The Rockridge News

rockridge.org

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

"RO" illustration by Laura Serra

The Young Flare of the Wardrobe Project Flea Market

by Lydia Belusa-Niesen, 18 years old

Once a month, instead of cars occupying the longest row of the Rockridge BART parking lot, there are hundreds of racks selling anything from '60s style clothing to pink Labubus. Homemade tags adorn every style of clothing from JNCO jeans to hippie flares, while vendors keep close watch on their stalls, shouting out prices.

"It started with one row of stands and now they have porta potties," said Nathan Gale, the manager at the nearby RIC Bar and Arcade. "Even my 23-year-old girlfriend feels old at the vintage market."

Flea Market, continued page 7



Marketgoers pick through the racks of one of 55 vendors who operate at the market. | photo by Liam Pierce

RCPC Election 2026

Elections for the Board of the Rockridge Community Planning Council

Statements of candidacy:

Prospective candidates must send an email to Election@Rockridge.org by Mar. 4, 2026 at 5pm.

Candidate and voter eligibility:

Anyone 18 years or older whose principal residence is within RCPC boundaries (see Rockridge.org)

When is the voting?

Voting will be held on Thursday, April 23, during RCPC's Annual Meeting and on Saturday, April 25.

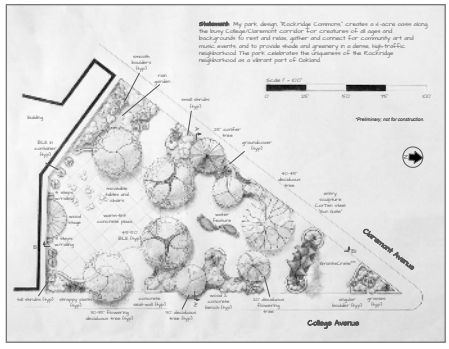
Interested in serving your neighborhood? Six seats are up for election this April.

Reimagining the Vacant Triangular Lot at Claremont & College

by Casey Farmer | Laurie Williams, Andrew Krulewitz and David Garcia

Ask any Rockridge resident about the vacant triangle-shaped lot at College and Claremont and nearly all will have a strong opinion about what they hope it becomes. Through RCPC's Community Vision Plan process, we heard countless frustrations about how the site was "a dead spot" on the Avenue, or that amidst a shortage of housing or a dearth of open space, why couldn't this site be activated.

For background, this site consists of two distinct legal parcels, owned by two different property owners who live in the Bay Area, and neither is currently for sale. A Shell gas station formerly operated at the site until 2013 and Shell cleaned up the property to commercial standards under the county's oversight. Alameda County Department of Environmental Health will require the residual contamination to be cleaned up or mitigated in compliance with residential standards if it will be put to residential use. The site is listed on Oakland's housing element as a priority site.



Landscape designer Kat Gritt's interpretation of how the triangle could be used—one of many creative people who see the site as an enticing blank slate.

The following are some creative solutions from Rockridge residents about what could go there:

Triangle, continued page 8

INSIDE: ● Rockridge News Turns 40, page 3

Rockridge Community Vision Plan

Let's envision the future of Rockridge - together!

5 Focus Areas:
Mobility, Open Space, Housing, Sustainability, & Commercial/Cultural

Here are 2 ways to share your thoughts:

Feb 16-28
Draft Plan Available for Public Review
(Submit comments online anytime)

Feb 24 at 7pm (Zoom)
RCPC Meeting to Present the Draft

See links & information here:

or at www.rockridge.org/cvp

Logo Update

Thanks to all of you who provided comments and designs for the Rockridge logo. We received mixed feedback: some did not want to see changes to the craftsman logo and others would like to see it evolve to include additional Rockridge elements (e.g., retail, BART, urban housing, our peacock!).

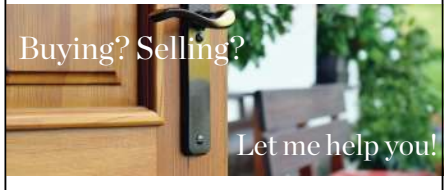
Given the impending release of the Community Vision Plan, we've decided to put changes to the logo on hold and revisit the conversation in the future. ●

NCPC Meeting
Feb. 12, 7 p.m.

Join the bi-monthly meeting of the Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council, Thursday, Feb. 12 at 7 p.m. in the Rockridge Library conference room. We hope to have brief presentations by the Community Resource Officers, and discussion of local crime and safety issues. Our February speaker will be the new Captain for OPD Area 2, Acting Captain David Burke. To join on Zoom, find the link at: rockridgencpc.com. ●



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The Rockridge News

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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.

Letters to the Editor
Letters are limited to 350 words and published at the editor's discretion in the order received. Send letters to: **editor@rockridge.org**. Please include name, email and street of residence. Deadline is the 11th of each month for the upcoming newsletter.

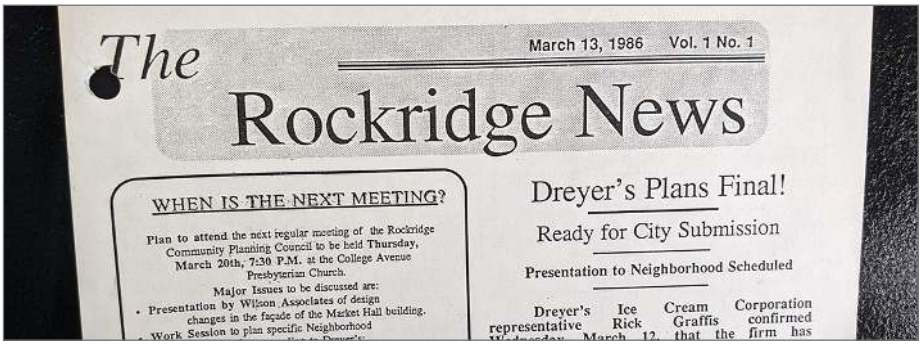
All submissions accepted for publication are subject to editing for clarity and brevity. The Rockridge News reserves the right to refuse any articles, letters or advertisements.

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 RCPC. ●

Tell a Tale to Toast The Rockridge News Turning 40!

We'd love to hear from you about your memories of the paper.


The Rockridge News

March 13, 1986 Vol. 1 No. 1

WHEN IS THE NEXT MEETING?

Plan to attend the next regular meeting of the Rockridge Community Planning Council to be held Thursday, March 20th, 7:30 P.M. at the College Avenue Presbyterian Church.

Major Issues to be discussed are:

- Presentation by Wilson Associates of design changes in the façade of the Market Hall building.
- Work Session to plan specific Neighborhood

Dreyer's Plans Final!

Ready for City Submission

Presentation to Neighborhood Scheduled

Dreyer's representative Ice Rick Cream Graffis that the Corporation firm has

The first issue of The Rockridge News was printed in March 1986 as a xerox copy.

Do you have a coffee group that reads The Rockridge News together? Have you been distributing it since you were a kid? Have any articles stuck with you over time?

What do you like most about it? Do you know who delivers it to your doorstep? Has it ever helped you understand the neighborhood in a new way? What can it do that bigger papers can't?

Have any particular articles caused meaningful change in the neighborhood and if so, how? If you had to describe The Rockridge News to someone who just moved to the neighborhood, what would you tell them?

Please write to editor@rockridge.org about what the paper has meant to you over the years and we might include it in the next issue! ●

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RNews CORRECTIONS

●"SNAP Food Drive" (Jan. '26)
One very generous donor was inadvertently omitted:
Annette Floystrup donated $7,000 to honor her father, putting totals at an even more impressive $21,126.

●"Haunted RIC" (Jan. '26)
Sarah-Jean Bartky's name was misspelled once as "Sarah-Jane."

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Become a Rockridge News Distributor!

College Avenue is Calling You! College Avenue is beckoning a Rockridgian to distribute The Rockridge News to businesses and residences along the commercial thoroughfare while enjoying window shopping and chatting with business owners along the way (not required, of course).

Once a month a bundle of papers will be delivered to your doorstep and they are yours to pass out on one segment of College Avenue (see below) as soon as possible.

AVAILABLE ROUTE

CAv1:

Businesses/apartments along College from Claremont to BART. Stack at Zachary's. (50 papers)

To volunteer:

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

Neighbors and RCPC Call for Claremont Country Club to Reduce Pesticide Use

by Casey Farmer, RCPC Chair and Morgan Molvig



photo by Casey Farmer

Despite neighbors' requests, the club did not provide advanced notice of this spraying.

Rockridge neighbors near the Claremont Country Club are alarmed about a recent neurological study that found that people living within 6 miles of a golf course face a significantly higher risk of developing Parkinson's disease. So they're taking action.

The study, published in the May 2025 edition of the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA), identified airborne pesticide drift and contaminated dust—not just drinking water—as likely exposure pathways for nearby residents. Morgan Molvig, a mother of a young toddler and resident of nearby Belgrave Place, came across the article and shared it with neighbors close to the golf course—which include many young families, several schools and daycares—to see if others were interested in learning more.

"It's jarring and concerning to realize we've been living somewhere that's potentially exposing us to chemicals that will make ourselves or our kiddo or our dog sick," Molvig said.

Molvig sent the study to neighbors—including a nearby epidemiologist and mother of two, Dr. Sarah Raifman—and the response was immediate.

"When there is evidence of risk and serious impacts on the community and reasonable alternatives, we have a responsibility to act," Dr. Raifman said. "Taking precautionary steps now can reduce exposure and protect public health, while the scientific community continues to refine our understanding of what constitutes a safe distance from pesticide-treated golf courses."

What started as a single inquiry quickly grew into a small neighborhood coalition focused on understanding potential risks of pesticide exposure and exploring constructive solutions.

Neighbors reviewed pesticide use reports, which golf courses are required to publish under California law. They found that Claremont Country Club routinely applies several chemicals that public health agencies associate with potential health risks, including:

Chlorothalonil, a fungicide classified by the EPA as a likely human carcinogen and linked to kidney and respiratory toxicity; 2,4-D and dicamba, herbicides known to cause endocrine disruption and developmental effects, with documented cases of drift affecting nearby vegetation and leading to human exposure; and Triclopyr ester (Turflon), a synthetic auxin herbicide associated with reproductive and neurological impacts in animal studies.

While these materials are legally registered for turf management, health agencies caution that repeated, low-level exposure—especially for pregnant women and children—may contribute cumulatively to negative health impacts.

Dr. Raifman connected the group with Beyond Pesticides, a nonprofit headquartered in Washington, D.C.that works with allies to protect public health and the environment from toxic pesticides.

"The goal is not to chase a single 'safe' distance from pesticide treated turf, but to systematically phase out hazardous pesticides and synthetic fertilizers," Rika Gopinath, a policy manager for Beyond Pesticides, said. "Communities have successfully worked with golf courses to adopt organic practices, proving that protecting public health and maintaining excellent course conditions are entirely compatible goals."

With guidance from Beyond Pesticides and input from neighbors, the group wrote and delivered a letter to the Claremont's management and board explaining the concerns and requests for changes to their use of pesticides. In the letter, the group requested a meeting to discuss the Claremont Country Club's turf-management program and consideration of more organic or reduced-chemical alternatives. They also asked the club to post signs along the perimeter fencing 72 hours before and after pesticide applications to allow neighbors to take simple, voluntary precautions such as: keeping windows closed or limiting outdoor play during these times.

RCPC Chair Casey Farmer is a mom of young children and resident on Carlton Street, adjacent to the golf course and brought the issue to the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) board, who voted to join the advocacy effort and co-signed the letter.

The manager of the Claremont Country Club agreed to meet with RCPC and the group of neighbors, though not until Mar. 10. We will report back to the community via the Rockridge News. ●

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Backyard Brawl: Western Bluebirds vs. Eastern Fox Squirrels

by Collin Pine


illustration by Laura Serra

I'm just going to come out and say it: Rockridge's eastern fox squirrels are bad neighbors. These introduced terrors tear up my raised beds, take bites out of my tomatoes and uproot my potted plants. Now, if a native western gray squirrel showed up on my block, I'd be ecstatic, but unfortunately native squirrel sightings are few and far between in Oakland. Instead, we're left with these poorly mannered east-coast transplants. Or are we?

Last winter, my husband and I were excited when a pair of western bluebirds showed up in our yard. We'd hung a nest box on our fence post the previous year, but unlike most of the local real estate, it sat vacant for longer than we would have wanted.

Come February 2025, the bluebirds hadn't yet made an offer, but they were making a point to scare off other potential buyers. We enticed them with dried mealworms and they chased away the chickadees, the titmice and any other potential cavity nester. Then, when the two finally decided to make the leap and begin to build their nest, something unexpectedly fantastic happened: they turned on the squirrels.

That's right: from March through June, these little heat-seeking missiles cleared our lot of squirrels, giving our annuals and seedlings a chance to grow. Watching the bluebirds dive-bomb squirrels became a highlight of my days. We were sad to see the smaller songbirds driven out of our airspace, but the tradeoffs were more than worth it. Not only were the squirrels gone, but we got to witness the persistence of bluebird parenthood firsthand: the incessant feeding, regular bird baths, fecal sac removal (Google it). It was a particularly lovely spring.

In recent weeks, two bluebirds have already started to visit our backyard, and although we can't be certain if it's the same pair as last year, their arrival is a good reminder that now is the time to hang up nesting boxes. Doing so is easy: a quick search will tell you which box to get and where to hang it.

We're crossing our fingers for more baby bluebirds—and a temporary respite from the squirrels—in 2026. If you are too, lean into the BIMBY (Bluebirds In My Backyard) mindset and get a box up as soon as you can.●

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Love Letters to the Rockridge Community

MLK Day Cleanup



Thanks to (left-to-right) organizer Natalie Musick and volunteers Julian Brown and Edward Karst for weeding the spot on Monroe and Kales avenues—along the golf course—that neighbors planted some years back. ●

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Sweet Justice for Blocked Driveways

Written and illustrated by Amina Tongun, Junior at Oakland Tech



Instead of calling a tow truck, one Rockridge resident has found a sweeter solution to blocked driveways: candy.

For the last eight years, Phillip Rubin hasn't called the police or a towing company when a car blocks his driveway. Instead, he leaves a kind, slightly mischievous note on the windshield, directing the car's owner to the See's Candies on College Avenue. The message asks for a one-pound box of chocolate, "Nuts & Chews" being his preference, as a polite and less expensive alternative to a towing fee.

"I did it originally sort of as a joke," Rubin said. "I didn't think anyone would actually bring us any candy—but it worked almost immediately."

The joke has transformed into a small tradition, shaped more by coincidence and location than anything unique about his driveway. Rubin estimates he's collected about 7 pounds of chocolate, including one See's delivery that came with a bouquet of flowers. At one point, a neighbor lent Rubin his car while another blocked his driveway. When he returned hours later, he and his wife were met with a box of Sees and flowers waiting on his porch from the apologetic driver.

Another time, Rubin left a note on a woman's car only to come back later to find the note gone, but the car unmoved. He considered calling the police until the driver returned with a box of candy. She apologized, they hugged and she drove off from his neighborhood that reportedly had many free parking spaces at the time.

What began as a personal solution has now grown into kind of a fad. Other neighbors and friends in his small community, known as "Chabot Village," have taken on writing similar notes, turning a common neighborhood frustration into a shared custom.

Rubin admits his first reaction to driveway blockers was negative, but has since made a complete 180. "I kind of look forward to it," he said. "Quite often now, I'm excited to see somebody blocking it."

The story first took form as a letter to the editor to The Rockridge News, written about an anonymous "neighbor" in the third person in hopes of spreading the neighborly love, before Rubin later admitted he was the subject himself.

For Rubin, the lesson is simple: "Sometimes a curse is a blessing," he said. And if someone blocks the driveway tomorrow?

"We definitely prefer Nuts and Chews," he said. "No question about that." ●

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Flea Market, continued from cover

Every third Saturday of the month at Rockridge BART, you might happen upon one of the newest, trendiest events in Oakland: the Wardrobe Project Flea pop-up market. While there is some generational diversity among the crowd, its distinctly hip vibe is an injection of youth in a neighborhood not always known for it.

Since its founding just over a year ago, the market's program has grown beyond the many stacked clothing stalls, now including a variety of stands filled with plants, art and even political booths—mutual aid for Palestine, the Oakland youth-oriented organization People's Programs and more. But beyond its size and diverse offerings, the market has developed its own culture—shaped by small, self-made operators and their clientele—one that perfectly encapsulates the variety of Oakland.

In November 2024, Talia Brown and Jon Jon Prejean—a couple who met in a thrift store and now own the small brick-and-mortar shop "The Wardrobe Project" on College Avenue—expanded their offerings with "The Wardrobe Project Flea," a flea market that they felt Rockridge needed. While Oakland has no scarcity of events like this (there are three flea markets that happen every weekend in downtown Oakland alone), "every vendor we've picked is intentional," said Talia, adding that they make sure to pattern out vendors for diversity. "A lot of what we're looking for is to really uplift the Oakland community."

The aisles between vendors are like a catwalk caught in a time machine. A woman in her early 20s looks like she stepped out of Y2K, licking a lollipop in her grey calf boots that come up over her skinny black jeans. A millennial man walks past her wearing Air Jordans, dark blue baggy jeans and a cardigan that might have belonged to Mister Rogers at some point. There are flashes of soccer jerseys—Brazil and Argentina seem like favorites of market-goers. Colorful ribbons, beautiful barrets and handsome headbands add extra flair to dyed hair and curls. Postures are up for the social-media conscious, ready for a snap at any moment.

About midway up the market, Marian Bradley-Kohr, 62, was with her mother, 90, and her daughter Camille, 25, who was trying on a pink leather jacket that fit like a glove.

"My mom's a master knitter; she's probably crocheted 1,000 hats," Bradley-Kohr said, noting how excited her mother was to be amidst the textiles. Bradley-Kohr took a moment to eye the new addition to her daughter's outfit. "It's very cool; I think you should have it."

A vendor named Demo Salazar, 42—a musician from Detroit and a veteran vendor who sold jackets from the '80s with new patches sewn on—recounted that he had sold something to someone who was 80 years old and another thing to a 14-year-old, all in the span of just a couple hours. Immediately next to him was Shahla Prouty, 26, for whom it was her first time vending anything.

Brown and Prejean have witnessed a "dramatically increased" demand to expand the market size over the last year and change, but came to the conclusion that it would lower the impact of the market for each vendor. They make sure they rotate at least 10% of vendors each event to give everybody a fair shot.

On the south side of the market, people cheer and dance as someone sings their heart out to Mariah Carey on a microphone, while 100 yards over on the north end, a man in a green hat drives rhythms into a well-loved drum set under the overpass—everything between them is jam packed with vendors. The smell of incense and carnitas wafts from restaurants and food trucks encamped nearby.

"This is the kinda central area that fills the gap for a lot of people," Brown said, noting that Rockridge's nature as a transit hub helps attract a diverse crowd. "It's been really delightful."

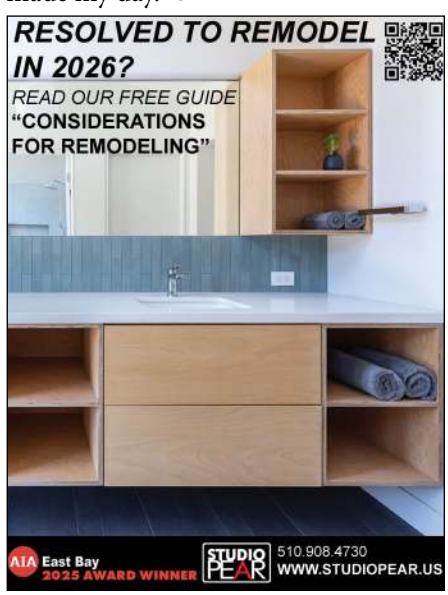
The market is evolving and changing each time it unfolds under the BART tracks. New to the market in January was live music from "The Booth" by Studio X, hosted by Tizzy and sounds by Zuko Ali. As part of the new music there was also an open mic that over a dozen people rocked in a diversity of genres.

The Wardrobe Project Flea will be taking a break in February but will continue again on Mar. 21. The market operates rain or shine—taking advantage of Highway 24 and BART's shelter—always available to shoppers of every vintage.

"It's a really fun energy in this neighborhood," said Hannah Gilson, a millennial vendor who's been with the market since day one and has worked closely with Brown for many years. "A 12-year-old told me I was pretty and it made my day." ●



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THE BEER GARDEN

by Andrew Krulewitz

THE TOWN TRIANGLE

by Laurie Williams

Our chance to create something wonderful at Claremont and College may be short-lived, so I'm hoping we take a moment to explore creating a small but transformative Rockridge town triangle. A leafy space adjacent to the busy intersection could encourage serendipitous meetings and community gatherings. It could also host a small community center and food kiosk. As we anticipate an inevitable increase in density, preserving public open space can help mitigate the harms and save the soul of our neighborhood.

Currently, Rockridge has limited public space. We have some sidewalk cafes, parklets for restaurants, and the small plaza between Safeway and Philz coffee, which is popular but a little spartan and lacking in greenery. We have Lake Temescal and Frog Park, which is adjacent to and underneath the freeway. We are a wealthy community that is, relatively speaking, poor in public parks. Urban ecologists suggest that with increased housing density we also need increased green oases. Maybe we can create this at the triangle?

Consider a small building at the rear of the triangle property, near adjacent structures, that could house a ground-level community center and food-and-drinks kiosk, with most of the property preserved as a public park. Above the community center, one, two or three stories of apartments could provide affordable housing for Oakland teachers, who could provide a watchful eye on the public space. A building that covers approximately 3,000 of the available 17,400 square feet (less than 20%) would still leave substantial room for a green, relaxing park.

Imagine a pocket park, similar to those in Brooklyn: fenced and closed at night, a welcoming intersection of people by day. Benches and chess tables, a small playground and raised flower beds (plus perhaps something else you suggest), are among the possibilities that could make this a place for neighbors to chat and enjoy outdoor time together.

The community center could host a volunteer hub connecting us with opportunities to tutor teens, read to children and elders, garden, paint and find other ways to provide TLC to areas of Oakland in need of helping hands. It could also be a place to sing, make art, collaborate and help those new to the neighborhood feel at home.

Money and ownership are the primary obstacles. Developers of the proposed 200-unit elder housing development at 6230 Claremont Ave., might get a waiver, but currently fail to meet the requirement for on-site open space. Maybe this failure can create an opportunity? Perhaps the developers could choose to invest in acquiring and transforming the triangle (currently privately owned by others) to meet open-space requirements and create a valuable neighborhood (and marketing) asset. The developer has agreed to consider this and saw potential for the triangle to serve as a staging area during construction. Current owners of the triangle property could seek a stake in the new elder housing in exchange for their property. I'm hoping we can organize to gather the support that could make this dream a reality.

Contact williams.zabel@gmail.com to be invited to a meeting on next steps and a way to help make the triangle a beautiful gathering place for generations to come. ●

Last summer I started wondering what could be done, quickly, to prevent the vacant triangle from remaining fallow. Ideally, it would be something that benefits residents and local businesses alike, incentivizes the landowner, generates tax revenue for the city and strengthens our sense of community. As a young parent with two energetic kids, the answer was obvious: a family-friendly beer garden.

After getting some enthusiastic feedback from friends and neighbors, I took the idea to an RCPC Community Vision Plan session, where I mentioned it to another Rockridge resident who happened to know the landowners. He told them about the idea and their response was: "As long as you don't pave the lot, we're open to proposals." That was all that I needed to begin exploring how it might be possible to activate the site quickly for use prior to long-term development.

First, the Alameda County Environmental Health Department pointed me to similar properties that had been repurposed, including a pop-up beer garden in the Laurel that is also located on an old gas station. With ACEHD's help, a comparative soil analysis showed that our local lot is overall less impacted than the Laurel site, alleviating a major concern.

Next, the City of Oakland planning department kindly explained that even my temporary shipping container taproom idea would incur costly permits, so they suggested special event permits as a more practical alternative.

City of Oakland special event permits allow any one organization to schedule up to 10 three-day events in a year. A pop-up community beer garden run from a tap truck—with picnic tables, benches, planter boxes and kids' play space—could operate every other weekend from May through September.



Unfortunately, even with just the bare minimum site improvements, the math doesn't work. But, if we're upgrading the space anyway, why not maximize its use for many different types of events under the same special permit structure, thus accelerating the payback of the initial investment?

That's where you come in: What else would you want to see hosted at the corner of College and Claremont? Summer movie nights, makers markets and concerts are all ideas that have already been suggested. The plan is to form a non-profit (or partner with an existing one) to lead site improvements and manage the beer garden.This entity would act as an anchor tenant and make the site available to other community groups to sponsor their own events.

Learn more, get involved and stay up to date at: rockridgecommons.org. ●



The barren, vacant triangle can and should be turned into new homes. While the site is not without quirks and challenges, it is more than large enough to support new development. With some creative design and ambition, the triangle could be transformed into four to six story homes for professionals, families and others who would contribute to our community's vitality. The ground floor would become coveted retail frontage with the potential for outdoor space vthat would activate the long dormant corner.

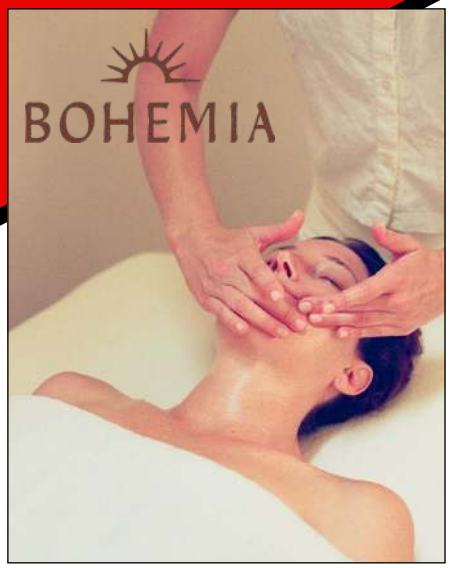
The need for remediation and the site's peculiar shape should not be cause for concern. Countless gas stations have been cleaned up and reused for new homes throughout California, and the triangle shape could inspire an architect to design a more aesthetically interesting building with curved edges and an interior courtyard. At 17,400 square feet, the site has plenty of space for multifamily buildings, many of which are routinely built on just 10,000 square feet or less. The location is the exact kind of place where we should advocate for housing: along major bus routes and walking distance to BART, which minimizes the need for unnecessary and expensive parking (though some parking would likely be provided onsite, underground).

Another reason the triangle should become homes: leaders have paved the way for residential development at this exact site. The city lists the two parcels on the triangle as "housing opportunity sites" in its housing element. This designation is essentially the city's way of saying, "we really want these parcels to become homes."

New state laws would help make the project financially feasible in exchange for including affordable homes on site. A project here is now also eligible for exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act, which would help get the project built faster and at lower risk. But perhaps most important, I believe the residents of Rockridge are ready to welcome more neighbors through increased housing. The lot is particularly well suited for new neighbors in a taller building, given that it would not abut any residential property.

Rockridge is one of the most affluent communities in Oakland. Yet Rockridge has only constructed 0.8% of its housing stock between 2020 and 2024, compared to the rest of the city, which saw a substantial increase in home development during the same time period—particularly around downtown. The disparity between homebuilding here and Oakland writ large is a cause for concern, especially as Oakland has a goal of building over 26,000 new homes by 2031.

Our neighborhood should be doing more to take on our fair share of homebuilding, not just because the city needs as much as housing as it can get to meet its goals, but because it's the right thing to do to ensure that people who can't afford to buy a home in our community have as many options as possible to live here. ●



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"Hey, uh, Rockridge... *blushes*...

by Jody Colley
Rockridge District Association

This Valentine's Day, let College Avenue be your cupid—your Cyrano de Bergerac—as it sets the mood with cozy boutiques, indie bookstores and thoughtful gift shops. Rockridge has something personal and unique for your valentine; afterward, settle into one of the neighborhood's beloved cafes or restaurants. Whether it's handmade pasta, intimate wine bars or decadent desserts—share a meal that feels warm, unhurried and genuinely connected to the community.

Supporting local businesses this Valentine's Day isn't just about what you buy or eat; it's about showing love to your sweetheart and your community at the same time. Explore our gift guide to sample what Rockridge has to offer. For more gifting and pampering inspiration, as well as upcoming events, visit:

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Big Dipper Beeswax Candles

Designed for moments worth slowing down, each long-burning, pure beeswax pillar brings a soft, romantic glow to the room. Whether styled as a dining table centerpiece or flickering quietly in the living room, these candles add warmth and elegance.

Re-Up Refills, 6025 College Ave.



Blue Sapphire Heart Ring

Surprise your loved one with this beautiful 18 karat yellow royal gold ring designed by Michael Endlich, featuring his signature redwood bark texture. The heart-shaped blue Sapphire is flanked by wings accented with diamonds in a finger size 7.25. Resizing within one ring size is complimentary with purchase.

Pavé Fine Jewelry Design, 5496 College Ave.



Leonidas 9-piece Heart Valentine's Tin

This red heart-shaped tin holds nine pieces of assorted Leonidas Belgian Chocolates. Beautiful and delicious, and tied with a lovely satin bow, this box makes a wonderful Valentine's Day gift for those who fancy a variety of milk and dark chocolate delights.

Love + Chocolate, 6309 College Ave.

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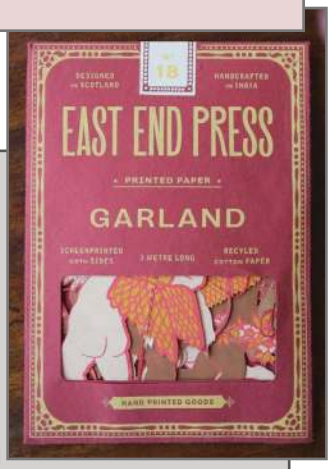
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Nathan&Co, 5636 College Ave.



Valentine Garland

Sixteen playful cupids soar across this festive garland, each ready to stir up a little romance with a well-aimed arrow. Screen printed by hand in rich, cheerful tones, this piece brings a touch of whimsy to Valentine's Day celebrations. Sewn along strong cotton thread, this garland is long enough to hang across mantels, windows or walls.

Maison d'Etre, 5640 College Ave.



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Atomic Garden, 5453 College Ave.

Romantic Rockridge Restaurant Recs

"We spent our honeymoon in Italy and it's nice to speak Italian with the staff at Belotti. We love all their pastas, the antipasto platter and their tiramisu is amazing."
— Christine Garofoli

"My favorite is À Côté for the cozy atmosphere, menu meant for sharing, great bar selection and the pommes frîtes (best in the East Bay)."
— Monte McClain

"People overlook how wonderful a good brunch spot can be for a date—you can eat well then have the whole day ahead of you to go out and enjoy. Kitchen Story is perfect and gives all the vibes plus delicious food. Whether or not it's a date or just a friend hang, it's is my go to. I love their outdoor seating and their lemon ricotta pancakes are a must."
— Candi Martinez Carthen

"My husband and I will always have a soft spot for À Côté. We had our wedding reception dinner on the back patio, so every time we go, it reminds us of the day we were married. It doesn't get more romantic than that."
— Devan Meneses

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Historic College Point Building Sheds its Scaffolding to Reveal Modern Update



by Liam Pierce / *College Point in the '30s next to a photo of current day*

You might've walked by the scaffolding that, up until recently, covered the Southeastern gateway to College Avenue, and known that underneath it were the businesses im Moment Kaffee, Future Ink Tattoo, Powerform, AdF Studios, Green Copy and Rae Bar Aesthetics.

But you might not've known that the building was built in the 1920s. Well that'll be even harder to decipher now that the building has finally unveiled the results of major exterior repairs and upgrades to its facade, which includes arched awnings that echo the original architecture and a plaque at the College and Broadway intersection identifying all of the businesses it contains.

The triangular building, around when it was built, used to welcome people who were Orinda-bound, via what was called the "Broadway Tunnel" at the time.

The College side of the building, lower in elevation, was primarily used as basements up until 1979, when new owners decided to open them up as their own businesses. The building also used to house a path-breaking bookstore called "A Woman's Place." ●

Bike Ride for a Reason: Support Oakland & Alameda Public Schools, April 25



Join the 18th Annual Ride for a Reason! What began in 2009 with four parents biking from Oakland Tech to the State Capitol has grown into a community ride that has raised over $2 million for East Bay public schools.

Funds support library books, sports and science equipment, after-school programs and critical staff such as counselors, librarians and reading specialists—for schools where fundraising opportunities are often limited. Beneficiary schools include several Rockridge-area schools, such as Emerson Elementary, Oakland Tech and Oakland International High.

Choose a fully supported 45-, 68- or 110-mile ride to Sacramento (shorter rides begin with a bus/train from Oakland Tech). Enjoy a post-ride meal and a powerful day of community impact. ●

Learn more, register or volunteer at r4rschools.org
Questions? Contact Nora Vargas-Dye at R4RSchools1@gmail.com

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February is awareness month for Heart Health, Library Lovers, Random Acts of Kindness, Emotional Health, Children's Mental Health, Love Your Pet



Happy Valentine's Day!

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COMPASS

Dogs of Rockridge

illustration by Laura Serra





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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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Thank you for January's excellent article "Solving the Dangerous Intersection of College and Claremont".

I cross that intersection several times each week. I see parents with baby strollers, shoppers with bags of groceries, Bart-bound travelers with luggage, seniors with mobility issues, and other vulnerable pedestrians who struggle to cross the busy intersection safely.

A scramble would greatly increase pedestrian safety. I usually cross on my bicycle. However, if there were a pedestrian scramble there, I'd happily walk across instead.

Scrambles are hardly a novel experiment. Closer than Tokyo's Shibuya Crossing, I've seen pedestrian scrambles work well in Washington DC and Toronto. I understand that there are even some in San Francisco.

A scramble could be a benefit for merchants as well. Studies have shown that shoppers who arrive on foot spend more per month than shoppers who arrive in their cars.

To test out a scramble at College and Claremont, we could employ methods from tactical urbanism such as temporary restriping and signaling. Let's make Rockridge safer and more welcoming!

Rachel Hollowgrass
Dana Street

Dear Editor,

I am writing regarding the new senior living property proposed on Claremont Ave., which follows California laws to fit in an impressive 203 units.

I was born and raised in Rockridge. Right after college, I moved back to Oakland and lived in an apartment in an older Chinatown building at a market-rate price I could afford, a result, I suspect, of the substantial amount of newer housing built in that area. Even in an older building I was a beneficiary of newly built "luxury" apartments.

The simple fact is, I am worried that my grandpa, who is 91 and lives in a Richmond condo, and my parents, who are in their 60s and live in Rockridge, will not be able to live out their last years in a place that fits their needs. My grandpa already downsized from a house, but a time will come when he will need to sell his car and be able to get groceries on foot and take a short bus ride to the doctor. Living near my parents would be a huge plus for him. My parents will eventually need to downsize, too, and would not want to leave the neighborhood. Oakland is sorely lacking in retiree-appropriate housing in its walkable areas and that makes me nervous.

Others, many associated with the group Rockridge Neighbors for Sensible Housing, may email you with concerns about traffic, especially on Florio St. The fact is, seniors drive less than anyone except children and benefit perhaps even more from living within walking distance of shops and amenities. My grandpa, for instance, is not going to move into a dedicated senior facility until he can no longer safely drive anywhere. Bringing up automobile access in the context of this project amounts to a distraction.

This project is a step in the right direction (though much more is needed) and will help alleviate accelerating costs of living that affect even well-off Rockridge residents. I urge the RCPC to support it in its current form.

Ross Parish

Rockridge Library

For Children (Red = February-only events)

Black History Month Craft w/ Ase Arts: Piece-by-Piece - Celebrating African American Contemporary Arts Join us on Tuesday, Feb. 17, at 4:30 p.m. for this hands-on workshop introducing children ages 3 to 13 to influential artists.

Storytime: Thursdays and Saturdays; 10:30 a.m.

Chess Club: Wednesdays; 4 p.m. All ages & skill-levels welcome.

Read to a Dog: Thursdays; 4 p.m. Practice reading aloud with Gladys the dog.

Craft Programs: MoChA at the Library! Thursday, Feb. 19, 3:30 p.m. Monthly art workshops for children & families led by teachers from the Museum of Children's Art. For ages 5 to15 & caregivers. Build creativity, social-emotional & academic skills through art.

Making Stories Club: Thursday, Feb. 5; 3:30 p.m. Monthly workshop to write, illustrate & tell stories. Make books, zines, stories, comics, kamishibai or plays! Join youth writers & illustrators. For ages 8 to 12

For Teens ages 12 – 18

Card Making: Wednesday, Feb. 11; 2-3 p.m. All supplies provided. For teens only! Presented by the Teen Advisory Board with support by the Friends of the Rockridge Library.

Teen Advisory Board: Second Wednesdays, Feb. 11; 4-5 p.m. 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

Adult Crafting Series: Tuesday, Feb. 10, 6-7:30 p.m. – Sashiko Stitching. Back by popular demand! Carla is coming back to teach us new techniques in this popular form of mending and decorative stitching. Drop ins welcome.

Meet the Author—Shonda Scott: Wednesday, Feb. 18, 6:30-7:45 p.m. Entrepreneur and civic leader, Shonda Scott will discuss her book: "Give Me a Year 12 New Things to Embrace Change and Live Your Best Life." Copies of the book will be sold on site by A Great Good Place for Books. This event is sponsored by the Friends of the Rockridge Library.

Ask Your Area Home Experts: Every 2nd Friday, 12:00 a.m. – 2 p.m. 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 p.m. Please call 510-597-5017 for more info and to get a copy of the book. February's book is "Wandering Stars," by Tommy Orange.

Needlework Circle: every Thursday, 1-3 p.m. Bring yarn and fiber arts projects to Rockridge Library. Build community, share your passion, learn & have fun!

1-on-1 Technology Help: every Saturday, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1-3 p.m., Tuesdays 5:30-7:30 p.m. and Wednesdays 5:30-7:30 p.m. Come with your devices and technology questions and our volunteer tech guru will help you get sorted. Signup recommended. ●

Rockridge Library Hours:

Holiday Closure: President's Day, Feb. 16

Mon., Thurs., & Sat.: 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Tues. & Weds.: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Fri.: 12 noon to 5:30 p.m.
See calendar for events: oaklandlibrary.org/events

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Deadline for MARCH News: Feb. 19, 2026 (available Mar. 7.)

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