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

by Casey Farmer, Chair, RCPC Board of Directors

On Tuesday, March 14, the Rockridge Community Planning Council will host an online Town Hall to take a deep dive into how housing is financed and how affordable housing can be built in Rockridge specifically. Due to the regional housing crisis and recent changes in State law to promote the building of housing, the topic has widely surfaced here in our neighborhood. We hope all residents will take the opportunity to educate themselves on this pressing issue.

The Town Hall will begin with a welcome by City representative **Emily Weinstein**, Deputy Director of Community Development, City of Oakland's Housing Community Development, and **Chris Norman**, Chief of Staff, City of Oakland's Housing Community Development. This will be followed by an illustrious panel of experts.

Questions for the panel:

- What makes affordable housing "affordable"?
- How it is financed? Overview of local tax measures, State funds, federal funds, and Oakland Impact Fees (funds collected for the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund from new housing developments).

March Town Hall, see page 2

Coming in April: RCPC BOARD ELECTIONS

by Ben Friedman, RCPC Election Officer

The Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) will be holding its annual Board of Directors election next month. There are six seats up for election. The "Call for Candidates" closed on March 1, and Candidate Statements will be published in next month's edition of the *Rockridge News*.

The election is scheduled for Thursday, April 20 from 7-9pm and Saturday, April 22 from 1-4pm. Rockridge residents are encouraged to come out and vote (see Rockridge.org

Board Elections in April, see page 2

What's Next for Long-Term Rockridge Renter?

by Anna L. Marks

In 1974, **Bruce Parry**, now 79, moved into a cottage on Lawton Avenue where he still lives today. He believes his home to be one the oldest in Rockridge, dating back to 1889; it served as the gardener's cottage for the large estate at the time. According to Parry, it was built from a single, first-growth Douglas fir harvested in Mendocino County. The the property hosts a 100-year-old plum tree in his backyard that was planted by local Italians for making prunes.

Parry has been able to live on his Social Security income (~$900 per month) largely because of his low rent. When he moved in, his landlady, an art instructor at UCLA, agreed to allow him to live there as long as he wanted for only $65 per month in exchange for doing home improvements. Parry picked up carpentry skills while designing sets for live theater and he has since made many upgrades — he intended to live in the cottage for the remainder of his life.


Photo/Anna Marks

Bruce Parry has been renting his Rockridge cottage for the past 49 years.

When his landlady passed away a while back, the home was left to her daughter, also a resident of Southern California. She continued to honor the agreement until a year and a half ago, when she sold the home to local developer Kenneth Er for $750,000. Now, after 49 years, Parry is looking for a new place to live.

Bruce Parry, see page 4

RCPC

March Town Hall

continued from front page

• What pencils out? A Case Study in reviewing a *pro forma* of a local housing project.

• Do "affordable or nothing" projects pencil out here in Rockridge? Why or why not?

Panalists Include:

• **Jeff Levin,** Policy Director, East Bay Housing Organizations

• **Rick Jacobus,** Economic Consultant to East Bay municipalities on housing

• **Ben Metcalf,** Managing Director of the U.C. Berkeley Terner Center for Housing Innovation

Jeff Levin worked for the City of Oakland's Housing Department before becoming Policy Director for East Bay Housing Organizations, a post he has held for nearly a decade. He has been in the weeds of city housing production, advocating on behalf of increased funding for affordable projects and for major efforts li the Housing Element.

Rick Jacobus, a national expert in inclusionary housing and affordable homeownership, is the principal of Street Level Urban Impact Advisors. He serves as a strategic advisor to Grounded Solutions Network, a national initiative focused on building more inclusive communities.

Ben Metcalf currently leads both the expansion and deepening of Terner Center's work solving housing affordability challenges through policy, practice and innovations. From 2015-2019, Metcalf was appointed by former Governor Jerry Brown to lead California's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

Time permitting, we will take additional questions from the community.

To share your questions, email Chair@Rockridge.org or submit them through the Zoom Q&A feature during the meeting. ■

Tuesday, March 14
7:30-9pm on Zoom

Register via QR code or at Rockridge.org

Note: The meeting will be recorded for future viewing on our YouTube page, accessible via our website at rockridge.org.

SCAN ME

RCPC

Board Elections in April

continued from front page

for neighborhood boundaries).

Before the election, RCPC will hold an online Candidates' Forum and will post the video on the organization's website. Additionally, candidates will submit statements for publication in the *Rockridge News* in which they discuss three important issues they seek to address as a board member. The April issue of the *Rockridge News* will include details about election procedures and voting locations.

The RCPC Board has adopted guidelines for candidates to encourage fairness and transparency. Candidates are asked to not seek or promote endorsements by elected officials or outside groups. Campaign materials should clearly state they were not written, produced, or published by RCPC, and should indicate that they come from one or more candidates (with their approval), or identify the author/s by name, with a mailing address and/or website. Finally, if campaign material recommends a "slate" of candidates, all those listed on the slate should have agreed to be included.

The Board expects candidates will avoid making personal attacks or false or misleading statements about themselves or others.

For more information, contact RCPC at election@rockridge.org and visit www.Rockridge.org. ■

The Rockridge News

The Rockridge News was founded in 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 650 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 Ad Deadline for APRIL 2023: March 16, 2023

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.*

RCPC Land Use Update
— by Ken Rich, LUC Chair

On January 25, RCPC sponsored an online town hall to help us begin creating a vision for what might be built on the Ridge site. As most of our readers know by now, the Ridge is the name for the large empty lot at the corner of Broadway and Pleasant Valley which was originally supposed to be Phase Two of the Safeway shopping center. This was one of the most highly attended RCPC meetings in recent memory, with 83 attendees!

The intent behind this program was to collect people's hopes and dreams for this site as a beginning to an ongoing conversation. We did not try to rank, evaluate or prioritize these ideas. That will come later. We started from the premise that a primary objective for the site is development of new housing, since that has been the stated position of RCPC and our neighboring groups for some time now.

To guide the discussion, we divided participants into several breakout groups and asked them to discuss two broad sets of questions. Our first discussion session asked, "What type of housing and for whom should be developed on the Ridge site?," raising topics like housing affordability, unit size, rental vs. ownership. The second round focused on other aspects of potential development, asking "What should that housing look like?," and, "What other amenities might accompany it?" This was intended to spur discussion around retail, open space, parking, height and density, and the like.

The subject of affordable housing clearly dominated the "what type of housing and for whom?" discussion. Most participants wanted to see development at the Ridge emphasize affordable housing, though ideas varied widely about how to accomplish this, given the high cost of construction and scarce public resources. Clearly, our residents care about making Rockridge more affordable and diverse, and want to see potential large new developments like the Ridge reflect these values. Luckily, our next **Town Hall, on March 14,** is going to focus on this very subject (see announcement on front page).

On the second discussion question, the conversation focused on retail: How much? What type? Is it feasible? Are we concerned about competing with College Avenue? Parking was also a frequently mentioned topic along with the ways in which a project at the Ridge should fit in with development at the CCA site next door. Perhaps summing up the discussion, one participant said, "Make it feel like a place, not a development."

Please keep watching this space and rockridge.org for more information as we explore this significant underutilized space in our community. ■



This is Cooper, a three-year-old energetic Australian Labradoodle, enjoying his backyard. Cooper loves people and dogs; he is kind to squirrels, but avoids cats. He loves his daily walks with Jan in his Rockridge neighborhood. He is great at obedience; he loves hide-and-seek. He will retrieve a ball or Frisbee for as long as you want to toss it.

editor@rockridge.org

Land Use Committee Meeting

RCPC's Land Use Committee Meeting will be held:

Wednesday, March 22, 2023, at 7:30pm, via Zoom.

The meeting is open to the public.

Use Zoom link: bit.ly/3c0r6X0
or email: landuse@rockridge.org.



CollegePrep
A private high school in Oakland

The College Preparatory School is a vibrant day school for grades 9-12 in Oakland's Rockridge neighborhood. At College Prep we believe in the foundational importance of scholarship, the value of dialogue, and the need for academically curious young people to belong to a kind, creative, diverse, and joyful community. We challenge our students to engage deeply in learning, appreciate one another, and grow into adults who are intellectually adventurous, ethically sure-footed, and generous of heart and spirit.

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Bruce Parry, from front page

As a young man, Bruce Parry wanted to be an artist and actor. He came to the Bay Area with a group of friends from his hometown in Nevada to check out the local art scene. He fell in love with the area, and went on to study at the California College of Arts and Crafts. He graduated with a degree in Design and Construction and eventually completed a Master's in Media Arts — the first student to graduate from that program (in a twist of fate, his surrogate nephew was the last student to get that same degree before the school closed its doors in Oakland last spring).

In the early 70s, he and some other actors, including Sam Shepherd, became founders of the San Francisco Magic Theater, which performed at New York's Summer Stock and on Broadway. "Quite a jazzy thing for a 26-year-old kid from the high-mountain desert," he remembers. Parry eventually started his own company with some friends, called The Thieves Theater. Their slogan was "we steal nothing but hearts and admiration."

Parry continued to work as an actor, landing roles in several underground films. He is listed on IMDB for his acting and special effects work in *Alone in the T-Shirt Zone* (1986), *The Last Roommate* (1985), and, most notably, Wayne Wang's *The Devil's Gift* (1984) "where an evil demon that inhabits a monkey doll takes over the mind of a suburban housewife to carry out its plans."

"That was 20 years ago, and in that one, I won an award for special effects, including creating an earthquake. We built a replica of a Victorian house, set it on fire, blew it all to hell, including the dog. Oh, no… but we managed to save most of them," he laughs, remembering.

Parry was surprised in late January of this year to find a public notice posted on his property, including an application for a tree removal, indicating his property would be demolished for a new residence.

"I came home one day and found a note on the door saying that Mr. Er would be by to examine the property. And when he came by, I said, 'who are you?' He said, 'I'm your new landlord.'"

> ***"And when he came by, I said, 'who are you?' He said, 'I'm your new landlord.'"***

When interviewed for this article, Er said he has not yet given Parry any sort of timeframe to vacate, and that he also has not offered him any monetary assistance outside of moving expenses. He insists he will wait to go forth with any new construction until Parry is resettled elsewhere.

Parry has a brother and sister who still live in Nevada, both of whom are also in their 70s, and has considered moving back there should he be able to convert their garage into an additional living space, but he has reservations.

"Putting three 70-year-olds together could be problematic. We are all pretty set in our ways. To move in with my brother and sister would just be too much for them." His brother recently lost his son who died unexpectedly of liver cancer at the age of 36.

Parry also explained that he can no longer do construction work since contracting long-term Covid, and now has heart disease. He recently had a stent placed in his heart.

When neighbors heard about his dilemma, they planned to start a petition. They hope this action will help him stay in his home.

"Most of us have been here for at least 15 to 20 years and are concerned for his wellbeing. We're hoping to change the landord's mind and let Bruce just live his days out there as a resident. It seems a pretty heartless thing to do when there are multiple other properties or investments that don't involve evicting a 79-year-old," says **Christian Luxton**.

"We plan on inviting Er to a forum where neighbors could ask him some questions, on Zoom, or at the Rockridge library. That's our hope — to circulate this petition and invite the landlord into a larger conversation with the neighborhood."

Er explains, "I would like to work with the community or whoever has resources to help relocate him so we can come to a happy medium. Until we can find him someplace to live that is subsidized in some way, I think any amount that we give him short of hundreds of thousands of dollars, he would still run into financial issues."

Parry is currently getting legal advice from the Oakland Tenants Union. The City of Oakland declared an eviction moratorium as part of its Covid-19 state of emergency; but the moratorium has exceptions, and how much longer it will remain in effect is unclear.

"I've told Bruce I don't want to evict him, even if it's within my rights; it's the last option," says Er. ■



RCPC/JCC Joint Town Hall Meeting Continues the Conversation About the Jewish Community Campus Project

by Melissa Chapman, JCC's Chief Executive Officer



Rendering of the newly-planned entryway in the rear of the building.

More than 50 community members took part in Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) and the Jewish Community Campus (JCC) Joint Town Hall Meeting on February 7 — some came in person and some attended via Zoom. The JCC is extremely thankful to the RCPC and the project task force (which also includes neighbors on Chabot) for their partnership and guidance over the past six months.

The presenters, who included principals from the JCC East Bay, Equity Community Builders, Siegel & Strain Architects, and the Libitzky Family Foundation, gave an overview of the project goals and guiding values; shared findings from the Rockridge community survey; showed updated plans and renderings for the site; and discussed the ways in which the JCC has worked (and will continue to work) with Fehr & Peers, the project's transportation consultant, on traffic and parking mitigation concern.

There was a high level of overall support and enthusiasm for the Jewish Community Campus. As the survey also revealed, community members are most excited about having a community and values-based organization occupying the campus. Folks are excited about the variety of opportunities and offerings the campus can provide, including serving as a refuge in emergencies.

In addition to the JCC East Bay, there are four organizations currently on campus alongside Nestle/Dreyer's, which continues to lease the main building at 5929 College and the former Yoshi's at 6028 Claremont. These include the Jewish LearningWorks (works to elevate Jewish education); Base Bay (a subsidized home for a Rabbinic couple offering hospitality, service, and learning); Moishe House (subsidized housing for young adults offering community programs); and Keshet (an LGBTQ+ advocacy organization).

RCPC and JCC will continue to keep Rockridge neighbors updated as we learn more and plan accordingly. If you have thoughts or questions, or want to request a recording of the meeting, please reach out to the JCC at communitycampus@jcceastbay.org. ■





LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Feasibility of Affordability

Editor: The Piedmont Avenue and Rockridge neighborhoods are united behind the idea that the Ridge site at Pleasant Valley and Broadway should be housing. Beyond that, as many units as possible should be deed-restricted as affordable housing. However, setting rents below market rates generally requires a subsidy or other incentive to make it pencil financially for the development.

The most feasible option would be to build a market-rate development with some deed restricted affordable units. This means that a portion of the units would be available to households making 80 percent or less of the area median income. "Affordable" means that rents would be set at no more than 30 percent of the household's income and that the units would remain affordable to households of those income levels even after the original household moved out. Developers are incentivized to include these units by the State Density Bonus, which provides concessions like additional height and density in exchange for including affordable units.

Developers can either pay for these units out of the project's overall budget by cross-subsidizing them from the market-rate units, or they can seek government subsidies that allow them to include more and more deeply affordable units. The most well-known program for this is the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).

Since the Ridge site is located in a "Highest Resource Area" (access to jobs, school, and other community resources) as defined by the State, this project would be a shoo-in for tax credits if the affordable units were for families (50 percent of affordable units would have to be two- and three-bedroom units). These tax credits would pay for about half the cost of constructing the units and would provide a financially feasible route to include affordable housing units. If the LIHTC route is too complicated, the developer could build fewer affordable units to satisfy the state density bonus requirements.

These two options are the most financially and technically feasible and require no additional subsidy from the City of Oakland. Oakland has very few units of affordable housing in high opportunity areas, and building affordable housing at the Ridge is an important way to meet our federal obligation to affirmatively further fair housing.

If the City of Oakland chooses to become more involved in this site, another alternative would be for the developer to sell or lease a portion of the site to a nonprofit affordable housing developer, such as the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC), Satellite Affordable Housing Associates (SAHA), or Resources for Community Development (RCD). That developer could then seek funding from the City of Oakland or the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) in combination with tax credits to finance a 100 percent affordable development.

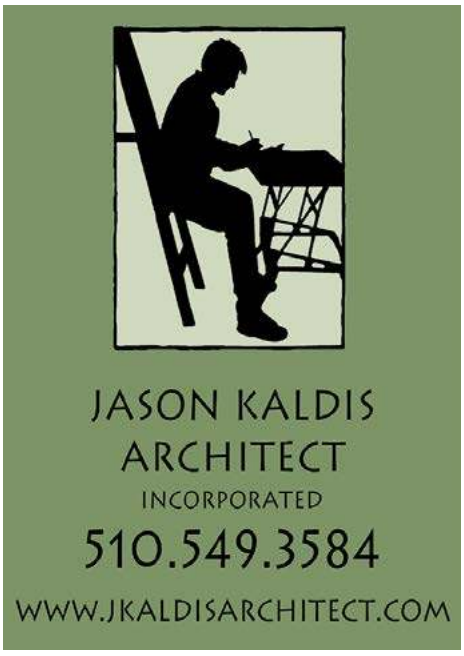
Due to funding application deadlines this process can take two to six years just to begin construction and would require additional support. However, this would likely provide the most affordable units on site. This is only a viable option if the City of Oakland can offer zoning incentives in exchange for a portion of the site, or offer funds to purchase a portion of the site.

Overall, I caution neighbors to be realistic about the costs and complexities of building affordable housing and the funding sources that are needed to accomplish different types of affordable housing projects. As a community, we should support zoning for as many affordable units as possible, alongside market rate units, at the Ridge site. This is a valuable opportunity to welcome more neighbors at all income levels into Rockridge, and we must advocate for housing at this centrally located site. ■

William Wilcox
41st street

Mr. Wilcox holds a Master of Public Policy degree from the Goldman School of Public Policy at U.C. Berkeley and has worked in affordable housing finance and homeless services for the past eight years in Northern California and NYC. He lives near the proposed development site.

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.*





LETTER TO THE EDITOR

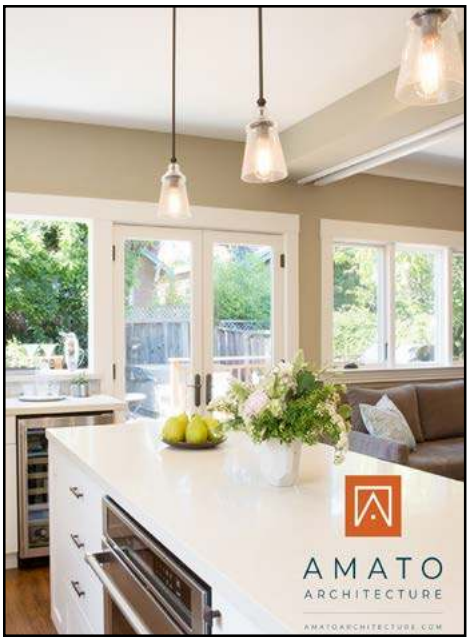
Rockridge Does Its Part

Editor: I'm writing to express my appreciation for the RCPC board for lobbying hard against, and defeating, Home Depot at the Ridge on the corner of Broadway and Pleasant Valley. It's heartening to see the members of this community come together to support housing Rockridge so desperately needs.

I've lived in Rockridge for 18 years, and during that time Oakland's unhoused population has increased to more than 5,000, and space for low- and middle-income people has dwindled. Our lack of housing versus demand and its astronomical cost is pushing longtime residents down and out, creating a cycle of homelessness and increasing exclusivity.

It's time for Rockridge to do its part and I'm encouraged by these recent efforts to demand more, and more affordable, housing in our neighborhood. Rockridge has a wealth of resources, access to public transit, and excellent schools. It's wonderful to see members of the community come together in support of affordable housing options, especially for families and working people. If Oakland is for everyone, let's make it so. ■

Stephanie Dominguez Walton
Rockridge Boulevard, South



Peralta Elementary Holds Spring Auction

By Maggie Pickavance



Artwork by Jenny Wehrt

Ahoy! Spring is in the air and Peralta Elementary parents are celebrating the season with their annual auction on **Saturday, March 18**, at the Lake Merritt Sailboat House. As a nod to the waterfront location, the evening will have nautical-themed decor and dress. Guests will enjoy cocktails, dinner, and live music, followed by a live auction.

The Peralta community has been collecting donations from local businesses and individuals, and has a treasure trove ready for the bidding to begin. From pizza gift cards to Airbnb stays, there will be a range of items to suit any interest and price point. Families from each classroom are working together to create different themed gift baskets — full of gardening supplies, or movie-night-in-a-box — to be bid on at the event, as well.

Funding for our school has never been more important as we are facing steeply increasing costs for staff and supplies and an unprecedented level of need from our students, who are struggling to readjust to school life after the pandemic. All money raised from the auction will support enrichment programs, including art, music, PE, and gardening, as well as for hiring teacher's aides.

Because the school district does not provide these essential components of elementary education, parents step in to fill the gaps. Thanks to the generosity and hard work of the school's families and the greater community, organizers anticipate another successful auction event.

There's still time to help. If you have an item, service, or skill that you can donate to the cause, send an email to auctiondonations@peraltaschool.org and let them know what you'd like to offer — an IOU for a basket of summer tomatoes, an experience at your business, or a handmade craft.

The parents of Peralta are grateful for the support of our neighbors and community. ■

Earth Day Beautification Projects

Rockridgers: Share your ideas!



- **Tree plantings**
- **Landscaping**
- **Other beautification ideas...**

…trash can mosaicking in May, individuals picking up litter on neighborhood streets (we will provide bags and gloves), etc.

Email your ideas to: *Chair@Rockidge.org.*

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Local Centenarian Looks Back… and Ahead

by Judith Doner Berne

eyes on Rockridge

Throwing up her hands, **Anna Kassal** answered "I have no idea," when asked how she has lived to be 102 and counting. But then, the long-lived, long-time Rockridge resident mused, "We ate food before they started adding so many chemicals." And, as for genetics: "I had one cousin who died at 100."

Experts predict that the number of people who live to be at least 100 years old will continue to rise in the coming decades. "While genetics play a large role in healthy aging, physical activity, social support, and where you live also can influence your chances for living a very long life," according to a recent report in the *Washington Post*.

Born of Czech descent in Wilber, Nebraska, billed as the Czech capital of the United States, Kassal grew up in Omaha. "My dad had a grocery store and butcher shop," she said, so that even during the Great Depression they had enough to eat. "It also helped that my dad was a bootlegger and my mother was a frugal person who always had money we didn't know about."

Kassal waited for her younger sister to graduate high school, then they enrolled together at the University of Nebraska. "It was fun getting out of the house. We had a good time." She left after two years because, "I didn't really know what I wanted to study," and, with World War II underway, followed her boyfriend George to his military post in Sacramento, where they married.

"It also helped that my dad was a bootlegger and my mother was a frugal person who always had money we didn't know about."

It wasn't until 1955 that Anna and George, who died in 2008 at the age of 91, moved to Rockridge. She remembers when College Avenue hosted a Woolworth's, an Armenian restaurant, a movie theatre, a bowling alley, and she "loved the Chimes Market," located where Cactus Taqueria is today.

"We had everything we needed right here," daughter **Barbara Kassal** said. She and her brother, named for his dad, attended Chabot Elementary and Claremont Junior High School, and Barbara, who now lives in Montclair, graduated from Oakland Tech.

They picked Rockridge, Anna said, for its easy access to public transportation (although there was no BART at that time), with Key trains to San Francisco and, most importantly, bus service to downtown Oakland, where she and her husband owned Duo, a record store. "He loved records. We lasted longer than any other Oakland record store — from 1954 to 1980. We were nice people."

Being a one-car family, George would take the bus to the shop, first located on Broadway and then around the corner at 14th and Franklin. She would drive there later in the day, where she worked the counter,

Eyes on Rockridge, see next page







"You always need something to look forward to," said Anna Kassal, including discussing books with daughter Barbara Kassal.

Eyes on Rockridge, from previous page

and he did the ordering. Laughing, she explained why they settled on the name Duo. "The more words, the more expensive the sign."

"Mostly, I remember the real cross-section of customers," she said. They ranged from Golden State Warriors basketball players to 11-year-old Bill Thompson, now known as Bill Dudley, who frequented the store all through his teen years. He went on to open, and later close, a string of record stores in Portland, and six years ago, he and a teenage neighbor opened one in Torrance.

"Anna and George became friends of mine," Dudley said. "She's kind of like my mom. I talk to her at least twice a week. She's sharp as a tack." As they were closing Duo, he was opening his first record shop and bought their cash register, a Led Zeppelin balloon, and a record rack that George had built that Dudley still uses.

But Anna wasn't content to retire. "I love to clean," she said. So, for the next 20 years, until she was 80, she cleaned other people's houses as well as her own. "Whenever I left a house, I always looked back at its clean kitchen." But retirement also meant that the couple traveled, gardened, and helped raise their grandson, Ben.

Although now confined to a wheelchair and dependent on a care worker to get her going each morning and settled at night, Anna is in control. "Grocery shopping was my delight," she said. She directs family members who shop for her on what to buy and where to store them. Grandson Ben, who lives in Berkeley with his wife and Anna's two small great-granddaughters, takes out the trash, but she handles the indoor recycling.

"I want to be busy," Anna said. "It's still my house. I won't let anybody run over me." "She's feisty," Barbara seconded. "To me, she was a super mom before we even knew what Super Moms were."

Her mom's daily routine includes browsing the local newspaper, doing crossword puzzles, and setting aside an hour in the afternoon to read — mainly mysteries. "I always remember what my mother used to say," Anna recounted, "You have to have something to keep your mind going."

Next up is her 5pm glass of wine, which she dilutes with ice cubes and imbibes with a side of crackers. That's followed by a refill at 5:30pm while she watches the television news. "I can only watch the news with a glass of wine, and even with that glass of wine, I sometimes can't watch.

"I never even voted when I lived in Nebraska," Anna acknowledged. But that was way back when. "Everybody these days is doing everything wrong. To me, it seems as if they don't want a democracy. If they just get smart people in the government, I still have faith that good things will happen."

"She's a unique personality in a changing world," said her neighbor and founding editor of the *Rockridge News,* **Don Kinkead**, "and she's keeping up with it."

If you have questions or suggestions for future columns, please email judyberne@att.net. ■

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Oakland Tech's Online Auction Is Now Live

by Leslie Ayers, Oakland Tech Auction committee

Oakland Tech's 2023 online auction is now live, and community members are invited to check it out and bid on any of the 200-plus items in the catalog, through **Wednesday, March 8**.

A huge thank you goes out to all the local businesses who donated to or sponsored the auction. If you are the high bidder for any items, stay tuned; you will be advised of the pickup location in Rockridge.

Visit https://oaklandtech.schoolauction.net/auction2023 to peruse the catalog and bid. Or, if you prefer, you can support the school by making a monetary donation.

Questions? Email auction@oaklandtech.com. ■

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Friends of the Oakland Tool Lending Library: Donations and Sale

by Jack Soares, Friends of the Oakland Tool Lending Library



Is it possible to have too many tools? **Ty Yurgelevic**, a volunteer with the Friends of the Oakland Tool Lending Library (FOTLL) believes at least some people think so, and that's a boon to FOTLL's Tool Sale — the tiny nonprofit's primary fundraising activity. FOTLL is always soliciting tool donations. "Nothing ever goes to waste," says Yurgelevic.

The Tool Sale, held on the **first and third Saturday of every month, 10am until 2pm,** at the Temescal Branch Library, 5205 Telegraph Avenue, is fueled by all sorts of donated tools. "It's not unusual for us to get an email saying something like, 'Uncle Louie died and left a garage full of tools. If you don't want them, they're going to the dump.' Sometimes a potential donor is moving, or downsizing, or just doesn't need the tools anymore," continues Yurgelevic.

"Tools that aren't popular, like gas-powered chainsaws, lawnmowers, and weed whackers are shared with other nonprofits that work with FOTLL." Recently, From the Ground Up Farms, a tiny nonprofit in Concow (Butte County, near Chico) picked up a load of tools for their tool library. Most of the small community was burned to the ground in the Paradise Fire several years ago.

What happens with the sale proceeds? "The money FOTLL raises," says **Tucker Bowen**, another FOTLL volunteer, "helps underwrite our free DIY workshops like the Junior Carpenters' Club, programs in schools, and participation in community events like Chabot Space & Science Center's Tinkerfest (scheduled for May 20). We help pay for repairs to the Tool Library's collection of over 5,000 tools, and sometimes buy tools or supplies that aren't in their budget. And we're currently working with the Oakland Public Library on the first major expansion of the Tool Library's space in over 20 years."

Interested in donating tools, volunteering, or have a question? Email friendsoftheotll@gmail.com, or visit www.FOTLL.org. ■

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Interview with Ray Craun, District Captain for *The Rockridge News*

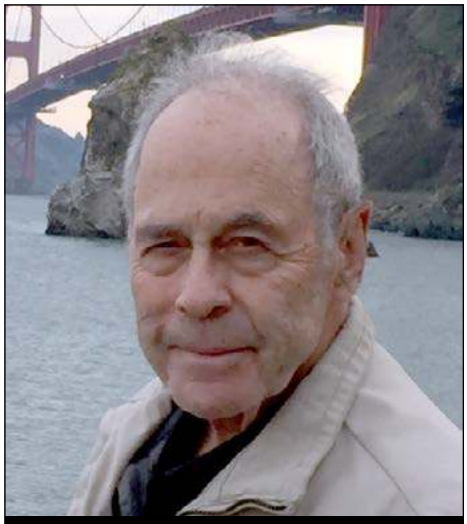
by Susan Montauk, Rockridge News Distribution Manager

Susan Montauk: Ray, how long have you been a volunteer with the *Rockridge News*?

Ray Craun: I volunteered when the newsletter first started back in the late 1980s. When I moved to Rockridge in 1976 the freeway had just been built, leaving the neighborhood in shambles. Many stores along College Avenue were closed and the neighborhood had organized to try to protect Rockridge going forward. I was on several committees organized by the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) to discuss options for community revitalization. When the RCPC established the *Rockridge News* in 1986, I volunteered to be a block captain and deliver it door-to-door.

Susan Montauk: What do you like best about your current job as District Captain?

Ray Craun: Well, it's really easy since my bundle drops are primarily on three blocks, Keith, Lawton and Ocean View. It takes about 30 minutes and it's a natural thing to do — to fill an important need. Now that I am older, I'm ready to pass the job on to someone who has the time and volunteer spirit to take it on.



Rockridge News **volunteer, Ray Craun**

Susan Montauk: Thank you for your decades of volunteer work! It's people like you who make this neighborhood such a wonderful place to live.

If you are interested in volunteering as a District Captain to replace Ray, call Susan Montauk at (510) 547-3855 or email smontauk@gmail.com. ■

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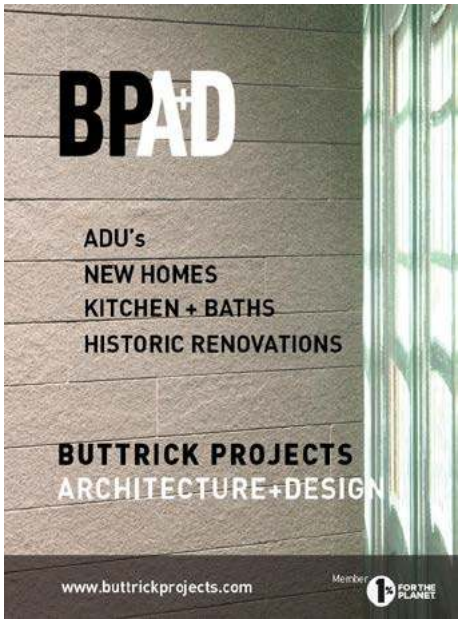
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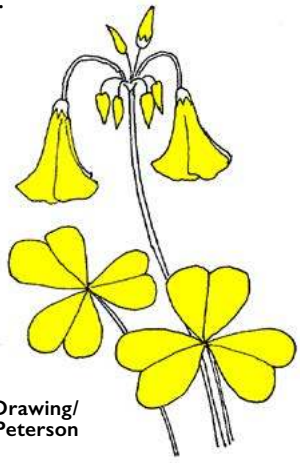


LOOK AROUND

Oxalis pes-caprae

by Kirk Peterson

We've been looking up at trees that grace our neighborhood; now let's look down at the ground. It's high season for sourgrass, *Oxalis pes-caprae*, a low-growing perennial that shows up in the wet winter and disappears when the ground dries in spring. Oxalis, or wood sorrel, is a prolific genus of small flowering plants. This variety, sometimes called "Bermuda buttercup," is widespread in California, though native to South Africa.



Drawing/
Kirk Peterson

The stalks of bright yellow flowers rise around a foot above the bright green shamrock-shaped leaves. The entire plant is edible in small amounts. Kids chew the lemony-tasting juicy stems for a burst of sour flavor, due to the oxalic acid.

Many a gardener loathes sourgrass. It is an invasive species that, unfortunately, seems intent on covering the earth. It spreads rapidly and is nearly impossible to eradicate. Its many tiny bulbs are very difficult to ferret out of the soil. If any readers have had success in killing off your sourgrass please share your methodology! Apparently, weeding repeatedly when the plant is activly growing, or smothering them under plastic sheeting, are both good ways to get rid of them.

Meanwhile, don't forget to enjoy the daffodils, tulips, paperwhites, hyacinths, and other bulbs that are blooming now. ■

Local Chef Pairs Haute Cuisine with Craft Beer

By Skip Fogarty

For 30 years, **Bruce Paton** has been something of a fixture in the neighborhood. I first spotted him at the former Barclay's pub on College Avenue enjoying a pint at the bar. Turns out, Paton and beer have a deeper affinity than simply sipping and socializing.

After earning a degree in culinary arts at the California Culinary Academy in 1988, the San Francisco native moved to Oakland in 1992 for an opportunity to work as a chef at the Claremont Hotel.

"It was banquet work with long hours," he remembers. "I was commuting from the city at first, but that was a grind and I moved to a place near Alcatraz and Telegraph. I discovered Barclay's as a good place to hang out and I casually got to know the owner, **Gene Bromstead**."

When there was a sudden opening for a head chef at the pub in 1994, Bromstead offered Paton the gig. "Although he didn't know me well, he needed someone to keep things running. So I decided to jump in."

As luck would have it, that decision set the course of Paton's career. It was at Barclay's that he first conceived the notion of inviting local breweries to showcase their product alongside his culinary creations. "We did four events at Barclay's which we called Dinner with the Brewmaster," he recalls. In fact, when we met for this interview, he brought along his complete portfolio of past Brewmaster menus, now numbering nearly 100.

Paton believes that for many cuisines, beer can offer a better pairing than wine. "Beer has so many facets — yeast, malt, hops — with so many different parameters and flavor profiles, you have more options to complement or contrast with the food.

Bruce Paton, see next page

Bruce Paton, from previous page

The concept of pairing beer and food was almost an accidental discovery.

"In my first job at the Claremont Hotel, I often got requests for an off-menu vegetarian dish. So I created a pasta dish with fennel, corn, and garlic. I made that an occasional special at Barclay's too. I was preparing the dish for our very first Brewmaster dinner, which showcased the Moonlight Brewing Company. They were introducing a bitter ale called Twist of Fate." Indeed, it was fate. Tasting his pasta sauce alongside the ale, Paton had an epiphany.

"The ale is very dry and heavily hopped. It balances the bitterness of hops with a sweet, malty flavor. Combined with the pasta's toasted garlic, sweet corn, earthy mushrooms, and chili flakes, I immediately sensed the beer was a perfect complement. Everyone at the event agreed."

Beer blogger **Jay Brooks** (brookstonbeerbulletin.com) once said of Paton's ingenious style: "I have been persuaded by extensive testing — better known as eating — that beer and food go together far better than wine, especially for heavier flavors, potent seasonings, and meat dishes. There are many to thank for this [beer-pairing trend]… including Bruce Paton."

It was another beer journalist who coined the term "beer chef" in reference to Paton. "When I saw that I knew it was a great brand, so I trademarked it for myself!"

After a few years at Barclay's, Paton moved on to become executive chef at the Clift Hotel and later at the Cathedral Hill Hotel and Jack



Bruce Paton, The Beer Chef

Tar Bar in San Francisco. He's been pictured on the covers of publications such as the *Beer Advocate* and *Celebrator Beer News*. He also served in leadership roles for the San Francisco Professional Food Society, the Chefs Association of the Pacific Coast, and the San Francisco Chapter of the American Culinary Federation.

Before I met Paton, he was already a familiar face. Then one sunny afternoon at the Rockridge Out & About street fair, I recognized him on center stage doing a cooking demonstration. With deadpan humor and his characteristically gruff voice, Paton shared his recipe for deviled eggs. He also showed a neat trick of altering a wire slicer so his eggs stood tall when served, rather than sliding all over the platter.

These days, the Beer Chef is taking things a little slower. He still cooks for friends and special events, but he's more usually found in his sunny spot on the patio of — where else? — Beer Baron on College Avenue.

Asked about his other favorite pubs nearby, Paton cites the recently remodeled Ben & Nick's and the Golden Squirrel, which now occupies the former Barclay's space. As far as other breweries around the area, he favors 21st Amendment in the city and Fieldwork in Berkeley.

Paton recently took over a *Rockridge News* route, delivering it to neighbors on Birch Court where he's lived for many years. He scores Rockridge high on walkability, eschewing a car completely. "I fell in love with this neighborhood as soon as I left the foggy city behind — the people, the weather, the vibe. A friend recently said to me, 'you're the unofficial mayor of Rockridge.'"

Unofficial or not, the Beer Chef is a Rockridge icon. Give him a nod if you spot him at the pub. ■

The Beer Chef's Penne Pasta with Corn, Fennel & Wild Mushrooms

(serves four)

1/2 Pound Pasta

1 Tablespoon Olive Oil

Dash of Crushed Red Pepper

2 Tablespoons Minced Garlic

1 Small, Diced Fennel Bulb (reserve fronds for garnish)

3/4 Cup Fresh Corn Kernels (approx. two ears)

1/4 Pound Shiitake Mushrooms

1/4 Pound of Diced Chanterelle or other Wild Mushrooms

1 Cup Cream

1/4 Diced Red Pepper (garnish)

Roasted Corn (garnish)

Cook pasta, al dente, drain, and set aside. Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add crushed red pepper and garlic, stirring for two minutes. Add corn and fennel. Cook for five minutes. Add mushrooms and salt and pepper to taste. Add cream and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Add pasta to the sauce.

Garnish with red bell pepper, roasted corn, and chopped fennel fronds.



Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council Meeting

by Carol Kasparek

The NCPC meeting held on February 9 came to order in a hybrid format. Attendance at this meeting was evenly split between those on site at the Rockridge Library and those online. Chair **Michael Ubell** announced that future meetings will be held in person and via Zoom.

Sergeant **A. Manguy** introduced the newest officer for Area 2, Officer **Nathaneal Estifanos**. Officer Estifanos has been patrolling Rockridge for a year and a half. He continues to connect with merchants as well as residents. With OPD coming out of a period of very limited resources, Sergeant Manguy announced that the six beats of the area will soon have four officers on patrol, including walking patrols. Attendees were clear that Rockridge needs police coverage and consequences for lawbreakers.

"I feel scared and sad" declared one merchant who has been on College Avenue for 30 years. Past experiences for some people have led them to believe that theft and break-ins were not a priority for the police. "I'm afraid lower-level crimes are going to lead to more violent acts in our neighborhood," offered another attendee.

Some residents asked for more resources for police. "How do we change the situation so we can help the police help us?," asked an attendee. The "no pursuit policy" was also cited as a possible reason for suspects not being apprehended.

Meeting participants noted the parking lot behind the empty restaurant at Chabot and College is being used as a drug dealing area and needs further investigation. Officer Manguy committed to addressing that area, as well as other areas that were brought to their attention.

NCPC's April meeting will feature a representative from the Office of the Inspector General to comment on the negotiated settlement with the OPD. Secretary **Karen Ivy** will present a summary of the past 60-day crime statistics.

Since the meeting, two crimes have tragically affected our community. The owner of Angel Cakes died from injuries she sustained while trying to apprehend those who had broken into her car. Jen Angel's family seeks restorative justice, support them by contributing at https://www.gofundme.com/f/love-and-support-for-jen-angel.

Recently, incidents of cars following and "dooring" bicyclists sent at least two riders to the hospital. This type of assault is exactly what the OPD is asking residents to report, by any of the methods listed in the sidebar above. Officer Manguy emphasized that reports and ongoing communication from residents are needed for the OPD to be most effective. If crimes were fully reported, the department would be able to present more accurate statistics to the City Council, justifying more funding. ■

The next meeting will be held at the Rockridge Library:

Thursday, April 13, 2023 at 7pm, in the upstairs conference room at the Rockridge Library. It will be a hybrid meeting for those who want to attend remotely.

For Zoom link, visit: https://www.rockridgencpc.com/

To suggest meeting topics, send an email to: chair@rockridgencpc.com.

Three Ways Citizens Can Aid Law Enforcement:

- Call 510-777-3211 from your cell phone, which routes directly to OPD dispatch.
- File a report online with as many details as possible: www.oaklandca.gov/services/report-a-crime-online.
- Email Sergeant Manguy: amanguy@oaklandca.gov.





RN Classifieds

List your 36-word message here for only $22 (phone number counts as one word). Make check payable to RCPC, and write "Rockridge News Classifieds" in the memo line. **The deadline for April is March 16** (available April 8). Mail to: RCPC, 4900 Shattuck Ave., PO Box 22504, Oakland, 94609-20131. For info, email Susan at smontauk@gmail.com.

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2/14/2023	2	1	5165 Shafter Ave	$828,000	$828,000	15	$880,000
2/17/2023	2	1.5	5939 Chabot Crest	$1,095,000	$1,095,000	11	$1,600,000
2/21/2023	4	3.5	5833 Ayala Ave	$2,395,000	$2,500,000	49	$2,510,000

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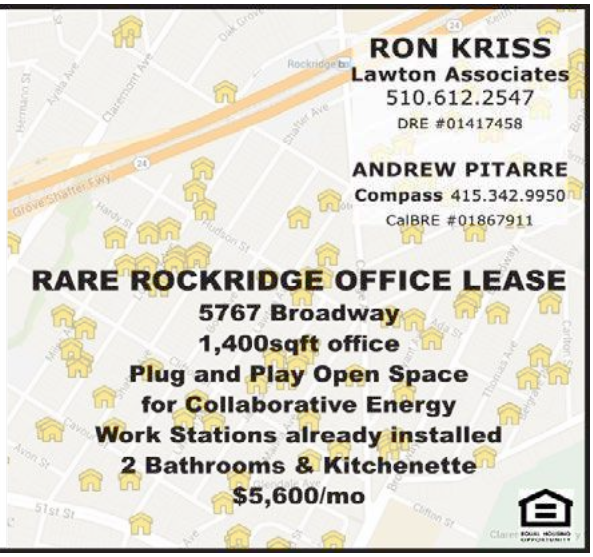


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