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

RCPC 2024 CANDIDATE FORUM & BOARD ELECTIONS

Candidate Forum: April 10, 7pm (on Zoom) / Vote: April 18, 7–9pm & April 20, 1–4pm (at Rockridge Library)

by Zac Unger, RCPC Board Member and Election Officer

It's Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) election season again. We have fourteen candidates who have stepped up to run for six open spots on the board — so we've got a race on our hands!

We will hold an online-only **Candidate Forum on April 10 at 7pm, via Zoom** (https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81904742643#success). Candidates will introduce themselves and respond to questions. To submit a question, email it ahead of time to zzunger@gmail.com. Keep your questions brief as responses will be limited to one minute.

The election will be held on two separate days at the Rockridge Library: **Thursday, April 18, from 7 to 9pm** and again on **Saturday, April 20, from 1 to 4pm.**

RCPC Election, see next page

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS — SEE PAGES 3, 4 & 5 —

Volunteers Needed

Rockridge

TBD Fall 2024

2024 RCPC Kitchen Tour

Available Roles:

- Kitchen Recruiter
- Webmaster
- Advertising Team
- Volunteer Manager *(Recruit & train tour docents)*
- Photographer
- Sponsorships
- Tour Brochure

To sign up, please email Chair@Rockridge.org

FROG Celebrates Earth Day

by Alison Drury

In celebration of Earth Day 2024, Friends of Rockridge-Temescal Greenbelt (FROG) are planning a cleanup of Big and Little Frog Park. The Earth Day theme for 2024 is "Planet vs. Plastics." The intent is to bring awareness to the health risk of plastics (including the phaseout of single-use plastics) and a call for a United Nations Treaty on Plastic Pollution.

There has been ongoing dumping of plastic toys and used plastic play structures at FROG Park. Often these items are broken or damaged and do not meet safety standards.
We ask the community to responsibly discard these items — either by recycling or donation — to minimize our collective environmental impact.

The cleanup at the park includes tasks such as weeding, pruning, picking up trash, raking, sweeping, and gardening. Families and groups are welcome. Students needing service hours for school can receive a signed letter verifying their participation.



Volunteers assist with cleanup at last year's Earth Day event.
Photo by Alison Drury

When: Sat., April 20, 9am to noon

Where: Meet by the Big Frog play structure to sign the waiver needed to participate in the cleanup.

Please bring your own gardening gloves and refillable water bottles; some gardening gloves will be available onsite. Tools will also be provided by the City of Oakland, but if you have your own, please bring them. Coffee and snacks will be provided. ■

RCPC Election, from front page

Voters must show proof of identity and primary residence within the RCPC boundaries to be eligible to vote. A map of the boundaries is available on the RCPC website (www.Rockridge.org). A California driver's license or California ID card fulfills both functions. Identity can be verified with a U.S. passport or student ID. Residency can be verified with a tax bill, utility bill, or a lease/rental agreement indicating your local address and dated within the last two to six months. Voters must be age 18 or older. Please come out and make your voice heard — vote! ■

A Hidden Hand Lifts Up a Neighborhood

by Annette Floystrup, RCPC Board Member

What do the Rockridge BART Plaza, Colby Park, FROG Park, Hardy Dog Park, the Greenbelt, the outdoor seating at Ain't Normal, the small shops and plaza at Safeway, the retail stores in the Dreyer's building, the multiple traffic safety improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle traffic, the upgraded HVAC system at Claremont, environmental enhancements at both Chabot Elementary and Claremont Middle school, and the Halloween Parade all have in common? They have all been facilitated by the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC).

Every day, residents of Rockridge see, use, or benefit from projects and undertakings, big and small, that have been originated, sponsored, supported, paid for, negotiated for, or defended through litigation by RCPC. Every year since 1986, RCPC has brought you the *Rockridge News*, yet RCPC's most signature achievement remains the building of the Rockridge Branch of the Oakland Public Library. The library opened its doors in September 1996, and, to this day, Rockridge remains the only neighborhood in the country to fund and build to completion its local library.

RCPC was incorporated as a nonprofit public benefit organization in 1985 after existing in various forms for almost 70 years. RCPC exists 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."

RCPC has partnered with neighborhood groups in Oakland and Berkeley, the Rockridge District Association merchants' group, the City of Oakland, and resident groups to solve problems and create opportunities that make life more vibrant, interesting,

Hidden Hand, see next page

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The Rockridge News

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Judith Doner Berne ..... Senior Contributing Writer

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Contact the board: chair@rockridge.org
For information: info@rockridge.org

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? We'd love to hear from you.

Want to write a letter to the Editor? Lletters are limited to 450 words and are published at the editors discretion. Send letters to: editor@rockridge.org. Please be sure to include your name, email address, 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, or advertisements.

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 MAY 2024: April 18th, 2024

Advertising rates are $28/column inch ($32 for color). Six-month pre-pay rates available.
For display ads, call Jo Ellis at 510-653-3210 **(after noon)**, or email **joellis1@hotmail.com**.
Classifieds: Email Susan at **smontauk@gmail.com**.

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 2024 ELECTION
CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

Andrew Charman
(Incumbent)



I have served on the RCPC Board for several terms and in several capacities, including Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board; liaison with Friends and Neighbors of College Avenue; member of the negotiating team for the College-Avenue Safeway project; and Fourth Bore settlement representative (Caldicott Tunnel), but have mostly focused on traffic, transit, and safety issues as Chair of our Transportation Committee where I worked closely with the City, public agencies, businesses, and community members.

I hope to continue to represent and advocate for the Rockridge community where I have enjoyed living since 2007 while teaching at UC Berkeley. Although neighborhoods must evolve if they are not to stagnate, I hope that RCPC and our larger community can strive together to maintain what is working and improve what is not while fostering a neighborhood that is interesting and inviting, clean and congenial, safe and sustainable, and walkable and welcoming for residents, merchants, workers, and visitors.

Annette Floystrup
(Incumbent)



I'm RCPC's historian and de facto "community memory." I have served on RCPC boards during several key periods, and the knowledge I gained has directly benefited current projects such as the Jewish Community Center (JCC) and the proposed BART station development. I served on the RCPC board when the Dreyer's campus was built, and am currently on the committee for the new JCC project.

When RCPC built the library, I served on the library architectural selection committee, and in 2011, I co-chaired the Rockridge DVD project, raising $13,000 to double the library's DVD collection. I hope to develop a permanent digital RCPC archive with a searchable database for the community and future boards to reference. RCPC is a community benefit organization that has brought over $7 million into Rockridge including the library, FROG Park, Hardy Dog Park, Temescal Greenbelt, and more. It's a proud legacy to carry forward.

Casey Farmer
(Incumbent)



As Chair of RCPC for the last two years, I led two very successful community campaigns. First, we defeated a proposed Home Depot at 51st/Broadway in support of housing; the second was to demand Alameda County hold Shell Oil accountable for their clean up at the Claremont and College vacant lot (thanks to the thousands who supported). I initiated RCPC's latest public art project — the mosaic trash cans.

Professionally, I conduct community engagement and develop public policy for nonprofits and local governments. Last year, I coordinated three RCPC Town Halls on the topics of housing and sustainability. I believe that we have a moral and environmental imperative to build housing — with as much affordable housing as possible. My husband and I have had the privilege of being homeowners in Rockridge for 10 years. We love spending time with our twins in Frog Park and at the Rockridge Library.

David Beiser



As I walked up Keith for the first time in 1987, I thought, "This is a great neighborhood. When I have a family, this is the type of neighborhood I want to live in." In 2007, we moved in with our first baby. My work has focused on youth and community development, concentrating on communities in transition, beginning with a small town outside Moscow in 1990 as the Soviet Union was dissolving. This was followed by programs in Thailand and Indonesia, and in 1996 in Tartu, Estonia, the first program of its kind with the former Soviet Republic.

Since 2011, my wife and I have operated a program centering on resilience in the area of Japan devastated by the earthquake and tsunami. As a former OUSD teacher and after working in an international context for many years, I'm excited to become more deeply involved in my own community.

RCPC 2024 ELECTION
CANDIDATE STATEMENTS
(continued on next page)

Hidden Hand, from previous page

and functional in our neighborhood.

In the late 1960s, RCPC led the way in obtaining funding from HUD for planning studies that resulted in the City of Oakland adopting the new C-31 zoning designation (currently CN-1 pedestrian-oriented retail) for College Avenue in 1973. Five other Oakland neighborhoods were assisted by RCPC in adopting the C-31 zoning, resulting in greater economic success for each of them — and benefitting all of Oakland.

RCPC has given voice to neighborhood concerns at countless Oakland City council meetings and hearings, lobbied Sacramento for library funding, and negotiated with Caltrans for the land to build FROG Park, the Greenbelt, and Hardy Dog Park. This is our neighborhood organization: the RCPC works for all of us. Please participate and vote for the RCPC board. Who knows what we can accomplish together in the future? ■

The next meeting will be held at the Rockridge Library Conference Room

Thursday, April 11, at 7pm

There will be brief presentations by Community Resource Officers and discussion of crime and safety.

The Greater Rockridge NCPC meets every 2nd Thursday of the even numbered months.

Visit www.rockridgencpc.com

Land Use Committee Meeting

The Rockridge community is encouraged to participate in LUC meetings where elements of the General Plan Update will be a primary topic of conversation.

Meetings are held at 7:30pm on the 3rd Wednesday of each month.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 17, on Zoom

To participate, or to request links to this or any previous meeting, email landuse@rockridge.org.

RCPC 2024 ELECTION CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

(continued from previous page)

Eli Kaplan



I have been a renter in Rockridge for six years in three apartments, first living alone in a studio and now renting the top floor of a duplex with my partner, baby, three bikes, and zero cars. Professionally, I am an urban planner working on housing policy issues for a regional government agency.

I love Rockridge for its walkability, thriving business district, transit access, and beautiful residential blocks. As homeownership becomes increasingly inaccessible, the existence of rental housing has allowed me to stay in this wonderful neighborhood as my family has grown. I hope that more people will have this same opportunity to access all that Rockridge offers regardless of their ability to buy a home. Drawing on my experience as a renter, young parent, transit-dependent household, and housing policy professional, I would be grateful to to serve my community on RCPC.

Kirk Peterson

(Incumbent)



I love Rockridge and Oakland. I've been here on College Avenue for 30-odd years practicing architecture, and living in our storefront. Now, we're in the duplex/studio/office space we built in our backyard. I'm in the Rockridge District Association/BID and I want RCPC to continue to support the stores, restaurants, and services available on College.

I've had years of interaction with Oakland's Planning and Building Departments, including chairing the Landmarks Board and volunteering at Mosswood Park. I wrote the column "Looking Around" in the *Rockridge News*. On RCPC's Land Use Committee, I've helped track and comment on planning applications and activity in general. I am particularly interested in this part of RCPC's mission; To preserve and enhance the unique character of the Rockridge neighborhood of Oakland. How can Rockridge change and grow (mostly by adding new housing and people) and keep the "look and feel" we all like so well?

Jennifer McElrath



I've contributed to Land Use Committee meetings in recent years, and delivered the *Rockridge News* with my husband for most of the 20+ years we've lived in Rockridge. Like many parents, I've planned, organized and fundraised for community, school and sports activities. With Upper Broadway Advocates (UBA) I've strived to balance the need for green space and historical preservation, along with genuinely affordable housing — ensuring Rockridge as a community and destination. Supporting essential workers also supports our schools and local businesses.

I have a strong professional background in budgeting and financial analysis with everything from multibillion-dollar companies and multimillion-dollar projects to startups. As a volunteer, I even made a plan that brought financial stability to housing for 90+ students at UC Berkeley. I love spreadsheets, and Rockridge! I am especially keen to bring my planning and financial skills to RCPC's treasury, and support its many endeavors to ensure our neighborhood's vibrancy.

Kim Suczynski Smith



I have been a resident of Rockridge for six years. My husband Matt grew up in the neighborhood and went to Peralta Elementary. We moved back to the neighborhood in 2016 when we were expecting our second set of twins! Yes, I am a mother to four wonderful children (ages six and eight) who are currently attending Chabot Elementary.

I'm excited to be running for RCPC as a way to get more involved in the community and to support the conversion of large opportunity sites in our neighborhood into housing. I am a practicing architect and planner who is passionate about creating vibrant and inclusive public spaces. Recently, I have been working with my UC Berkeley city planning students to look at The Ridge site, and to explore this and other opportunities for housing, public space, and transit improvements.

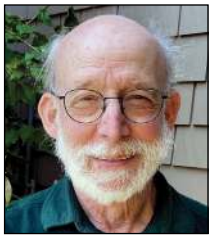
Muhammad Alameldin



Access to affordable, quality housing is a fundamental cornerstone of a thriving society. It not only provides individuals and families with the security and stability necessary for daily living, but it also fosters community cohesion, economic vitality, and overall well-being. Investing in housing is an investment in the future, paving the way for more equitable and inclusive communities where everyone has the opportunity to succeed. It keeps Rockridge families closer together, while also doing our part to address critical social issues such as homelessness and poverty.

Moreover, building where housing already exists contributes to environmental conservation, promotes energy efficiency, and reduces our carbon footprint. Ensuring that everyone has access to affordable housing is not just a matter of social justice, it is a pragmatic approach to building resilient, dynamic communities that can adapt and thrive. I plan for RCPC to commit to striving for a brighter, more equitable future for our current and future neighbors.

Stuart Flashman



I'm a public interest environmental and land use attorney. I've lived in Rockridge since 1992. I served off-and-on the RCPC board since 2007 and was board chair for five years. I also chaired RCPC's Land Use Committee from 2008 to 2022. RCPC accomplished a lot then!

As board chair, I considered communication a priority. It was my practice to keep Rockridge residents informed about important issues — using Town Halls for public discussion and the *Rockridge News* for in-depth analysis. The current board has neglected this. As a result, Rockridge residents know less about issues affecting them. I want to make sure our residents know what's being planned and can have their say. I think having more affordable housing is a priority, and I support it. More luxury housing? Maybe not so much. I want to support our residential neighborhoods and keep College Avenue retail vigorous.

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS (continued on next page)

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS
(continued from previous page)

Zack Walton



My family has lived in Rockridge for 18 years. My vision for our community includes housing, safe streets, and a vibrant College Avenue. I grew up in Berkeley and made pasta at Market Hall during high school. I remember when Chimes Market became Cactus Taqueria. I was a member of one of the community groups that negotiated the settlement with Safeway over the redesign of the store at College and Claremont — there would be little public space at the site if were not for our involvement.

Environmental and land use law is my specialty. I've permitted projects with the City of Oakland and I've commented on projects as a member of the public. I believe my skills and experience can be of use to the board. Rockridge has been good to my family and I would like to return the favor. I would appreciate your vote.

Susie Wyshak



Maybe you know me from the *Rockridge News*, cafes, Market Hall, or online neighborhood groups… or maybe you don't! A Lawton homeowner since 2011, UC Berkeley grad, California native, ex-Silicon Valley entrepreneur, author, connector, and local real estate agent, I love Rockridge and our history.

My approach to issues is to use "common sense." My goal is to help residents and our businesses thrive and to ensure disaster preparedness. Neighbors knowing, talking to, and helping neighbors is something we should always do (not only during disasters). I was inspired to run by the AARP Community Challenge Grant, which provides nonprofits with funding for projects such as safety, public spaces, healthy aging, and transit. Let's get a grant in 2025! If you want an a-political board member, vote for me.

CANDIDATE ZOOM FORUM
Wed., April 10, 7pm

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81904742643#success

Ronnie Spitzer



I'm running for the RCPC Board because I love Rockridge and want to continue advocating for its inclusive and vibrant character. I've served on the RCPC Board over several terms and in various capacities including Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer; as a liaison with Friends of the Rockridge-Temescal Greenbelt; Fourth Bore Coalition representative and Vice Chair; Kitchen Tour Co-Chair; and member of the negotiating team for the Safeway project.

My focus throughout this time has been on community engagement. Reaching out to Rockridge residents through one-on-one discussions, public meetings, and surveys has always guided my representation of the community to City of Oakland staff, various transportation agencies' staff, City Councilmembers, and other neighborhood organizations. I believe transparency is key to keeping the community informed on current issues affecting Rockridge such as the recently adopted 55-foot height limits on College Ave. I'd be honored to receive your vote and return to the Board.

Kristen Belt



As an architect and urban designer, I have dedicated my career to the development of sustainable urban places with an emphasis on affordable housing. For 25 years, I've worked hand in hand with nonprofit developers, city officials, and neighborhood communities to create solutions that address both our urgent housing need and neighborhood fit. I first moved to Rockridge during grad school and returned a few years later to raise my kids in this beautiful, walkable neighborhood. My kids attended Peralta, and I've relished our time in that community.

Rockridge has a rich tradition of community organizing to make great things happen, from the library to the College Avenue street fair to the robust support for local schools. I would like to contribute to that spirit of community organizing using both my professional skills and personal experience to help shape a welcoming, inclusive vision for the next generation of our neighborhood. ■

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2024 Kitchen Tour Needs Kitchens

by Casey Farmer, RCPC Chair

For many years, the Rockridge Community Planning Council has hosted a Kitchen Tour (KT). Its purpose is to raise funds that support our neighborhood association and events such as the Halloween Parade; community grants for neighborhood beautification; and Town Halls. Our 2022 tour raised enough to fund the beautiful mosaic tile trash cans on College Avenue and at Frog Park.

The KT is also a community builder: it offers neighbors the opportunity to meet one another, learn about how they made their kitchens their own, and share the history of our homes. The tour showcases local architects, contractors, and craftspeople. Neighbors can volunteer for the KT Committee and serve as docents (prospective volunteers should email chair@Rockridge.org).

Kitchen Tour Needs Kitchens

RCPC invites homeowners, architects, designers, and builders to submit kitchens to be considered for the 2024 Kitchen Tour. A kitchen does not have to be fully finished to qualify, but should be ready for viewing by August. Whether it is recently remodeled or not — we welcome and encourge you to let us know if you think your kitchen should be featured.

What Does the Process Entail?

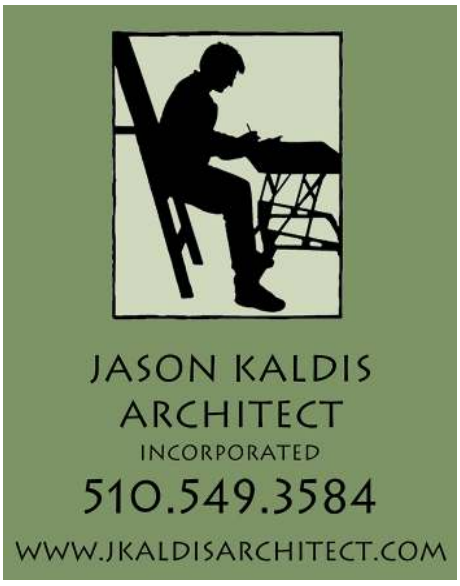
First, interested homeowners or renters need to send a short description and a photo or two of their kitchen to chair@rockridge.org **no later than April 30**. Next, our KT Committee will review the kitchens and determine the best tour date (sometime this fall). Then they set up interviews, which, in turn, are used for descriptions in our brochure, and take professional photos. Closer to the tour date, we'll schedule time for a docent tour so they can be prepared to highlight the unique features.

My kitchen was featured in the 2019 tour, so I can attest that the process was fun and not much work. We had recently remodeled our kitchen, so I saw the tour as an opportunity to highlight the great work of our local designer and our local contractor, as well as to support the neighborhood we love. Many people enjoy talking to the neighbors who come through, but since our designer was able to attend, we opted to go to an A's game instead.

The self-guided tour takes place over a few hours on a weekend afternoon. Tour guests can admire and be inspired by the beautiful kitchens and meet the professionals whose artistry, design genius, and craftsmanship fashioned amazing results. Tickets and brochures will be available at a central location on College Avenue, and docents will be on hand at each kitchen to answer questions and point out key homeowner design choices. ■







Foxtail Grasses — It's That Time, Again

— by Anna L. Marks

Spring marks the beginning of foxtail season… those little sticky weeds that pop up everywhere. This can be a big problem, especially for cats and dogs. Once the barbed grasses get into their little feet or ears they can burrow deep and cause a lot of pain and distress. They can enter through the nose and be inhaled.

Foxtails shed thousands of seeds that can quickly spread around the neighborhood, so it's important to completely remove them to prevent them from returning. The grasses can cause infection, organ damage, and even result in hearing loss. Children are also susceptible to getting them in their noses, on clothing, or in their shoes or socks.

When you see foxtails, please pull them out — best to dig out the roots with a simple garden tool. Cutting or breaking off the seed stems is less effective. Mowing them and leaving the clippings allows the seeds to spread. The earlier in the season they are removed, the less damage they do. Be sure to put them in a plastic baggie and into your regular garbage, not the compost. If you notice your pet showing any unusual symptoms including incessant licking, chewing or swallowing, see your vet immediately. ■

Dogs of Rockridge

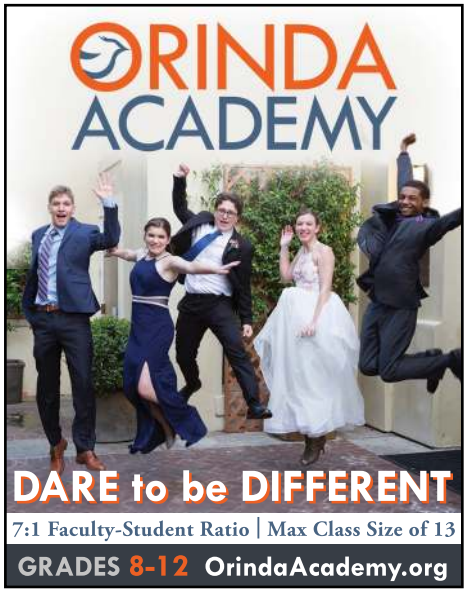


Toothpick is a one-year-old Silken Windhound. Known around the house as Tootie, she is easy, breezy, and beautiful. Tootie has two moms, Richelle and Carolyn, and a very special Aunt named Lauren, and likes to hang out with her favorite Uncles Lloyd and Pete at Stranded Records. Toothpick goes wild for pup cups and enjoys riding on her skateboard. She is a friend to all animals, even cats like her good friends Willie and Angel Baby.



Meet **Katniss Everdeen**. She does not shoot with a bow and arrow like the girl she is named after, but she does curl up and sleep like a cat. She is a Sheepadoodle (mom is a Poodle, dad is an Old English Sheepdog), though we call her a sneak-a-doodle because she sneaks food off the counter when we are not looking. We love calling our big dog Kat, and in balance, we have a little kitty named Sirius Black (a character who turns into a dog). Katniss was born in the year of Covid and we joke that she came with her own face mask. She loves her long walks around Rockridge.

Does your furry friend live in Rockridge? If so, send a photo of your four-legged companion with a short commentary to: editor@rockridge.org.





Alice Erb: Traveler, Hunter/Gatherer

by Judith Doner Berne

Months after **Alice Erb** and her business partner **Lauren McIntosh** closed their iconic Tale of the Yak craft boutique in Berkeley's Elmwood neighborhood, Erb keeps in mind what a friend told her about retirement: "Don't sign up for anything in the first year."

Although she remains surrounded by the people and art pieces that she loves, the long-time Rockridge resident agrees that it's an evolution. Sitting at her flower-bedecked kitchen table where a tiny sampling of her eclectic collections from her travels are displayed on the wall behind, Erb says, "some days it's a complete void and other days I am seeing people."

But Erb has made a start. She and her long-time companion **Robert Harris**, a published poet and retired head of the Parks Department in North Berkeley, are "great Oakland enthusiasts." They hike and walk, seeking out "ethnic dives you wouldn't normally go to." She's planning a trip to Sicily. And, she's continuing her Tuesday afternoon knitting group that began during the pandemic where six friends knit, talk, and drink tea, frequently meeting outside in the courtyard of what has become known as "The Compound."

Erb's individuality is mirrored not only in the contents of her home but where it is located, who lives there, and how that came to be. In 1983, her sister, Susan Erb, alerted her to a four-house complex with a common courtyard, "the ultimate Italian farmstead," that was for sale. "It was a kind of magical realization that this is a perfect place for a group of people to do something wonderful," Susan said.

Alice acted quickly. "Within a single day, I found three other friends who wanted to buy it. Amazingly, each of us got the house that we wanted." The complex, first bought as a tenancy-in-common, was converted to condominiums a few years later. "That was pretty unique in Oakland at that time," she said.

Since she has lived in The Compound, it has been a mecca for artistic people. Currently, the other three homes are occupied by a film director and his wife, a food and travel photographer (see February 2023 *Rockridge News*, "Eyes on Rockridge"), a renowned cookbook author, and a child therapist/ceramicist whose tenant is a paper artist.

Alice grew up in Columbus, Ohio, attended a Quaker college for two years, spent two years in Italy, and finished up her art history degree at Ohio State University. After moving to New York City where she worked as a recreation therapist at Bronx State Hospital, she took a freighter to Casablanca.

Several months later she returned, fully intending to resume life as a New Yorker. But one day, she recalls sitting on the steps of the Main Branch of the New York Public Library, she was disheartened by the throngs of people walking by. That feeling was further cemented when, a few hours later, "somebody picked my pockets. That was the sign that I should leave."

It was 1970, and with two of three sisters living in the East Bay, she headed west. Now all her siblings are nearby: **Jane Brenner** and **Susan Erb** in Rockridge, **Nancy Erb** off Piedmont Avenue in Oakland, and her brother, **John Erb** in Berkeley.

Eyes on Rockridge, see next page

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eyes on Rockridge

from previous page

Alice's job as a proofreader in San Francisco left time for traveling to Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and Mexico. "I would haunt ethnographic museums and take notes as to the origin of objects and avail myself of books showing the crafts and what was traditional to that culture."

She followed up by traveling to the villages and origins of what she found most interesting. "Sometimes it meant local markets, and sometimes it entailed finding the craftspeople in their homes and work areas. So many things I have in my house I found in these tiny little villages."

In the early 1970s, Alice began selling artwork out of her Rockridge apartment on Harwood and even bicycling her wares to peddle along Telegraph Avenue in Temescal. It was on that bike, riding down Ashby, that she discovered Tale of the Yak, a small shop opened by students of Tibetan Buddhism.

"I started buying for them in Asia, they became friends, then I started working in the store," which she eventually bought, later taking in McIntosh as partner. England became her main source for antique jewelry that she found combing through weekly markets and antique fairs.

"Traveling near or far with Alice is always an adventure," said **Dorothy Lindsay** (known by her friends as Dodie), a fellow Rockridge resident who became a friend through her frequent visits to Tale of the Yak. "Local adventures might include a stroll along International Boulevard in East Oakland, checking out the wares in the small businesses, stopping to eat something somewhere new… or it could be a Rockridge street that we've not yet explored.

"And, of course, there are the serious adventures by bus into remote parts of Mexico on the hunt for the folk art that we both love," said Lindsay. "Even in the bustle of a busy marketplace, or the street corners of Mexico City, Alice can spy the truly unusual and beautiful: small puppets made out of drinking straws; the beauties in a bundle of textiles; and the vintage hand-painted lacquerware gourds with personal inscriptions."



Newly retired, Alice Erb says she surrounds herself with "things that mean something to me." *Photo by Judy Berne*

"I always loved beautiful things," said Alice. She attributes some of that to growing up with parents who were very interested in other cultures. She has traveled to more than 30 countries, "returning again and again to the places I value for the traditions that are still alive, the architecture, the markets, the food, the textiles, the natural beauty.

"I was the main hunter-gatherer" for Tale of the Yak, she said. "I liked finding things without necessarily having to own them. That was one of the pleasures of my job. Lauren was a genius in putting it all together." They closed their shop with no thought of selling it. "Lauren and my skills are so unique. It was the subject of our passion."

Have a Rockridge story that needs telling? Email judyberne@att.net. Watch for an upcoming Eyes on Rockridge story on Susan Erb, co-founder of Park Day School. ■

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"Chicago" Is Coming to Oakland Tech

This is a golden opportunity to support the school and see a great show

by Chris Shayne

Extra! Extra! Read all about it! "Chicago" is coming to Oakland Tech this spring. Set in the Roaring Twenties, this timeless tale of fame, fortune, and all that jazz promises to delight the audience with its classic combination of show-stopping songs and dazzling dancing.

This is easily the school's most ambitious undertaking since **Casey Fern** and **Colleen Egan** became the co-leaders of the theater program, which is saying something because Tech productions are always big. But this is the first time the duo has attempted a musical (and the first at Tech in over two decades), which made the whole project a bit riskier than usual.

When:
April 18, 19, & 20 and 24, 25, & 27

Shows start at 7pm
(No Friday show on the 2nd weekend)

Tickets are $12 and will be available at the door, or online at:
https://oaktechdrama.my.canva.site/

All proceeds benefit Oakland Tech's Drama Department

Where:
Oakland Tech Auditorium
4351 Broadway

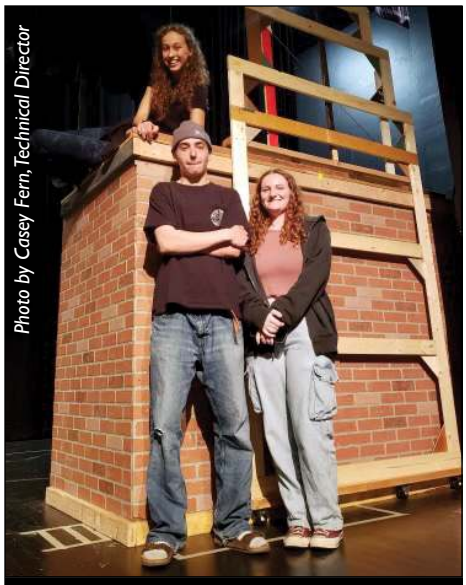


Photo by Casey Fern, Technical Director

Tech Techies Evaline Flamer (senior), Oliver Maitland (junior), and Sam Shane (senior).

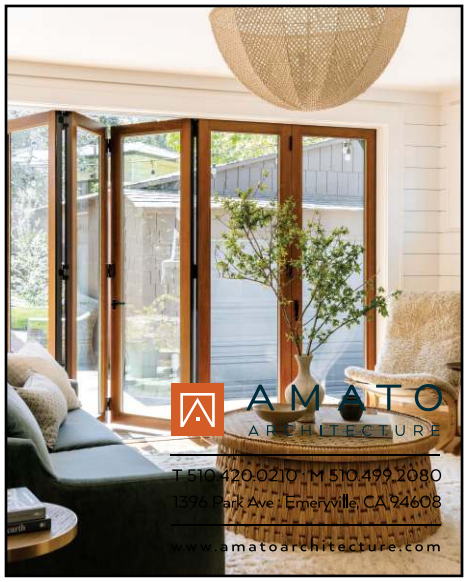
"We weren't even sure we had enough singers in the school to pull this off at first," said a chuckling Egan, who is responsible for casting and directing. "But things worked out great. The auditions went as well as we could have hoped and the talent level is off the charts. The kids have really settled into their roles and we couldn't be happier."

Normally, Egan handles all of the directing herself, but because this show is a musical, she needed to bring in both a voice coach and a choreographer. "It's been even more of a team effort than usual, but the chemistry has been great."

Of course, there's more to the production than just the singers and dancers, and that's where Fern's Tech Techies come in. "The Techies are the engine that makes the car go," said Fern, whose team designs and builds the sets, takes care of the lighting, and handles the sound engineering. "It's a lot, but we have an amazing group led by some outstanding seniors."

Two of those seniors, **Evaline Flamer** and **Samantha Shayne**, not only help design the sets, but they work side-by-side in the booth, managing the lights (Flamer) and the sound (Shayne). They've seen a lot in their Techie careers, but agree this one has been special. "We've put on some great shows over the years, but I think this will be our best one yet," said an

Chicago, see next page







Chicago, from previous page

excited Evaline.

Samantha added that all the seniors are a little sad that this will be their last production, "But at least we're going out with a bang. We've been part of Techies since we first came to campus after the pandemic and it really feels like we're a family now."

Speaking of families, Fern and Egan are married, and their adorable kids, Owen (4 years old) and Maeve (9 months old), occasionally make brief appearances at the theater while the cast and crew are working, which always lightens the mood.

"It takes a lot of effort to put on a production like this and sometimes it can feel like a bit of a slog. But whenever Owen and Maeve are around, the place perks up a little — it's a fun distraction for everyone," said Egan.

As always, Egan and Fern hope the community comes out to support them, but there's a little extra motivation this time. "The Auditorium Renovation Committee is launching a massive campaign to push the District to replace the seats in the theater, most of which were installed more than 60 years ago.

"If we can fill the auditorium, we can show the District how much the performing arts matter at Oakland Tech. Our community is prepared to raise the money ourselves, but we are holding out hope that OUSD will contribute to the project." ■



On Saturday, March 8, the Oakland Tech Bulldogs beat Centennial of Bakersfield, 79-55, to win the boys' Division II title. The Rockridge community congratulates the team on their success.



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Market talk: Buyer activity is warming up like the weather locally. While not at our peak level of inventory or absorption of homes, both are on the rise. Contact me to hear more about buying or selling in this current market!

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For Sale: 4 contiguous view lots in Piedmont Pines, great for 4 homes or a dream estate @ $ 995,000
Coming: Glen Highlands 4+ Bd 3+ Ba 3,300+SqFt beauty across Hwy 13 from Upper Rockridge - @ $2.1M

April is Awareness Month for: Pickleball, Tea, Brunch, Financial Literacy, Hope, Volunteering, Landscape Architecture/ Gardens, Canine Fitness, Fair Housing, Donating Life, Poetry, Jazz, Humor



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Claremont Middle School Gets Creative With New Space

by Carol Kasparek

Ten years ago, the Claremont Middle School (CMS) cafeteria burned down. The cause of the fire is still a mystery; however, the effect of that blaze is not. As a result of the damage, areas surrounding the cafeteria became inaccessible to students — classes were moved to temporary trailers, meals were served in a small building in a corner of the campus, event attendance was limited or relocated off-campus and students had no place to gather or take breaks during inclement weather.


Photo by Carol Kasparek

The community recognized the need to provide students with a revitalized facility. "We want everyone to feel welcome in our space, feel welcome at school" declared Community Schools Manager **Edana Anderson**. Beginning in 2016, three bond measures were passed to provide funds for the cafeteria's transformation. They raised $21 million for the project, money separate from the Oakland Unified School District Budget.

Along with the cafeteria, the scope of work includes a kitchen, stage platform, sports field, intrusion alarm system, and strengthened walls for several classrooms. Community planning sessions ensued. Architect **Susan Meeks** and Arntz Builders were chosen to execute the project. The design phase was completed in September 2021. Project Engineer **Chastity Henderson, who** helped shepherd the project through the tedious state approval process, recalls saying, "We owe you a cafeteria."

Shovels broke ground in the summer of 2022. Principal **Tremaine Moore** came to the school that same summer and considered part of his mandate was to "create joyful spaces." As one of the "keepers of joy," Andersen explained that the 27 teachers, together with administrative staff, all focus on making the facility attractive and inspirational to students so they concentrate on their education.

With the many features incorporated in the design, the official name of the structure is the Multipurpose Room. The wood floors are striped for basketball and volleyball. A platform

Claremont MS, see next page


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Claremont MS, from previous page

stage rises out of one end, and a warming kitchen and vertical lift for deliveries occupy the opposite end. Assemblies for all 460 students can be accommodated in the space along with pull-out tables and chairs for core classes. CMS serves breakfast to all students; lunch and afternoon supper is available to smaller groups.

When the ribbon is cut in early May, the community will enter an airy structure flashed with large tiles in shades of pale green. Windows maximize natural light and modern ceiling fans create enough circulation for the entire building.

To reach the towering entryway, students and visitors will pass the expansive school garden. Garden Steward **Mika Zbie** guided the development of bio-retention cells and planters. "Harvest of the Month" features produce that is available to students, along with tasting samples and nutritional information. Approaching the Multipurpose Room from the main building, paths and cement block benches provide a space for students to gather or contemplate.

Anderson and Moore surveyed the scene on a recent visit, recalling each stage of the project and the overall intention. Their delight in the "colorful, joyful space" will soon be shared by the entire school along with neighbors and friends. As Andersen exclaimed, "Time to move on in!" ■

on College Avenue



Photos by Anna L Marks

Flights & Empanadas were a featured item during Restaurant Week.

9 Julio Empanada Kitchen

5239 Claremont Avenue (at Telegraph)



After a soft opening in December, chef **Erica Sanders's new restaurant** has been dishing out an eclectic sampling of empanadas that represent different corners of the world — from Peru to Cuba.

The Empanada Flight was a special feature during Restaurant Week, and included an array of savory options — all handmade and baked to order in small batches (not deep-fried).

— Submitted by Anna L. Marks

The dough was flaky and delicious, and the fillings were inventive and satisfying — eliciting exotic flavors from south of the border. Each empanada was thoughtfully paired with a tasting of local wines from Broc Cellars (Berkeley) and Hobo Wine Company (Sonoma). ■

A Grand Opening Celebration
will be held on
Sunday, April 7, 1-5pm
In celebration of National Empanada Day (April 8)
Enjoy music, dancing, games, and, of course… delicious, free, empanadas!





LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Do Not Feed the Squirrels



Dear Editor: Please, stop feeding squirrels peanuts in the shell. With increased food prices, neighbors are planting more veggies, and the flea-infested, disease-carrying rodents are destroying our edible plants when burying peanuts in our gardens.

The nuisance squirrels also aggravate neighborhood dogs, so please quickly quiet the barking — it's intrusive and wakes our sleeping youngsters.Specifically, we have found this problem in the area of Chabot Court, Clover Drive and Ross Street. Please share this with your neighbors who may not read this posting.

Matson Family and Neighbors ■

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April/May Events at the Rockridge Library

Behind our current caregiving crisis, in which a broken system leaves parents and caregivers exhausted, sits a strong addiction to independence. But what would happen if we started to appreciate dependency and the deep meaning of one person caring for another? What if we start to care about care? In this "brilliantly argued and timely book" (Brigid Schulte, *New York Times* bestselling author), journalist **Elissa Strauss** (photo below) delves into the history and power of care and explores the role of caregiving — with a feminist bent. The result is an eye-opening exploration and a stirring call to action. ■



Elissa Strauss will discuss her book on May 1, at the Rockridge Library: *When You Care: The Unexpected Magic of Caring for Others*

For Children

Storytime: Thursdays and Saturdays; 10:30am.

Chess Club: Wednesdays at 4pm. All ages and skill-levels welcome.

Read to a Dog: Thursdays at 4pm. Two dogs; Scout and Coco, alternate weeks. They are trained to listen to young people practice reading aloud.

Intergenerational Origami: Join Ellen for amazing folding practice on Tuesday 4/2 at 4pm, & Tuesday 4/16 at 6:30pm.

Crafternoon for ages 5 through 12: Make kumihimo braided cord with Rachel Palacios. Thursday, 4/11 at 4pm.

DIA – Children's Book Day: Soul4Kidz will get the whole family moving with interactive children's songs for ages 2 through 7 and their grown-ups. Saturday, 4/27 at 10:30am.

For Teens

Teen Advisory Board: Wednesday, 4/10; 3:30-4:30pm. Join the Rockridge Branch Library Teen Advisory Board (TAB) and take an active role in creating, planning, and implementing programs and services you want to see at your local library. Every 2nd Wednesday in the TeenZone. New members welcome.

For Adults

Rockridge Book Club: every 2nd Saturday, 3:30-4:30pm. Call (510) 597-5017 for more info and to get a copy of the book. April's book is *Women Talking,* by Miriam Toews.

Meet the Authors:

Wednesday, 4/17, 6:30–7:30. Award-winning writer, musician, dancer, and director **Brontez Purnell** will discuss his book, *Ten Bridges I've Burnt: A Memoir in Verse.*

&

Wednesday, 5/1, 6:30-7:30pm

The spring series continues with a talk by **Elissa Strauss**, journalist, essayist, and opinion writer. She will be discussing her book, *When You Care: The Unexpected Magic of Caring for Others.*

(see adjacent article)

5366 College Avenue at Manila
510-597-5017

Hours: Mon, Thurs, Sat 10am to 5:30pm
Tuesday and Wednesday from 10am to 8pm
Closed on Sundays.

Note: The library will be closed Monday, April 1, in observance of Cesar Chavez Day.

www.oaklandlibrary.org/events.

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For more information, email Susan at smontauk@gmail.com. **The deadline for May is April 18, 2024** (available May 4).

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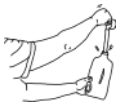
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3/5/2024	5	3	5671 Ocean View Dr	$2,495,000	$2,495,000	13	$2,950,000
3/11/2024	3	2	383 51St St	$1,295,000	$1,295,000	36	$1,450,000
3/18/2024	3	2	5511 Thomas Ave	$2,100,000	$2,100,000	24	$2,200,000
3/18/2024	3	1	338 62Nd St	$1,495,000	$1,495,000	13	$2,075,000
3/21/2024	3	2	6701 Chabot Rd	$1,749,000	$1,749,000	6	$2,000,000

Homes sold in March closed 14% over the asking price on average.

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