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



Get an Early Peek at Rockridge Kitchens: Be A Docent

by Star Lightner, Kitchen Tour Chair

Planning for the 2024 Rockridge Kitchen Tour, scheduled for **Sunday, October 13**, is in full swing. The Kitchen Tour committee has selected eight kitchens and two ADUs to be featured on this year's tour, and is now turning to the vital task of recruiting another great group of Kitchen Tour docents.

Docents fill a very important role during the tour: they are the people who welcome the guests at each home; answer questions about the kitchens; and make the Kitchen Tour enjoyable for attendees and homeowners alike.

Whether you've been a docent in the past, or are new to the Rockridge Kitchen Tour, volunteering as a docent is a fulfilling and rewarding experience. It's also ideal for someone who wants to help the Rockridge community but can't make a long-term commitment to neighborhood boards and associations. Many people volunteer year after year — it's that much fun!


Photo by Anna L. Marks

This kitchen was featured on the 2022 Kitchen Tour.

Docents: What's Involved?

A week or two before the tour, all docents attend a pre-tour training session (no more than three hours) that includes visits to several of the selected houses. One of the best parts of being a docent is getting a behind-the-scenes look ahead of the tour and the opportunity to learn more about the kitchens from the owners/architects/contractors.

On your training day, you will visit three of the selected kitchens and hear directly from those homeowners, architects, and perhaps even the contractors about the unique features and skillful problem-solving approaches taken during the actual design and construction for each of them. The session will also familiarize you with the layout of your assigned home to help you guide visitors around, educate them about the house, and be able to answer any questions. On the day of the Kitchen Tour you will be given a three-hour shift, with the rest of the day to visit the other kitchens that you did not see during the pre-tour training.

Volunteering for the Kitchen Tour is a great way to get to know more about the neighborhood as well as first-rate

Kitchen Tour, see next page

ROCKRIDGE ROCK-N-STROLL

Saturday, August 24
11am to 6pm

by Jody Colley

The Rockridge District Association has revamped its summer event this year to take place on just one full day, **Saturday, August 24, from 11am to 6pm.** It will feature all the popular themes from previous years — Pup Promenade, Fall Fest, Scavenger Hunt, Family Day, Art Walk, and other fun highlights — and more bands performing than ever before.

Rock-N-Stroll spans College Avenue from Alcatraz Avenue to Broadway with pop-up vendors, local artists tabling, music, and special offerings from businesses all along the way. The free event features kids' crafts, art shows, and fun activities for the whole family — showcasing the local wares, fine dining, savory and sweet treats, and delicious drinks you can only find in Oakland's Rockridge District.

Rock-N-Stroll, see page 3

RCPC Land Use Committee

Next Meeting: July 18, on Zoom

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

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

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

Volunteers Needed

Rockridge Community Vision Plan

Over the next year, RCPC seeks to develop a plan to collectively identify priorities for our neighborhood, including the potential for growth. We will host a series of engagement opportunities and an online survey.

Skills needed:
-Survey design/analysis
-Graphic design
-Research

Sign up for updates or to volunteer on this online form

bit.ly/VisionRockridge



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Kitchen Tour, from front page

kitchen design, but it's also a chance to give back to Rockridge. In case you didn't know, the biennial Kitchen Tour is the main fundraiser for the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC). Since the first Kitchen Tour in 1995, proceeds have gone to the Friends of the Rockridge Library for building the inspiring home for the College Avenue branch; to the design and building of the play structure and other amenities at Frog Park; to the Kevin Faughnan Memorial Community Grants program that supports local projects that benefit Rockridge; and many other purposes.

Many hands make light work, and the Kitchen Tour is an enjoyable experience for both attendees and volunteers. In addition to docents, we are seeking folks interested in helping put up posters and banners, as well as volunteers to act as "runners" to troubleshoot on the day of the tour.

Want to be part of the action? Contact Kitchen Tour Chair Star Lightner; kitchentour@rockridge.org. ■

Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council

Held at the Rockridge Library's Upstairs Conference Room

Thursday, August 8, at 7pm

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

A Zoom link is available to those who wish to attend remotely.

For more details, **visit** www.rockridgencpc.com

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

The RockridgeNews

The Rockridge News was founded in March 1986 by **Don Kinkead** and is published monthly (except August). It's 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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Are there topics you'd like to see covered in the *Rockridge News*? Have questions about newsletter distribution? Want to volunteer to be a *Rockridge News* distributor? We'd love to hear from you.

Want to write a Letter to the Editor? Letters are limited to 450 words and are published at the editor's discretion. Send letters to: editor@rockridge.org. Please include your name, email, and street of residence. **Deadline is the 11th of each month for the upcoming newsletter.**

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.

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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 SEPTEMBER 2024: AUGUST 15, 2024

Advertising rates are $28/column inch ($32 for color). Six-month pre-pay discounts 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.*

Visit RCPC at the Stroll

The Rockridge Community Planning Council will have a table at Rock-N-Stroll for selling t-shirts, onesies, and mugs, as well as informing neighbors about the Kitchen Tour and the Community Vision Plan —

Stop by to chat and meet an RCPC board member!

Rock-N-Stroll, from front page

Restaurants and markets will be offering seasonal menus and tastings as well as hosting food and beverage purveyors on their sidewalks and patios. Retailers will have sales and promotions, and will host artisan vendors and local nonprofits that they want the community to meet. You can find vintage sunwear at Phoenix Optical (5519 College Avenue), a sidewalk sale at Planterday (6004 College Avenue), and a local artist and pop-up vendor at La Esquinita (5400 College Avene), to name a few neighborhood participants.

New this year, there will be a Rockridge Fair hosted at College Avenue Presbyterian Church that will showcase many of the merchants you don't typically get to meet. Yoga instructors, mental health practitioners, architects, tattoo artists, fitness coaches, and others will be onsite to greet you. In addition, several local artists



Optician Tina Satara, of Phoenix Optical, shows off a pair of Vintage Sunglasses.

have been invited back this year to showcase their talents and artwork all along College Avenue. Although the whole Bay Area is invited to enjoy Rock-N-Stroll, this is, at its heart, a neighborhood celebration and event.

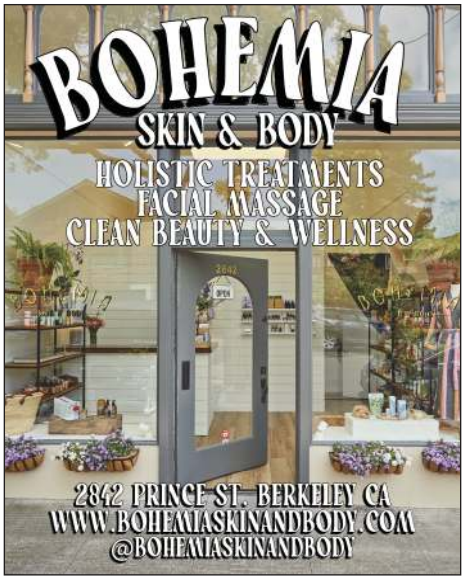
The music lineup welcomes Rock-N-Stroll veterans along with new bands to the series. **Frances Anchata** is a singer/songwriter offering introspective electric acoustic folk, indie, pop/rock, and tropical new wave folk. Anchata has already released three albums, and has garnered international independent and internet radio airplay in the US, Canada, the UK, and Spain. Frances performs both original songs and her personal interpretation of covers. She has participated in Rock-N-Stroll since its inception in 2021, and has introduced other talented musicians to the event.

Rock-N-Stroll is pet-friendly and many of the merchants will welcome their furry guests with water bowls, treats, and pup menus. A pet adoption will be available for those looking to add to their families.

There will be no street closures for Rock-N-Stroll — every available space on the avenue will be involved — with a focus on highlighting Rockridge's many businesses, artists, musicians, and nonprofits. This is truly an event hosted by avenue merchants for their neighbors — all of them welcome you to relax, discover, and share the day with the whole family as you leisurely stroll along tree-lined College Avenue.

For details on how to participate, visit www.RockridgeDistrict.com. ■







RCPC Land Use Committee

RCPC Weighs in on City of Oakland's Objective Design Standards for 4-8 Story, Multifamily Residential Units

Objective Design Standards hold a promise to be a more efficient, predictable, and equitable path to obtaining and granting of planning approvals for a wide variety of development projects, especially those for affordable housing. The City of Oakland's Planning Department accepted public comments on these standards through June 3, 2024. Comments from RCPC were sent to the Oakland Planning Deparment: (see letter on right). You can learn more at: https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/objective-design-standards. ■

Dear City of Oakland Planning Department,

The RCPC board is committed to supporting housing production within Rockridge, and more broadly throughout Oakland, to address the Bay Area's current housing crisis and advance equity within our communities.

We appreciate the Oakland Planning Department's efforts to provide predictable, objective standards to expedite approvals for new housing. We recognize the challenge of creating a document that provides flexibility to developers while ensuring that projects make a positive contribution to the public realm. The "Public Draft 4-8 Story Multi-Family Residential Objective Design Standards" is a good start at achieving that balance.

As you finalize this document, we would appreciate consideration of the following comments, which aim to ensure that these standards remain as objective as possible and work for a broad range of site conditions, project types and scales of development.

1. Consider revising the name and applicability of this document to address buildings of 4-9 stories, up to 85'.

In recent years, many buildings, particularly on sloped sites, are using Type I concrete construction with thin floor-ceiling assemblies to provide 9 stories of housing within the "mid-rise" construction requirements of the building code. These buildings are typically about 85' tall, and should be covered by these guidelines, as they have the same urban design impact as an 8-story building at a similar height.

2. Consider providing more exceptions tied to building size/ parking count/ building frontage where this distinction is not already made, to provide more flexibility for smaller, space constrained sites.

Some of these standards feel more important for a one-to-two-acre site or sites with longer frontages. While some standards include provisions for this, others don't. Landscape and trees in driveways or parking areas, top treatment, and middle treatment are examples of sections that should provide exceptions or reduced requirements for smaller buildings and/ or narrower street frontages.

3. Consider concentrating design standards on aspects of the building that most impact the urban experience, such as ground floor pedestrian experience, including streetscape planting requirements. Standards should not unnecessarily add to costs. The requirements for the "middle treatment" in particular are problematic. One method of articulation is sufficient for most buildings. Consider reducing this requirement.

We welcome any questions related to points above, or discussion tied to optimizing the design standards for both economic efficiency and urban experience.

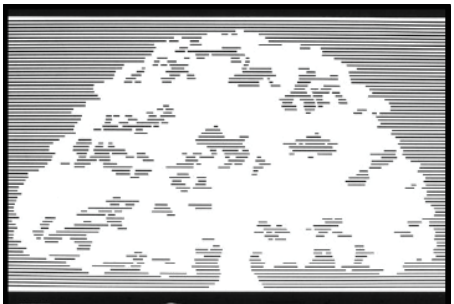
Sincerely,

Casey Farmer
Chair, Rockridge Community Planning Council

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Urban Studies Students Rethink Potential of "The Ridge"

by Kim Suczynski-Smith, RCPC Boardmember

This past spring, a group of Urban Studies students from UC Berkeley studied The Ridge Phase II site redevelopment of the shopping center at Broadway and Pleasant Valley. As part of their capstone course experience as junior and seniors, the City Planning studio is designed to provide students with a real-world experience exploring the intersection of a city's zoning and development standards; constraints of land owners; limitations of development opportunities; and desires of the community.

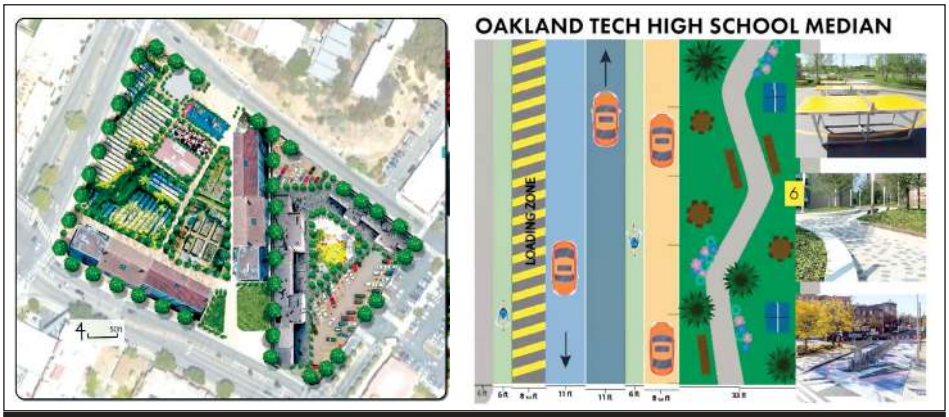
The Ridge Phase II site has been vacant since 2016, and is listed as an "opportunity site" in the City of Oakland's Housing Element. It was proposed to be redeveloped as a Home Depot last year, but received pushback from the community who would prefer it to be used for housing.

The site is also adjacent to the California College of Arts campus, which is currently undergoing the EIR review process for repurposing the site as 448 homes, offices, and an open space. Located at the intersection of two major arterial streets, the Ridge Phase II site is disconnected from the neighborhood fabric, and challenged by a lack of access safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

Also, the Ridge Shopping Center is within walking distance to Oakland Tech High School and utilized daily by its students. For all these reasons, the site is an excellent opportunity for students and the broader community to discuss and envision solutions to our neighborhood's broader challenges of housing access and affordability, transit access and safety, and inclusion.

The course started out looking at the City of Oakland's General Plan, other available planning documents, and census data. After then conducting site walks, surveys, and physical observations, students tried to answer the questions of:

- **Who belongs to the community?**
- **What physical, social, economic, and cultural factors tie the community together?**
- **Who is using the public space?**
- **How would a project impact the community?**



(Left image) Urban Farming for Restorative Justice and Community Healing project proposal for a mixed-use urban farm and housing design. (Right image) The Accessibility through Public Space project proposal for Broadway in front of Oakland Tech.

These questions were explored by first understanding resident, Oakland Tech, and shopping plaza perspectives. After the research phase, the students generated project proposals for the issues and challenges they identified from their research. On May 2, 2024, the students presented their final projects via Zoom at a Rockridge Community Planning Council Town Hall meeting. Nearly 50 members of the community attended the session and provided comments to the students. The goal of sharing the students' research and visions for the site was to not only to prepare the students for professional practice but to also help the neighborhood dream outside conventional constraints around the possibilities for the site and for this stretch of Broadway.

One project, titled "Accessibility Through Public Space," studied how Broadway could be reconfigured to slow traffic, reclaim the natural public space of the street for pedestrians, and improve the connectivity of the site to the adjacent neighborhoods. Another project, titled "Urban Farming for Restorative Justice and Community Healing," proposed addressing Oakland's broader issue of food insecurity by dividing the site into two areas — one for housing development and the other for a high-production urban farm inspired by the City Slicker Farms project in West Oakland.

These student projects have provided a glimpse of possibilities for development, but ultimately it is up to the landowner, and the community, to implement these ideas.

Architect Kim Suczynski-Smith taught this class at Berkeley's College of Environmental Design. ■

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History Corner

The Past and Future of Development at Rockridge BART

by Annette Floystrup

Rockridge was founded as a transit-oriented neighborhood, uniquely situated to take advantage of an expanded transportation system in all four directions. Commuters can take freeways, BART, or bus to work in San Francisco and beyond, yet few know that the routes they take today were begun 120 years ago to serve the same purpose.

It took about as long to get to San Francisco then as it does today by BART. By 1913, the Sacramento Northern trains ran along Shafter through the Chabot canyon, and it was possible to get to Sacramento in about the same amount of time as taking the Amtrak specials from Emeryville now. Since the opening of the Grove-Shafter Freeway in 1970 (Highway 24) and BART in 1972, neighbors once again have commute options like they had in the 1920s.

Higher Density Housing

Higher density housing did not begin with the construction of BART. During WWII, many single-family houses in Rockridge were converted to duplexes, and there was a rise in the construction of duplexes and small apartment houses to meet the housing demands of workers pouring in to work at the Alameda Naval Air Station, the Port of Oakland, and the Army supply depot in Oakland. Wartime industries of shipbuilding and canning fueled industrial growth, which led to a surge in the population. Oakland added almost 100,000 new residents between 1940-1945. The 1945 special census revealed the population of Oakland at a then all-time high of 405,301 residents.

Oakland's population has decreased by 20,640, a 4.68 percent decline since the most recent census in 2020, which recorded a population of 440,873. Currently, Oakland has a population of 420,233, which is declining at a rate of 1.21 percent annually.

BART Station

In the late 1960s, BART helped pioneer the development of metropolitan rail transit around the country. The initial 1956 plan aimed to provide service for older city centers and to reorganize sprawling suburbs by creating commercial and residential hubs at BART stations in order to attract higher-density housing, retail shops, and offices. To this end, they proposed special transit zones around the new BART stations.

In November 1970, a group of developers, calling themselves the Rockridge Neighborhood Committee requested rezoning around the Rockridge BART Station area to allow construction of an 83-unit apartment complex.

Context is Everything — The Quarter-Mile Radius

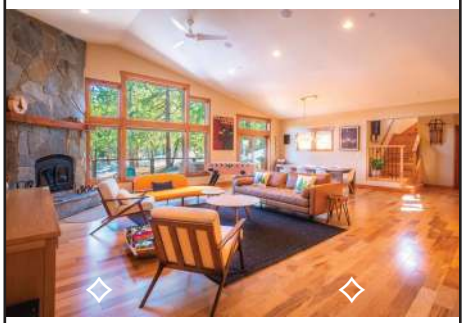
Neighborhood pushback was swift. Residents were faced with the resurrection of the original BART station's "mini-downtown" concept to create a high-density zone that included a quarter mile radius around the Rockridge Station to be created by using eminent domain to clear the designated area for development. Between 1960-1966, urban renewal, freeway construction, BART construction, and other government actions had already destroyed over 7,000 housing units in Oakland, including over 1,400 (mostly) single-family homes in

Rockridge BART, see next page

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COMPASS

Rockridge BART, from previous page

Rockridge taken by eminent domain to allow for construction of the BART Station and Highway 24.

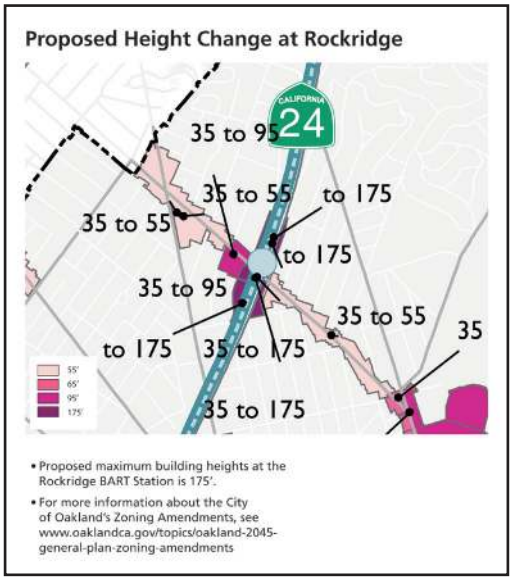
The residential and business districts in Rockridge had been seriously harmed by six years of highway and BART construction. College Avenue was 50 percent vacant, with boarded up storefronts and empty lots used for construction equipment. Local residents and merchants felt they now faced the total destruction of neighborhood and business district integrity if this new plan to clear a transit zone was implemented. Both groups had had enough.

The City of Oakland put a building moratorium in place in April 1970, and in January 1971, more than 400 residents, along with the College Avenue Merchants Association, voiced their opposition to the Planning Commission. They requested a rezoning moratorium and a planning study.

The neighborhood organized and obtained HUD funding that paid for a comprehensive planning study which resulted in the creation of the C-31 special pedestrian-oriented retail zone for College Avenue, and a new residential buffer zone (about one block deep, abutting the commercial zone) called R-35. This newly created residential zone specifically allowed for higher density than the original R-30 single-family zone.

The Second Development Proposal

In 1988, four local developers made proposals to the BART board for high-density residential developments on the Miles side of the BART Station. The proposals were submitted on the initiative of each developer and not as a formal Request for Proposal from BART. The BART board rejected development at the Rockridge Station citing suitability concerns, additionally saying they could only consider proposals for stations with a BART General Plan, and the Rockridge Station had none. As a result, no proposals were submitted by the developers to the City or RCPC.

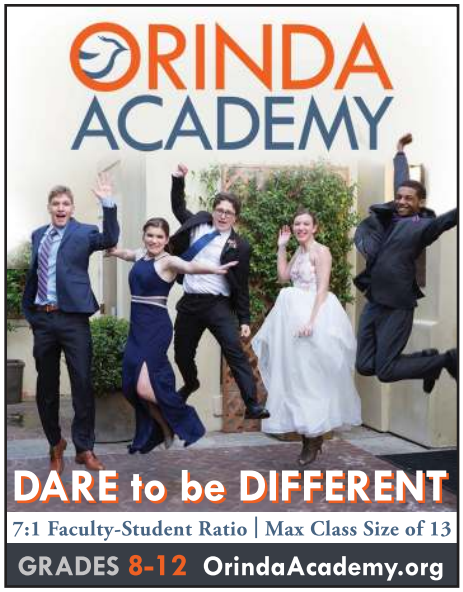


Impediments to Development

Currently, development plans for Rockridge from 2020 to 2025 have been delayed until 2034 or later. The plans now reflect the new height limits and transit-oriented development zones by the BART Station and along College Avenue that were imposed after expiration of a July 1, 2022 deadline for local zoning changes persuant to AB 2923 (see diagram on left). Allowable building height on College Avenue is now 55 ft. (up from 35 ft.), and could be higher with density bonuses applied. At the BART Station, the new maximum height limit is 175 ft., or about 17 stories tall.

While the Rockridge Station has been determined to have strong potential from a Transit Oriented Development market perspective, as both a top-ranked residential and

Rockridge BART, see next page



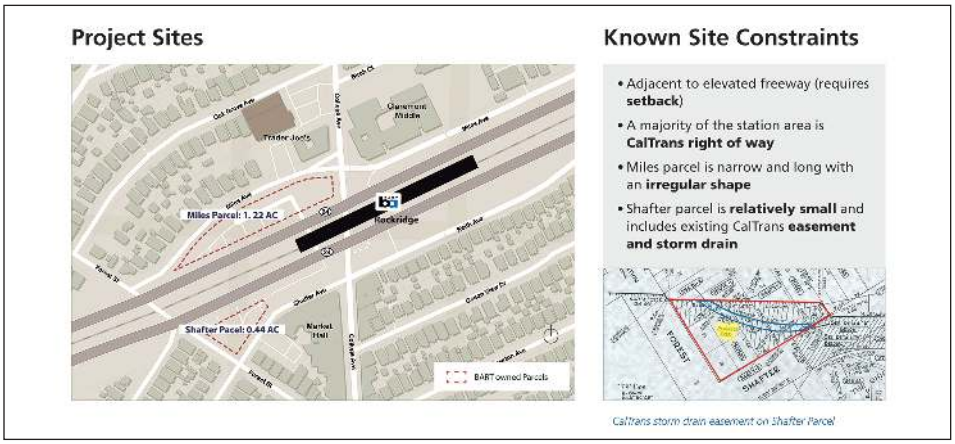


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Rockridge BART, from previous page

office site with emphasis on affordable housing, the site has some specific impediments and challenges to development. The barriers to development are capacity (limited developable land area) and easements, which include mandatory setbacks from the freeway and BART rails, existing easements, local regulatory requirements, and the underground location of branches of Temescal creek. These must be mitigated or overcome before BART can pursue development.

Few residents know that we are living in the Temescal watershed, one of the largest in the East Bay system. Construction of Hwy 24/BART put the main branch of Temescal Creek in a major culvert underneath the freeway. The Dreyer's/Nestle corporate building has sump pumps going 24/7 at the corner of College and Chabot to keep the understory of their building dry, and the water table across the street from their parking lot on Chabot Road has been as high as just 12" from the surface. Two major flood control projects in 1987 and 1990 finally stopped the annual flooding of basements on College Avenue. Above ground or culverted, Temescal Creek is a major influence on life in Rockridge. Learn more: https://oaklandgeology.com/2024/01/22/temescal-creek-the-lower-reach/.



Plans for Rockridge were initially outlined in BART's Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Program Workplan (August, 2020), a 10-year plan aimed at "strengthening the connections between people, places, and services while enhancing BART's value as the backbone of the region's transit system." This plan was superseded by the March 2024 workplan update. Given the challenges posed by the Rockridge site, and facing an uncertain financial future, BART is focusing its efforts in the near term on sites with higher TOD potential.

Both documents are available, and can be found at https://www.bart.gov/about/business/tod. ■

Maison d'Etre Re-Opens

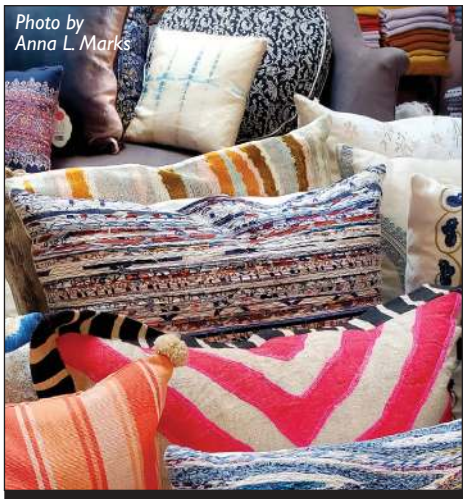
by Carol Kasparek

Friday afternoon, May 10, at 5pm, a beloved Rockridge retail establishment, Maison d'Etre, re-opened its doors. "We made it back before Mother's Day," proclaimed Maison d'Etre co-owner **Patty Brunn**. Daughters **Daisy Womack** and **Lily Sosnowski** spearheaded the renovations, which began in January. The updated space maintains the enchanting product mix for which the store is known.

When the store first opened on College Avenue in January 2002, **Fred Womack** (Patty's husband and father of Daisy and Lily) was the face of the family on the sales floor. With Fred onto a new venture, his wife and daughters have taken it over. "Both daughters have a great eye for product and merchandising, and Daisy and Lily worked around the clock to make it open on time," says Patty,

Colors are fresh and different, with more accent lighting and a cleaner look for the expansive front window. Fixtures have been moved or replaced to create an open atmosphere with enhanced sight lines. The entire family pulled off a *trompe l'oeil* — moving a back half-wall forward while inducing a feeling of an expanded sales floor. This allowed them to enlarge the minuscule workspace behind the mirrored doors — they succeeded, although the room could still be called "petite."

The family wants visitors to feel there's something special for them. They want the customer experience to be "rich, uplifting, and inspiring," especially when making choices for their own homes. "The need for beauty is just behind the need for air, food, and water," says Patty. That need can be filled at this rejuvenated bright spot on the avenue. ■


Photo by Anna L. Marks

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Thank You, Margaret



Many of our volunteers who deliver your paper to your doorstep have been doing so for decades now, some since the very first issue was printed in 1986… and we thank all of them. This month, we express our gratitude to **Margaret Wahlberg**, a former RCPC boardmember who has faithfully performed three different delivery jobs every month with the *Rockridge News* over the last 25 years. Wahlberg has served her area around Ocean View as Marshal, District Captain, and Block Captain. She recently informed us of her retirement, which she justly deserves. She will complete her final route this month and hopes that another resident will take on her role as District Captain (DC) as of September.

District Captain Route

The DC generally receives a box of bundled papers on his/her doorstep the first weekend of each month (except August). The box contains between five and ten bundles, each with a cover sheet indicating how many papers are in the bundle and the name and address of the Block Captain (that person then delivers papers door-to-door).

Margaret's route has six houses where she drops bundles on each of their front porches (listed below) on the same weekend she receives them. Bike or car will get the job done.

- **6144 Ocean View**
- **5850 Broadway**
- **5912 Buena Vista**
- **6100 Margarido Drive**
- **5825 Margarido**
- **6062 Ocean View**

To volunteer, or for more information, contact Susan at 510/547-3855 or smontauk@gmail.com. ■

Dogs of Rockridge

This is **Winston**, a 10-year-old Wheaten Doodle (aka "Whoodle") rescue who loves long walks down College with his owners Priya and Sal, as well as his 11-month-old human intern, Arin. Winston's hobbies include peeing where other dogs have peed, chasing squirrels, and looking for crumbs on the sidewalk. He's very outgoing and enjoys meeting smaller dogs and people with good vibes/snacks. If you see him in the hood, say hi!





No, this is not a teddy bear; this is **Shana**. She's about 3 years old and has been living with her family for over two years. Occasionally, one of her human siblings props her up into a sitting position, which she seems to like. However, she's a dog's dog and loves playing with other canines, chasing leaves, and trying to catch running gutter water. She sometimes sits in the middle of the street and won't budge, so we have regular pep talks. We're also working on her courage.

Zena is a senior rescue mutt from West Virginia by way of New York City. She moved to Rockridge last year to enjoy her golden years in the West Coast sunshine. Zena is a gentle beloved soul, charming everyone she meets. People are often captivated by her beauty, her unique blue merle coat, and her tricks… especially "dance" and "bang!" She enjoys basking in the sun and long walks through tall grass, and has been deemed the "fairest of them all" by shops on College Ave.



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.



eyes on Rockridge

Doing Life with Marty Nemko

by Judith Doner Berne

If you're a fan of the Little Free Libraries and wander in and out of certain streets north of Chabot Road, you may have seen one or more books by **Marty Nemko**.

Nemko, a career and personal coach who has lived at his Rockridge address since 1977, has written 33 books — some through publishers and others self-published. Probably the most popular, he said, is *Careers for Dummies*, published in 2018 as part of the well-known series designed as unintimidating instructional guides. He followed it up with *Cool Careers for Dummies*; both are published by Wiley.

"Trying to be a good neighbor, I do donate my books," Nemko said, which he distributes as he walks with his dog, Hachi. "I like the concept of the honor-system little libraries in front of people's homes." Although he doesn't host such a book exchange box himself, two of his self-published books lay on his sidewalk inscribed "Hi Neighbor, Enjoy!" His latest is *In a Word*, which he printed last month, and riffs on the meanings of 103 words.

Interviewing Nemko is like unraveling a ball of yarn, with each strand leading to another of his interests and accomplishments. That's because he's also written hundreds of articles, including for *Family Circle* and *Time* magazines as well as PsychologyToday.com. Many of his 2,500 videos are available on YouTube. He was interviewed on local NPR radio programs by **Ronn Owens** on KGO and by former KQED *Forum* host **Michael Krasny**, and went on to host his own radio show on KALW for 30 years. "I'm a worker bee," Nemko said.

It took a second interview and attendance at a mid-June piano concert in his living room to discover that he is also an avid gardener who creates new hybrid roses; active in both Mensa and Toastmasters; and a generous friend and neighbor. Self-taught, he began playing piano professionally as a teenager, Nemko said. Now, since the onset of Dupuytren contracture (a skin ailment), he can use only seven fingers, which doesn't seem to inhibit his performance.

Maggie Grover was among 16 people and three dogs attending Nemko's interactive home concert, a rehearsal for his quarterly recital at the Orinda Community Center. "Marty is a wonderful neighbor," Grover said, "always giving out seeds, tomato plants, and his special hybrid roses, as well as his books. During Covid, we would bring chairs and sit out on the street and he would open his living room window and play for us. He came to our house and played for my husband when he was ill."

Lana Lee, a tech company manager who has been his client for 10 years, drove from Fremont with her mother and niece for the concert. Nemko guided Lee's transition out of engineering and she still sees him monthly. "Marty helps me with things that can apply to different parts of my life. A job is a job, but a career is longer."

Nemko, now 74, grew up in Flushing, New York, and might have been described as a wunderkind. He could read at the 12th grade level by first grade, he said, having taught himself at the age of three. "I deserve no credit," he said. "I was just provided with the right genes."

Marty Nemko, see next page

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Marty Nemko, from previous page

His first job, at age 13, was as a bar room piano player. His parents, both of whom were Holocaust survivors, "gave me classical lessons, but I refused to practice. I learned to play pop stuff at weddings and bar mitzvahs by ear." His teenage summers were spent entertaining in the Catskills. One eight-week summer lodging was spent in a cubbyhole beneath the stage.

After graduating from Queens College in psychology, Nemko taught middle school in an underserved area of Queens. It was, he said, "a complete disaster because I couldn't control the class." But he did meet his wife **Barbara Nemko**, a fellow teacher at the time, and now the long-time Napa County Superintendent of Schools.

Heading west, Marty earned a PhD in educational psychology from UC Berkeley, specializing in the evaluation of education with the idea that he would teach at the college level. But first, he set out to master teaching younger students. After three years at a Richmond school, working with another underserved group of students as they moved through the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades, he went on to posts at Cal State East Bay, UC Davis and UC Berkeley.

Although Nemko's books and videos often rely on his knowledge and experience as a career counselor, his own career "happened by default," he said. "I wasn't planning to be a career counselor."

It was his first book, *How to Get a Private Education in a Public School* (Ten Speed Press, an imprint of Random House), that led him in a different direction. "It reflected, in part, what we learned in trying to get our daughter Amy a decent education in the Oakland Public Schools," which led to the Ronn Owens radio interview. When Nemko returned home to find 25 calls from parents, he began a new counseling and radio career.

Nemko's radio show *School Talk*, his counseling, and his writings, have mirrored the path of his daughter, now Amy Nemko Zubrensky, as she went from Chabot Elementary, to Montera Middle School, to College Prep, and then on to college at UCLA and Yale Law. Her experience inspired him to write *How to Get an Ivy League Education at a State University* (Avon), and *The-All-in-One College Guide* and *You're Gonna Love this College Guide* (both published by *Barron's).*

As Amy entered the job market, his broadcast morphed into *Work with Marty Nemko*, which ended in 2020. His writings and counseling developed into what he does today – working with clients by phone, over Zoom, and in person, "sometimes in my backyard, which is very nice. I have some clients, who, like a dentist, I see twice a year."

"My father's words (having escaped a Holocaust death camp) — 'Never look back: Always take the next step forward' — have long helped me with my clients," said Nemko. "Careers blend into everything — relationships, physical and mental health, gender, race, politics. My job is helping people make the most of their potential, in and outside of work."

Have a Rockridge story that needs telling? Email judyberne@att.net. ■



Photo by Judy Berne

Marty Nemko, a self-taught pianist, says he was hyperactive as a child and, "I still am."

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# of Rockridge



Photo by Anna L. Marks

Alem's Coffee
5353 Claremont Avenue

Alem's Coffee, in the Rockridge neighborhood since 1999, serves up a delightful vegetarian dish known as **"Shihan Ful"** — common and popular in East Africa and parts of the Middle East. The nutritious, complex, and not-too-spicy dish is made with fava beans, chopped tomato, green peppers, chili pepper, cumin, lemon juice, Eritrean spices, olive oil, and feta cheese. Served with two large bread rolls, it's a hearty meal for one; or combine it with the Enkakuho Frittata and share them both with a friend for breakfast. While you're there, enjoy it with a tasty, strong cup of Ethiopian coffee. Congratulations to **Nigisty** (pictured on left) and her husband **Alem** — both from Eritrea — who are celebrating 25 years in business. ■

Send your favorite bite or beverage in Rockridge to: editor@rockridge.org

Marin Raw: A New Diet for Healthier Pets

Rockridge has a new type of pet food to consider. Marin Raw recently opened at 5808 College Avenue, across from Zachary's Pizza, and the offerings reflect a deeper understanding of how a healthier diet can lead to a healthier pet.

When her dog got cancer, **Elizabeth Davis** did some research that swayed her to try a raw diet. "It blew me away how much the dog changed," she recalls. Her passion became her business, which slowly grew… from farmers' markets to commercial kitchen to the opening of her first store in San Anselmo and a production facility in Richmond. When **John Lewis** saw the potential of Marin Raw, he made a substantial investment, enabling her to open a second store and continue offering a variety of house-made treats.

Davis is overwhelmed by the reception, enjoying the folks with and without animals who have come by to welcome her. "My biggest satisfaction is helping the animals." ■



Photo by Anna L. Marks

Elizabeth Davis, owner of Marin Raw, and her dog Peanut.

Oakland Tech Student Named Youth Poet Laureate



Rockridge resident **Ella Gordon**, 17 years old, has been named 2024 Oakland Youth Poet Laureate after competing with eight other Finalists, winning a $5,000 college scholarship generously funded by the Friends of the Oakland Public Library. A senior at Oakland Technical High School, she will represent the community through poetry, media, and public appearances.

Gordon finds poetry to be a wonderful vehicle of expression, beyond words — creating a gateway for her to navigate the world and find meaning and purpose — even in the most mundane aspects of life.

Upon receiving her award, Gordon said, "Poetry is a voice. It is such a humbling experience to be appreciated for the very thing that allows me to speak. This program has given me, and young poets all over Oakland, the platform to share our voices and flourish. I am supremely honored." ■

Changes Coming to Market Hall

by Carol Kasparek

After Market Hall opened in 1987, the European-style gourmet food store soon became a cornerstone of the neighborhood and a destination for fine food in the Bay Area. Sara Wilson and her family expanded the food hall to include a bakery, seafood shop, and a produce store, as well as a busy catering department. Independently owned Highwire Coffee Roasters, Paul Marcus Wines, Wildflower & Fern, ACRE Restaurant, and Marin Sun Farms Butcher Shop complete the marketplace's offerings.

The space next door, previously occupied by the Alta Bates Thrift Shop, has remained vacant for some time. The Wilsons, owners of both buildings, have decided to use the spot to relocate Highwire Coffee. This will allow the coffee shop to expand and give customers more breathing space with better visibility for the store's enticing and informative displays. "We want customers to have an easier time getting what they came in for — and then discover something delightful," says Sara.

Extra shelf space means buyers can bring in more specialty and difficult to find items, which are only available online. "We are focusing on less packaging and an ever more inspiration to cook," says Sara. The new storefront will include windows that look onto the street, plus a separate entrance. Outdoor furniture will be upgraded along with widened entryways "to contribute to an enlivened street scene," she says.

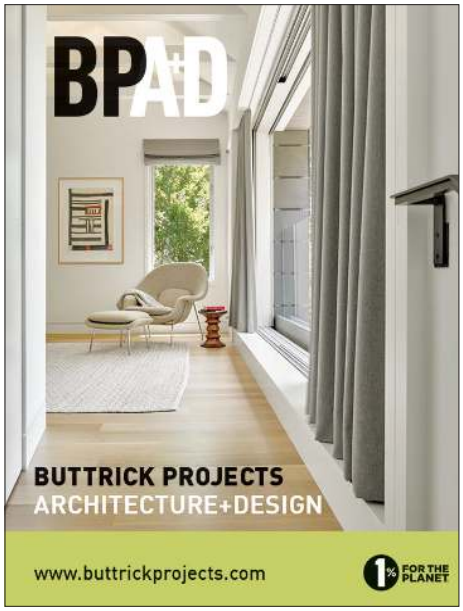


Architect Julia Mandell of Wilson Associates with Highwire Coffee co-owner Rich Avella.

Once the move is complete, hopefully by August, Market Hall's cheese department will take over the vacated coffee shop space in September. This will allow additional room for free-standing cheese displays, and for a modified pasta counter inside.

The Wilsons will keep Market Hall open throughout the remodel. "We know we are part of the social fabric of the neighborhood," Sara said. "We want to always be available for our customers." ■

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Pathology

by Tyler Maxey

The Game: Follow the rules below to figure out the order that BART, the Library, TJs, and Zachary's were visited.

Easy

One rule is a lie.

I. Bart and TJ's are in the first two visits
II. The 1st visit is either BART or Zachary's
III. BART is either 2nd or 4th
IV. The Library is 2nd

BART	
Library	
TJ's	
Zachary's	

Hard

Two rules are lies.

I. There's one visit between BART and TJ's
II. The Library is 1st
III. BART and TJs are in the first two visits
IV. BART and Zachary's are sometime before the Library
V. Zachary's is either 1st or 4th

BART	
Library	
TJ's	
Zachary's	

Author Bio: Tyler Maxey is PhD economist and research director at Capital Preferences. Since moving to the area, he's been a volunteer math instructor at San Quentin, a game theory instructor at UC Berkeley, and the creator of many new puzzles. You can play more of his games at perplexedgames.com.

Answers

Easy Pathology: I.e: I. Path: Zachary's, Library, TJ's, BART; Hard Pathology: I.es: II, III. Path: Zachary's, BART, Library, TJ's



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JULY/AUG Events at Rockridge Library



For Children

Summer Reading Program: Read a little every day to get prizes! Come for special programs:

Bomba & Aguacero: 7/9, Tuesday @ 6:30pm

Scientific Adventures: 7/16, Tuesday @ 6:30pm

Persia Drag Queen Storytime: 7/23, Tuesday @ 6:30pm

Kamishibai Stories: 7/30, Tuesday @ 6:30pm

Storytime: Thursdays and Saturdays; 10:30am.

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

Build, Make, Play CRAFTS and Read to a Dog: Thursdays at 4pm every week in July.

Intergenerational Origami: Join Ellen for folding practice on 7/16, Tuesdays at 4pm.

— Meet the Author —

Wednesday, July 17, 6:30-7:30.

Author Mark Coggins will be in conversation with Randal Brandt, Curator of the California Detective Fiction Collection at UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library, about his latest book, *Geisha Confidential*. Mr. Coggins will be signing copies of the book, available for purchase.

Wednesday, August 21

Meet the Author Series' Fall season begins with Dr. Erwin Chemerinsky, *No Democracy Lasts Forever: How the Constitution Threatens the United States.*

ROCKRIDGE BOOK CLUB

Meets every 2nd Saturday, 3:30pm to 4:30pm at the Rockridge Library

Please call (510) 597-5017 for info and to get a copy of the book.

July's book is: *Maid,* by Stephanie Land



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For Teens, ages 12 – 18

Teen Summer Program: Do not miss this opportunity to earn raffle tickets for our Summer Program (runs through August 3), Prizes include a Nintendo Switch, a LEGO set, and a Chromebook. Earn tickets through different activities. See oaklandlibrary.org/summer for more information.

Make Tiny Art: Wednesday 7/3; 3-4pm. Come in and make a mini masterpiece for our virtual tiny art show, featuring tiny paintings by teens all around Oakland.

Super Smash Bros. Tournament: Wednesday 7/10; 3-4pm. Do you play Super Smash Bros? Think you have what it takes to win it all? Well, you're in luck because the library is having a Super Smash Bros Tournament and you're invited! The top two finalists will receive prizes and will get a chance to compete in the FINAL Tournament (7/26 3 – 5pm) where they will battle it out against contestants from other libraries. Players must be ages 12-18.

Teen Advisory Board (TAB): Wednesday, 7/10; 4-5pm. Join the Rockridge Branch Library Teen Advisory Board and take an active role in creating, planning, and implementing programs and services you want to see at your local library.

Turfin' for Teens: Wednesday 7/17; 3-4pm. Take up room on the floor! Learn the step-by-step foundation moves of TURF dancing with TURFinc!

Perler Beads: Wednesday 7/24; 3-4pm. Design tiny, colorful beads; set on pegboards and fuse together to create an endless array of designs, from simple patterns to intricate works of art.

Take Tiny Photos at Rockridge: Wednesday 7/31; 3-4pm. Calling all teens — we need your skills to contribute to our Virtual Teen Tiny Photography Exhibit. Come by, take an amazing photo with our great instant camera, then decorate and embellish your photo however you'd like! We'll take a scan of your piece of art and you get to take it home with you. Photos will be featured in an online display starting in the fall!

For Adults

Ask Your Area Home Experts: Every 2nd Friday, noon-2pm. Get answers, tips, and connections from a Senior Loan Advisor and a Realtor, both Rockridge locals. Have questions answered about home ownership, maintenance, finance, investing, ADUs, downsizing, moving, and more.

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

Holiday: The library will be closed Thursday, July 4 in observance of Independence Day.

More August events online at:
www.oaklandlibrary.org/events.

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For more information, email Susan at smontauk@gmail.com.

Deadline for September's newsletter is: August 15, 2024 (available September 7).

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