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

# Community Vision Plan: What We've Done So Far; What's to Come

*by Casey Farmer and Kristen Belt, CVP Co-Chairs, RCPC Board Members*

The Rockridge Community Planning Council embarked upon the Community Vision planning process to engage and activate residents to collaboratively develop a plan for our neighborhood's future. A similar plan in 1990 initiated the development of the Rockridge Library and Frog Park.

There is still lots of time to get involved, share your ideas, and/or help create a plan for actualizing these ideas to improve the community and spaces we love. Here's what we've accomplished to date and a preview of what's to come:

**February 10: Launch Meeting**

Presented a sketch of our process and proposed categories to include in the plan; solicited feedback.

**Determined Five Focus Areas:**

1) Mobility
2) Sustainability and Resilience
3) Housing
4) Commercial and Community Use
5) Open Space and Green Infrastructure

*CVP, see next page*

# RCPC Welcomes New and Returning Board Members

Congratulations to the new and returning board members who have been confirmed for two-year terms following the 2025 uncontested election. Incumbents returning to the board include **Star Lightner** and **Mark Aaronson**. New members to the board include **Gary Barg**, **Jana Good**, **Robbie Tasker**, and **Paul McDonnell**. Statements of the new board members are published on pages 3 and 4.

The next election will occur in the spring of 2026, at which time all interested residents will again be encouraged to run for the board.

*RCPC New Board Members, see page 3*

# Cole Coffee Has Brewed Community And Connection for The Past 20 Years

*by Carol Kasparek*




Photo: Anna L. Marks

**Michael Murphy** and **Desiree Salas-Murphy,** owners of Cole Coffee.

Coffee and community: For 20 years, Cole Coffee has represented the coming together of these two beloved identities of Rockridge.

In 2005, **Michael Murphy** and **Desiree Salas-Murphy** bought Royal Coffee, the shop's earlier incarnation, which had already become a neighborhood institution. Michael had managed the retail outlet for the Royal Coffee Distribution Company for several years.

*Cole Coffee, see page 12*

*CVP, continued from front page*

**March 20: Pop-Ups and Community Listening Session**

Neighbors came together to brainstorm ideas on all of the five Focus Areas.

**April 27: What Ideas Should We Move Forward With?**

All feedback to date will be reviewed to identify key themes, organize ideas by project type, and determine what other partners are needed to bring to the table.

**May 22: Deep Dive on Key Themes**

Within each focus area, neighbors will be asked to choose one of the five Focus Areas to attend a strategy session. (See QR code on front page for the RSVP link, then select your focus area of choice.)

**June: Community Dialogue**

Continue the conversation to discuss what have we learned thus far.

**Summer**

Create a plan of action from community input; RCPC Board will vote to approve the final plan.

**Early Fall**

RCPC's 40th anniversary of its nonprofit incorporation, and presentation of the official plan to the public.

*Thank you to everyone who has participated. It's not too late to get involved. Email chair@rockridge.org with questions or ideas.* ■













# The Rockridge News

*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.

**Rockridge News Production**

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Judith Doner Berne ..... Senior Contributing Writer

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Kim Suczynski-Smith ..... Secretary
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Mark Aaronson, Muhammad Alameldin, Gary Barg, Kristen Belt, Jana Good, Eli Kaplan, Star Lightner, Robbie Tasker, Zack Walton

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

**Contacting the** Rockidge News

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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**Advertising Deadline for JUNE 2025: MAY 17, 2025**

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, or email joellis1@hotmail.com.

**Classifieds: Email** Susan at smontauk@gmail.com.

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

# RCPC: NEW BOARD MEMBER STATEMENTS

## Gary Barg / Chabot Rd.



I've lived in Rockridge since 1988 with my husband Ross. As young transplants to California, we bought a 1910 bungalow on Chabot Road and transformed it into our home. I relish the richness of life in Rockridge and the greater East Bay. I want the joy and opportunity that Rockridge, the East Bay, and California have given me to be available to the new arrivals I see on the streets every day, and am driven to see that our community thrives and grows in ways that make it accessible to more young people that want and deserve to live here.

My career was as a technical educator in software development, with degrees in Computer Science and Education as a foundation. I have a passion to educate and transform ideas and concepts that can be difficult for people to understand into informative, digestible and accurate information. One of my goals on the RCPC Board is to use this skill to keep our community informed about the issues that affect us.

As I have become more aware of what I value in a community, I've zeroed in on what is important to me: vibrancy, diversity, safety, adequate housing, easy mobility and close-knit neighborhoods. I'll work with my Rockridge neighbors and the board on each of these. ■



## Jana Good / Manila Ave.

I'm thrilled to be serving on the RCPC Board. I've been a resident of Rockridge for many years, and I've loved watching the neighborhood grow and adapt with the changing needs of the community.

I am very interested in the visioning work that we're embarking on to ensure we continue to meet the needs of community members. I also intend to help foster the vibrancy of our neighborhood by supporting our commercial district and the ecosystem that can help to sustain it.

I am a strong advocate for new housing to ensure we have more residents enjoying the neighborhood and supporting our shopping and dining establishments. Professionally, I've worked for years in marketing, primarily in the healthcare space, for both startups and large organizations. I am excited to apply my communication and organizational skills to the work of enhancing the neighborhood that we all love. I look forward to getting to know many more of you through my RCPC service. ■

## Paul McDonnell / Auburn Ave.

I have been active in RCPC programs for several years. This includes assisting with the Kitchen Tour, helmed by my wife Robin in 2020 and 2022. I have volunteered for events such as the annual Halloween parade, board elections, and distribution of the *Rockridge News*.

The current Treasurer is going off the board: I am willing to take over that position. My priorities include support of our local businesses and the development of additional housing, both of which will help keep our community vibrant.

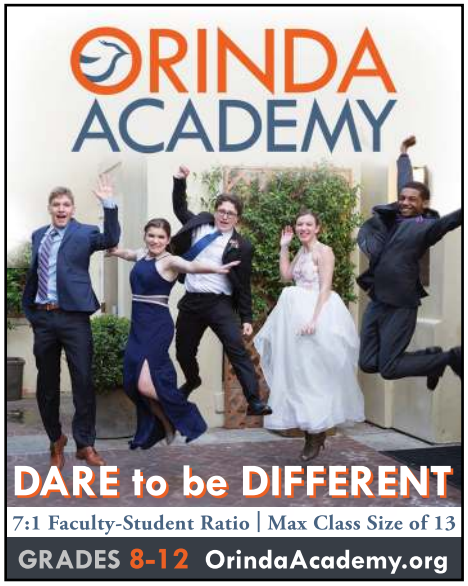


I have an extensive background in finance, having been a County Treasurer, a County Finance Director, and a Treasurer for a small community foundation, and a board member of several not-for-profit entities. I am also an attorney.

My education includes a BA from Cal Berkeley, an MBA from UCLA, and a JD from the Northwestern California University School of Law. ■

*New Board Statements, cont'd next page*






## RCPC: NEW BOARD MEMBER STATEMENTS CONT'D

### Robbie Tasker / Broadway Terrace



I'm a young urbanist and a student who moved to Rockridge three years ago. It's already a second home to my family. I know there's a reason that each of our past board members have successfully run on platforms of inclusivity, vibrancy, and safety. I look forward to working towards those goals with the rest of the board.

The only solution to the housing crisis, cost of living crisis, and the effects of climate change is by people working together in every neighborhood, every city, and every state — especially as things change so drastically on the federal level.

I plan to examine the ways in which we can use our roles to address the above issues. Aside from the opportunities presented to us in the development of Oakland's new General Plan, I believe there's a lot we have agency over in our neighborhood to begin addressing concerns already brought forward by our community visioning sessions. See you around the neighborhood! ■







# Celebrate Mother's Day at the Big Sidewalk Sale in Rockridge

*by Jody Colley, Rockridge District Association*

The Rockridge Sidewalk Sale, now an annual event, will take place on **Saturday, May 10**. It's the perfect opportunity to pamper the moms in your life over a full weekend. In addition, it marks the end of Oakland Small Business Week when we are all reminded of the importance of shopping locally and supporting the businesses we love because they add charm and convenient services to the neighborhood. And why not? There is no shortage of thoughtful gifts and experiences to entertain mom.

The Rockridge District Association has put together a handy Mother's Day Gift Guide with loads of gift items including apparel, specialty foods, wines, home décor, salon and spa packages, wellness, and more.

For the impossible-to-shop-for mom, consider a gift card to Nathan & Co. (5636 College) where there is something fun for everyone, Cole Hardware (5533 College), Planterday (6004 College) if she has a green thumb, or Re-Up Refill (6025 College) if she is a conscientious consumer.

Cap that delightful experience off with complimentary bubbly and wine tastings at Vino (6319 College) and treat mom to a bottle of her new-found favorite. Several participating restaurants in Rockridge will feature tastings, discounts, and unique offerings during this special weekend.

Spending quality time with mom is one of the best gifts you can give and there are plenty of experiences to share with her this Mother's Day Weekend in Rockridge.

*Explore the Mother's Day Gift Guide and the Saturday Sidewalk Sale. More details can be found online at www.RockridgeDistrict.com.* ■



# Meet the Authors, Makers, and Growers At the Second Annual Indie Food Fest

Also on **Saturday, May 10**, Rockridge Market Hall, at 5655 College Avenue, will be hosting its hugely popular Indie Food Fest, where mom can taste, meet, and chat with some of her favorite independent food purveyors and makers.

Taste and mingle with the crafters of cheese, olive oil, charcuterie, chocolate, honey, heirloom beans, and premium rice growers. Meet Greens Restaurant **Chef Katie Reicher** at the authors' table as she signs her debut cookbook, *Seasons of Greens*, and **Georgia Freedman** (pictured below) author of *Snacking Dinners*.



*Photo: Cortesy of Market Hall*

**Bay Area-based food writer/editor Georgia Freedman will be signing copies of her new cookbook, *Snacking Dinners*.**

And don't miss the opportunity to sip luscious libations at Paul Marcus Wines as they showcase independent wine producers (21+only).

*For details and more information about the makers, visit https://rockridgemarkethall.com/events/indie-food-fest-2025.* ■

# East Bay Booksellers Earns National Recognition

*by Anna L. Marks*

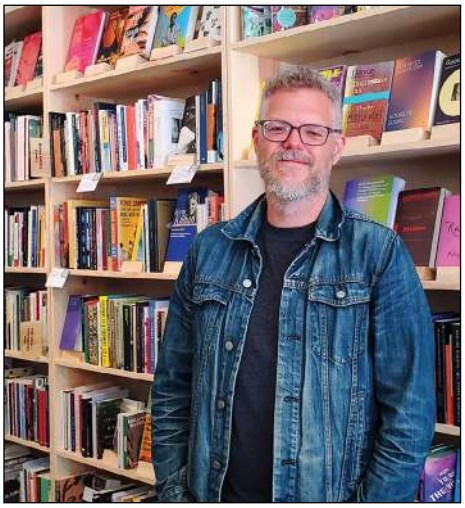


*Photo: Anna L. Marks*

Just months after a devastating fire forced **Brad Johnson** (pictured above) to relocate his beloved bookstore, it's not just surviving — it's thriving. Now located a short six blocks north at 6022 College Avenue, the store has earned a prestigious nomination for *Publisher's Weekly* "Bookstore of the Year."

This national recognition, championed by the bookstore's longtime supporter, publishing representative **Patricia Nelson**, highlights Brad's remarkable ability to rebuild and flourish in the new space. Despite a smaller footprint, Brad has skillfully curated a collection boasting over half the inventory of the original store.

"We're learning some tricks along the way on how to deal with the smaller space," Brad explains. "It requires a lot more work and attention, but there's a more immediate payoff in the browsing experience — the riches are just much more apparent. The Rockridge bookstore continues to offer a diverse selection of titles, inviting everyone to explore their shelves.

Ready to discover your next great read? Experience firsthand the bookstore that has earned national acclaim as well as local support, and continues to enrich our local community's literary landscape. ■









# "Cities Like Oakland" — A Love Letter to the Town

Rockridge filmmaker **Jarod Backens** is working on a new short film, "Cities Like Oakland," which is now in production. The film tells a deeply personal story set in the heart of Oakland. Created by a team of Bay Area filmmakers, the project explores identity and resilience through the eyes of Nicole, a therapist facing an existential crisis as she struggles to navigate her unraveling life while coming to terms with the complex issues reshaping the city.

Nicole's journey reflects the duality many Oaklanders face. The 39-year-old therapist in Oakland finds herself living in two vastly different worlds: the tech-driven culture of her high-end private practice and the underserved community she supports at a volunteer mental health clinic. Struggling with PTSD and guilt after a former client's suicide, Nicole is at a breaking point and wanders Oakland's streets in search of meaning.

Backens, whose work has been recognized by The Black List, Austin Film Festival, and *Variety*, describes this project as deeply personal. "I've poured my heart into writing for years," he shares. "But it's not easy finding time — I've woken up at 4am, crammed it in while I travel, in coffee shops, in rooms packed full of people... It's my passion, and helps give me direction. The film is about real people confronting real challenges and finding a path forward."

His connection to Oakland runs deep. "My grandparents were married in 1945 at the Oakland City Hall, where my wife and I got our marriage license 77 years later," he recalls. "My grandpa was back on his ship to the Pacific days after their wedding. When I walk the streets, I often wonder if I'm retracing their steps. There's something so profound about the past and how we intersect with it. I feel there's no better time to tell this story."

Shot mostly in Oakland (one of their seven locations is across the bay) and featuring local voices, the film aims to showcase the city's raw beauty and vibrant culture. "Audiences will feel the truth in every frame," he adds. "This is a story I've been waiting to tell — a story about connection and the search for meaning in a fractured world."

*The team is actively seeking support to bring this project to life. See their fundraising campaign at https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/735013310/cities-like-oakland.* ■


Photo: Anna L. Marks

Set in Oakland, **Jarod Backens** directs his new film about futility and hope.







# Youth ALIVE! to Deliver an Inspirational Presentation on Violence Prevention and Healing at Rockridge NCPC Meeting

*by Karen Ivy*

At the Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council's June meeting, residents will hear Youth ALIVE! give a powerful presentation straight from the front lines. Hear directly from staff, youth leaders, and clients as they share moving testimonials about how its lifesaving programs prevent violence, intervene in crises, and support long-term healing.

If you care about Oakland and its future, this is a presentation you won't want to miss. Learn what Oakland's premier violence prevention, intervention, and healing agency is doing to save lives, uplift young leaders, and center healing in everything we do.

The Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council meets on the 2nd Thursday of even-numbered months. Next month's one-hour presentation will leave you feeling inspired and full of purpose.

*For more details and Zoom link, visit https://rockridgencpc.com.* ■

**Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council**

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

The next meeting will be held on:
**Thursday, June 12, at 7pm**

Rockridge Library Conference Room (and on Zoom).

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

# Two Spots Open for News Distribution

*by Susan Montauk, Rockridge News Distribution Manager*

Two *Rockridge News* delivery routes need volunteers this month to replace **Beth Johnke** and **Maria Chavez** so residents of their routes continue to get their newsletter.

Maria served as Block Captain for Claremont Avenue and Beth served as the District Captain in the Coronado/Desmond area. Thank you both for your many years of service.

**Route Descriptions:**

- **Route 18Ga: Block Captain for Claremont, from the freeway to Clifton Street**
- **District Captain for Coronado, Desmond, Hemphill Place and Merrill Gardens**

**How it Works:**

The District Captain receives a box of bundled newsletters on his/her doorstep the first weekend of each month, except August, and then delivers a box to each of the four Block Captains (the box includes cover sheets indicating the number of papers in each bundle). Block Captains deliver the papers door-to-door.

*Call or email Susan at 510/547-3855 or smontauk@gmail.com if you are interested or need more information.*

# Tenth Anniversary Party at Cole Hardware — And You're Invited!

*by Shanead Mueller, Cole Hardware Marketing Manager*

We couldn't be more delighted that Cole Hardware will be celebrating 10 years in the Rockridge neighborhood. You're invited to our party on **Friday, June 6 from 3pm until close**. We'll have food and drinks, door prizes, raffles, and if you want to shop — 20 percent off your purchase.

At Cole Hardware, we strive to offer a rare, old-fashioned brand of service where we do whatever it takes to provide positive dinnertime conversation. We are especially proud of our employees, **Emiel**, **Jan**, **Kelly**, and **Ryan**, who have been with us since we opened and continue to be stewards of our brand of service.

From the moment we opened our doors, the support of the neighborhood was overwhelming, and watching that enthusiasm grow has been incredible. Whether you want to pop in for a drink, snack, and a chat, or stay awhile and check some items off your shopping list, we hope to see you there to celebrate these wonderful years. ■

# Experience ACRE Kitchen and Bar After-Hours

ACRE Kitchen and Bar is excited to unveil a new program to bring unique late-night experiences to the East Bay and the local Rockridge neighborhood. In response to the growing interest in lively, after-hours entertainment, ACRE has stepped into the spotlight with a curated series of themed, bar-forward events that began on May 1.

Each event will offer a distinctive atmosphere centered around live music, crisp cocktails, and tasty bites that complement the evening's theme. From "Fern Bar" to "Drink Like a Chef" and "Nomikai," guests can expect an evolving lineup of experiences inspired by diverse cultural and culinary influences.

This new after-hours series is a celebration of community, creativity, and connection— inviting friends and neighbors to experience ACRE in an entirely new way.

*Reservations are recommended and can be made via the ACRE website or OpenTable. For more details or to get in touch, visit them online at www.acrekitchenandbar.com.*

eyes on Rockridge

# Rockridge Neighbors Share a Lifelong Journey of Music, Mentorship, and Community

*by Judith Doner Berne*

A door-to-door salesman hawking guitars and guitar lessons started then 10-year-old **Dave Brossard** "on a lifetime of music," while **John Geltmeyer**, an electric bass player who only recently took up the string bass, considers himself "a musical product of the Oakland Public Schools (OUSD)."

Rockridge residents, now retirees, both play string bass in the Oakland Community Orchestra (OCO), a volunteer symphony started in the early '60s that plays six free concerts a year at City of Oakland senior centers, sponsored by its Parks and Recreation Department.

Brossard's early years on guitar eased his way, at the age of 12, to the string bass. At his San Rafael high school, he played guitar in a school jazz band and bass in an orchestra. "I quit cold turkey when I went to college," going on to earn engineering degrees at UC Berkeley and the University of Michigan — but music wended its way into his adult life.

While carpooling to his job at Chevron, a fellow employee asked if he played an instrument. Well, yes… and it turned out there was an available bass he could use. "I probably played lunchtime with the Chevron Dixieland Band for about 15 years." Several years in, he bought a bass of his own.

Fortuitously, when Brossard's wife, **Sally Beck** was parked in Oakland, a sax player looking to assemble a small jazz combo spotted the bass in their car. He left a card asking to get in touch. Brossard played in that band for a couple of years. "I still play with the pianist, **Russ Taylor**, who remains a close friend after over 30 years."

Brossard retired as a technical manager at Chevron in 2013, opening up more hours to fill with music, and as a docent at the Cal Academy of Science. In addition to 11 years with the OCO, he plays with the Bob Enos Legacy Big Band and the Temple Big Band.

Geltmeyer, a retired teacher, said his introduction to music was learning clarinet at OUSD's Burckhalter and Sequoia elementary schools. That came to a halt in middle school "because I thought it wasn't cool to be a musician." It wasn't until he graduated from Skyline High that he resumed playing an instrument, taking up the electric bass guitar.

While majoring in economics at UC Berkeley, he took enough music



Photo: Judy Berne

Rockridge residents **John Geltmeyer** (left) and **Dave Brossard** met as string bass players in the Oakland Community Orchestra.

classes that during a fifth year in Berkeley's teacher credential program, he also earned a minor in musical composition. He went on to teach special education and math, and coached basketball for over 35 years, at two Danville high schools.

"I also took lessons in composition for seven years with **David Sheinfeld**, an outstanding composer with the San Francisco Symphony," Geltmeyer said. "He was one of the most influential people in my life."

Although his grandmother bought him a double bass for $100 in 1973 ("She could never resist a good deal."), he didn't begin playing it until eight years ago. "I attended a rehearsal of the OCO, approached the conductor, and asked if I could join once I felt comfortable with the bass. She said, 'No. I want you to join now.'"

"I was initially terrified," Geltmeyer said, "but after meeting Dave, decided to jump in and try. Dave was encouraging, thoughtful, and just a

*Eyes on Rockridge, see next page*

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*Eyes on Rockridge, from previous page*

wonderful person. He has guided me through these years with grace and understanding. Playing with OCO, I made many mistakes but rarely missed a rehearsal or performance. I spend time each day practicing."

"The OCO is a gem and is the only daytime community orchestra I know of in this region," said **Martha Stoddard**, the interim conductor who also is the full-time musical director of the Oakland Civic Symphony. After attending a concert where they played one of John's pieces, she noted, "I was thrilled to be stepping into an environment that encourages this kind of creativity and lifelong learning. The piece was musically engaging and lovingly performed.

"I didn't know John at that time," Stoddard continued, "but have since come to appreciate his musical depth, gentle spirit, and sense of humor — a trait he shares in good measure with Dave. I hope he'll continue to compose for the group."

A year ago, "Dave reached out to me, interested in the Oakland Civic Symphony, wanting more experience doing classical bass," she said. "His background is in jazz, so this is a newer direction for him, which he fully embraces. He's been an enthusiastic participant in both groups ever since."

Geltmeyer's ties to Oakland and Rockridge run deep. His wife, **Margaret Geltmeyer**, is a Rockridge native, who grew up in the duplex they share with daughter **Ava Geltmeyer** and her family. Ava is a first-grade teacher at Chabot Elementary, which she, her mom, and John's grandchildren, **Axel**, age 15, **Alex**, age 13, and **Andre**, age 12, all attended.

**Come hear the Oakland Community Orchestra perform Strauss, Haydn, and Brahms**

**Friday, May 30, 10:30am**

**North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way.**

By contrast, it has been just five years since Brossard and his wife "worked hard to find a home in Rockridge because we love older neighborhoods, and the proximity to restaurants, shopping, and transit. We have loved our neighborhood and our neighbors, many of whom are musical."

"Getting together with like-minded musicians and jamming or sight-reading music requires concentration, listening, and creativity," Brossard said. "But there's a social connection as well… I was lucky to grow up at a time and in school districts that valued and provided music education." That's what draws him to Edna Brewer Middle School to coach young bass players at least twice a month "in the hope that playing music might enrich some, or all of the rest of their lives."

"Meaningful learning involves a blend of perceptual, intellectual, and motor skills," Geltmeyer said. "I can't think of a better curriculum than music that offers this unique blend. Music is quite powerful. It offers me a chance to share thoughts and emotions that I find difficult to put into words."

*If you have a Rockridge story to tell, please email judyberne@att.net.* ■




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# Where Do Rockridge Residents Play?

*by Tom Lollini, RCPC's Land Use Committee Chair*

As Oakland develops the Open Space, Conservation & Recreation Element of its General Plan and RCPC creates our Community Vision Plan, let us reflect on the state of our neighborhood's open space and recreational resources. Rockridge has a population of roughly 12,500 residents served by approximately 4.7 acres of open space and recreation areas.

According to the American Planning Association and the National Parks and Recreation Association, Rockridge has about half the minimum recommended acreage within the neighborhood for dense urban areas (>10 units/per acre). While the recreational resources of Oakland Tech, Bushrod Park, North Oakland Regional Sports Center, Lake Temescal, and the East Bay Regional Park District are available, none of them are within the boundaries of our neighborhood, and most require a car or special permission to access.

### Making the Most of What We Have

Chabot ball fields and tennis courts are valued (though minimally maintained) single-purpose resources for tennis and baseball that could use bathrooms, and perhaps be considered for additional uses. Colby Park and Rockridge Place are attractive pocket parks anchoring their immediate environs, and would benefit from modest improvements to enhance their value.

Frog Park and Rockridge Library, outgrowths from our last neighborhood planning process in the 1980s, have added measurably to our community resources, but each could use some modernization and improvements. The former location might be expanded when the DMV and Lucky sites are developed for housing. It could also be extended adjacent to the Highway 24/BART corridor to create a mixed-mode trail that links lower Rockridge to Lake Temescal and the North Oakland Regional Sports Center.

The Library would benefit from audio-visual and energy-efficiency modernization, while the adjacent parking areas could become a pocket park for outdoor reading or even a play pavilion — enhancing the overall library experience as a community gathering place.

### Looking for Opportunities

As our presently underserved neighborhood grows by 15 percent or more through future development as envisioned in Oakland's 2023 Housing Element, where might we look for recreation and open-space opportunities? One approach could be incrementally adding to our inventory of small parks that enhance those projects and contribute to the larger community. For example, the proposed project at the former site of the California College of the Arts will include a half-acre public space with a large open lawn, pathways, sitting areas, sculpture garden, and an indoor space for community gatherings and programs.

Similarly, the 4-acre BART site could provide a centrally located recreation opportunity, as described in my February article (see the archives at Rockridge.org). It might also offer the opportunity to create a Rockridge Community Recreation Center for indoor sports, events, and other community learning and cultural programs at ground level as part of a mixed-use affordable housing development project.

This Rec Center would have

*Land Use, see next page*

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*Happy Mother's Day!*

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COMPASS

*Land Use, from previous page*

excellent regional access, serving North Oakland, and could be funded through a Rockridge parcel tax, and/or use fees for those outside the district. Other sizable opportunity sites for shared public space include the 1.5-acre Trader Joe's site, or the 4.6-acre vacant site at The Ridge. In the interim, The Ridge parcel, illegally fenced for the past eight years, could provide for recreational uses to mitigate the impact of this blight at the gateway to our community as it awaits development.

Smaller sites like the triangular lot at the southwest corner of the Claremont and College intersection could support an interim pocket park while awaiting development (isn't eight years of chain link fencing enough here also?). Once developed, a smaller garden park might define the corner and provide a lovely setting for a restaurant.

These are just some of the ideas that have percolated up from Land Use Committee discussions over the past couple of years, as well as recent conversations among community members in the early phases of the Community Vision Plan process as well as personal reflections resulting from my half-century of nationally recognized experience in campus and community planning. Please bring *your* thoughts, ideas, and energetic commitment to the Community Vision Plan process now underway. ■

# Foxtail Grasses — It's That Time Again


Photo: Anna L. Marks

Foxtails can be a menace to our beloved pets as they traipse about the neighborhood. When you see these weeds in your yard or neighborhood, pull them out. Foxtails shed thousands of seeds that will quickly spread if not removed early. The earlier in the season they are removed, the less damage they can do. If the barbed grasses get into an animals feet or ears, they can burrow deep, causing distress or even infection, organ damage, and hearing loss. If they are inhaled through the nose, it could require surgical removal.

See your vet immediately if you notice your pet showing any unusual symptoms including incessant licking or problems chewing or swallowing. Children should use caution, too, as they are susceptible to getting them in their noses, clothing, shoes, or socks.

Remove foxtails by digging them out by the root with a simple garden tool. Mowing will not prevent them from returning; instead, place them into your regular garbage in a plastic bag so they won't spread. ■





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*Cole Coffee, from front page*

"Before I moved here, I came all the time," he said, and was part of the devoted, diverse clientele that gathered daily at the corner of College and 63rd street.

Michael had been a machinist in San Luis Obispo, where he grew up. He worked with his brother at the Bronze Foundry and would bring coffee beans to his family. Desiree lived around the corner from the coffee shop while studying fashion and design. She taught at the Academy of Art Unveristy and worked as a Tech Designer. They met at the shop, marrying while Michael was still working as manager.

After acquiring the retail business, Michael and Desiree continued their commitment to be responsive to the workers. Two employees have worked for the shop for 21 years. Each raised a family, supported by the culture at Cole Coffee.

"Your kid needs something? Just go, we'll figure it out," explains Michael. "Children, and even grandchildren of employees, have come to work for us," adds Desiree.

***"Children, and even grandchildren of employees, have come to work for us."***

Increased neighborhood competition prompted the couple to make changes to the familiar spot. After Peet's and Philz moved in nearby, they developed new drink options and enhanced their simple food menu, assisted by their kitchen manager. With each change on the block, Desiree said they responded by getting really creative, while maintaining those aspects that long-term customers had come to love.

When the entire building required retrofitting seven years ago, they used the opportunity to remodel the front of the shop along College Avenue. They worked in collaboration with their landlord to improve bulk sales and expand the café.

The pandemic presented entirely different challenges. Online sales became prominent. As restrictions were lifted, they restored the outdoor seating. "We loved seeing people relaxing, just enjoying themselves outside," recalls Michael.

Owners and staff treasure the diversity of the clientele, noting that, "We seem to have waves throughout the day." The first two hours are contractors and construction workers, then come lawyers and judges, followed by restaurant workers and a closing contingent of bikers and cyclists. Families and kids linger throughout the day. Recent additions include pro-surfers, filmmakers and musicians.

Michael came to realize the impact of the environment they had created as people would confide in him and Desiree about personal loss or times of difficulty. "We never knew owning a business would help us meet so many people and form so many relationships," said Desiree.

"It's great to see people come by themselves," says Michael. "They get to engage, and they get to be alone." Regulars wearing Cole Coffee hoodies have discovered fans throughout the state, while new folks come in on the recommendation of fellow

*Cole Coffee, see next page*

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*Cole Coffee, from previous page*

travelers. Michael and Desiree visit shops in their travels, even connecting with a Market Hall veteran who now owns Abraco in Manhattan.

Several forces at work will likely lead to price increases. Michael speculates that climate change may affect coffee prices more than policy changes. Downpours, more than droughts, are hampering harvests, and cultural shifts can also have an impact on growing high-quality crops.

On top of all that, "Kids are not taking over, they do not want the 12-hour days." He feels fortunate that his nephews will be running the farm with his sister and her husband.

Michael and Desiree intend to go slow with any new pricing, and plan to increase live music performances and pop-ups. When local jazz musicians recently jammed in the café after closing, customers from stores across the street hung out on the sidewalk to listen, and were happy to see Rockridge business owners coming together as a community to help each other out.

"We love it," Michael and Desiree say of the coffee environment, because it allows folks to "make time for yourself, family, and relationships." Come by Cole Coffee and help them celebrate the best of two worlds — coffee and community. ■

## *Dogs (and sometimes, Cats) of Rockridge*

**This is Sky. She's an unstoppable burst of energy, the most loving companion, and simply everything you could ask for. Sky is a Shepherd mix, but after seeing her run, one can assume she's a Greyhound. She's two years old and was originally sheltered by the Milo Foundation in Richmond. It is known that they found her all alone near Bakersfield, and since then, Sky's life has changed dramatically — she now has a family and her best life in the beautiful pocket of the Bay Area called Rockridge.**





**The Original Orange Chicken™ (CEO, Co-Founder) is an American shorthair tabby who recently found new real estate ownership in Rockridge. Chicky enjoys taking business calls in the sun and chatting with his clients. This CEO has a silly side, too. When not on the clock, he loves being a menace, destroying all the plants within sight, drinking straight from the toilet bowl, and decimating carpets into a million bits. But looking past these heinous acts, he is the sweetest businessman out there.**

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

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# Scenic Streets of Rockridge Welcomes New Leadership After a Decade of Beautification

*by Patrick Cullinane*

Almost 10 years ago, **Lee Patterson** and **Robert Firehock** answered **Peter Lund's** call for volunteers to give "a couple hours a month" to the Scenic Streets cleanup effort. Now, many years later, the time has come for them to step back and let others take the lead. It is time for Rockridge to thank them for their years of dedicated service to make our community a more welcoming and beautiful space.

Scenic Streets of Oakland is a loosely organized volunteer group currently operating as a nonprofit association under the auspices of the Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation. Its mission is to make a small but meaningful contribution to community beautification in Rockridge by keeping the Highway 24 on-ramp neat and tidy.

Many have participated, and over the years, Lee and Robert took on the leadership of guiding Scenic Streets in its weekly endeavor. Originally part of Hardy Dog Park enhancement activities, the group agreed to spin off that work along with its funding. Although RCPC was the initial fiscal sponsor, for convenience, the remaining funds have been moved under the umbrella of the Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation.

Typically, cleanup work involves less than an hour of activity each Wednesday morning. This has included planting, pruning, weeding, and, picking up all manner of trash and discarded items. They have been able to reunite people with their stolen property and even called the Highway Patrol to recover unspent ammunition. They've encountered a fair share of campers trying to colonize the onramp, cleared the edges of the adjacent DaVita property, and planted some trees on Vicente — but their first love and devotion was always to keep the on-ramp looking good.

Lee and Robert are moving on, and they have welcomed me, **Patrick Cullinane**, to take over stewardship of the Scenic Streets effort, as I've agreed to lend skills and experience to steer the group forward. While the scope and schedule may change, from time to time you will see Lee and Robert picking up trash — making sure that this all-volunteer beautification effort continues. And thanks for all the waves and honks.

Hope to see you there soon.

*We hope you've enjoyed the flowers and greenery resulting from the weekly trash pickup. If you want to help out, and have time to spend with a group of like-minded neighbors, please email Patrick at pbc117@sbcglobal.net.* ■



**Lee Patterson** (left) and **Patrick Cullinane** are ready to pass the torch.

## Earth Day 2025 Photos



**Sallie Olsen** and **Theresa Nelson** sign up volunteers at Frog Park.



District 1 Councilmember, **Zac Unger,** bags trash.



Manila resident **Georges Forsythe** sifts and cleans the children's sandbox.



**Steve Weiss** with his helpers, **Cameron** and **Vivenne,** trim and pick up debris.

# RN Classifieds

List your 36-word message here for only $24 (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 JUNE 2025 issue is: MAY 17, 2025** (available May 3).

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# Rockridge Library
## MAY 2025

### For Everyone
**Pup-Up Event:** Dog Adoptions Saturday May 31, 11-1pm. Meet adorable, adoptable dogs from Oakland Animal Services. Learn about responsible pet ownership and resources for pet lovers.

**Rockridge Library Summer Marigold Contest:** Try your hand at growing the tallest marigold in Rockridge this summer. We provide the seedlings/supplies at sign-up. Sign Ups will be Saturday, May 24 to Saturday, May 31. Stay tuned for more information.

**Summer Programs for All Ages:** Begins Saturday, May 24. Sign up online or come by the branch to pick up your reading & activity log and our Calendar of Events for June & July.

### For Children
**Storytime Thursdays and Saturdays;** 10:30am.

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

**Read to a Dog:** Thursdays; 4pm every week.

**Tinker Tuesdays:** Join us for various crafts for children every Tuesday; 4pm. All ages welcome, children under 8 must bring a grown-up.

**Origami for All:** Every third Tuesday; 3:30pm; 5/20. All ages welcome.

### Special Events for Children of All Ages:
**ASL Storytelling with Ms. Kei-Che;** Saturday, 5/10, 10:30am.

**Laya Arts Dance of India;** Sat., 5/17, 10:30am

**Folktales from Sudan with Hana Baba;** Tuesday, 5/27, 6:30pm.

### For Teens, Ages 12 to 18
**DIY Ice Cream:** Wednesday 5/28: 3-4pm. Come celebrate the beginning of summer with us by learning how to make DIY ice cream.

**Teen Advisory Board:** Second Wednesdays, 4/9; 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. Summer volunteers wanted! Teens ages 13-17 are invited to apply at: www.oaklandlibrary.org/teen-volunteers.

### For Adults
**Adult Crafting Series:** Meditative Drawing: Tuesday 5/6, 6-7:30pm. Relax into your creativity as we explore various forms of meditative drawing. All materials are provided.

**Adult Crafting Series:** Shashiko Stitching Basics: Tuesday 5/20, 6-7:30pm. Discover the beauty and simplicity of this ancient art form used for decoration and mending. Please bring an item of cloth you would like to work on.

**Oakland Public Library Spring Gardening Workshops:** Understanding and Using Medicinal Teas: Tuesday, 5/13, 6-7pm. Learn about the properties and uses of a variety of medicinal teas from a local herbalist. Make and take home your own tea blend. Prepare and share tea together with the class. Workshop with Ma del Carmen Cortez.

**Spring 2025 Meet the Author Series:** Wednesday, 5/14, **Kazu Haga** will discuss book, *Fierce Vulnerability: Healing from Trauma, Emerging through Collapse*. Books will be available for signing from A Great Good Place for Books.

**Rockridge Gardening Series:** Integrated Pest Management: Saturday 5/17, 2-3pm. The U.C. Master Gardener Program of Alameda County will teach us eco friendly pest management.

**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, 3:30-4:30. Please call 510-597-5017 for more info and to get a copy of the book. May's book is *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store*, by **James McBride.**

**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.

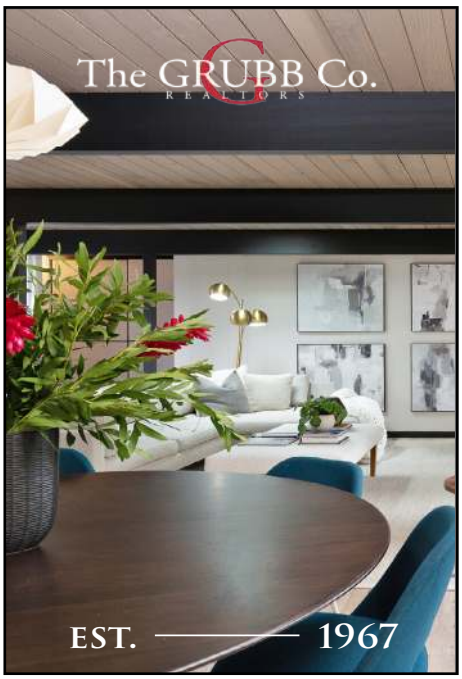
**1-on-1 Technology Help:** every Saturday, 10am-12pm. Come with your devices and technology questions and our volunteer tech guru will help you get sorted. First come first served.

**Holiday Closures:**
**Memorial Day — Monday, May 26**

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

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

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