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

Rockridge Community Vision Plan Has Officially Launched: Time to get involved!

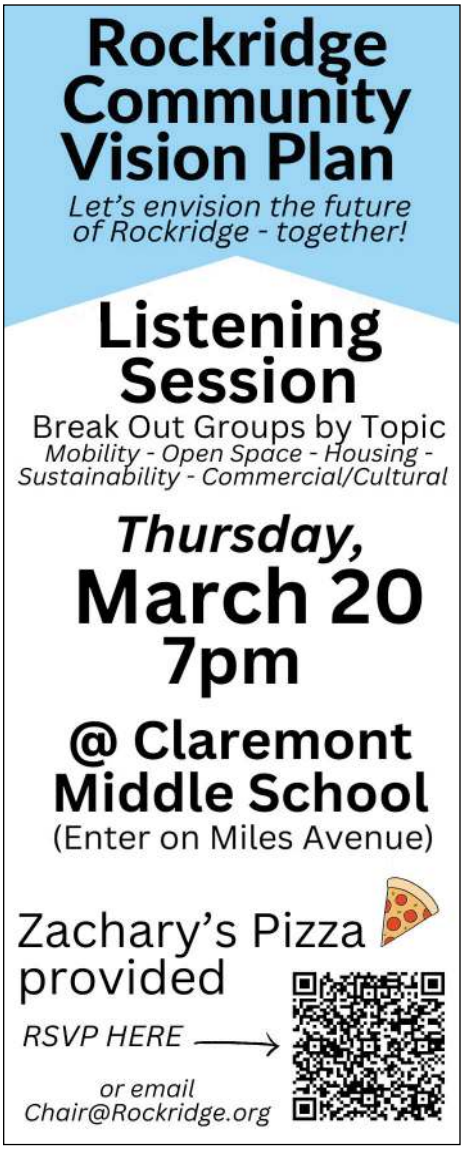
by Kristen Belt, RCPC Co-Secretary and Casey Farmer, RCPC Chair

On February 10, RCPC launched the Community Vision Plan (CVP) at a Town Hall meeting attended by nearly 100 community members. We received a lot of positive feedback, helpful clarifying questions, and excellent ideas to ensure our process is inclusive and thoughtful. Participants overwhelmingly supported the creation of a plan for Rockridge — one that could serve as a roadmap for improving our community for the next 20 years and beyond.

Why Create a Community Vision Plan?

The idea for the CVP emerged from conversations at Land Use Committee meetings over the past couple of years. There are two reasons why the RCPC board thinks this is ideal timing to develop a Community Vision Plan: 1) We haven't done one since 1990. This plan was highly influential as it instigated treasured Rockridge amenities, including the library and Frog Park. 2) The City of Oakland recently developed its Housing Element (zoning changes and identifying housing opportunity sites). It will soon begin its General Plan Amendment planning process, which will focus on land use, circulation (mobility), housing, environmental justice, conservation, open space, noise, and safety.

CVP, see next page



RCPC SAVE THE DATE

Rockridge Community Planning Council Board Election

Two Opportunities to Vote at the Rockridge Library:

Thursday, April 24 from 7-9pm

OR

Saturday, April 26, from 1-4pm

In order to vote, please bring proof of residency within RCPC boundaries. For questions, email Elections@rockridge.org.

For boundary map, see *www.Rockridge.org*.

Rockridge Artist Beautifies Frog Park Mural



Rockridge resident and artist **Caroline Stern** recently restored the mural she had previously painted at the Frog Park bathroom facility in 2017. The enhancement was paid for with proceeds from the Rockridge Community Planning Council's Kitchen Tour fundraiser.

Stern would like to thank the following for making this project possible: RCPC and Friends of Frog Park for supporting Art in Rockridge; RCPC for supporting the restoration of public art; **Theresa Nelson** and the Frog Park Committee for their work to get a grant to fund it; the late Kevin Faughnan and the RCPC grant named in his honor for his inclusive vision to support artists and encourage women in leadership in Rockridge; **Chris Jackson** of the Rockridge District Association (RDA) for his support; and all the children of Rockridge — they are the future.

Stern has operated the DecoArt Oakland Artworks studio on Claremont Avenue for more than 30 years. Follow her on Instagram @decorartoakland. ■

CVP, from front page

RCPC will be able to share our neighborhood's feedback through our final CVP plan with the City this fall. The update of Oakland's General Plan is expected to be adopted next year

What Are the Goals of the CVP?

- To bring the community together to create a shared vision for the long-range future of Rockridge
- Identify opportunities to improve the vitality of College Avenue, mobility of all kinds (pedestrians, strollers, bicycles, cars, and transit), and green/open spaces.
- Identify solutions to improve the neighborhood's sustainability, resilience, and safety.
- Identify corollary benefits, challenges and opportunities from increasing housing access.
- Create a vision for housing and community development in Rockridge to help guide collaboration with the City, public agencies, the development community, and the Rockridge District Association.

What Will the Process Look Like?

At the launch meeting, there was significant interest in beginning the process by exploring residents' emotional connections to the neighborhood before diving into strategies. Beginning with questions like "What is essential to Rockridge?," and "How do you connect to your neighborhood?" will help identify shared values to shape specific goals for the plan. Rockridge is fortunate to have neighbors who are experts in fun, hands-on community engagement. We have asked **James Rojas** and **John Kamp** of Place It to facilitate three pop-up events to support the process (see details below).

Following the pop-up events, RCPC will host a series of meetings to listen, share information, and strategize together in community. We will also determine ways for online participatation to ensure broad and inclusive access to this community conversation. Over the summer, the RCPC Board and Steering Committee will collect and organize aditional feedback, and present a draft in late summer. Finally, we will celebrate the plan at a large event in October.

Get Involved: Attend An Event or Pop-Up

RCPC is excited by the energy that was brought to the first meeting, and we appreciate our neighbors' thoughtful comments. We encourage the community to get involved.

Join a Steering Committee: We recognize that many in our community have skills that could contribute to the CVP, or interest in participating more deeply in the process. Stop by our booth for a hands-on activity to share your ideas at one of our pop-ups — spend as little as five minutes, or as long as you'd like. There are three opportunities to engage — please bring neighbors, youth, and children.

Community Engagement Pop-Ups

- **Tuesday, March 11, 6-8pm at the Rockridge Library**
- **Saturday, March 15, 11-1pm at the Safeway Plaza (College/63rd)**
- **Sunday, March 16, 9-noon at the DMV Farmer's Market**

Community Meeting #2:

- **Thursday, March 20, 7pm, at Claremont Middle School.** Enter on Miles Avenue. Zachary's pizza provided. To RSVP, scan QR code on front page.

To download and share our flyer with your neighborhood email list, see Rockridge.org. Email chair@rockridge.org to get involved. ■



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 in the order received. 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 $22, payable to *RCPC* with "Rockridge News" noted on the memo line.

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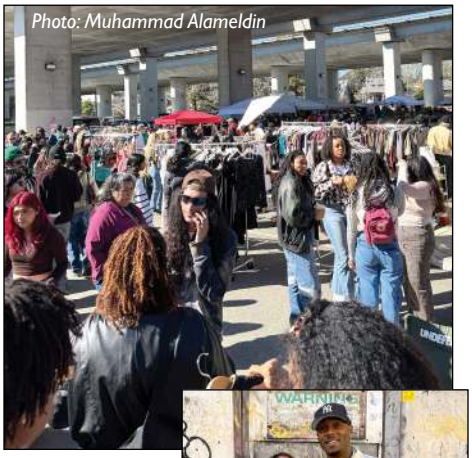
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Views expressed in published articles do not necessarily reflect those of the Rockridge News, *its editor, or the board of directors of the Rockridge Community Planning Council.*

The Wardrobe Project Hosts Flea Market at Rockridge BART


Photo: Muhammad Alameldin



After selling vintage clothing at various flea markets around town, businessowners **Talia** and **Jon-Jon** (see photo) opened The Wardrobe Project in October, 2022, at 5461 College Avenue. Both of them had previously worked in the fashion industry and wanted to contribute to the community-driven, circular, fashion economy.

This past November, they took over the BART station parking lot to celebrate the neighborhood with a curated selection of recycled clothing, jewelry, and art. The event happens sporadically, for now, and the next Vintage and Makers Market will take place on **Saturday, March 15**. There is no fee for admission, and parking in the BART lot is free.

The store is open daily from 11:30am to 6pm. Find them on Instagram @ thewardrobeproject. ■



RCPC Expands Membership Eligibility to New *Rockridge News* Distribution Boundaries

by Casey Farmer, RCPC Chair

Since 1986, the *Rockridge News* has been distributed throughout the neighborhood by more than 150 community volunteers. All persons, age 18 or older, whose primary residence is within RCPC boundaries, are eligible to vote in RCPC elections and to run for a seat on the board.

RCPC protocols allow for expansion of boundaries, with board approval, in contiguous areas of the neighborhood where residents request inclusion and where volunteers are available to deliver the *Rockridge News*.

The board has voted to increase distribution and expand its boundaries to include the following areas:

• **Telegraph/North Street:** The homes on the even-numbered side of Telegraph between 58th Street and the Berkeley border, and the North Street cul-de-sac were not previously included in our boundaries. They have now been incorporated. **Anna Formicola** is the new block captain.

• **Broadway Area:** The Clifton Apartments (225 Clifton Street); CCA (5212 Broadway); The Ridge shopping area (5100 Broadway); and four additional addresses on Broadway Terrace at Carlton Street. **Karl Larsen** has taken over as block captain from **Lynn Delaney**.

• **Upper Rockridge:** Acacia Avenue (6300-6346); Buena Vista Avenue (5611-5921); Buena Vista Place; and part of Contra Costa Road, Contra Costa Road; Contra Costa Place; Romany Road (5950-6095); and a new portion of Golden Gate Avenue (5000-5560). The new block captains are **Skip Fogarty**, **Rhita Williams** and **Silvia Hughes**.

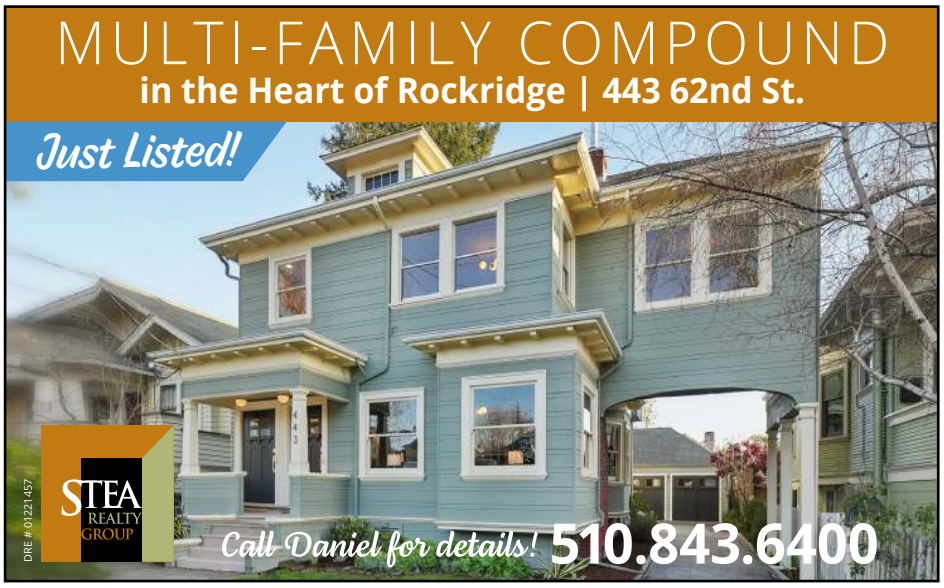
Thank you, new Block Captains for your valuable contributions.

For a map with organization and newsletter distribution boundaries, see https://rockridge.org/boundaries. ■

Rockridge Community Planning Council — Bylaws Update:

At the Town Hall on February 10, residents voted on an amendment to the bylaws in case of any tie vote in an RCPC Board election. Due to the amount of work that goes into an election for an all-volunteer board — the board recommended a coin toss or drawing lots instead of a runoff election.

A quorum of residents approved this amendment by a wide margin (83 percent).



Intersections: Land Use, Transportation, Open Space, and the Art of Public Placemaking

by Tom Lollini, FAIA, RCPC Land Use Committee Chair

As the City of Oakland embarks upon the General Plan Update, Phase 2 (GPU2), RCPC has commenced its Community Vision Plan process with a kickoff meeting on February 10. The GPU2 process will focus on citywide housing, transportation, and open space systems that overlay one another, as law requires. However, RCPC can look holistically at the opportunities to integrate these systems, employing *placemaking* as a principal driver.

Placemaking is a collaborative process that involves planning and managing public spaces to improve a community. It aims to create more vibrant places to improve people's health and well-being.

The General Plan's Housing Element has created the capacity to increase the population of our neighborhood by 15-25 percent. The potential benefits of higher-density housing include improved economic and social diversity, stronger demand for restaurants, shops, pharmacies, medical or other professional services, and, importantly, public spaces that support a vibrant, engaged, and connected neighborhood.

Fifty years ago, I studied in Copenhagen under Jan Gehl, a young professor who had recently penned a simple but transformative book titled *Life Between the Buildings*. His theories that well-designed public spaces engage, delight, and strengthen communities as part of their daily lives shaped my career. More importantly, they transformed Copenhagen into one of the most enviably livable cities in the world, and a model followed on every continent.

The circulation framework that defines our neighborhood was shaped by the *Key Route* electric streetcar system. The local Key routes along Telegraph and Claremont Avenues, Alcatraz, 51st Street, Broadway, Broadway Terrace, and College Avenue were abandoned in the 1940s. Over time, each street was widened to accommodate increasing traffic, bus stops, street-side parking, left turn lanes, and signalized intersections.

The traffic engineers were in charge, but who would ever ask a plumber to design their home? Recent efforts to look more broadly at mobility, considering transit riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians, including those with physical challenges, focused on cost-efficient interventions like curb cuts, broad paint stripes to define crosswalks and bike lanes, or other graphics and plastic bollards. Parklets, installed during the pandemic, add some depth and interest to the pedestrian experience. However, these principal streets give limited attention to the safety and potential for social interaction of pedestrians.

These streets are 80-120 feet wide, yet, after deducting room for curb cuts, light poles, signal equipment, mailboxes, trash cans, benches, street trees, and outdoor displays, the clear walking path is 3-4 feet on either side. That is less than 5 percent of the public right-of-way reserved for people to walk, making it difficult to pass by a baby carriage, dog walker, or window browser. Additionally, crossing these streets too often means stepping out from behind parked cars where aggressive drivers swing around corners, or walking around cars that sit in the crosswalk trying to find a gap in the cross traffic.

In a vibrant neighborhood, congestion is a good thing, as **Jane Jacobs**, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* preached, but New York City sidewalks are 10 to 15 feet wide! William H. Whyte's 1980 book, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, studied how people interacted along the city sidewalks, in particular at corners, or standing between trees and stairways, and in pocket parks. He went on to create Project for Public Spaces, an organization that to this day works with communities to improve street life through strategic interventions. They created a traffic calming manual in 2008.

To my point, we must look at how we can use the existing "spaces between the buildings" to do more "placemaking" for our growing

Intersections, see next page

Reasons to Consider Roundabouts

(Federal Transportation Administration)

Safety & Efficiency Benefits
- 30-50% increased intersection capacity
- 90-100% reduction in traffic fatalities
- 76% reduction in injury crashes
- 30-40% reduction in pedestrian crashes
- Reduction in severity of crashes
- 75% fewer points of conflict than four-way intersections

Environmental Benefits
- Lower CO2 emissions
- Reduced fuel consumption
- Reduced noise pollution

Financial Benefits
- Lower installation costs
- Lower operating costs
- Longer life cycle (25 years vs. 10 years)

Aesthetic Benefits – Fewer turn lanes allow for:
- Wider sidewalks
- More street trees
- Landscaped medians
- Fewer signals, less signage
- Iconic community identity

RCPC Land Use Committee Meeting

In Lieu of the March Land Use Committee Meeting, RCPC invites everyone to participate in the

Community Vision Plan
March 20, 7pm
at Claremont Middle School
(see front page article for details)

Intersections, from previous page

community, which has the city's lowest open space ratio per capita. In addition to my suggestions about the BART Station Area in last month's *Rockridge News*, I have two suggestions for the community's consideration.

Rethinking Our Gateways:

Rockridge has several of the most congested intersections in the city. Our southern gateway from Broadway at 51st to College Avenue and Broadway Terrace has four unsynchronized signaled intersections, eight points of vehicle entry, eight bus stops with thousands of passenger trips per year, and thousands of pedestrian trips during the school year. There are also eight susceptible development sites nearby with potential for more than a thousand new homes that will add to the current congestion.



The Claremont-College intersection includes entry and exit points for 62nd and Florio Streets. Presently, pedestrians must navigate, at their own risk, more than sixteen directions from which vehicles could approach. And there is limited sidewalk space to gather and wait for the eight-way signals.

We should imagine these gateways as a series of iconic, coordinated roundabouts with significantly shorter crossing distances, safe spaces in landscaped medians that could replace left turn lanes, and places for pedestrians to gather and comfortably engage as they encounter one another.

Creating Bulb-Outs at Key Intersections:



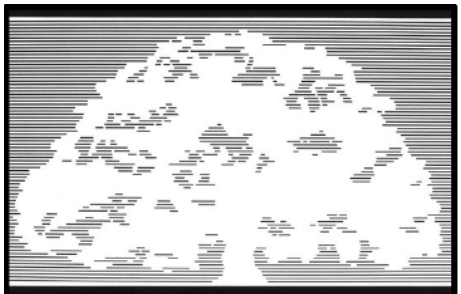
Primary crossing points of our busy arterials and the many complex intersections along College Avenue would benefit from "bulb-outs," as they provide:

- Shorter crossing distances, lowering pedestrian risk for the young, elderly and disabled.
- Safety for pedestrians waiting to cross as they look down the street so they can see and be seen by passing vehicles, and are not hidden by parked vehicles.
- Wider emergency vehicle turning radiuses and curbside parking, typically not allowed within 15 feet of a corner or intersection.
- Increased space at corners where most pedestrian interactions take place, also making room for street furniture, art, or plantings.

Let's make our streets safer and greener, and create space for the social interactions of a dynamic, diverse and connected neighborhood. ■

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Special March Holiday Menus at Market Hall

by Roberta Klugman

Celebrate the upcoming spring holidays with foods from Rockridge Market Hall. St. Patrick's Day Menu is available **Sunday, March 16, and Monday, March 17**, featuring Corned Beef, Potatoes, Carrots & Cabbage, Shepherd's Pie, Irish Soda Bread, Kale Salad with Apples & Cheddar, and Irish Cream Pudding.

The Persian New Year Menu will be offered for two weekends, starting on Nowruz: **March 20-23; March. 27-30**. The festive menu includes Kuku Sabzi, Kufteh, Jujeh Kabab, Polow, Mast-o-Khiar and Borani-e Bademjan.

Oakland Restaurant Week: Mar. 20-30

Market Hall will offer a pizza special: 1 slice (choice of a slice of the day) + ½ pint of Kale Caesar + can of soda; $10 for cheese or veggie slice; and $12 for pepperoni or meat combo.



Cactus Taqueria will be doing a Crispy Taco Special: 2 crispy tacos (choice of veggie or chicken), a side of chips with Salsa Verde and Guajillo Salsa, and a fountain soda for $11.95

In April, Passover and Easter Menus will be available for online pre-ordering on **March 20**. Expect some traditional favorites as well as some new additions.

Visit rockridgemarkethall.com. ■







Good News in the Hood

It's Never Too Late to Be Called to the Bar

by Robin McDonnell



Photo: Robin McDonnell

Assemblyperson Buffy Weeks recently administered the Attorney's Oath to Rockridge resident **Paul McDonnell** (see photo above) who recently passed the California State Bar exam on his first try. Although he is not the oldest person to pass the Bar, as a septuagenarian, he is among the oldest. McDonnell has been active in RCPC activities and helps bundle and distribute the *Rockridge News*.

After a career in municipal finance, McDonnell decided to pursue his long-held interest in law and enrolled in Northwestern California University School of Law in 2019. "The school was online prior to the pandemic, so it was well positioned to continue its courses without a hiccup when Covid hit," McDonnell noted. When asked how hard it was to return to school at an advanced age, he responded that it was difficult at first but found his footing after the first year. One of the most challenging aspects was his slow typing speed.

Will we see him "hang out a shingle" soon? Not likely. He is currently doing volunteer work and will likely continue that. He also enjoys his free time and the ability to cycle with a group that meets every Friday on Lower Broadway Terrace. In talking about his motivation, he stated, "The law impacts so many of our lives; if I can help a few people navigate past their challenges, that will be reward enough." ■

Support Local Public Schools: Join the 17th Annual Ride for a Reason

by Cliff Rechtschaffen and Nora Dye

In 2009, four parents biked from Oakland Tech High School to the State Capitol in Sacramento to support public education. The ride began as a protest against the deep budget cuts to Oakland Unified School District and other state public schools during the Great Recession.

Parents, friends, students, and teachers ride to demonstrate their commitment — raising more than $1.8 million over the past 16 years for schools including Emerson Elementary, Oakland Tech, and Oakland International High School. These schools serve many students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds with limited fundraising capabilities

This year's ride will take place on **Saturday, April 26**. Riders can choose from fully supported rides of distances of 45, 68, or 109 miles (for the shorter rides, cyclists take a bus from Oakland Tech to the starting point).

Beneficiary schools use these funds for books, sports and science equipment, after-school programs, and salaries for counselors, librarians, and reading specialists.

To sign up or volunteer, please visit https://www.r4rschools.org. For questions, please email Nora Vargas-Dye at R4RSchools1@gmail.com. ■

Dogs of Rockridge

Charley just moved to the neighborhood from LA with his family. He's a loyal cuddly 10-year-old rescue pup. He's a little shy and protective of his pack but is handling all the changes with dignity. He loves to walk us around the new neighborhood and explore all of the new tastes and smells. He's also loving to zoom around and play fetch in our new yard.





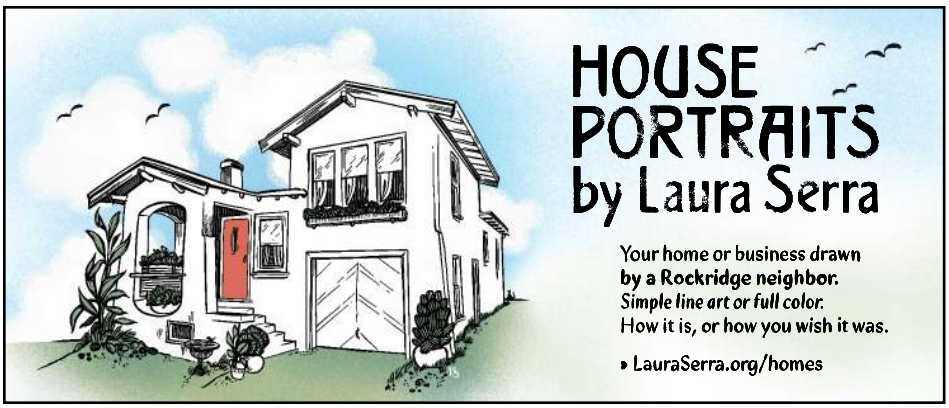
Louis aka "Lou-Lou," aka our "potato baby," is a 10-year-old mixed breed we adopted in 2015 from Oakland Animal Services. He is a sweet natured boy who loves all manner of treats and daily walks through his beloved Rockridge. When we walk, you can almost hear the song "Staying Alive" as he struts through the neighborhood smelling all the smells.

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

Merrill Gardens Boasts a Roster of Literary Talents

by Judith Doner Berne



Bil Banks, Marcelline Krafchick, David Berliner, Ruth Feldman and Dick Williams are among the senior residence's "book people."

If you cried, "Author, Author" at Merrill Gardens, a senior living center in Rockridge, you'd be applauding at least eight of their residents. Five of them have a selection of their books categorized as "written by residents" in the cozy, home-like library where they — three professors, an attorney, and a diplomat — recently gathered in easy, back-and-forth conversation.

Although they don't usually meet as a writer's group, "We are all on very friendly terms," said **Marcelline Krafchick**, Professor Emerita of English at Cal State East Bay, where she taught mythology, literature, film criticism, and writing for 35 years. Before that, she spent three years as Santa Clara University's first female professor.

"Three of my books came out of courses I was teaching," Krafchick said. Her fourth and favorite, *The Romance of Elsewhere*, subtitled *A Half-Century of Connecting By Sea, By Air, By Rail*, is a memoir of her travels. "At some point, no matter what career you have, you can be hooked into saying something important about what you are doing. There is something that reaches out and grabs you." After retiring, she moved first to Emeryville and then to Merrill Gardens. "I've been enjoying exploring the neighborhood."

David Berliner, an educational psychologist, co-authored the bestseller *The Manufactured Crisis*, subtitled *Myths, Fraud, and the Attack on America's Public Schools*. Several of his more than 400 books, articles, and chapters in the fields of educational psychology, teacher education, and educational policy are written with other experts, including his wife, **Ursula Casanova**, who is also a Merrill Gardens resident.

The retired Arizona State University professor and dean likes having a writing partner. "I can chat, we can have coffee and socialize before we feel guilty, and then actually write something. I write on my own, but writing can be lonely, and co-authors take that loneliness away." He advises aspiring authors to, "Write notes when ideas hit you and look at them when you sit down to write — and to do that sitting down you have to have time!"

After spending summers in Rockridge, Berliner's move from Arizona was driven by the fact that daughter **Bethann Berliner** and her family live mere blocks away. Another reason, he said, is, "The restaurants in Oakland and the Bay area are a heck of a lot better than in Phoenix — and in summer it doesn't reach 110 degrees every day!"

In retirement, **Ruth Tenzer Feldman** and her late husband, **Michael Feldman**, moved from Portland, Oregon, to Rockridge to be close to their son **Keith Feldman**, chair of the ethnic studies department at UC Berkeley, and his family.

Eyes on Rockridge, see next page


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Eyes on Rockridge, from previous page

As a legislative attorney for the Department of Education under four presidents (Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton), Ruth sent bills to Congress and wrote documents on behalf of the White House. "That's where I practiced writing from different 'points of view.'" Then, after creating ten non-fiction books for children and young adults, "I really wanted to use my own imagination."

The result is a trilogy billed as "speculative and historical fiction with a time travel twist." *The Ninth Day*, the second in the series, entwines Berkeley's Free Speech Movement with the aftermath of the First Crusade in Paris. As a member of an online writer's group, she advises: "Don't fall in love with your writing. Have other writers critique your book. Be prepared to kill your babies." She's currently working on a novel involving a community of trees and utility poles in Rockridge, tentatively titled *The Tangle*.

William M. (Bil) Banks didn't move far from his Rockridge house to Merrill Gardens. The author of *Black Intellectuals*, subtitled *Race and Responsibility in American Life*, Banks is Professor Emeritus at UC Berkeley, where he was recruited to the faculty in 1970 to chair its African American studies program. Under his leadership, it gained full status in the College of Letters and Science. He also served a two-year stint as Provost of Undergraduate Affairs.

"I was a kid in the '60s in the South," Banks said. "My father was an academic. I was always interested in the ideas behind activism." A desire to focus on the Black thinkers who have helped shape American culture "came from my experience."

His book was reviewed and touted in a range of journals and publications from *The New York Times Book Review* to The London *Observer*, but also by a fellow Merrill Gardens writer. "I read Bil's book," Ruth Feldman said. "It was not just about the activists. It was the philosophers and thinkers that really helped me understand more about Black culture."

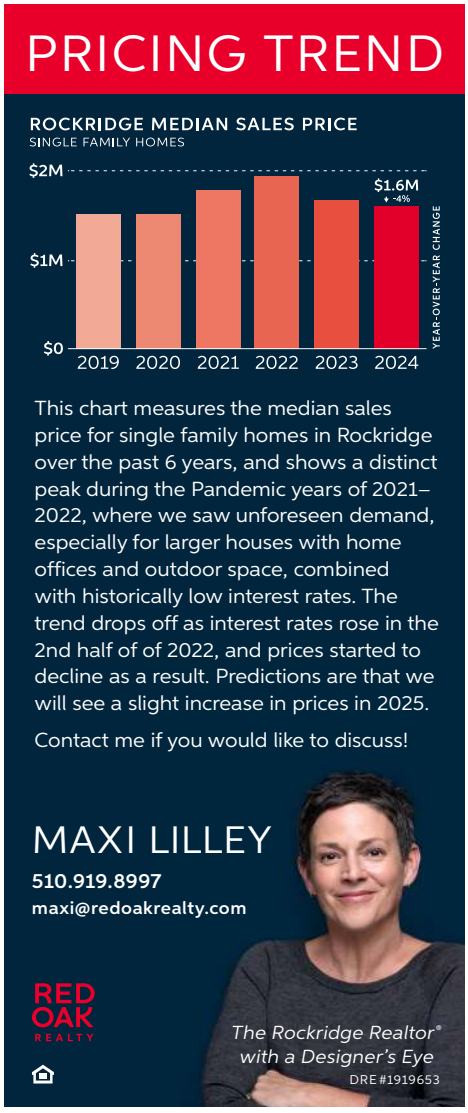
Richard L. (Dick) Williams, who recently moved to Rockridge where daughter **Maria Cypher** and her family live, was a Quiz Kid (a radio and TV series from the '40 and '50s) who became a 30-year career diplomat, opening the first United States consulate in mainland China since the 1940s. His memoir, *At the Dawn of the New China*, recounts the experiences — diplomatic and family-related — when he, his Chinese wife, the late **Jane Khuo Williams**, and their two teenagers moved to Canton (Guangzhou) China (1979-81), as President Jimmy Carter re-established diplomatic relations after 30 years.

"I kept a diary and other records from day one," Williams said. His book covers "experiencing the combination of establishing a new post in exotic Communist China, in a province that's the ancestral home of most American Chinese; my Chinese wife's reunion with family she hadn't seen in 30 years; my teenage mixed-race daughter's school experiences; and official visits by Vice President Walter Mondale, and others."

As part of the conversation, Williams recalled his adventures on the radio program Quiz Kids. From ages 10 to 15, he and three others performed at bond rallies to raise funds for World War II. He was also on the Jack Benny and Fred Allen radio shows and, according to Wikipedia, "is regarded by many as the best all-around kid the Quiz Kids ever turned up."

Each one of these Rockridge residents deserves an entire story, so you may be reading more about one or another in the months to come. Meanwhile, if you have a Rockridge story that needs telling, please email judyberne@att.net. ■







Letters to the Editor

Difficult Housing Sites

Dear Editor: RCPC has started work on a "Rockridge Community Plan." A major goal is to build more housing in Rockridge. Proposed sites include the former California College of Art campus, the large vacant lot at the Rockridge Shopping Center (aka "Shops at the Ridge"), and the lot at the corner of College and Claremont (formerly a gas station). RCPC suggests that "NIMBY" attitudes have stopped progress: If only more people clamored for housing, it would happen. Well, maybe, and maybe not.

Here are some relevant things that many Rockridge residents may not know about these sites: 1) both the former CCA Campus and Shops at the Ridge are part of a former rock quarry, along with the pond just east of Shops at the Ridge. That quarry site is bedrock. It's extremely difficult to excavate, so building basements or underground parking is difficult at best. Anchoring buildings to prevent earthquake damage is also complex and expensive.

2) the southwestern portion of the Shops at the Ridge site has a subsurface plume of PERC, a popular but toxic (and likely carcinogenic) dry-cleaning chemical. The plume leaked from a dry cleaner at Rockridge Shopping Center. Although currently monitored by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the site has yet to be fully cleared.

3) The CCA campus was sold to a for-profit developer for redevelopment. CCA used sale money to help finance the expansion of its San Francisco campus. This adds to the cost of redeveloping the site.

4) The Shops at the Ridge parcel is owned by a Chinese-American family corporation located in San Francisco. The current buildings operate under a long-term lease of the parcel that prohibits residential buildings from being built. The owner has been unwilling to remove that term of the lease.

The former gas station site is comprised of two parcels under separate ownership, complicating its redevelopment. It too, has a toxic plume under the site — leakage from an underground gasoline storage tank includes not only gasoline (containing benzene, toluene, and xylenes) but also the toxic additive MTBE. While much has been removed by site excavation, residual amounts remain in the soil and groundwater, so this site too has yet to be cleared for residential use.

These complications help explain why construction at these sites has been problematic.

Stu Flashman
Ocean View Drive ■




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Letters, continued

Community Engagement on CVP

Dear Editor: It is good to see that Rockridge is doing a new Community Vision Plan. It has been 35 years since development of the Rockridge Area Plan, which (for budget reasons) was required to focus on a limited number of areas for development and improvements. Rockridge has changed a lot in 35 years, so the timing is fortuitous.

In the months ahead, it will be essential to ensure a broad scope for this plan. While building new housing and preserving existing housing are important, a thriving community is much more than buildings. A new vision should be grounded in community values and how people live. We have time to carefully consider topics and hear from the community before jumping into specific goals and objectives.

Some of the topics in this broader list should include improving pedestrian and bike safety; supporting public and private transportation and parking; improving public safety; supporting local small businesses, services, restaurants, and wise future growth; ensuring well-maintained parks and recreational opportunities and open space; supporting thriving schools, preschools, and childcare; improving adaptation to threats from fires and earthquakes; updating crumbling infrastructure, including 100-year-old sewers and water mains, aging streets, and power lines; encouraging intergenerational support and resources; and fostering connections among those who work, visit, and shop here.

Let's take time to hear from the breadth of the Rockridge community with multiple meetings, online surveys, polls, and other tools to gather input. There is no urgent deadline. It is important that no single group pre-determine the outcome before the community can be fully engaged. I hope the RCPC Board will engage a broad cross-section of the community in this process and encourage a wide field of topics for this vision plan.

Theresa Nelson
Shafter Avenue ■

# of Rockridge



Photo: Bruce Goldberg

Khana Peena: Malai Kofta

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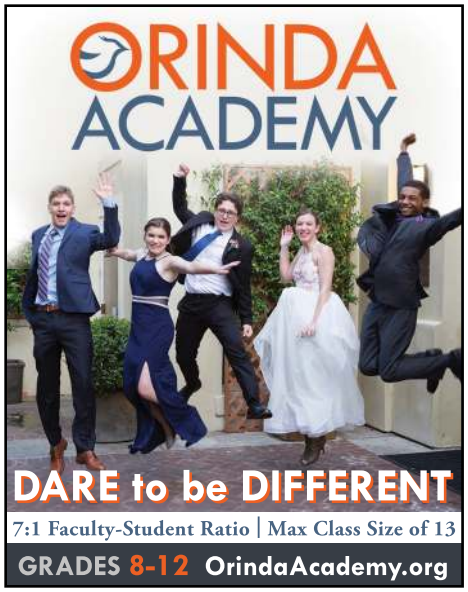
My husband and I began the tradition of enjoying Thursday evenings as "date night" when our children got old enough to spend an evening at home alone. One of our favorite destinations is Khana Peena. We love the warm welcome from the owner, **Chaten**, and his wife, **Anjali**, the smell of wonderful Indian spices in the air, the opportunity for a drink from the bar, and the cozy interior on a cold night or the outside heated patio.

As a vegetarian, I love that there are a lot of options to choose from, but Malai Kofta is my recent favorite. Malai Kofta is a dish of vegetable balls dipped in chickpea batter and then fried and cooked in a wonderful creamy, tomato-based curry sauce. It's hard to describe how delicious this dish is — the balls literally melt in your mouth and the sauce is so tasty it takes willpower not to drink it straight from the bowl.

I love ordering this with naan (onion is my favorite) so I can soak up every bit of the wonderful sauce. And while date night is a bit of an opportunity to splurge, I appreciate that I can order Malai Kofta as a dinner, which includes rice, grilled vegetables, and choice of naan for $22. I hope you'll try it. ■

— by Jana Good





Music Trio at the Rockridge Library, On April 5

You've seen them over the years in front of Safeway, busking for the Alameda County Food Bank. Now the Rockridge Trio is taking it inside — offering up a selection of music by great composers like Johann Sebastian Bach, Josef Haydn (and a few surprises) at the Rockridge Library on **Saturday, April 5, at 2pm**. Mark your calendars for a trip back in time — performed by flutist **Danny Beagle**, a 50-year Kales Avenue resident, flutist **Steve Shapiro**, longtime leader of the San Francisco Community Music Center, and cellist **Hans Kolbe**. ■



Photo by Lisa Ruben

This past fall, Danny Beagle and Steve Shapiro went busking to get out the vote.



Support Oakland Tech's Online Auction

by Leslie Ayers

Oakland Tech's annual auction fundraiser runs **now through March 12,** online. You can join the fun and bid on hundreds of items donated by generous Tech families and businesses in Rockridge and throughout the greater Oakland.

Winning bidders will get an email with a Rockridge pickup location and time window to retrieve your item/s.

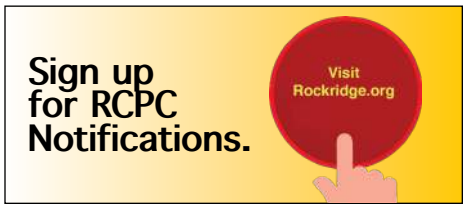
Visit the online auction website at https://bit.ly/techauction25. ■



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

The next meeting will be held on:
April 10, at 7pm
at the Rockridge Library Conference Room, and on Zoom.

For details and Zoom link, visit
www.rockridgencpc.com



Easy Home Fixes for Aging in Place or Thriving After Surgery

by Susie Wyshak

The edge of a curb. A raised sidewalk. A barbell at the gym. A steep hike. What do these all have in common? Whether you're aging or healing from a broken bone, these challenges too often become obstacles to living independently. The *Wall Street Journal* reports that by 2030, the U.S. population of 80 years and older is expected to increase by more than 4 million to 18.8 million. Many Rockridge homeowners wonder how they can age in place.

Tackling Upper Rockridge-style stair climbs is beyond the scope of this article; however, for many, whether you own or rent, small changes can produce significant results.

Easy Wins to Future-Proof

Aging in place can be made easier with some simple solutions. Swap a shower head for a handheld or combo. If you ever experienced trouble getting into a tub or shower, being able to wash with a detachable hose is a must. Swapping out a shower head is remarkably easy, and many kits come with white plumber tape to seal the threads.

Consider towel rod grab bars. You can find stylish designs that give peace of mind if you need it. Amp up your lighting. Along with Improved safety, bright lights can enhance your mood. FEIT makes bulbs you can set to different light warmth with a simple switch on the bulb. Plug-in motion lights are cheap and prevent stumbles in the dark. Solar path lights are a cinch to install.

Check your house number visibility. Is your house findable at night and in the rain by emergency responders? Follow the lead of many Rockridge remodels and choose larger, contrasting numbers rather than subtle ones.

Anchor rugs down. Area rugs can lead to deadly falls — secure area rugs to the floor with nonslip mats or double-sided tape. Tape can also keep the edges from curling up.

Swap knobs for lever handles. There's a reason the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) requires lever handles. They're awesome! Opening doors by leaning on a lever is much easier than having to grab and turn a knob.

Less Easy but Essential

Tighten up railings. Are any railings loose and at risk of falling with the weight of a fall? When installing a new railing, be sure it can support a chair lift if the time comes.

Kitchen remodels, such as adding drawers instead of lower cabinets and more open shelves, are trendy and accessible. Widen doorways. If you needed a walker, knee scooter, or low-profile wheelchair, could they squeeze through? When remodeling, consider widening doorways and leveling floors. Deal with steps early. How many steps stand between you and the sidewalk? If steps need repair, a concrete ramp might be a good substitute.

Let Services Fill the Gaps

Remember, helpful people and innovative services surround us. For example, Temescal Wash and Dry's "Wash and Fold" service helps people who can't handle laundry. They will pick up laundry (via DoorDash), take care of the wash, and deliver it back to your home.

If you need medical equipment in a hurry, look into ReCares. This organization accepts donations and passes free equipment to new owners (*https://www.recares.org*).

Susie Wyshak is a Compass REALTOR® and Senior Real Estate Specialist (DRE 02144226). ■

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Grow your Gardening Skills at the Library

by Alona Rivord, Friends of the Rockridge Library

This spring, the Rockridge branch of the Oakland Public Library is offering a bountiful selection of free gardening workshops. The Grow with OPL program is a creative way to expand the library's mission to "empower all people to explore, connect, and grow," explains Library Assistant **Ryan Lindsay**.

Hands-On Workshops

The Friends of the Rockridge Library (FORL) is proud to sponsor two upcoming hands-on workshops.

Saturday, April 12, from 11am – noon,

Rockridge visitors join **Chef Terry Betts** for *Cooking with Spring Produce.* Chef Terry of the Kitchen on Fire cooking school will teach participants how to prepare and serve farmers market produce in a variety of ways.

Tuesday, May 13, from 6-7pm,

Local herbalist **Ma del Carmen Cortez** will lead *Understanding and Using Medicinal Teas.* Participants will prepare and share tea together and take home their own tea blend.

Master Gardener Series

The library is also welcoming the UC Master Gardener Association of Alameda County at a series of six practical sessions on various gardening topics. The events run one Saturday per month through June.



Photo: Dutch Key

Yolanda Burrell of Pollinate Farm led a mushroom cultivation workshop sponsored by FORL in October.

The instructors are all volunteers with extensive training who can offer research-based knowledge on home gardening subjects.

"I anticipate the interest to grow as we get into spring and folks start thinking about their gardens," said Adult Services Librarian **Anita Bowen**, who looks forward to the session on Pollinators. "What's not to love about bees and butterflies"?

The following events will be held at the Rockridge Branch, from 2-3pm.

March 15: Waterwise Gardening & Irrigation Options

April 12: Container Gardening

May 17: Integrated Pest Management

June 14: Pollinators ■

Rockridge Library Spring '25: Meet the Author Series

Meet the Author Series begins with Homeroom founder, **Erin Wade**, discussing her book, *The Mac & Cheese Millionaire: Building a Better Business by Thinking Outside the Box.*



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March is awareness month for Red Cross, Women's History, Athletic Training, Gender Equality, Parental Mental Health, Noodles, Nutrition



Happy Spring!

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Rockridge Library MARCH 2025

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 every week.

Tinker Tuesdays: Join us for various crafts for children every Tuesday at 3:45pm. All ages welcome, children under 8 must bring a grown-up.

Origami for All: Every third Tuesday at 4pm; 2/18. All ages welcome.

For Teens, Ages 12 to 18

Teen Advisory Board: Second Wednesdays, 3/12; 4-5pm. 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.

For Adults

Author Talk: Tuesday March 11, 6:30-7:30pm. Laura McNeal will introduce her novel *Swan's Nest*, inspired by the true story of Elizabeth Barrett, the most famous "poetess" of the English-speaking world.

Rockridge Gardening Series: Water-Wise Gardening: Saturday Mar. 15, 2-3pm. The U.C. Master Gardener Program of Alameda County will teach about the beauty and benefits of plants specifically tailored to our climate (see article on left).

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.

Rockridge Book Club: Every 2nd Saturday, 3:30-4:30pm. Please call 510-597-5017 for more info and to get a copy of the book. March's book is *How Not to Drown in a Glass of Water* by Angie Cruz.

Needlework Circle: Every Thursday, 2-4pm. Bring your yarn and fiber arts projects to Rockridge Library. Build community, share your passion, learn, have fun!

Artist's Open Studio: Every 3rd Tuesday, 2-4:30pm. Work on your own art pieces at Rockridge Library. Oil paints and other media with strong odors not allowed.

1-on-1 Technology Help: Every Saturday, 10am-12pm. Come with your devices and technology questions and our volunteer tech guru will help you get sorted. First come first served.

Digitize Your Family History: Saturday March 29, 1-3pm. Ron Chan will demonstrate digital techniques as well as story telling ideas for preserving your family history.

Library Hours:
Mon, Thurs, Sat 10am to 5:30pm
Tuesday and Wednesday from 10am to 8pm
Friday, noon to 5:30pm.

Holiday Closures:
Cesar Chavez Day – March 31

Please see the online calendar at www.oaklandlibrary.org/events for events throughout the city.

RN Classifieds

List your 36-word message here for only $22 (phone number counts as one word). Make check payable to RCPC, and write "Rockridge News Classifieds" in the memo line. Mail to: RCPC, 4900 Shattuck Ave., P.O. Box 22504, Oakland, 94609-20131.

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

Deadline for the April 2025 issue is: March 20, 2025 (available April 5).

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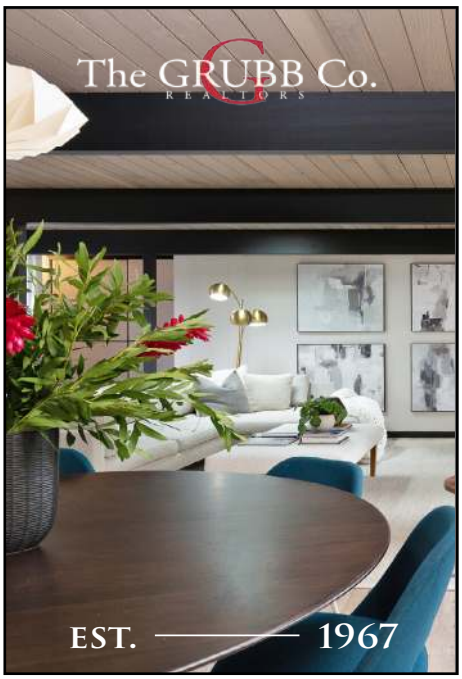
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