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

Creek-to-Bay Day at Frog Park

by Alison Drury

When: Saturday, September 23
9am to noon

Where: Frog Park. Meet at the big oak tree by the Big Frog play structure to sign the waiver to participate.

In celebration of Creek-to-Bay Day, Friends of the Rockridge Greenbelt (FROG) are planning a clean-up of Little and Big Frog Park. This is our chance to be part of the International Coastal Cleanup Day — a truly global effort to make our planet's waterways cleaner and healthier. When we clean up trash and debris, the park looks better, but more importantly, it keeps litter out of the waterways… Temescal Creek, San Francisco Bay, and the Pacific Ocean.

Tasks include weeding, pruning, trash pickup, raking, and sweeping. Families and groups are welcome and encouraged to volunteer. Students needing service hours for school can receive a signed letter verifying their participation.

Please bring your own gardening gloves; some gardening gloves will be on hand, but please bring disposable gloves as an extra layer if you'd like to borrow a pair. Tools will also be provided, but if you have your own, please bring them. Coffee and snacks will be provided to volunteers.

To participate, RSVP by September 18 so we can get a proper headcount. Email: info@frogpark.org. Hope to see you there. ■



Theresa Nelson, co-founder of Friends of the Rockridge Greenbelt (FROG), organizes volunteers for park cleanup.

Thank you, Rockridge…

…for demanding Shell Oil clean up its old gas station at the Claremont & College triangle. More than **1,000** signatures on our petition, **dozens** of emails sent to our leaders, **500** postcards mailed in, plus an official letter from RCPC.

Read more details about our campaign at Oaklandside.org/2023/08/02/



What's next?
We await Alameda County Dept. of Environmental Health's response to our collective public comments.

Look for an updated report in a future newsletter.

— Casey Farmer, RCPC Chair

Tragedy in Maui – A Caution for Oakland/East Bay

by Doug Mosher, Oakland Firesafe Council

We at Oakland Firesafe Council are truly saddened by the wildfire tragedies on Maui, and our hearts go out to all those affected. Relief is now flowing in, but the first few days were reportedly very chaotic, understandably so.

A contributing factor to the chaos was how fast and for how long the cellular and internet communications infrastructure went down due to the fire. An FCC report from 8/15 notes that 100 percent of cell sites in six west Maui cities, including Lahaina,

Firesafe Council, see next page

RCPC's October Town Hall will focus on what residents can do to reduce their carbon footprint and make their homes and neighborhoods more climate and wildfire resilient.

We welcome your inquiries. Stay tuned for the date of the hybrid meeting (at the Library & online).

Email: Chair@Rockridge.org with your questions or ideas.

"Rock-N-Hunt" Returns to the Avenue

by Jody Colley, Rockridge District Association

On Saturday, September 9, the annual Rockridge Rock-N-Hunt returns, bringing scavenger hunter lovers of all ages to search College Avenue for clues. Players can work solo or in teams. After each clue is found, players are entered into a raffle for three big prize packages. The more clues found, the more chances to win.

Prize packages include $400 or $200 in Rockridge gift cards (winner's choice), including restaurants, retailers, markets, spas, and more. This event includes a game exclusively for kids, including a $100 gift card package to kid-friendly businesses.

The event is free, and anyone can participate. There are easy clues as well as extremely challenging ones. However, the better you know the district, the better your chances to solve clues. Can't attend physically? There are some clues you can probably solve from home using the internet. Clues (objects) can be found inside or outside publicly accessible spaces on the ground-floor level of College Avenue between Alcatraz and Broadway. Players have an eight-hour window to solve as many clues as they can.

"We got hot beverages and pastries in the morning, then started the hunt. It was fun learning about new spots we hadn't visited and we had an excuse to spend time in some of our favorite places. Overall, a great morning; we felt so accomplished every time we figured out a clue," said **Bree Marchman**, a 2019 winner.

The event takes place during Rock-N-Stroll — featuring free outdoor live music, popups, kids' crafts, art shows, tastings, and more. Register for the hunt at RockridgeDistrict.com. Clues will be sent on game day to all who signed up. ■

Firesafe Council, from front page

were out of service from 8/9 through 8/12. People couldn't call 911, receive warnings, contact family or get timely information. Mobile Cell-on-Wheels (COWs) towers are now being deployed in Maui to support wireless services while cell sites are restored, and connectivity via Starlink satellites is also being made available to help restore Internet services.

Similar loss of communications could happen in the Bay Area immediately following a major wildfire, earthquake, or tsunami/flood. For this reason, we at the Oakland Firesafe Council created GENOAK — an area-wide, two-way radio emergency network. The ability to send or receive critical information may be a lifesaver. For info, and to participate, check out: https://www.genoak.org/.

The devastating, wind-driven wildfire through Lahaina is a concerning example of what could happen right here in our East Bay — a large firestorm, pushed by Diablo winds, burning through our residential and business areas until it hits the Bay and runs out of fuel. It might have happened in the 1991 Oakland Firestorm, but thankfully the winds died down.

We all need to be as prepared as possible for wildfire or any other disaster (https://oaklandfiresafecouncil.org/prepare/). Please review our wildfire safety programs including Firewise USA, Red Flag Warnings, ember protection/defensible space, wildfire monitoring, reporting, etc. at https://oaklandfiresafecouncil.org/programs/. ■

Rockridge Community Planning Council's Land Use Committee Meeting

RCPC's Land Use Committee Meeting will be held:

Wednesday, Sept 27, 2023, at 7:30pm, via Zoom.

The meeting is open to the public.
Use Zoom link: bit.ly/3c0r6X0
or email: landuse@rockridge.org.

THE RockridgeNews

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 *Rockidge 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 450 words and are published at the discretion of the RCPC. 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.

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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 OCTOBER 2023: September 21, 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.*

"Neighbors Together Oakland" Proposes Local Action for Crime Prevention

by Janine Firpo

Many of us are frustrated by what we see as rising crime coupled with what feels like a lack of action to make things better. We are also witnessing other changes in Oakland that make us feel as though our city is in a downward spiral. It does not feel good to sit by and watch. It feels disempowering and insufficient. Many of us want to take action, but we don't know how or where to turn.

There are individuals and organizations in the city that are working to create change. One of those is Neighbors Together Oakland (NTO), which was formed in 2021 to organize individuals across the city to ensure we all enjoy safety, thriving businesses, affordable housing, and local food systems.

The founders of NTO believe that City Hall has failed to deliver the basic services we need to enjoy a safe and livable city. We are seeking pragmatic solutions to the problems we are facing and support a government that is responsibly managed, transparent, accountable to neighbors and most importantly, follows common sense.

Built on the belief that change starts with us, NTO aims to empower residents to engage with our neighbors, take action in our neighborhoods, and form a cross-city coalition of concerned citizens who make their voices heard. The organization provides information, simplifies the process of attending or tracking outcomes of City Council meetings, and brings resources to create change at the local level. Part of that change is achieved through voting, which is only effective when members of the community fully understand the issues at stake, the differences between candidates, and how our ranked-choice voting system works. This is why education is so important.

Many of us want to take action, but we don't know how or where to turn.

Rockridge neighbors can learn how to get more involved with NTO on **September 20 at the Rockridge Library** (see sidebar for details) where they will hear from individuals who have been tracking crime in our neighborhood for years, and listen to the experiences of NTO leaders in Trestle Glen who have organized their neighborhood for action. Attendees will walk away with a list of actions to get more involved. ■

Neighbors Together Oakland
will meet on:

Wednesday, September 20
6pm to 7:30pm
Rockridge Library
5266 College Ave.

Doors open at 5:30pm. The meeting, led by two Rockridge neighbors, will start promptly at 6pm and end promptly at 7:30pm — everyone must be out no later than 7:45pm.

Seating is limited to 90 people. Once the meeting room capacity has been reached, no one else will be permitted to enter.

Questions? Email jfirpo@aol.com.





Twenty-Year Update to City's General Plan Moves Forward

by Star Lightner and Aly Bonde, RCPC Board Members

Last month, the Oakland Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on components of the General Plan 2045 Update for consideration by the City Council this fall, with additional components seeking further community input and approval by 2025.

Much of the General Plan's housing-related items implement the commitments already included in the Housing Element — the citywide plan adopted earlier this year for creating additional housing that meets state requirements. Three key action items in the Housing Element being implemented through this update are intended to remove barriers to the development of new affordable and mixed-income housing on key sites, as well as to facilitate creation of so-called "missing-middle" housing.

Three Key Action Items

The first two action items are the creation of two new "overlay zones" — added layers on top of existing zoning requirements — in certain areas of the city.

One is an Affordable Housing Overlay Zone, which streamlines approval for 100 percent affordable housing projects. The second is the Housing Sites Overlay Zone, which streamlines approval for mixed-income housing on key sites already identified in the Housing Element.

State requirements also create By-Right Approvals for small-scale developments on parcels less than 15,000 square feet that contain 20 percent affordable housing.

Pursuant to State law, sites included in previous Housing Elements can receive By-Right Approval if they include 20 percent affordable housing. However, if a site was newly added to the most recent Housing Element, there will be additional affordability requirements in response to Oakland community desires. This would range from 20 percent of units affordable at the "very low income" level to 40 percent of units at the "moderate income" level. Projects will not be eligible for By-Right Approval if they propose more than 100,000 sq. ft., or are to be built in phases (unless they are 100 percent affordable).

City staff is currently drafting Objective Design Guidelines which By-Right Projects must adhere to. The guidelines will go through an intensive community feedback process, planned in the coming months. The Planning Commission members requested that despite the State's By-Right Approval requirements, the City create ways to enable the public to know when such applications are submitted.

City staff is currently drafting Objective Design Guidelines where By-Right Projects must adhere to an intensive community feedback process.

The third action item is intended to create "missing middle" housing (multiplexes, townhouses, live/work, etc.) which are affordable to middle-income households but historically have been difficult to produce due to market dynamics, and which are ineligible for public subsidies. Proposed changes include up-zoning some residential areas for up to four units of housing on lots greater than 4,000 square feet; and two units on smaller lots, as well as reducing setbacks and parking requirements in some areas.

Additional changes to the General Plan include increasing 60-foot height limits to 65 feet, and allowing structures with 75-foot, 85-foot, and 90-foot heights to go as high as 95-feet to better align with State code and to lower construction costs for common building types.

For more info, visit oaklandca.gov/topics/general-plan-update. ■





Friday Night Mealtime at College Avenue Presbyterian Church

— by Thom & Tina Faulkner

For more than 30 years, the College Avenue Presbyterian Church (CAPC) has been serving weekly "Friday Night Meals." This is a wonderful opportunity to gather together as a community and respond to the needs of those struggling with hunger, solitude, or joblessness.

In 2020, as a result of Covid, CAPC had to pivot, and the Friday Night Meal is now served "to-go" with 80 to 100 hot, home-cooked meals distributed free for anyone who wants. Additionally, on two Friday nights a month, they distribute Blessing Bags with packages of new socks, underwear, toiletries, and other necessities.

Donations are gratefully accepted and needed. CAPC invites all Rockridge neighbors to help. The meal is a joint project made possible by contributions from our community — congregational members, local merchants, and residents. It costs an average of $200 per week to produce and distribute these meals, so contributions go a long way.

Have extra time? CAPC is always looking for volunteers to help with setting up, serving, and cleaning up. In addition, they need more Community Organization Cooking Teams that can prepare a meal for one of the Friday nights. It's easy, fun, and assistance is available for menu planning.

To donate, visit www.capcoakland.org/give. To volunteer, sign up at www.capcoakland.org/Friday-Night-Meal, or email Thom Faulkner at FaulknersAtSea@yahoo.com. ■



Coco is 9-years-old. She volunteers at the Rockridge Library. She comes every other Thursday to be read to. She loves being scratched. She also likes long walks, car rides, other dogs, and sniffing for food. She has one empty eye socket, but she hears very well. She is so cute.
— *Marguerite Kott, age 9*



This is Zephyr, a 7-year-old standard poodle. Zephyr's personality is playful, but willful. He has an advanced degree in detecting where he will score a biscuit. He knows every shop, garage and bar where they are offered. His parents, Adele and Jim, have lived here for 36 years and Zephyr is their third Rockridge poodle.

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SAVE THE DATE

for the Annual College Ave.

Halloween Celebration

Sunday, October 29
11am to 2pm



The main event will take place at the Rockridge Library. Trick or treating will take place at the businesses all along College Ave.

Be prepared for stories, crafts, games, and music. Do not miss out on a great Halloween tradition. Stay tuned — look for more information in the October issue of the *Rockridge News*.

Rockridge News Volunteer Request

Keith Avenue Block Captain Moving On

by Susan Montauk, **Rockridge News *Distribution Manager***



Many thanks to **Katie Caradec** (who is moving away) for her service as Block Captain on Keith Avenue since February, 2021. The *Rockridge News* and residents of Keith Avenue are eager for someone in her neighborhood to take over her route as soon as possible. Of course, it would be optimal for someone on that very route to step forward. Please let us know if you are that person.

Route 09H: Up Keith from McMillan to 5925 Broadway

Block Captains deliver newsletters door-to-door. Their bundles are delivered to their front porches the first weekend of each month (except August). Call (510) 547-3855, or email Susan at smontauk@gmail.com to volunteer.

Kevin: The Peacock of Oak Grove

by Chuff Afflerbach

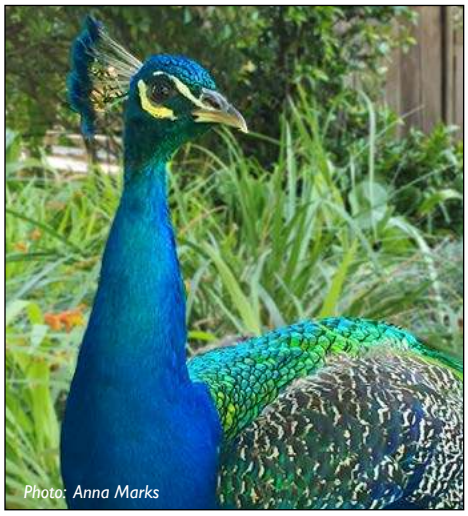


Photo: Anna Marks

He just appeared on the street one day. Nobody knew where he came from. It was around the Fourth of July so some folks said he fled the fireworks in West Oakland for a quieter neighborhood. Some said he was looking for love. Whatever brought him, we were all surprised to find a full-grown peacock with a four-foot train of brilliant feathers strutting up and down Oak Grove Avenue.

He stopped the traffic. Drivers jumped out of their cars to take his picture. A cluster of kids from the daycare came for the show. They ate their lunches as they watched him eat; pecking for bugs and worms, buds and seeds. Water bowls appeared on porches and lawns. One resident bought a bag of chicken feed for him. Somebody started calling him **Kevin**, after the peacock in the Disney movie "Up." The name stuck.

Everyone asked, what do we do about a stray peacock on the street? There was an online discussion on the neighborhood email group. Nextdoor was consulted, but nobody claimed him. Animal Control came by, and Kevin hid out until the heat was off. The Lindsay Wildlife Museum said "no thanks, peacocks aren't wildlife." The Oakland Zoo also declined. So it looks like he's here for now. Who doesn't want to live in Rockridge?

We do worry about him. Fearless or foolish, he wanders into the street. Most drivers are thrilled enough at the sight to stop and gawk, but local housecats steer clear. One neighbor's cat got so close that Kevin leapt into the air, but he's a lot bigger than they are, so Kevin doesn't worry like we do. He's got his roost in a topped-off street tree where he sleeps well at night… just don't park your car under him.

After a month or so, the novelty has worn off, as have all those flashy tail feathers. Wikipedia says Kevin should grow a new set for the next mating season. Meanwhile, he's still a regal-looking bird; a royal turkey, as they say in Spanish. And it's still a surprise and a delight to open the front door and see a real live peacock standing on the front porch. ■



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Rockridge Triangle Park Dream

For some years now, I have been thinking about how wonderful it would be to have a park at the vacant Claremont/College triangle — a former Shell gas station, and nearly a half-acre parcel. We have so few public open spaces to gather and relax in Rockridge.

The *Rockridge News* has circulated a petition (https://rb.gy/v8lse) to ask that Alameda County Environmental Health not let Shell Oil off the hook to clean-up the site (see front page). The petition and article in *Oaklandside* from August (https://oaklandside.org/2023/08/02/) emphasized the lot's potential for housing. Maybe the triangle site can accommodate both? In the meantime, I am looking to get together with folks who care about the potential for open space to transform our neighborhood and intensify our sense of community.

Along with brainstorming about what would be best for our community, we also need to think about how to overcome the many barriers to turning this dream into reality. I believe Rockridge has the skills, talent, and resources to make it happen. **Penn Philips** at Inside Out Design has offered to sketch out a few concept designs to help us visualize what is possible.

The College Avenue Safeway Plaza is a highly-used public space, but it is not a substitute for publicly-owned green space for gathering, gardening, and building community.

Please let me know if you are interested in brainstorming about the possibility of a park. If so, email me at williams.zabel@gmail.com with the subject line "Triangle Park." Once I hear from folks, I will organize a backyard meeting at my home on Auburn Ave. Your energy and enthusiasm, as well as your questions and concerns, are welcome. ■

Laurie Williams
Auburn Avenue

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dense Housing at Rockridge BART?

In a letter to the Editor (July/Aug 2023, Rockridge News) Mr. Alameldin, a policy associate with the Terner Center for Housing Innovation, UC Berkeley, and a YIMBY supporter, provided a rousing promotion for a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) at the Rockridge BART.

The usual buzzwords — sustainable, greenhouse gas, housing crisis, climate change — were employed. Glowing predictions were made that young families would flock to the BART station area, that local businesses would thrive, and that the city's coffers would overflow with new tax money to provide infrastructure and services to our community.

Those of us who have resided in Oakland for decades know that these promises, particularly that city services will improve, are flimsy at best. Due to high land prices, it is known that TOD in high-cost urban areas can't overcome the issues of accessibility and gentrification — making affordable housing nearly impossible in these locations. This outcome was verified in a draft Rockridge Housing Study by the RCPC Land Use Committee in concert with UC Berkeley housing experts.

Building directly adjacent to BART tracks will cause additional noise and air pollution exposure to many nearby residents. I lived in a TOD in Helsinki, Finland, where, by design, walking is the principal form of transportation. This means the amount of groceries per shopping trip is limited to how much one can carry, or place on a bicycle. Consequently, family grocery shopping must occur multiple times a week.

The value of one's time spent on this necessary chore is only one of the many considerations related to the quality of life in a TOD. As to public transportation itself, it must be economical, clean, safe, and on time. Helsinki did fulfill the latter three factors, but BART certainly has not. People are simply not enamored of local public transportation due to its continuing failures on all four parameters — it has become a choice of last resort for many.

And has anyone noticed that California's population is shrinking? Are additional dense housing developments even needed? Sacramento's "housing mandates" seem more appropriate to 1965 than 2023 — in other words, regressive. ■

J.W. Yager
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IN MEMORIAM
Neil Jacobson

by David Jacobson



Neil Jacobson was more than just a parent to me. He was a mentor, a friend, and a role model. He taught me how to live with courage, compassion, and dignity. He inspired me to pursue my dreams to be the best chef, boss and mentor I can be through kindness, curiosity, and advocacy.

Neil Jacobson, a 40-year resident of Rockridge, passed away on May 10th, at the age of 70, after a long battle with multiple health ailments. He left behind a legacy of innovation, advocacy, and leadership that will continue to shape the lives of millions of people for years to come.

He was born with cerebral palsy, a disability that affects movement, coordination and speech. He faced many challenges and barriers throughout his life, but never let them stop him from achieving his goals. He graduated from Hofstra with a degree in computer science and completed his MBA at Golden Gate University while working as one of the first employees for Wells Fargo Bank's technology division with a significant disability. He rose through the ranks and became a senior vice president, overseeing the development of many cutting-edge systems, including serving as architect of 24/7 banking. His code is still used in ATM and banking software today.

He went on to found Abilicorp, which provides job opportunities and support for people with disabilities, and served as the president of the World Institute on Disability, an organization that promotes the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. He also co-founded the Computer Technologies Program, a school that trains people with disabilities in the tech industry.

He was a visionary who challenged the stereotypes of others. He understood that people with disabilities have valuable skills and talents that can benefit any organization. He was one of the biggest advocates for the employment of people with disabilities, and he inspired many employers and employees to follow his lead, myself included.

I am proud to be Neil's son, and grateful for everything he taught me — how to overcome obstacles, how to work hard, how to help others, and how to enjoy life with the cards that were dealt. He was a loving father, a devoted husband, an extremely loyal friend, and a respected leader. He touched the hearts and minds of more people than I could ever keep track of.

He loved his Rockridge Neighborhood and could often be seen zooming around in his wheelchair, along with my mom, off to their favorite neighborhood haunts for a beloved mocha. I've heard countless stories about how he changed lives wherever he went.

"Neil and (his wife) Denise are our regular customers, and our staff love both of them. Neil was a polite and funny person. I often saw the waitress cutting up pieces of food and I knew who that was for," remembers Bill Chung, owner of The Rockridge Café.

Bob Klein, former owner of Oliveto's, had a close relationship with Neil. "We would see Neil tear-ass down the street in his powered wheelchair, with his giant grin on his face. Sometimes, David, then a little boy, will be hanging on the rear of the chair. On occasion, he would come into the café and I felt it lift the spirits around us. He was a force."

May the lessons of his life story live on like the legend he was. ■





Envisioning & Creating A "Climate Scape"

by Carol Kasparek



Participants choose colorful objects to inform their ideas for the Climate Scape.

Frog Park has been evolving since neighbors designed and built the greenspace in 2001. This fall will launch another phase in that evolution. The corner of the park adjacent to the basketball courts along Hudson will soon become a spot where people can explore, play, and commune. All these benefits will come from an irrigation-free landscape.

Theresa Nelson, chair of Friends of the Rockridge Temescal Greenbelt (FROG), connected with Rockridge landscape designer **John Kamp** (featured with his partner **James Rojas** in the June 2022 *Rockridge News*) who proposed a collaborative, innovative way to approach the project.

"We want to create a living legacy" for this portion of the park, says Nelson. Part of the plan is to attract pollinators. Extensive experience and experimentation have shown Kamp that our Mediterranean-like environment can attract pollinators by planting and training drought-tolerant flora. "Plants have more intelligence than we realize," he says.

The plants need to be thoughtfully chosen and placed in order for the landscape to be sustainable. Done according to plan, they will adapt better to changes in the environment. Kamp has dubbed the result a "Climate Scape." He hopes to include elements that inspire and amaze as the landscape changes over time.

Members of FROG gathered in June to map out the plan for the 900 sq. ft. space. Twelve residents, ages 8 to 80, participated in a "Learn, Play, Build" exercise to guide the development. James Rojas directed the group to use everyday objects to build their ideal concept for the corner.

As each person described their creation, Kamp recorded recurring themes — discovery, adventure, safety, simplicity, and belonging, among others. "We show what we have in common… what we look for throughout our lives, whether we know it or not," according to Rojas.

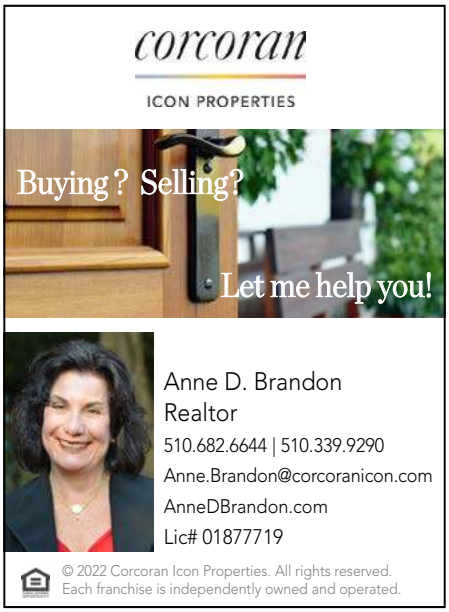
Since its inception, Frog Park has been transformed through extensive community effort, including input on landscaping and the addition of play installations. FROG has raised more than $3 million over the past 20 years for the project, with residents contributing much of the labor. Members have already raised over $3,500 for the Climate Scape.

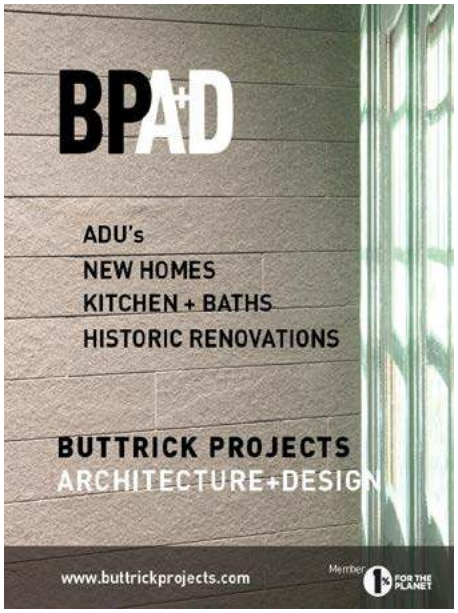
"All of our founders see the importance of stewardship, and teaching stewardship, as a major component of the corner renovation," according to Nelson. "We are fortunate to have the chance to show future generations the joy of supporting the community."

Current visions for the corner are a welcome contrast to its past. FROG member Leonora Sea recalls decades ago when she and Nelson forbade their young daughters from going near the "hideous wood and metal structures."

The BART and freeway overpasses remain. "Limitations always make creative work better," says Kamp. "Working from the heart and the senses surprisingly works."

Groundbreaking for the Climate Scape will take place on September 23, *along with International Coastal Cleanup Day event at Frog Park (see front page). Kamp will be onsite to train FROG members on the planting methods for the project.* ■





IN MEMORIAM
Sam Martinez

by Edward Guthmann

At Angkor Wat, the ancient temple complex in Cambodia, **Sam Martinez** was vacationing this past February with his wife Brenda Bloomfield. One day they met a young South Korean man who looked alarmingly like their late son Marco. Eerily, just moments before the stranger appeared, Sam and Brenda had emptied some of Marco's ashes into a stream behind the Ta Som temple.

"We made this connection with him," Brenda says, "and when we got back home Sam wrote to him right away." Sam was energized and optimistic, but two weeks after returning from Cambodia, on March 2, he died from liver failure. He was 71.



A Rockridge resident for 53 years, Sam was a friendly, eternally boyish man with an avid curiosity about people. He grew up in Richmond, the son of Hispanic parents from New Mexico. At UC Berkeley he majored in math, then art, and became a teacher of children with learning disabilities and mental health issues. He earned a Master's in Special Education and taught at several schools, including Claremont Middle School. He became a father at 37.

"When I was born," says his older son Mateo, "one of the first things my dad did was walk up and down College Avenue to show off his new baby."

Sam retired in 2017 and was getting his footing after 40 years of teaching. But in February of 2018, Marco, 19 years old, died of an accidental overdose of kratom. An herbal substance extracted from the leaves of a Southeast Asian tree, kratom can produce opioid or stimulant-like effects; in small doses it alleviates pain or depression.

With Marco's death, Brenda says, "Sam fell apart" and drank heavily for four years — until a family intervention. He found a therapist, started a qigong practice, joined a gym and a father's grief group.

"He was doing really well," Brenda says. The disconnect between his elated mood in February and his sudden death is harsh. "It's just so weird not having him here. I'm not used to it at all."

Sam was a Rockridge fixture. When he first moved here in late 1969, he lived on Boyd with his partner, Perry Amidon. After Perry died of melanoma in 1976, Sam bought the house from Perry's mother. He paid $49,000.

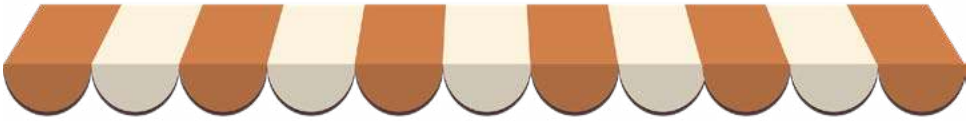
Brenda met Sam in 1982 at a center for emotionally disturbed children where they both worked. "He was soft-spoken, artistic, sweet, kind," she remembers. "He really attracted me because he was so different. He had long hair and he was wearing clogs, a shearling jacket and a scarf. I just thought, 'Who is this person?'"

Sam had a passion for travel — he'd been to Machu Picchu, Cuba, Sweden, Morocco. He spoke Spanish fluently, plus a little Swedish and French. He loved movies, books, and art museums. He ran the Bay to Breakers every year... and he loved living in Rockridge.

One of Sam's greatest joys, Mateo says, was biking around the neighborhood and catching up with a friend, acquaintance, or store clerk. "I think my dad serves as a reminder of what it can look like to be a member of a community." ■

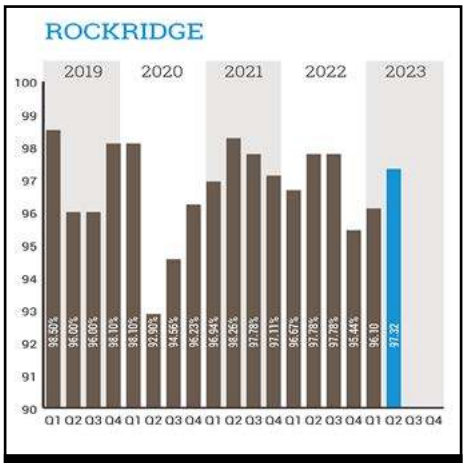






College Avenue Retail is **HOT!**

According to John Cumbelich & Associates of Walnut Creek, over-all occupancy in Oakland's retail submarkets has moved noticeably higher in the second quarter of this year. Rockridge has proven to be Oakland's hottest retail district with occupancy rates moving from 96.10 percent to 97.32 percent, and this includes new leases signed with three shops soon to be open on College Avenue, including Bad Walter's Bootleg Ice Cream, Love + Chocolate, and The Xocolate Bar *(see article below).*



In Q2 of 2023 widespread leasing gains in Rockridge's retail submarkets moved occupancy levels higher.

Source: John Cumberlich & Associates of Walnut Creek

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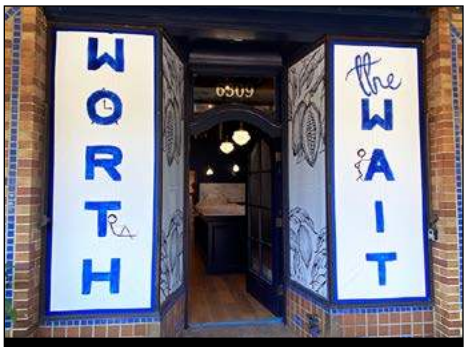
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New Businesses Find A Home In Rockridge

Is Rockridge becoming a mecca for chocolate lovers? **See's Candies (5802 College)** has been serving chocolate delectables since 2014. **The Chocolate Dragon Bittersweet Café (5427 College)** has been hosting a menu of chocolate beverages and bakery items for the past 12 years, and soon Rockridge residents will have two new chocolate shops and more to explore…



Love + Chocolate will open as soon final inspections are complete.

Love + Chocolate (6309 College Avenue) may be open by the time you read this. And if not, the owners are promising that it will be "worth the wait." Shop owners **Kent and Kristy Lincoln** have been busy completely remodeling the inside of the shop since February 2023, and at the time of this printing have had their first building inspections. If all goes well, you will soon see the location transformed into a proper Belgian chocolate shop with over 70 different pieces of chocolate. When they do open, stop in and sign up for free tastings… until then, visit them at www.loveandchocolateshop.com.

Rockridge Biz, see next page

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Welcome to CLARADISE!

Internationally unknown comedian **Clara Bijl** and host of the Nuthouse at The Golden Squirrel produced a 43-minute comedy album, recorded at the venue at a May 2023 performance.

In Welcome to Claradise!, Bijl discusses living in the Bay Area, raising kids in Berkeley, sex ed, wine, Trump supporters, and her dog (to hear her discuss her cats, check out her first album). Paul Simon may have sung about 50 ways to leave your lover; Clara will share one way to leave your husband because she's efficient. She discusses all these topics with ease and relatability, making this album sound more like a conversation (where Clara's the only one talking) rather than a recording.

"I always thought that 43 minutes was a nice round number for a comedy album. Not to worry, there are 60 minutes worth of jokes packed in these 43 minutes. This album is efficient, compact, and clean. This album would be 23 minutes if the people in the audience weren't laughing so much."

You can see her upcoming performances at The Golden Squirrel, Wednesdays at 8pm and Saturdays at 8:30pm. To listen to her album and to learn more about her live shows, be sure to visit her website, https://www.iloveclara.com/. ■

Rockridge Biz, from previous page

The Xocolate Bar (5854 College Avenue), an independent, Latina-owned small business established in 2006, is a purveyor of artisan chocolates and confections. Their highly-anticipated opening of Xocolate Bar is designed to captivate and delight customers from the moment they step inside.

"This store is the culmination of 15 years of hard work," said **Malena Lopez-Maggi**, co-founder and owner of The Xocolate Bar. "We will finally have a venue for showcasing not only our handmade chocolates but also the world's best candies, ethical-craft chocolate, and artist-made goods inspired by sweet treats."

They are planning to open later this month. To stay informed of their progress, follow them on Instagram (@xocolatebar) or join their email list for an invitation to their grand opening celebration.

Opening Hours: 7 days, 11am-5pm. For additional information, visit www.xocobar.com.



Xocolate Bar staff celebrate getting the keys to their new space in Rockridge.

The Yoni Temple (5831 College) reclocated to Rockidge in 2022 after ten years on Berkeley's Telegraph Avenue. The shop attracts clients of all ages, backgrounds, abilities, and genders.

Their talented estheticians are not only highly experienced, but most of them also have a background in health and holistic healing — adding to the sacred, nourishing, and heart-centered approach to wellness. They offer a distinctive approach to waxing and use organic single-ingredient skin products to maximize results — they specialize in Brazilian waxing. Curated music completes the overall nourishing ambiance.

"The Yoni Temple has become a home, a safe space where our clients can forge a deep connection with

Rockridge Biz, see next page

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Market talk: Rates remain about 6.5%-7.25% for qualified buyers/properties, with most economic forecasts suggesting they will come down toward year end and into 2024.
Inventory of homes is still lower than prior years but increasing from a lower summer point.

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Rockridge Biz, from previous page

themselves and feel a sense of belonging," says founder **Ashley Apple**. "Our waxing technique incorporates body mechanics and energetic awareness so clients can relax into the experience with little to no discomfort." The shop is open Mon to Fri from 11am to 7pm, and Sat/Sun from 10am-5pm, visit https://www.theyonitemple.com/.

La Esquinita (5400 College Avenue) is restaurateur **Thomas Schnetz**'s newest venture. After many notable successes (Xolo, Tacubaya, Doña Tomas, and Flora), Schnetz took over the old Filippo's location, painted the façade bright pink, and now serves up curated tacos — each with a unique salsa and topping.

They have already earned more than four stars on Yelp and boast reasonable prices, good-sized portions, and fast service. You may recognize employees **Jorge Rosales** and **Juan Zarate Jr.** who came with Schnetz from Xolo. They are open Tues-Sat, from 11am to 8pm; Sundays from 11am to 3pm.

Bad Walter's Bootleg Ice Cream (5800 College Avenue) was born in **Sydney Arkin**'s living room as an underground popup. After being laid off from her job as a creative director for an ad agency during the pandemic, Arkin found herself most concerned about the ice cream supply chain being disrupted. "Just the fear of it sent me learning how to make ice cream from scratch."

She started selling pints from her apartment, and, after much success and support she is planning to open her first brick-and-mortar shop at the former location of Smitten sometime



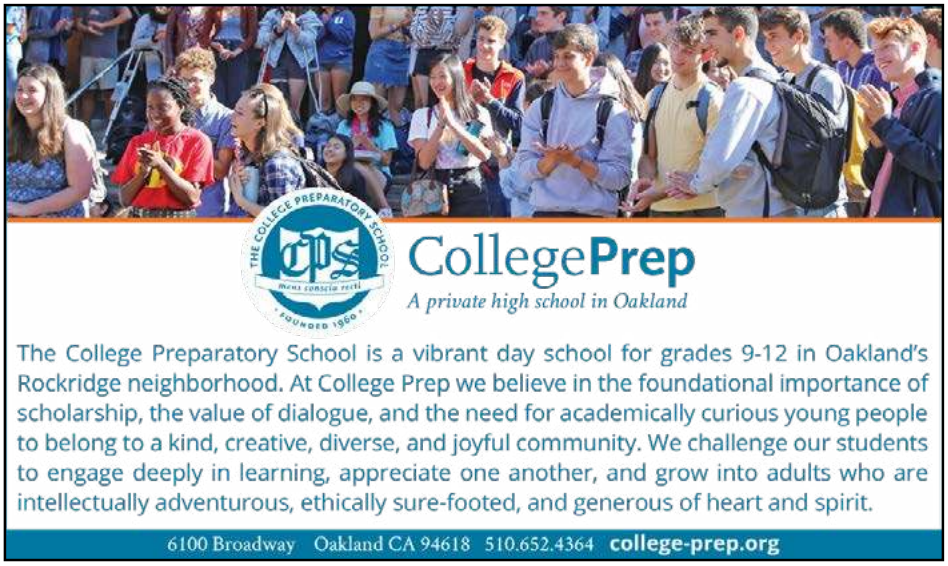
Sydney Arkin wants her ice cream shop to be known for wild creativity.

in the spring of next year.

"This spot is my dream location. I couldn't imagine a better street corner. I was born and raised in New York, but my aunt and uncle lived in Rockridge when I was growing up. I always spent a lot of time in the neighborhood. I love that my whole family already knows exactly where we'll be opening up shop."

Her outlandish flavors like Sucker Punch (sour lemon ice cream with lemon curd and sugar cookie chunks) and Campfire (super-burnt marshmallow ice cream with candied Rice Krispies and bourbon fudge ripples) showcase her creative adult spin on childhood favorites.

These and more will be available by the scoop or by the pint. Visit https://www.badwalters.com/ to keep abreast of their progress. ■



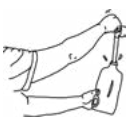
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African Art Exhibit at Soma Art + Space

Soma Art + Space is the newest addition to Rockridge. Located at 5289 College Avenue near Broadway, the contemporary gallery features local artists as well as artists from Southern Africa.

The art space first opened in Johannesburg, South Africa — known as a city where young artists gather from across the continent. Soma represents many things — Greek for "body," a ritual drink from ancient India, pleasure-seeking tablets in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and a reference to the downtown artsy neighborhood of Maboneng, where the gallery was located (with a wink to South of Market in San Francisco).

Gallery owners **Tanya Pampalone** and **Roman Slepica** relocated to Rockridge from Johannesburg during the pandemic and continue to work with curator **Teboho Relasai,** who is known for his collaborations with emerging and established artists from the continent and the diaspora. They all wanted to recreate the unstuffy and unintimidating art space they had in South Africa — encouraging new collectors and art explorers to learn and talk about exceptional, original artwork without the pretence of a traditional gallery.



Relasai has curated the gallery's first exhibition, "Joburg Abstracted," featuring five young artists from Southern Africa which will coincide with the **official launch of the gallery space on Friday, September 15**. It explores the complexities of the modern African identity and themes like migration, urbanization, spirituality, and global interconnectedness. The exhibit will run through October.

"The show challenges conventional perceptions of African art, which have often been confined to representations of tribal masks, wildlife, and folklore," says Relasai about the exhibition. "The artists draw from their heritage while also responding to the rapidly changing socio-political landscape of the 21st century."

Soma is open Thursdays through Sundays, and is available for intimate gatherings or as an exhibition space for local artists. For info about the launch, exhibition or event space, visit somaartgallery.com, or email Roman at roman@somaartgallery.com. ■

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6/6/2023	3	2	5844 Broadway	$1,398,400	$1,398,400	15	$1,975,000
6/6/2023	3	2.5	428 Cavour St	$1,425,000	$1,425,000	14	$1,425,000
6/12/2023	2	1	5230 Miles Avenue	$899,000	$899,000	13	$1,100,000
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