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

Chivalry Isn't Dead; It's Right Down College Avenue

by Madeleine Turner,
Senior at Oakland Tech

In a not-so-distant kingdom, tucked deep inside the Rockridge BART parking lot, lies a land where swords are wielded, battles are waged, armor is worn and principality is everything.

Started 60 years ago in Rockridge's own backyard, the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) is an international organization of royal knights that encourages participants to study history and live it—by way of battle, art and honor. SCA has grown to 20 kingdoms across North America, Europe, Asia (Japan, Thailand), South Africa and Oceania, with 30,000 paying members and an estimated 60,000 participants.

Anachronism, continued page 8



Sparring SCA swordsmen Ryan "Heath" Hoffman and Bobby Hrousis | photo by James Sinclair

2026 RCPC Annual Meeting

Presenting the:

Rockridge Community Vision Plan (CVP)

at the Rockridge Library

Thursday, April 23

7 pm:

Refreshments & meet your neighbors

7:30 pm:

RCPC presentation of the CVP & sign-up for Action Groups

RSVP here → *or* *Rockridge.org/cvp*

Bungalows to Mid-Rise: Senate Bill 79 and Rockridge's New Skyline?

by Tom Lollini, FAIA, RCPC Land Use Committee Chair

Starting July 1, 2026, a new state law (SB 79) requires cities to allow taller, denser apartment buildings near major transit hubs like Rockridge BART. Because Rockridge cannot avoid these changes, Oakland City Council is updating local land-use plans, aiming to moderate the potential impact on residential neighborhoods by shifting new, denser residential development to existing commercial mixed-use corridors.

SB 79's approach is known as Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), which concentrates housing and jobs around transit hubs, increasing transit use, reducing traffic and emissions, and creating diverse, cohesive neighborhoods. The law also mandates that 7-13% of units are affordable for projects with more than 10 units, protects historic resources and requires prevailing wages for construction workers on structures taller than 85 feet.

Oakland has eight BART Stations and 38 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stops that are affected. The law allows housing to be built on any property within a half mile of a transit stop. For heavy rail stations, like Rockridge BART, height limits are increased to 95 feet (nine stories) within 200 feet of the station entrance, to 75 feet (seven stories) within ¼ mile and to 65 feet (six stories) within ½ mile.

SB 79, continued page 4

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For Earth Day: Join the Frog Park Cleanup!

by Theresa Nelson, Frog Park co-founder



Rockridge neighbors and former City Councilmember Treva Reid (right) at clean up

This year for Earth Day, do something good for Rockridge: volunteer at the Frog Park Earth Day Cleanup on **Saturday, April 18 from 9 a.m. to noon**. As part of this national community-based workday to take care of our parks and wild places, the Friends of the Rockridge-Temescal Greenbelt (FROG) is sponsoring this cleanup at our neighborhood park. This clean-up is family-friendly, for all ages and FROG will supply tools and gloves, as well as snacks and coffee from generous Rockridge and Temescal merchants. Please bring your own water bottle (to reduce plastic waste).

Together we'll weed, trim, sweep, sift sand, rake leaves and eucalyptus, and spruce up the play structures. We'll also clean up the dog park and basketball court. Students needing service hours for school can receive signatures on their forms. Sign in and be deployed by the Big Frog play structure.

Please join us to make this corner of the earth a bit brighter on Earth Day. ●

Oakland Tech Basketball's Deep Run

by Liam Pierce

Both the boys and girls Oakland Tech basketball teams made deep runs into their season before bowing out, each coming one win short of State championship appearances.

On March 10, the Tech girls' team—No. 4 in Division II CIF NorCal—played two-time defending State champions Sierra Pacific (No. 2) in the hosts' hometown of Hanford. As regulation time ticked down, Tech pulled off a triumphant five points to level the game at 53-53, sending them to overtime. The two teams exchanged leads, but the Sierra Pacific Golden Bears had a 9-0 run that helped them pull off a 66-62 win over the Bulldogs.

Sierra Pacific later went on to win State with a decisive victory over St. Joseph of Santa Maria at 56-47. The Tech girls team finished the season with a record of 21-11, including a 12-game winning streak after a 9-10 start.

Tech's No. 6 ranked boys team made a similar run, playing No. 1 San Joaquin Memorial in their own Division II CIF NorCal finals on the same day as the girls. Despite finishing the first quarter 13-13, San Joaquin came back with a punishing 18-0 run against the visiting Bulldogs. San Joaquin finished with a 30-point victory at 74-44.

The boys team ended their season ranked No. 45 in California across all divisions and the girls team finished at No. 53, per MaxPreps—impressive feats for a school that doesn't have a big enough student population to play in Division I. ●

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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 **200 words** & 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.* ●

Kitchen Tour: Seeking Volunteers

by Star Lightner, RCPC Vice Chair



Some of the kitchens that were toured in 2024's event | photos by Benedicte Rodet (left and center) and Sky Lanigan (right)

Hello Rockridge! While it's still a ways off, we are starting to plan the biennial 2026 Rockridge Kitchen Tour, which will likely happen the first or second weekend of October.

Right now, we'd love two things from you: First, we're looking for kitchens to be on the tour. As with our extremely successful 2024 tour, we are looking for a diversity of kitchens in terms of style, cost and function. We want to see your style—no aesthetic restrictions! Cost is immaterial here: many kitchens are very expensive to remodel, but maybe you did it on a shoestring.

There can even be diversity of function: maybe your kitchen is particularly small, or you have decided to focus on energy efficiency. Moreover, it doesn't have to be all about the faucets and knobs; it can also be about structure. Maybe you moved walls, repurposed spaces or changed the flow.

In short, there is no template and no specific type of kitchen we are looking for. Just as Rockridge is not a static and unchanging place, neither is the Kitchen Tour. Many people were excited to see ADUs on several previous tours, and the RCPC Board is enthusiastic about continuing to highlight them. Thus, if you have a new ADU that you would like to have on the tour, please let us know.

We are also interested in your feedback: what are some things you would like to see (or not?) on the Kitchen Tour? The Kitchen Tour is RCPC's only fundraiser and its main source of funding, and we would like to hear from you about how we can make it even better, whatever that means to you.

Second, and just as important, we need VOLUNTEERS! The Kitchen Tour has a lot of moving parts and volunteers make all of them work and run smoothly. To begin with, we need someone with InDesign experience who can create the tour brochure, which consists of photos and descriptions of each house or ADU and ads from our sponsors. We have a template and many past brochures as examples. We also need a photographer to photograph the kitchens and ADUs. More volunteer opportunities will be highlighted in the May Rockridge News but please let us know if you are interested in either of these two important roles.

Please email kitchentour@rockridge.org with kitchen or ADU candidates, feedback on the Kitchen Tour or to volunteer. Thanks! ●

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SB 79, continued from cover

The law's height and density targets apply the same standards, regardless of current density or land use. The impact perimeter of Rockridge BART's zoning includes a substantial portion of our lower density post-1910 residential neighborhood. *(See map)*

Oakland City Council is seeking exclusions for 44 of its 46 transit hub sites. These include "low resource" neighborhoods (such as those along the International Boulevard BRT corridor) and Specific Plan Areas (such as downtown), where current zoning allows at least 50% of the minimum densities required under the new law. The City says "alternative plans" for those sites will be developed by 2032 in the Housing Element Update.

Rockridge, MacArthur and Ashby BART station impact areas are all considered "high resource" areas and therefore are not eligible for these exclusions. Hence, the city council strategy of using the ongoing General Plan Update process to moderate the new law's impact on traditional residential neighborhoods in these transit hub zones. These plans are expected to be complete in 2027.

(See D1 Councilmember Zac Unger's Statement on SB 79 at Rockridge.org)

The change in Rockridge's residential density is perhaps the most impactful aspect of this law, as seen in the case study below:

Typical 4,000 square foot lot in a ½ mile radius of BART with mixed residential zoning:

	Prior Zoning	2023 Zoning	SB 79—distance from BART	
			½ - ¼ mile	¼ mile
Height	35 feet	45 feet	65 feet	75 feet
# of Units	2-3 units	2-5 units	9 units	11 units

Though the financial feasibility of investing in small-lot development may be questionable in the current construction cost and financing market, SB 79 opens avenues for smaller investors to get in the game of creating new housing "as-of-right," and yielding transformative change over time, a primary intention of the law.

Given the City's strategic decision, the process of updating the General Plan Land Use Element—currently underway—is the most critical path to shift some of this potentially dramatic change in residential areas into the mixed-use commercial corridors and large underutilized properties.

Why do we need so much housing? Since the mid-70s, California's population has surged by 19 million, yet only 4 to 5 million new housing units have been built, leading to a chronic shortage of housing in the State and skyrocketing prices. During that same period, Rockridge home prices increased from an inflation-adjusted $300,000 to over $1.5 million.

While intense population growth fuels demand for housing, supply has been constrained by rising land, labor and material costs, lengthy planning approval processes and a scarcity of low-interest funding. A veteran of the Oakland Planning Commission recently said that, while clearing out his archives, he threw away thousands of units of "approved" housing projects that were never built.

SB 79 aims to address the planning approval process, but it will likely fail to create abundant and affordable housing without robust public tools like land acquisition, tax exemptions and concerted efforts to secure low-interest financing—whether public or private. Europe has many affordable housing development models that have succeeded for generations.

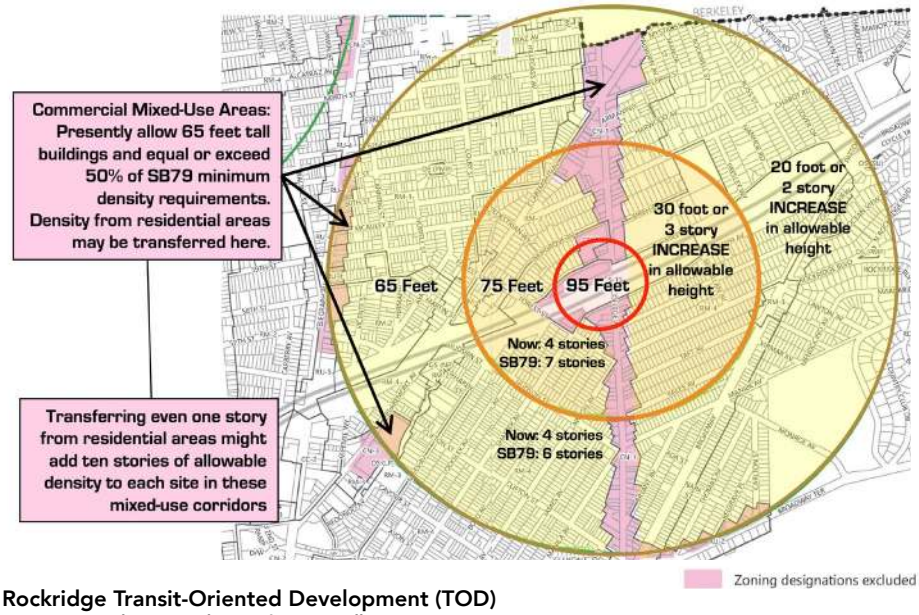
Regarding local housing capacity, the 2023 Oakland Housing Element and Zoning Ordinance Update has already identified sites in or proximate to Rockridge for 2,000 to 3,000 new units—a 20% to 30% population increase. Examples include the mixed used corridors along Broadway, College, Claremont and Telegraph avenues, as well as vacant underutilized

SB 79, continued next page

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Rockridge BART Station SB 79 Impact Area: Building Height



Rockridge Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
SB 79 Site Exclusion Analysis — by Tom Lollini
Sites excluded based on zoning under gov. code §65912.161(b)(1)(A) (50% density and residential floor area ratio)

parcels like the California College of the Arts site and The Ridge at Pleasant Valley and Broadway. It also assumes growth in accessory dwelling units and other increases in residential neighborhood densities as a result of modest height increases.

However, SB 79 treats housing solely as a commodity, rather than placemaking. It ignores the context, character and quality of neighborhoods and the need for additional services, infrastructure and recreation space that intensified development might demand by focusing principally on the mobility systems that serve us.

The Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) will soon be publishing the Community Vision Plan (CVP) with a presentation scheduled at RCPC's Annual Meeting on April 23 (see cover for details). The CVP will provide a blueprint for advocacy in working with the City on multiple planning issues, and it is our hope that this will engage our neighbors and move us to an approach more responsive to the context of our neighborhood, building a stronger community in the process.

The General Plan Land Use & Transportation Element for Oakland's General Plan framework comment period is Mar. 9 to April 23. ●

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Farewell Message from the RCPC Chair

by Casey Farmer, RCPC Chair

Selfie from Rockridge News volunteer celebration



I joined the RCPC board seven years ago because I have a passion for community building, and I cherish our Rockridge neighborhood. Alongside my fellow board members, I've planted trees, coordinated public art projects, directed traffic of costumed families at the Halloween Parade, informed the community through our publication, The Rockridge News, and engaged countless residents in discussions about guiding the neighborhood's growth.

As I reflect on my service, I'd like to highlight ways we have made meaningful impact and how RCPC has evolved as a neighborhood organization. RCPC continues to focus on transportation and quality of life issues, but has refined its land use advocacy to also include supporting new housing (in addition to our focus on promoting ground floor retail along College Avenue). Advocating for housing is a change from RCPC's founding which occurred soon after the construction of Highway 24 and BART. RCPC originally focused on retaining the "character" of Rockridge, including craftsman homes, small businesses and a pedestrian-friendly character. Forty years later, with a vast housing crisis now confronting us, RCPC's advocacy efforts today must reflect new and modified priorities. (Per recent community feedback through the Community Vision Plan, Rockridge residents largely support the creation of new housing.)

Envisioning the Future of Rockridge

RCPC launched our Community Vision Plan with months of collecting feedback and engagement meetings focused on the topics of housing, mobility, open space, community activities and sustainability and resilience. The process cultivated hundreds of ideas about how to improve the neighborhood. This was a huge lift for an all-volunteer board. We are pleased to present the final draft on Thursday, **April 23 at 7pm at the library**. Please join us for refreshments with your neighbors, followed by a short presentation and opportunity to learn more about how YOU can participate in implementing these Community Vision Plan initiatives—including improving emergency preparedness throughout the neighborhood, creating more open space to increase seating and greenery, and advocating for housing on key opportunity sites such as the DMV parking lot. (More on the Community Vision Plan Town Hall on the cover.)

Welcoming New Neighbors

In 2020, when Oakland purchased the CCA dorm (5276 Broadway) for the purposes of transitional housing, RCPC launched a fundraiser to provide the new residents with supplies for their units. Our goal was twofold. First, to activate the Rockridge neighborhood to welcome these new neighbors to our community; the residents of Clifton Hall are low-income seniors and families transitioning out of homelessness, which is a very small demographic in our high-resource neighborhood. Second, to send a clear message that we support affordable housing here. The Rockridge community responded with remarkable generosity, contributing thousands of dollars and affirming a shared commitment to inclusion across all income levels.

Information Sharing

After new legislation streamlined the process for building Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), RCPC recognized that many residents were interested in building these types of units on their properties—but didn't know where to start. We held a Town Hall with experts and later hosted an "ADUs and Brews" mixer at The Golden Squirrel, where neighbors could connect with architects and design teams.

Advocacy to the City

In 2023, RCPC advocated for more housing in Rockridge through the City's Housing Element process. We flagged housing opportunity sites, urged upzoning on College Avenue and articulated our desire for more affordable housing.

Thank you to the RCPC Board members I've had the pleasure of leading with. RCPC is currently led by a dynamic team who will soon be joined by four fantastic new members.

See you around the neighborhood,
Casey Farmer ●



Turnt Up for Turnip Cakes at Soi 4

by Galen Wilson



photo courtesy of Soi 4 Bangkok Eatery

The East Asian food scene in Oakland is hot (literally and figuratively) with stalwarts like Champa Garden and newer sister restaurants Daughter Thai and Farmhouse Kitchen, to name a few. If you were to jump in the DeLorean and turn the clock back 25 years, you would find what some would call the anchor of quality for Thai food in Oakland, Soi 4 Bangkok Eatery.

In 2001, a Chronicle review opened with "Soi 4 is going to turn the East Bay's idea of Thai food on its head," and since then it has been doing consistently great Thai food out of its stylish digs at 5421 College Ave.

I bring up the article because the one dish it panned happens to be one of my favorites and a Best Bite in our neighborhood: the Kanom Pak Gard, more famously known by its stage name, Turnip Cakes. Maybe they improved it after the article or maybe I have different taste than the reviewer, but I love these turnip cakes unabashedly.

While more often associated with dim sum, Soi 4's rendition of turnip cakes blends flavors that can be hard to pin down. If you don't know what you are eating, you might think it is tofu or even fish.

The turnip cakes' pièce de résistance is their texture, which comes from a process of steaming and then pan-frying them to achieve a warm and soft inside and crispy outside.

Soi 4 does many other great dishes, some traditional to americanized Thai food and some unique fusion takes. (I've recently rekindled a fling with their coconut braised pork shoulder, which never disappoints.) As I've noted in past columns of this venerable publication, I feel lucky to live within walking distance of so many great restaurants. But I often fall into the trap of obsessing over new places (at the risk of firing off a hot take that is spicier than a bird's eye chili: Oken may be a top 5 restaurant in the whole Bay Area)—and sometimes forget to appreciate the places that have been putting out consistently great food for a quarter-century.

Did I mention Soi 4 has a great bar with excellent cocktails to complement their menu? Cheers to you, Soi 4. ●







Anachronism, continued from cover

Whilst partying like t'was 1399, the first SCA gathering took place in Berkeley in 1966—a tournament of knight fights at someone's house, purely for fun. But the hunger for battle spread like wildfire and the event became so popular that SCA became a recurring affair.

In the '70s, they moved their operations to the patch of dirt that would later become the Rockridge BART parking lot. Today, this small slice of the past has grown into a branching network of subdivisions (the Rockridge BART fights belong to the Province of the Mists) and a complex administrative hierarchy that is, above all, mindful of insurance.

"When it comes to hitting people with sticks I kinda know what I'm doing," said Sandor a Naposparti, or Robert Crabbs—if you prefer to call him by his legal, 'mundane name' as SCA calls it. "Some people like being hurt."

Every Thursday evening in Rockridge, from 7–10 p.m., medieval-style sword fighting brings LARPers together. LARPing (or live action role-playing) is where one brings their own fictional character to life through acting, typically in a group or game setting. However, for these knights, this is no game.

With rattan swords and ruling lords, they are a full-fledged monarchy—complete with Kings, Queens, Dukes and Duchesses. The crowning of a new king and queen happens every six months, and the path to the crown is through some good old fashioned combat.



Duke Sigifrith (Ben Hitz) warming up 'gainst his Rivian | photo by James Sinclair

Draped in leather and metal, the knights' weekly battles all add up to tournaments and wars. Wars run anywhere from four days to two weeks, with fighters often traveling hours cross-kingdom to participate and in some cases, on other continents entirely.

"Before you pick a particular armor, look around and do some research," said Dr. Robert "of Woodsende" Holland, noting how there's a lot to choose from the Middle Ages' 1,000 year span. Robert of Woodsende started attending some of the first SCA events in 1977 at age 18. "We all become amateur historians."

Robert of Woodsende recalled one knight who was so strict to his time period that he lived each day as if it were exactly 800 years in the past. Robert of Woodsende said the man was distraught in 1999, when it meant—eight centuries before a Y2K scare—that big changes were afoot, including Richard I dying and all of the fashions changing.

SCA participants are endowed with awards for anything from swordfighting to sewing, painting, music, cooking and mead brewing. Sometimes there are feasts—cooked with medieval methods and ingredients—without any fighting at all. Above all, SCA emphasizes honor: doing good for the goodness of your kingdom and yourself, as opposed to glory.

"Are you kind; are you courteous; are you helpful?" said Buffy, mundanely: Bruce Bufkin. "Do you stand up and say something when someone is being contrary or mean or bullied?"

The knights also strive for inclusivity.

"I'm a proud Pride parent," said Bren Keely (Jenny Pico-Moy), who started SCA at age 52 after kidney surgery. "It's important to me that the things I'm involved in are open to people."

And inclusivity builds community. Despite members of SCA being worldwide, one would believe they grew up under the same turret.

Yseult (Deborah St. James) and Bren met through SCA and have a unique mentor and cadet relationship. Yseult, 73, specializes in combat, clothing and painting. Ornamented on her shield is an illustration of a dragon to represent herself. Robert of Woodsende has a nod on Yseult's shield through a merged family crest—they met through SCA and are married. And in a corner she painted her cadet's dragonfly, a symbol Bren chose because of the insect's frequent appearances in her life.

"I wanted to learn from a teacher who understood women's body mechanics, so I approached Yseult," said Bren, noting that Yseult was reluctant at first. "But I kept nibbling away like a dragonfly; I wouldn't go away."

For anyone interested, the Province of the Mists has gear and swords for thee to borrow, and is extremely kind towards those who are looking for battle. However, if you are a man-at-arms, you should probably bring your own codpiece.

On a recent Thursday in March, a young knight named Heath (Ryan Hoffman) from Livermore spent 20 minutes dressing himself in heavy armor—a different division of fighting than Bren and Yseult's lighter rapier class. He showed off his self-made scale armor and described how, in 2020, he meticulously shaped his regular speaking voice to have an Irish lilt. That was well before joining SCA only 13 months ago.

"I am a new fighter—younger age than most—but the intergenerational aspect of it feels very appropriate," Heath said. "What, with history being passed on." ●



Robert of Woodsende (Dr. Robert Holland) bestowing advice 'pon youngling Bobby Hrousis | photo by James Sinclair











photos by Carol Kasparek | Layout by Stephen Coles

Congratulations, Volunteers; Celebrating 40 Years

by Carol Kasparek

The first weekend of every month, the stories of your neighbors and neighborhood arrive at your door. The Rockridge News—with its crisp columns and full color photos—is delivered to every residence and retail establishment by a legion of people. Eighty-five of those intrepid folks were honored on March 21, with a lunch and festivities at the majestic Masonic Lodge on College Avenue. Some over 80 years old, some under 12—month after month, they all complete their assigned route as part of an inspired system developed by Don Kinkead at the paper's inception.

RCPC Board Chair Casey Farmer and Business Manager Susan Montauk led the program as the faces of volunteers appeared on a screen behind them.

"Your dedication and consideration make my job a joy and guarantee that this wonderful tradition will prevail," declared Montauk. Farmer noted that the volunteers are key to preserving the precious resource of local news.

Guests gathered before the program in the dining room, greeted friends and met many of their fellow Rockridge volunteers for the first time. They shared tales of the neighborhood and their Rockridge News jobs while enjoying a scrumptious lunch from Market Hall Catering. Oakland City Council member Zac Unger dropped by and greeted guests, expressing his respect for this amazing group in his district. He even helped with the food service and clean-up!

Thanks again to all who help to distribute The Rockridge News: the bundlers who prepare the newsletters for delivery; the Marshals and District Captains who deliver the boxes and bundles to the Block Captains; those Block Captains who place a newsletter on the doorstep of every house on their routes. Thanks also to the talented writers and editors who so ably tell our stories and the advertisers who help to fund all of our efforts. We are indeed fortunate to have so many people invested in carrying on this 40-year-old tradition. ●

Local Rockridge Market Summary

Mid March snapshot showed 9 active, 9 pending and 13 sold detached single family homes. Average sold price was $2.3m, Median price was $2.15m, Average days on market was 12. There are plenty of buyers out despite a small temporary bump in rates.

Feel free to contact me for a valuation of your home!

April is awareness month for Diversity, Autism, Earth, Child Nutrition, Keep America Beautiful, Hope, Volunteerism, Wildlife





Happy Earth Day!

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Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council

Next NCPC Meeting: Thurs. April 9, | 7 p.m.

We hope to have brief presentations by local OPD officers and a discussion of local crime and safety issues.

Rockridge Library upstairs conference room and on Zoom: rockridgencpc.com

Rockridge Community Planning Council 2025 Financial Statement

Income Statement

Income	
Contributions	$ 1,034.00
Rockridge News	48,432.35
Interest	6.85
Total Income	**$ 49,473.30**

Expenses

Rockridge News	$ 48,488.73
Contractors	2,137.50
Insurance, taxes	2,172.00
Misc. Admin	3,208.26
Events & Programs	7,461.56
Total Expenses	**$ 63,468.05**
Net Receipts	**$(13,994.75)**

Balance Sheet

Assets: savings/ checking/CD accounts	$ 92,797.43
Equity & Liabilities	
Reserve Funds	$ 52,297.43
Equity	54,494.75
Net Income	**$(13,994.75)**
Net Equity & Liabilities	**$ 92,797.43**



2026 RCPC Election Update

by Robbie Tasker

A quick update on the ongoing Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) election. Seen below are our six candidates for the 2026-2028 term. With six openings on the board and the application deadline passed, these individuals have won their election uncontested.

You will find their candidate statements below, and next issue you will find bios for each of our new board members. Congrats to those joining us for the first time: Natalie Musick, Brian Stromquist, Sam Fishman, Garrick Monaghan Beyer and to our returning board members Tom Lollini and Kristen Belt!

I would also like to thank those who are stepping down from the RCPC board after multiple years of service: Zack Walton, Eli Kaplan, Muhammad Alameldin, Kimberly Suczynski Smith and especially our board chair Casey Farmer. ●

Natalie Musick



I'm an environmental planner, former OUSD public school teacher and current Rockridge renter who is committed to bringing an enthusiastic energy to the RCPC board. The beautifully curated open spaces such as Frog Park, intentionally designed walkways and strong community of Rockridge are some of my favorite parts of living in the area, and I look forward to maintaining these assets even while pushing for more affordable housing as a member of the board. I currently support the community through my involvement with Podridge, one of Rockridge's community activism groups, and by participating in the library's bingo reading events. In my free time, I can be found running around Lake Temescal, going down to Monterey for a weekend with Oaktown Divers or facepainting. ●

Sam Fishman

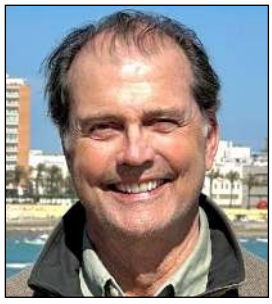


I grew up in the 94618 zip code, spent 13 years outside the Bay working in international development and now work as a sustainability policy expert at SPUR. I live on Coronado Avenue with my soon-to-be wife Terri, a neuroscience professor at Mills / Northeastern. As renters, we know firsthand how hard it is to access a neighborhood as wonderful as Rockridge—and how life-changing it is when you can.

As a board member, I would bring two priorities: advocating for new homes and new neighbors so more Bay Area residents can share in what makes Rockridge exceptional and leveraging my sustainability expertise to make Rockridge a hub for green homes—I want to see our neighborhood's homes equipped with heat pumps, solar, batteries and induction stoves—and I believe we can get there faster by working together. ●

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Tom Lollini



I am an architect and urban planner with 30 years of executive leadership in community and university development. Dedicated to creating sustainable, equitable environments, my career highlights include transforming San Francisco's Embarcadero, co-creating student housing at UC Berkeley and leading the development of UC Merced, the world's first Zero-Net Energy campus.

Since retiring in 2018 to launch studiolollini, I have focused on public advocacy and volunteerism. A Rockridge resident for 16 years, I have served on the RCPC board for three years and currently chair the Land Use Committee. In this role, I helped shape the Community Vision Plan and authored articles for The Rockridge News on state housing laws and neighborhood improvements. I am committed to a socially responsible approach to growth, driven by a desire to make cities better places for everyone to live, eat, work and play. ●

Garrick Monaghan Beyer



I have dedicated my career to advocacy, pragmatism and finding opportunities for mutual benefit. As an activist, I ran field operations for environmental and Democratic campaigns from Tampa to San Francisco. As a pragmatist, I left campaign work behind in order to better understand the business of how housing gets built. And as a problem solver, I've championed win-win programs like Teachers Rooted in Oakland to help OUSD teachers live in market rate housing developments.

When my wife and I had our son in 2025, Rockridge's walkable streets, beloved neighborhood shops and restaurants became more important to us than ever before. As he grows up and explores this world, we feel deeply grateful that he has such a welcoming, vibrant and safe community to launch him on his journey. I hope to work with my neighbors to continue cultivating a thriving Rockridge that welcomes new homes and new neighbors. ●

Brian Stromquist



As a dog owner, architect and avid neighborhood explorer, my Rockridge experience is brought to life by quiet pedestrian moments: the water bowls outside College Avenue restaurants, the cut-throughs off Oak Grove, the encyclopedic inventory of succulents that line our stoops and sidewalks.

I deeply appreciate this neighborhood for the richness of its experiences, and as an RCPC board candidate I'm energized by the prospect of both celebrating and enhancing them. In my professional life, I work to create experiences that sit at the intersection of architecture and programming, exploring the power of buildings to shape the visual character of a neighborhood and activate the streets and sidewalks around them. I'll also bring to the board my extensive experience with large-scale stakeholder engagement processes, built on the idea that the best outcomes happen when every neighbor sees themselves reflected in the environment around them. ●

Kristen Belt



As an architect and urban designer, I have dedicated my career to creating sustainable urban places, with a focus on affordable housing. For 25 years, I have worked closely with nonprofit developers, city officials and neighborhood communities to advance solutions that address our urgent housing needs while providing meaningful community benefits. During my first term on the board, I was able to draw on my professional experience to help lead the development of the Community Vision Plan (CVP), now in its final stages. I was deeply inspired by the strong community participation throughout the process and the shared commitment to strengthening the vitality of our neighborhood. I am seeking a second term to support the implementation of the CVP, including helping to organize the board internally to effectively advance the plan's key initiatives. I first moved to Rockridge in 2001 while attending grad school and returned a few years later to raise my children in this beautiful, walkable neighborhood. It would be an honor to continue serving our community through the RCPC Board. ●

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Painted Leopard's Salvadoran Café

by Sarah Rich & Alexis Madrigal

College Avenue has some of the best coffee shops in the world—there is something for every kind of coffee lover. The latest addition to the strip is a new player in coffee, Painted Leopard, which specializes in coffee from El Salvador. They run a pop-up inside our community space, Local Economy, and we wanted to share their story with the community.

When cousins Daniel Ortiz and Claudia Campos were little kids growing up in the Bay Area, their parents would take them back to their grandmother's hometown in El Salvador. There, in the foothills of a mountain called Cerro Cacahuatique, they'd travel to the little town of Osicala. This is El Salvador's mountainous coffee region, and the cousins shared a love for the place.

As they grew up, they went their separate ways. Ortiz became an industrial designer working for places like IDEO and Heath Ceramics. Campos went to UC Berkeley and got into public health, working for Alameda County. But like a lot of people, the pandemic gave them a moment to consider what they really wanted to do: start a coffee company featuring beautiful coffees from around Osicala.

Beginning in November 2021, they started to think about the brand they could build. They were deeply inspired



photo by Octavio Vargas

by the artwork of Fernando Llort, with its complex whimsy and symbolism, which permeates the aesthetics of their memories of El Salvador. Ortiz started working with different people to bring Painted Leopard's vibe into being.

By November 2023, they found two more team members. Through a lawyer friend, they met Octavio Vargas, who was running a coffee shop in Fresno. He imported and roasted coffee from Mexico, alongside Vero Pineda, his partner and the lead barista at the shop. With that core team, they launched in November 2023 with a booth at the San Francisco Coffee Festival, where they were a hit. They roasted and still roast out of Oakland, at a spot called 444 Collaborative, east of the lake.

What's special about Salvadoran coffee from their region? It's both the terroir and the processing that's done around Osicala.

"There are very distinct tropical notes in our coffees that come from the processing that the farm is equipped to do," Campos said. "As well as a result of the volcanic soils in which the coffee grows in the mountain range in El Salvador."

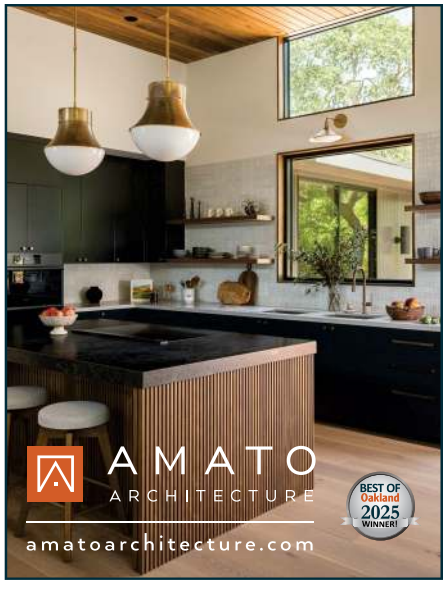
The Painted Leopard name started to gain some recognition and they secured their first long-term pop-up at the Presidio Tunnel Tops, a gorgeous new park by the Golden Gate Bridge, in June 2024. Then, on their second day there, they were invited to pop up in a warehouse in Berkeley.

"This guy walked by and he asked, 'Do you all have a coffee shop?'" Campos remembered. "Little did he know that it was our second pop-up ever. We did not know what we were doing."

They set up shop there, just off San Pablo, in August of 2024. They added the Saturday farmers market at the Ferry Building in May of 2025, and then, in July of last year, we contacted them about working with us out of Local Economy.

Since then, they opened up another location at the re-opened RealReal luxury resale shop on Maiden Lane off of Union Square in San Francisco. Painted Leopard are now going through hundreds of pounds of coffee per month as they continue to grow. To support the new big shop, they've reorganized their teams, and now, the only place to get Painted Leopard in the East Bay is right in Rockridge.

If you want to try their incredible pour-over coffee and espresso drinks—plus stand-out agua frescas and hot chocolate—come by Local Economy any time Wednesday to Saturday, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. ●





Dogs (& Cats) 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,

I am dismayed that the Rockridge News chose to publish Craig Segall's letter in the March 2026 edition. Out of all the letters that are received by RN, you chose to publish a letter that included (1) calling neighbors a derogatory name (busybodies), (2) gratuitously invoking the name of Trump as rage-bait, and (3) through the overuse of "scare marks" seeking to make the opinions of fellow Rockridge residents seem less than valid concerns.

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind Mr. Segall and the editor that democracy depends on civil discourse. (Note that the first word is civil.) We need to have respectful, constructive conversations that are focused on understanding differing viewpoints, especially when discussing public matters. We need to listen to other viewpoints, use evidence and facts rather than assumptions, keep our minds open to change, and above, all avoid name-calling and personal attacks.

To that end, I encourage all Rockridge residents to go to the website: 6230claremontseniorhousing.com to learn more. While affordable housing is desirable, Mr. Segall's contention that it is being "demanded" is not correct. Neighbors are requesting a thoughtfully designed building for both current residents and our new neighbors.

Tamara Lohrey, Rockwell Street ●

To whom it may concern,

As a longtime Rockridge resident, I was happy to read about the discussion around possible uses of the College and Claremont Triangle. While many interesting ideas were raised, I would like to propose an additional idea that would benefit our community in many ways: Let's use this space to create a public art venue.

On March 9, 2018, before the chain-link fences were put up, I installed a temporary art piece in that space for the weekend. It was a small version of a piece that I'd built for Burning Man a couple of years before, and it fit the space beautifully. Eleven 30' tall fiberglass towers covered in LEDs were installed that night.

The lights on the towers were designed to respond to people grabbing and pulling on them, and to the voices and laughter it created. People picnicked under the towers and gazed up at the sky. From all over the neighborhood people came out to celebrate the idea of using this space as a place to showcase the ideas and creativity that exist in our community.

It's a blank slate. We have so many unbelievably talented artists, makers, builders, and performers here in Rockridge, and this corner could be a place to showcase these talents. I hope that further discussions will include possible uses of this corner for public art that can be created and enjoyed by our dynamic community.

Regards,

Mauricio Bustos, 63rd St. ●









For Children (Red = April-only events)

DIA: Children's Book Day: Malinky Music with Emilia Lopez-Yanez: Thursday, April 16, 10:30 a.m. Joyful bilingual Spanish-English music and movement for ages 0–5. Each child can choose a free book.

90-Second Newbery Film Festival: Saturday, April 18, 12:30 p.m. Come see the best kid-created films that retell Newbery-Award-winning stories, in under 2 minutes each. All ages welcome.

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, April 16, 3:30 p.m. Monthly art workshops for children & families led by teachers from the Museum of Children's Art. For ages 5–15 & caregivers. Build creativity, social-emotional & academic skills through art.

For Teens, ages 12 – 18

Let's Make Smoothies! Wednesday, April 15; 2–3 p.m. Ingredients provided and a smoothie bike machine!

For Adults

Mohka House: Coffee, Tea & Yemeni Culture: Saturday, April 18, 3–4:00 p.m. Coffee, tea and traditional pastries while supplies last.

Adult Crafting Series: Tuesday, April 14, 6–7:30 p.m. Black Out Poetry Art. Using discarded books to create original poetry! Drop-ins welcome.

Meet the Author—Matt Fogelson, "Restrung, Fatherhood in a Different Key:"
Wednesday, April 15, 6:30–7:45 p.m. Local author, Matt Fogelson will be in conversation with Jeff Symonds about his memoir reflecting on fatherhood and coming of age in 1980s New York.

Ask Your Area Home Experts: Every 2nd Friday, noon–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. April's book is The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid.

California Writers' Club 5-Page Critique Group: Every 4th Saturday, 1–5 p.m. Bring 6–8 copies of your work, five pages long, double-spaced, Times New Roman font for review & critique in half-hour sessions.

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.–noon and 1-3 p.m., Tuesdays 5:30–7:30 p.m. and Wednesdays 1–3 p.m.; Come with your devices & technology questions & our volunteer tech guru will help you get sorted. Signup recommended.

Chair Yoga: Monday, April 6, 10:30–11:30 a.m. Learn from certified instructor Bett Bollhoefer, drop-ins welcome. ●

Rockridge Library Hours:

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

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April 16, 2026 (available May 2)

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