trio of Boichik, Casa Barotti, and La Farine that makes walking on College on a Saturday mid-morning a jolly gluten-filled slalom course.

Part of our deep and abiding love for Rockridge is its environmental setting. We are both thrilled to have access to the wild East Bay hills and are immeasurably grateful to the East Bay Regional Park District for its stewardship of our parks. The ability to enjoy runs and hikes up Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve and other nearby parks is a gift few other urban communities can boast. Additionally, the riot of wisteria, roses, and countless other flowers that burst forth is a joy, as are our redwoods that seemingly stand sentry throughout Rockridge.

As we benefit from the myriad amenities that Rockridge offers, we seek to act in reciprocity with this community that has given us so much. Your recommendations for ways to give back are welcome. Our first step is paying a monthly Shuumi Land Tax to the Sogorea Te' Land Trust, a volunteer contribution that serves to support the Land Trust and the Ohlone people on whose lands we all reside. Please join us if you can at www.sogoreate-landtrust.org and… see you around the neighborhood. ■

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Nuthouse Comedy Returns to the Golden Squirrel

by Myrna Walton

(This article was scheduled for publication in April 2020, but was held when the club was forced to close due to the County's "Shelter at Home" policy that was put in place the month prior. We are happy to report they have finally reopened.)

When was the last time you went to a comedy club? Now you can stroll from home, have a dinner or a drink, and laugh continuously for an hour and a half — all on College Avenue.

Who would think that an Oakland venue the size of a large living room would feature comics of international standing? They come to sharpen their material alongside local contenders. At a recent Saturday night at the Nuthouse at the Golden Squirrel, six comedians, women and men, some well known, others on their way up, convulsed the audience. And it happens every Saturday at 8:30pm.

A few years ago, comedy was happening big in San Francisco, according to co-producer of the Nuthouse, Jonah Pollack. Now, there is a great Oakland comedy scene, so no need to drive an hour and back when you can have an affordable night out nearby. Some neighbors even started a babysitting co-op so their whole street could attend.

Stand-up comedy has evolved so much in the last 10 or 15 years. There are fewer mean-spirited men on super steroids — with increasing numbers of women in the audience, men can't be as insulting as they once were. The comedians, ranging in age from their 20s to 60s, unleashed a wide choice of topics: sex, ethnicity, children, parents, penises, politics, the difficulties of adding your dog to your health insurance, and French Alexa who smokes a cigarette and sneers at your questions.

Clara Bijl (pronounced "belle") and Jonah Pollack, co-producers and comics themselves, are unlikely partners. She grew up in a small town in eastern France and studied in Charleston, South Carolina. She saw stand-up comedy for the first time 22 years ago and her life's choice was made. She lost her French accent due to speech therapy (but she can resurrect it, along with southern and valley girl). What did her six-year-old daughter say after seeing a performance? "Mommy said a lot of bad words."

Pollack descends from an Orthodox Jewish family in Brooklyn, grew up in Boston and studied at Hampshire College. He always knew on some level that he wanted to be a comedian. Four years ago he started performing in his apartment in West Oakland every Friday night. People bring their own drinks, or buy two-buck Chuck stored in his bathtub. His cat, Lexi, prowls the audience, leaping from table to table.

The two teamed up four years ago, to produce and perform in shows at the Squirrel.

Pollack says they continually try to find the best available talent. "Between the two of us, we know pretty much every comedian in town. Each of us goes out four or five times a week to see what's new, what's hot. The comedian network is sort of like an open-source guild. We know who's coming up or going down."

Comedians looking for good spots get in touch. Out-of-towners send videos. Bijl adds that no one who appears on the scene unknown becomes an instant star. "It takes a long time to find your voice and perfect your craft, eight years at least for men, twelve for women because they have not been given as much stage time. There used to be so many lineups with only one or two women

Nuthouse, see next page

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on the bill."

"Comedy comes from shared experience," says Clara. The audience says, "Ah, it's not just me who feels that." The appeal is universal. The audience at the Squirrel last month, ranging from 20-year-olds to seniors, laughed uproariously at the same jokes. One comic reflected on the miseries of child-rearing — "When I pile the four kids in the car, the noise is so loud, sometimes I slam on the brakes just to get that instant of silence, then it starts – Mama, mama, mama, mama, mama, mama, (long pause) mam-amamamama." The seniors in the audience laughed just as hard as the young and middle-aged folks. Maybe it's nostalgia for some, and painful daily truth for another, but everyone cracked up.



Co-Producer Clara Bijl of Nuthouse Comedy, hosts free shows at the Golden Squirrel, 5940 College Avenue, every Saturday at 8:30pm.

Bijl says the best shows have a slightly illicit feeling. This was true when an older, thin, frail woman came on stage — the very stereotype of a small-town, aged librarian. How brave she seemed to stand up there and dare the audience to leap over their first impressions and prejudices. And it did, when she recounted how she taught her ESL students the parts of speech using the Spanish swear words they taught her. Everyone in the audience whooped and hollered.

The best joke of the evening was from a young man saying, "I'm tired of having old people run this country. Trump is 73. Bernie is 96, Warren is 110. It's like my grandfather telling me how to set up Wifi. Except, he's from India so he knows how."

Bijl says comedy is the hottest thing now, perhaps because of the depressing state of the country. Everyone needs a good laugh… and you can even hang out afterward with the comedians if you like. ■

The Nuthouse@the Golden Squirrel is located at 5940 College Avenue, walking distance from BART.

Free shows every Saturday at 8:30 pm. See https://www.eventbrite.com/e/nuthouse-at-the-golden-squirrel-a-weekly-stand-up-comedy-cabaret-tickets-210176913807.

For more info, email Clara Bijl, clarabijl@mac.com, Jonah Pollack, jonah.m.pollack@gmail.com or Jeff Dean, jeffmdean22@gmail.com.

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Rockridge Real Estate: On the Precipice of Change

by David Garcia, former RCPC Board Member

In 2021, my wife and I were blessed with a new baby boy, our second child. We were thrilled to bring him home to Rockridge, to walk with him along College and stroll down Shafter. But while our family was growing, our housing situation remained unstable. As renters, our residency was tenuous, especially as we were quickly outgrowing our two-bedroom space.

With this in mind, we decided to buy a home, put down roots, and raise our family. But sadly, that won't be in Rockridge. Despite having valuable jobs, sparkling credit, and resources for a sizable down payment, homes here are completely out of reach for our family. After a year-long search, it was clear that the community we loved, where we raised our first boy and brought our second baby home to, had no room for us as homeowners. Instead, we are moving to Alameda.

We've had the privilege to live in Rockridge since 2014; it is our home. But Rockridge, as idyllic and charming as it is, stands at a crossroads. It is beyond expensive to live here. Just look at the realtor advertisements in this very publication, boasting of home sales going for significantly over asking, upwards of $2 million. Or look at the average neighborhood rents which reach "luxury" pricing despite there being no new "luxury" apartments built within our boundaries.

But maybe most starkly, you can look at the RCPC board composition, which, with my departure, will have lost all renter representation on the board, as three of my other board colleagues, all renters, have all been compelled to leave the neighborhood over the last year to afford the dream of homeownership. The RCPC board is now composed entirely of homeowners, nearly all white, nearly all over 50 — in stark contrast to the demographics of our neighborhood.

It doesn't have to be this way. Rockridge can grow in meaningful, inclusive ways while maintaining its precious charm and scale. This can be accomplished by welcoming more duplexes, triplexes, and other multi-unit options that can be sprinkled throughout our neighborhoods, the types of homes that used to be built and that fit seamlessly into our communities before they were restricted or prohibited in downzonings.

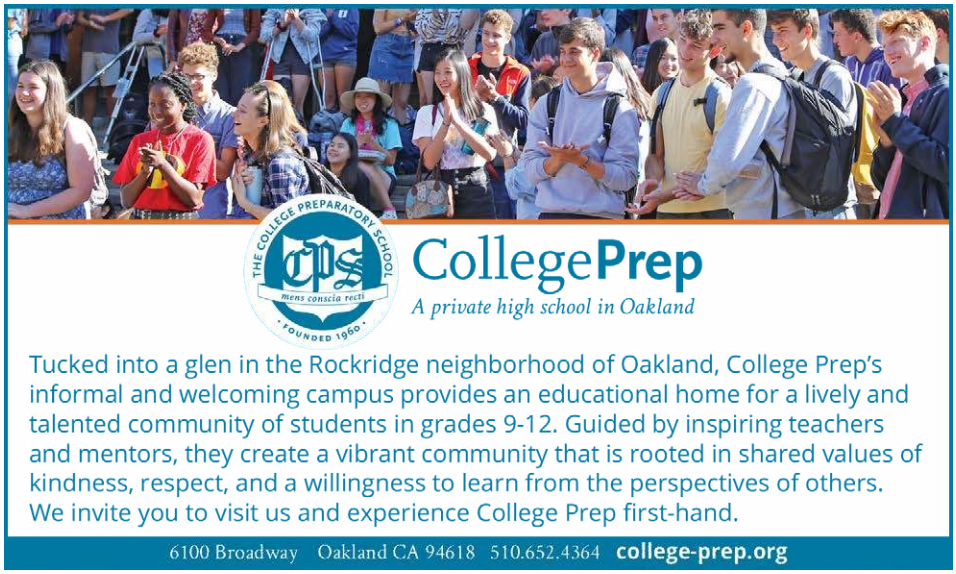
Smaller and hence less expensive by design, this "missing middle" housing typology, had it existed at a higher scale here, could have given families such as ours more choices for staying in Rockridge. But with a statewide push for more housing everywhere, Rockridge may be seeing such new growth in the near future anyway.

This is already partly underway. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) have caught on thanks to statewide legislation easing restrictions, and new laws take this idea even further, allowing for some lot splits and duplex conversions. And, as Oakland grapples with new zoning changes needed to accommodate a massive increase in State-mandated housing goals, Rockridge is more than likely going to be asked to do a lot more than what we've currently done. The question we face is: do we think thoughtfully and collaboratively about these changes, or will we push back because we are afraid of change?

Embracing these changes will not solve Rockridge's housing crunch overnight. But, allowing for more growth in key areas will eventually create more attainable housing opportunities for many more people, for renters and buyers alike, while also alleviating price pressures in more vulnerable parts of the East Bay. The data and literature is clear on this point. I should know: I am a nationally recognized housing expert at U.C. Berkeley, with my research and policy analysis quoted in the *New York Times*, NPR, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Chronicle*, just to name a few.

Any denial of the need to build more housing, of all kinds, to address our housing challenge is tantamount to climate denialism, and should not be entertained. It is my sincere hope that our neighbors can understand that the magnitude of our crisis demands action today.

We already know the cost of inaction; it's playing out throughout the region and state, where under-building and exclusionary practices continue to stymie much-needed new housing and increase housing costs. Rockridge can be a leader, and I remain optimistic that my home of the last seven years will do the right thing and embrace the need for more neighbors. I will be watching with great interest, from just past the Webster tube. ■



Mah Jongg Maven Has Passion for Iconic Pastime

by Judith Doner Berne

When I first contacted Lee Eisman, she was in Scottsdale, Arizona, playing in a mah jongg tournament and selling her Mah Jongg Tchotchkes, a business she started and built up. After flying with two suitcases full of her mah jongg-inspired designs and another for clothes, she had resolved, well ahead of New Year's, "From now on I'm only selling my merchandise if I can drive there."

Eisman didn't have to drive to the annual sale she co-hosts at her Rockridge home each November with Berkeley mah jongg guru Toby Salk. Salk has taught scores of Rockridge residents (yes, mostly women, including myself) to play American mah jongg — adapted from the Chinese game invented in the late 1800s.

While Salk concentrates on selling vintage American mah jongg sets from her sizeable kitchen island, Eisman fills her dining room table and buffet with the jewelry, coasters, clocks, picture frames, and vases she creates — all featuring the game's iconic tiles. She also designs cocktail napkins and mugs with slogans such as "It's always time to play mah jongg." All are available on her Etsy website store.

"She's so talented. What she had on display was so creative and tempting," said Oakland resident Terry Kulka, who attended the sale for the first time. "She had a nice variety, and she was so welcoming. It was a nice experience."

Eisman grew up in Chicago and earned a degree in speech at Northeastern Illinois University. Once she and husband Jay Tennenbaum, now retired from insurance sales, moved to Oakland, she earned an MBA from St. Mary's College of California while working in human resources for a trio of banks.

When their son Jordan, now 28, was born, she started a new career, founding East Bay Moms (EBM), an organization dedicated to providing support, companionship, and networking for parents of infants and toddlers that she ran for almost two decades. For a $90 annual fee, members enjoyed unlimited participation in scheduled activities and a subscription to their monthly newsletter. At its height, it had 120 members.



Lee Eisman's third career is creating mah jongg-inspired designs.

"It started out as a hiking group for new moms," Eisman told me. "I planned and led hikes every Friday morning, except when I was on vacation, for 19 years." It expanded to include a variety of special events such as a monthly mom's night out dinner, family night at the Oakland Zoo, and a yearly family camping trip.

She also put on an annual East Bay Moms Preschool and Childhood Resource Fair, held in the Grand Ballroom of the Scottish Rite Center, which attracted about 80 representatives from schools and other childcare programs, for the 400-500 parents who attended.

Eisman publicized activities

mah jongg, see next page

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mah jongg, from previous page

through the newsletter and a website. The newsletter I read had 16 pages, as many as this *Rockridge News*, and as many ads. "I wrote, laid out and printed the newsletter, which included a schedule of the month's activities, a recipe, a restaurant review and articles written by others that were of interest to parents of young children," she said. "I would deliver stacks of them to pediatrician and ob-gyn offices, children's museums and play places. I also sold advertising for both the newsletter and the EBM website."

Although EBM folded soon after she bowed out, "We provided an avenue for parents to meet, exercise and enjoy the outdoors," Eisman said. "I still have friends that I met through East Bay Moms. It was a very rewarding experience."

Eight or so years ago, she took up mah jongg, "a game my mom played when I was growing up" and, is still playing at age 93. In a recent game with her mother and two of her mother's contemporaries, "They played for money and my mom beat my butt."

It's the combination of luck and skill that makes the game so much fun, Eisman told me. "I love the vintage sets. I love the tiles. And it's a great way to do something fun with friends. I really never get tired of it."

She has eight vintage and two contemporary mah jongg sets and plays three or more times a week. When she competes in tournaments, "I never go with the expectation to win a prize. But when you play faster and with better people, you become a better player. I like all the strategy."

As for Mah Jongg Tchotchkes, Eisman said, "I had always done little crafts, off and on." About six years ago, when buying a mah jongg bracelet for her mom online, she thought: "I can make these." Her first creation was a necklace — a simple mah jongg tile on a chain. Now, she enhances the jewelry with beads, along with the vintage tiles, which she finds both online and prowling antique fairs and thrift stores. "I kept coming up with more and more designs. I don't do it for the money. But it makes me feel so good that people like to buy what I make."

All the while, she has been active in philanthropic causes, such as the Children's Support League (CSL) of the East Bay, where she has volunteered for 20 years. The organization, which put on the annual Heart of the Home house tour, raised money to help groups in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties that serve at-risk children. Sadly, Eisman said, "We recently shut down. It was just too hard to get enough volunteers."

"She's very outgoing and very giving," said Rockridge neighbor Jan Howland, who met Eisman when they were both volunteering at CSL. They play mah jongg together after taking lessons they purchased at a charity auction. Howland said she wasn't surprised when her friend started her Mah Jongg Tchotchkes enterprise. "She always wanted to be in business. She's the most organized person I know."

eyes on Rockridge

Currently, Eisman volunteers for the German Shepherd Rescue League of Northern California from which she adopted their dog, Louise, and was about to become a board member. "As you can see," she said, "I like to be busy."

To comment or suggest future stories, email judyberne@att.net. ■

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College Avenue's South End Renaissance

by Kirk Peterson

The new year will be more lively than last year along the 5200 block of College Avenue, at Broadway, because we have new neighbors. Following the slow fade of the CCA gallery and the disappearance of businesses caused by the pandemic, it has felt pretty lonely here. I believe I've been on the block longer now than any other proprietor (three decades), and the "ensemble" of goods and services currently available, and the people offering them, is better than ever.

On the west side of College the former CCA gallery space houses new tenants: **Rooted Floral Design, at 5239 College**, offers retail floral, and owner Leshia can provide floral decoration for a variety of events. Audiophiles and musicians can go next door to **ReVamp at 5241 College** where amplifiers, new and old, are repaired by Andy. At **5243 College, at the Extravagant Grooming Lounge**, Isiah and Josh are busy keeping Oaklanders looking good with a range of hair cutting and grooming.

At **5247 College, Susie Novak Interiors** designs residential and commercial interiors, and **Kirk E. Peterson Architect** (yours truly), is at the drawing board at **5253 College**. Next door at **TNT Strength, 5255 College**, Jesse and Liam can help and you get and stay fit. Across the street, at **5250 College,** Hanna and her fellow artists are at work at **Old Crow Tattoo**.

By the time this issue of the *Rockridge News* is delivered to your doorsteps, Semrit will have opened **'im Moment Kaffee, at 5254 College**. Now the rest of us can once again get coffee on our own block.

I have enjoyed meeting our new neighbors, and you will too. I have identified only the proprietors of the new businesses, by first name, and not included all of the other friendly people who work with them. Nor have I talked about the other business that have been here for years. College Avenue's "South End" has a lot to offer to the residents of Rockridge, Oakland, and beyond.

The built environment that Rockridge provides for visitors and residents is a winner: human scale and an eclectic mix of goods and services housed in an interesting and Oakland-funky collection of vintage structures.

This is not an accident. In the wake of the massive destruction visited upon Rockridge by Highway 24, RCPC led the charge as a strong local voice for sound neighborhood planning. The result was the C31 zoning, which was adopted by the City for College Avenue, and later established in other neighborhoods.

This zoning (now CN1) fosters, protects, and enhances desirable commercial activity and helps maintain a good balance between College Avenue and the adjacent residential neighborhoods. In the early 20th century, Rockridge was a streetcar suburb, and modest "taxpayer blocks" and apartment buildings were built along the avenue, largely resulting in what it has become today. These structures are still in use more than 100 years later — serving the needs of today, and housing neighbors new and old. ■

South End photos, next page




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Competition Drives Price in November

Closing date	BR	BA	Address	Original price	List price	DOM	Selling price
11/01/2021	4	2	5676 Oak Grove Ave	$1,795,000	$1,795,000	7	$2,900,000
11/05/2021	3	1	5862 Chabot Ct	$1,249,000	$1,249,000	12	$1,500,000
11/09/2021	4	2	5841 Colby St	$1,375,000	$1,375,000	12	$2,570,000
11/12/2021	4	3	5327 Shafter Ave	$1,595,000	$1,595,000	14	$2,630,000
11/15/2021	4	2	6449 Chabot Rd	$1,895,000	$1,895,000	15	$2,450,000
11/18/2021	2	2	5340 Broadway Ter	$665,000	$665,000	35	$675,000

Homes sold in November closed 48% over the asking price on average.

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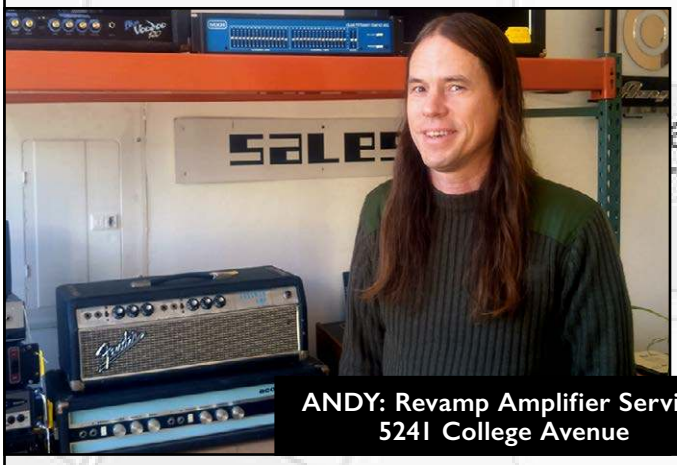
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JOSH: Extravagant Grooming Lounge
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LEISHA: Rooted Floral Design
5239 College Avenue



ANDY: Revamp Amplifier Service
5241 College Avenue

SEMRIT: 'im Moment Kaffee
5254 College Avenue





SUSIE: Susie Novak Interiors
5247 College Avenue





HANNA: Old Crow Tattoo
5250 College Avenue



JESSE & LIAM: TNT Strength
5255 College Avenue

College Preparatory School Used Book Sale Returns

After a Covid-required pause in 2021, the College Preparatory School's renowned used book sale is back. Join fellow Bay Area book lovers on **February 26 and 27** to find out why this is a not-to-be-missed event.

Thousands of used books will be on offer for adults, teens and children, including many recent and popular titles in excellent condition. There will also be some media, vinyl, puzzles and a small selection of vintage/antique books — something for book lovers of every age. Most books are priced at $1 to $3, with some special books priced slightly higher. On Sunday, there will be a bag sale during the day — $5/bag from 10am to 1pm, and $5 for 2 bags from 1pm to 2pm.

The sale will be held in the Buttner Auditorium on the College Preparatory School campus at 6100 Broadway in Oakland, on **Saturday, February 26, from 10am to 4pm**; and again on **Sunday, February 27, from 10am to 2pm**. There is free parking in the school lot.

Please note: purchases are by cash or check only. Contact Bookfair@college-prep.org with any questions. ■

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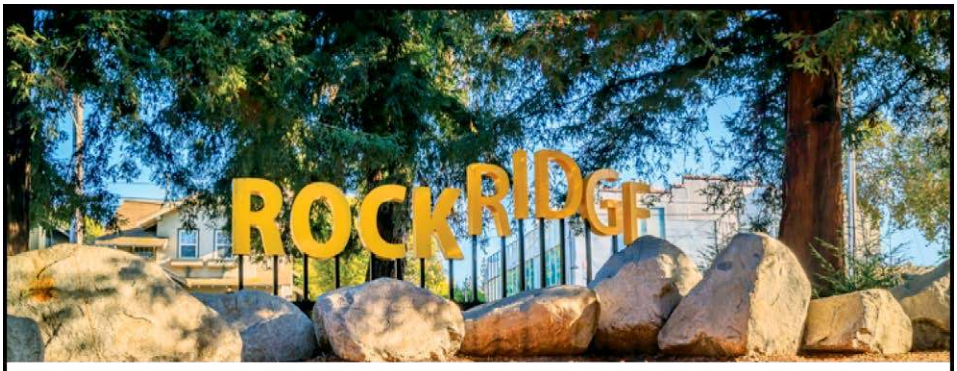
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The deadline for the February 2022 issue is January 20 (available Feb 5, 2022). For more details, email Susan Montauk at smontauk@gmail.com.

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