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Mayor Schaaf meets for an interview at a favorite College Avenue Café.

Eyes on Rockridge

by Judith Doner Berne

Mayor's Style is 'Rockridge Style'

I must admit I was a little nervous after having lured Libby Schaaf to Rockridge for an interview marking a year after her election as mayor of Oakland.

"Just pretend you're talking to me," advised my daughter Debbie Berne, who lives nearby in north Oakland and knew the mayor back when both were 20-somethings.

Indeed Schaaf, an Oakland native, impressed me as an articulate, in-depth steward of the city's past and a visionary about its future. She was also warm, funny and down-to-earth.

She greeted me with a hug as we sat down at a back table at the Rockridge Café on the Saturday morning after Thanksgiving. Joining us were her aide Michael Hunt and Rockridge News editor

Don Kinhead, whom she had met before.

Schaaf is well-acquainted with Rockridge: "I spend a fair amount of time here. This is my go-to shopping district. I get my hair done at Right Angle." And she frequents Lesley Evers (she was wearing an Evers print dress for the interview) and FIT boutiques for her clothes. "Pretty much my style is Rockridge style," she said.

"I know she likes to support small business," Evers told me when I visited her shop. "All of our designs are manufactured in Oakland. She [Schaaf] wore one of our dresses the day after she won the election."

"I tell her 'you're the face of Oakland,'" FIT owner Joyce Gardner said. According to Gardner, Schaaf first announced she was running for mayor at a Rockridge

► **Mayor Schaaf, page 10**

Special

January Town Hall: Proposed Off-Street Parking Regs

FOLLOW-UP Special Town Hall: How Off-Street Parking Revisions Could Impact Rockridge.

RCPC hosts a special Town Hall, **Thursday, January 21, 7 p. m., featuring Oakland Strategic Planning staffer Neil Gray and a representative from Dan Kalb's office.**

Come join the discussion at the Rockridge Branch Library with your neighbors to

better understand the proposed changes and to provide input directly to the City in a timely manner. The Off-Street Parking revisions will be presented at the Planning Commission's February Zoning Update Committee meeting.

Zoning Update: Off-Street Parking Regulations Could Bring Big Change to Rockridge

Oakland is updating its off-street parking

requirements for private and public new development, its first major overhaul since 1965. The proposed changes could have major effects on both new and existing businesses and residences in Rockridge.

On major commercial corridors such as College or Telegraph Avenue, and in high-density residential areas, implementing specific parking strategies would reduce the

► **Off-Street Parking Changes, page 11**

OUSD Extends Filing Period for Parcel Tax Rebate Seniors, Low-Income Property Taxpayers Eligible for \$120-\$195 Rebates

In an article published in the Oakland Post, Temescal resident Len Rafael noted that Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) parcel tax measures passed in recent years have included property tax rebates for senior and low-income taxpayers that apparently

have not been well publicized. Rafael wrote that Measure G, passed by voters in February 2008, and Measure N, passed in November 2014, allow exemptions and tax rebates for qualifying low-income homeowners, and (in the case of ► **Parcel Tax Rebates, page 14**

Details, page 6
 CHABOT ELEMENTARY

Spring Auction

ONLINE AUCTION
 FEBRUARY 24 THRU MARCH 2

Do You Need RCPC? RCPC Needs You!

by Stuart Flashman, RCPC board member and former chair

A comment that sometimes comes up in conversations I have about RCPC, especially with recently arrived Rockridge residents, is: "RCPC may have done lots of good things in the past, but why should I care about it now?"

It's a good question for all of us who live in Rockridge.

One need only look around Rockridge to see the many things RCPC has helped make happen. Those accomplishments include the Rockridge Branch Library, Frog Park, the Rockridge BART Plaza, the new trees at Claremont Middle School, and the Plaza at the new College Avenue Safeway.

Less obvious but equally important, RCPC has contributed to the thriving retail area along College Avenue and the comfortable, human-scaled residential areas of Rockridge. Yet the question remains whether RCPC is still relevant to Rockridge's future.

It's a characteristic of cities and neighborhoods that they change over time. Sometimes they improve; sometimes they deteriorate. Only museum-like areas such as Colonial Williamsburg stay frozen in time. The question is not whether Rockridge will change in the future, but what kind of changes will happen.

RCPC's role in the past, and hopefully in the future, is to help shape that change in ways that keep Rockridge a place that its residents are comfortable with and can be proud of.

Of course, there is not always consensus about how Rockridge should change. Forty-five years ago, when BART and Highway 24 first came through Rockridge, BART and the city felt it should be a place for high-density

housing and office buildings. The residents disagreed, and thus was born RCPC. Over time, the face of Rockridge has shifted, but controversies continue.

■ Should higher-density housing be built along College Avenue as is happening along Broadway?

■ Should College Avenue continue to be a retail center or are the days of "brick and mortar" retail over, to be replaced by offices designing software?

■ Should Rockridge continue to try to reflect the cultural, ethnic, and economic diversity of Oakland, or should gentrification be allowed to reshape Rockridge into a likely less-diverse, high-income community?

These questions need answers, and RCPC can help find them, but only with *your* help.

RCPC Board Elections

Every year, on a rotating basis, Rockridge residents elect half of the 12-member RCPC board of directors. That election is held in April: now is the time for people to decide to run for the board.

Being an RCPC board member does take some time – probably at least 5-10 hours a month, more if you can spare it – but there's a reward in helping Rockridge residents' voices be heard and listened to by those who make decisions, and in being a part of shaping Rockridge's, and Oakland's, future.

If you're not ready to throw your hat into the ring as an RCPC board candidate, RCPC has committees that can also use volunteers. Land use, transportation, Frog Park, schools, public safety, housing, and local business are all topics that RCPC takes on, and where community members can influence policy.

If you're interested, email us at info@rockridge.org, or drop us a note c/o RCPC, 4123 Broadway, PMB 311, Oakland 94611.

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 Library program details/hours: Calendar, page 15

THE Rockridge News

The Rockridge News, founded in 1986 by Don Kinkead, is published monthly in Oakland and is sponsored by the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC), a nonprofit public benefit organization founded to: preserve and enhance the unique character of the Rockridge neighborhood; promote the health, safety and quality of life of its residents; furnish a forum for community involvement; and provide leadership and representation of neighborhood interests.

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Susan Montauk.....Business Manager
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Contacting The Rockridge News

Are there community issues you'd like to see covered in **The Rockridge News**? • Do you have questions about newsletter distribution? • Want to volunteer to be a **Rockridge News** block captain? • Would you like to write a letter to the Editor?

Contact us at one of the following:

Editor: editor@rockridge.org;
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The Rockridge News,
 4123 Broadway, PMB 311, Oakland, CA 94611

Articles submitted for publication may be e-mailed or mailed to the above addresses. Submissions are limited to 600 words, must include the author's name, phone number, e-mail address, and city or neighborhood of residence, and are subject to editing. Views expressed in articles accepted for publication do not necessarily reflect those of The Rockridge News, its editor, or the board of directors of the Rockridge Community Planning Council. To reprint a Rockridge News article, please contact the editor.

Newsletter Advertising/Deadline

Publication date of the February issue is:

- ☛ February 6, 2016
- ☛ February deadline is January 21.

Advertising rates are \$26/column inch. Six-month pre-pay rate available. For display ads, call Jo Ellis at 653-3210 (after noon), or e-mail joellis1@hotmail.com. RCPC reserves the right to refuse any display or classified ad that it deems inappropriate. (Classified ad contact, page 14.)



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RCPC Land Use Committee

The next Land Use Committee meeting is Wednesday, January 27, 7:30 p.m. at the Rockridge Branch Library. Check rockridge.org for the meeting agenda.

Land Use Update

by Stuart Flashman, RCPC Land Use Committee co-chair

Looking Back, Looking Forward

It seems fitting in this first Rockridge News issue of 2016 to look back on what happened with Rockridge land use in 2015, and what we can expect in 2016. The big news in 2015 was new construction projects. Construction work finished on **Safeway's College Avenue store**, and on the neighboring 10,500 sq. ft. retail building; both opened for business early in the year (although the "point" space in the retail building remains unleased). There were, of course, rough edges on the project, most of which have gradually been ironed out. However, the parking deck's available space counter/display remains problematic, as do

the confusing parking and tow-away signs on the deck. RCPC hopes to prod Safeway to get these last issues resolved in 2016, as well as identify any secondary impact that might require fixing.

Construction also began on the other Safeway project, the rebuild of the **Rockridge Shopping Center** (rechristened by Terramar, its new owner, as "Shops at the Ridge"). Across the street, the **Merrill Gardens senior housing/mixed use project** started construction and is gradually taking shape. There's been some traffic disruption on Broadway, but RCPC has received very few construction complaints (far fewer than for the College Avenue Safeway project). Demolition was also completed for the third large project on the Broadway/Pleasant Valley/51st Street intersection, **Temescal Apartments**. Actual construction on that project may begin this month.

College Avenue had its usual share of

store openings and closings. Perhaps the most notable new opening was **Cole Hardware**, which appears to have been wildly popular. It should be noted that many of its employees live locally and therefore don't contribute to the local traffic and parking problems. The idea of hiring locally may be something RCPC ought to encourage the City to promote – perhaps by way of incentives?

RCPC has been working to bring to the City a zoning ordinance amendment that would cause use permits in the CN-1 commercial zones (including College Avenue) to be extinguished if the use for which the permit was granted has been abandoned or replaced by another. We have gotten buy-in from community and commercial groups in several other CN-1 areas of the city. There will be one more meeting in January to receive feedback before a decision is made on requesting formal action by the city.

In the upcoming year, the biggest item is likely to be the **Nautilus Group's 204 unit residential/33,000 sq.ft. commercial mixed-use project on Telegraph Avenue**

► Land Use Committee, page 13

Report on Special Town Hall Meeting on Secondary Units and Off-Street Parking

by Stuart Flashman and Ronnie Spitzer, RCPC boardmembers

There was a full house of more than 70 people who came to the Rockridge Branch Library the evening of December 9 to hear Oakland city staff explain proposed changes to the city's provisions for adding secondary units and providing off-street parking spaces for new development projects.

Because of the parking demand generated by BART and College Avenue businesses, much of lower Rockridge is already covered

by Oakland's Residential Permit Parking (RPP) program, and anything affecting parking availability is of great interest.

Darin Ranelletti, Deputy Director of Oakland's Planning and Building Department, explained the proposed changes in the requirements for secondary units.

A secondary unit is a small, accessory housing unit that is placed on a lot containing a single-family home. State law requires that each city provide for allowing secondary units. A recent U.C. Berkeley study, "Yes

in My Back Yard," indicated that reducing the zoning requirements for secondary units could help alleviate the current Easy Bay housing shortage. Oakland's Mayor, Libby Schaaf, has made such changes a priority goal for her administration.

The proposed changes include decreasing minimum setbacks from the property line to four feet, decreasing the maximum unit site from 900 to 750 sq.ft. (with the actual allowed size dependent on the size of the main house) and allowing existing structures not meeting setback requirements to be converted to secondary units as long as the zoning nonconformity is not increased. The

► Report: Special Town Hall, page 13



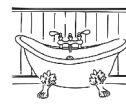
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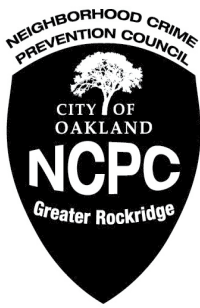


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Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council Year-End News Notes

by Karen Ivy, secretary



The Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) reminds residents that we are changing our meeting frequency. Effective January 1, 2016, we will meet on the

second Thursday of every even-numbered month. Our 2016 dates will be: February 11, April 14, June 9, August 11, October 13, and December 8.

We'll meet as usual in the Rockridge Library upstairs meeting room in February. The April meeting may have to be somewhere else, depending on the library's remodeling schedule. Watch our web site, <http://rockridgencpc.com>, for changes in the meeting site.

NCPC Needs a Treasurer

Our treasurer, Molly Singer, is resigning her post. The NCPC needs a new treasurer. Our bylaws say this about the treasurer's duties:

Treasurer: The treasurer will collect and record money due and received by the organization, and will be custodian of its funds. If necessary, the Treasurer will maintain a bank account associated with the Council.

In practice, this means managing our small bank account, and potentially working with the city of Oakland as it decides how to distribute the funding for NCPCs which was recently re-authorized. CPA certification is not required for this position, but you should feel comfortable being responsible for money and preparing occasional reports.

If you're interested in becoming an NCPC officer (including attending meetings), please email us at chair@rockridgencpc.com.

OPD and NCPCs Honor Anthony Hutzol, Rockridge's Community Resource Officer



Margitta Gardner, left, Chris Jackson, CRO Anthony Hutzol, Capt Darren Allison, Carolyn Burgess, Mary Boergers, and Olga Bolotina. Gardner is NCPC chair for Beat 9X, Piedmont Avenue neighborhood; Burgess is NCPC Crime Prevention Council chair, area 13Y and Public Safety Committee Chair, North Hills Community Association; Boergers is NCPC chair for Beat 14, Adams Point; Bolotina is chief of staff for District 1 Councilmember Dan Kalb.

To honor its members for their achievements and service in 2015, the Oakland Police Department (OPD) held its annual awards ceremony for sworn officers and civilian staff alike in mid-December. Among the many who were recognized in the festivities at the Police Administration Building (PAB), our own Community Resource Officer (CRO) Anthony Hutzol was presented the Area 2 Citizens' Advisory Committee Outstanding Police Officer award. The award, presented by Michael Ubell, chair of the Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (GRNCPC), was given in recognition of CRO Hutzol's outstanding work in reducing crime in police beat 12Y, which encompasses much of Rockridge. CRO Hutzol worked diligently over the past year to reduce the number of auto and home burglaries as well as addressing the quality-of-life issues that emerge in the area from time to time, thus helping improve the safety and comfort of residents and visitors throughout our neighborhood on a daily basis.

CRO Hutzol and members of the Area 2 Advisory Committee are pictured above with. Darren Allison, Captain of Police, Area 2 Commander. Award presenter Ubell was called away from the ceremony before the photograph was taken. Rockridge District Association (RDA) operations manager Chris Jackson nominated CRO Hutzol for the award.



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Winter Greenbelt Cleanup, and Farewell to Another Tree

by *Leonora Sea, DMV Neighbors organizer and RCPC boardmember*

Yay! It's raining, and our parched Greenbelt is soaking up all the lovely water. Sadly, the rains have come too late for at least one of the trees. The alder on the lawn at Cavour and Redondo died last summer from lack of water and damage sustained from a couple of falling eucalyptus branches. Alders are stream-side trees and need plenty of water. In previous summers, there was enough pumped into the creek to sustain this tree through drought conditions. This year, the pump at Hardy Circle was shut off early in the summer as a precaution, in response to a toxic algae bloom in Lake Temescal, primary source of Temescal Creek. Deprived of its usual water supply, the alder, already stressed, died. It will be missed.

Other plants in the Greenbelt are thriving with the rains. Unfortunately, this includes the usual noxious invaders: nutsedge, ivy, Kikuyu grass, broom, and many annual weeds.

To bring some of this stuff under control, the DMV Neighbors Association is sponsoring a work morning this month. We'll concentrate on the section of Temescal Creek between Cavour and Clarke Streets to remove weeds and trash from the creekbed, and cut back overgrown shrubbery.

Join us on Saturday, January 23 between 10 a.m. and noon. Meet at Chuck Fecher's memorial bench on Redondo Avenue, and pick up some hot coffee and pastry to start the morning. Tools provided, or bring your own. Wear footgear that can get wet and muddy. Heavy rain cancels.



PHOTOS/LEONORA SEA

Leaf litter and tree debris clogging the creek. We will clean it out.

Nutsedge in the creek channel: public enemy number 1; a non-native, and depressingly hard to get rid of. Planting California native sedges instead would be nice.

Creek channel seriously in need of weeding and ivy removal to come.



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Ready for El Niño

The city of Oakland is preparing for heavy winter rains and storms in anticipation of this year's El Niño, a weather pattern expected to bring strong storms to the Bay Area this winter. To encourage timely preparation, the City offers several web sites listing steps to take and resources for safety, including the following:

<http://www2.oaklandnet.com/EINino/index.htm#Updates>.

The City's main web site, <http://www2.oaklandnet.com/>, has additional information and the Department of Public Works (DPW) offers a flyer detailing storm preparation steps to take and emergency response resources: <http://www2.oaklandnet.com/w/oak056240>.



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Chabot Elementary School Prepares for Spring Auction

Community Donations Develop Educated Citizens

by Natalie Mehta, Chabot parent and auction co-chair

The Chabot Elementary School community is now planning one of our biggest fundraisers: the Spring Auction. This year, our hard work is focused on meeting (or beating!) our \$160,000 goal, which supports the dynamic enrichment programs that serve nearly 600 Chabot students in Kindergarten through 5th grade. Music, science, art, media, library, gardening, P.E. and Spanish, as well as counseling, intervention, and small group specialists all require funding not provided by OUSD.

How can you help? There are many ways: Can you donate a few hours sharing your specialized talent or trade?; Do you have access to a vacation home that could be donated for a weekend retreat?; Can you knit, sew or do woodworking?; Can you offer to tutor a student, help set up a home office, provide technology support, coach a

kid's soccer skills, or make a fabulous birthday cake? Are you a business owner who can donate a special item or service?

It's the donations, big and small, that make the Chabot Auction special every year. Contact Mari Morrish (auction@chabotelementary.org) to make your donation. **Our auction donation deadline is January 25**, so don't delay. This year's auction will again feature three fabulous raffles: a PUBLIC bike, an Instant Wine Cellar, and a Beer Cave.

■ **The Bike Raffle** winner will be turning heads, riding one of Bay Area-based PUBLIC Bike's European-styled bicycles that have been featured in Vogue, ELLE Decor and Sunset magazines. Picture yourself enjoying your spring and summer on a new cruiser around town.

■ **The Beer Cave** goes beyond Budweiser and includes a wide range of interesting and unique beers from around the

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world - hand-picked from various retailers and beer loving Chabot parents, teachers, and neighbors.

■ **The Instant Wine Cellar** is a Chabot tradition that promises an abundance of bottles for just one valuable winning ticket.

A limited number of tickets for each raffle will be available for purchase from Chabot families in the neighborhood and on campus. Check the website at chabotelementary.org for more details.

The online auction will run from February 24 through March 2, and is open to the entire community. Your donations will help ensure we generate the funds so vital for supplementing the tight budgets of the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). We know that the Rockridge community appreciates the benefit of developing educated citizens; here is your opportunity to help propel these efforts.

Chabot relies on the generosity of its school and local communities to make the auction a success. There are many ways to contribute—time and effort, auction items, and even your enthusiastic bidding during the online auction or purchase of raffle tickets. Please help out any way you can.



◀ **The auctioneer at the 2015 Chabot School Spring Auction declares a winner of the PUBLIC bicycle prize. The popular cycles are on the block again – along with other enticing items – in this year's school fundraising event. Prizes and how to get them, as well as how to help support the auction, are detailed in the article above.**

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Social Security: Maximizing Your Retirement Income

by Rick Prime

To support your retirement, you can maximize what you will receive from Social Security by choosing a strategy that considers your expected health in coming years as well as other choices that affect the timing of starting your benefits, such as, in certain circumstances, electing a spousal benefit – if it is available to you – rather than the benefit based on your own work history.

Social Security applies a formula based on your earnings history to arrive at your monthly benefit, which remains the same — with annual cost-of-living adjustments — from the time you file until you die. The average amount in 2015 was \$16,020 a year. The maximum benefit depends on when you retire (i.e., file for Social Security). Full retirement age (FRA) is 66 or 67 for those born after 1942, but benefits may be claimed as early as age 62.

For example, if you retire at full retirement age in 2015, your maximum benefit would be \$31,956 per year. However, if you retire at age 62 in 2015, your maximum benefit would be \$24,300 per year. If you retire at age 70 in 2015, your maximum benefit would be \$42,012 per year. (Note: All figures are in today's dollars and before tax; the actual benefit would be

adjusted for inflation and would possibly be subject to income tax.)

One of the biggest mistakes people often make is starting Social Security too early. Americans are living longer; many will receive Social Security for 20 or 30 years. For many, it will be their only or highest source of income. A great majority claim Social Security the month after turning 62. What they don't realize is that if they wait until full retirement age, benefits could increase as much as 32 percent. Wait until age 70, and the monthly benefit could increase to as much as 74 percent more than what would have been paid at age 62. Thus, for those with above-average life expectancy, there may be a significant advantage, in total lifetime benefits, in waiting to file until FRA, or even until age 70.

A second mistake is not maximizing strategies for married couples. If married, you may have a choice between taking the higher of your own Social Security or 50 percent of your spouse's. If both are in poor health, an early claiming strategy may make sense. If one or both have a family history of longevity, it may be beneficial to consider delaying taking benefits until age 70.

There is no "one size fits all" Social Security benefit strategy. Some factors to consider, in determining the best marital claiming strategy, are: the couple's ages, health histories, and probable life expectancies; their combined financial need; and their work histories and expected Social Security benefits.

A mistake that divorced persons sometimes make is failing to realize they may have the same claiming strategies as married couples. If you are age 62 or older, were married for at least 10 years, and are

now unmarried, all the strategy scenarios for married couples could very well apply to you and your ex-spouse.

Budget Act May Change Strategy

You may need to take action if you are in one of certain age brackets to preserve benefits that are going away due to changes in the recent Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 enacted by Congress. One change concerns a spouse's right to file and voluntarily suspend a Social Security application. Under the old rules, using a file-and-suspend strategy, one spouse could collect a spousal benefit at FRA, then switch at age 70 to a (now maximized) benefit based on his or her own work record. Under the new rules, this strategy will no longer be available.

For a limited time, some individuals can still take advantage of the old file-and-suspend rules. **If you were born May 1, 1950 or earlier** you should get advice *immediately* to determine how the new Social Security rules affect you and your spouse.

Congress also changed the rules for filing a restricted application, another filing strategy involving spousal benefits. For a limited time, **those born January 1, 1954 or earlier** are still eligible to file a restricted application and should review their options carefully. The file-and-suspend option and restricted application are available if you are in the above age categories for only a few more months.

It is important to understand how to maximize your Social Security benefits in order to get what is rightfully yours.

Rick Prime is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ at Prime Wealth Management, Inc. Sources for average and maximum social security amounts from www.ssa.gov.

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appear with your letter. Letters may be edited for clarity and brevity at the editor's discretion. Views expressed in any letter are the writer's own, and may not necessarily be shared by the editor, or by RCPC.

SECONDARY UNITS: MEETING PROVIDED PERSPECTIVE

EDITOR:

The RCPC Town Hall meeting held December 9 provided some perspective on the city of Oakland's proposed zoning changes to more easily allow secondary units, i.e., "in-law units" to be built or converted from existing structures.

1. Making it easier to allow secondary units is part of Oakland's response to the state's allocation to Oakland of its share of needed housing.

2. It is estimated that over time, this zoning change will result in approximately 500 new housing units citywide, which is perhaps one new "in-law" unit for every third or fourth city block, if that much.

3. A number of people, at least one of whom spoke at the meeting, desire to have one of these small units to help them with living expenses when they retire on a small fixed income, so that they can continue to afford to live in the Rockridge neighborhood, where they have lived for many years.

4. A University of California study of existing secondary units, legal and illegal, in Oakland, Berkeley, El Cerrito and Albany found that 51 percent of them are occupied by family members or others related to the

owners living in the main house.

5. Apparently, there are many basement, attic, and garage conversions, which already exist and which were built without permits. It is expected that many such existing undocumented units shall become documented and brought up to code, which would promote health and safety concerns.

In view of the estimated small number of additional units per block and per neighborhood, and other data, it appears these code amendments will have no significant adverse impact on Rockridge or other Oakland neighborhoods, and should be supported.

— Donatas Januta

NOT ENOUGH TIME IN ADVANCE OF HEARING ON COMPLICATED ISSUE

EDITOR:

I'm dismayed that I learned of these proposals less than three weeks before they will be voted upon by the City Council. In my opinion, these proposals dwarf any other land use issue of the last 20 years regarding their direct effects on every current Rockridge resident.

The city doesn't appear to have a plan about how they would regulate or cap the number of units, coordinate the parking,

nor how these secondary units would be protected from becoming untaxed hotel rooms, Airbnb style. There are already quite a number of Airbnbs in the neighborhood and some of them are entire houses. Building more units devoted to this type of use obviously doesn't help increase housing stock.

Here is the letter I wrote to the Council and city officials after the December 9 meeting at Rockridge Library:

"I urge the City Council to postpone their vote on changing zoning and parking requirements regarding construction of secondary units.

"The City Council needs to slow this down. I think 90 percent of Oakland homeowners are totally unaware of these proposed zoning changes and how these changes might affect them.

"I first learned of the issues from the December issue of The Rockridge News. On December 9, I attended the RCPC meeting at the Rockridge Branch Library and learned

Letters, page 9

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Letters

from page 8

the Council was to vote January 5 on this proposal.

"The time elapsed since I first read about the proposal to that vote is only 17 working days! Many people are busy with family and travel during the holidays. If the Council has any desire to receive feedback from informed residents, the vote couldn't be scheduled for a worse time.

"I learned at the library meeting that the issues surrounding construction of secondary units and parking requirements are both complicated and far-reaching. A number of people asked questions and made comments. Some of them were real estate

professionals or people who, in the past, had interest in building secondary units. While they seemed conversant with zoning and building regulations, this is new territory for many of us.

"Residents need time to understand the issues; they will have to live with the changes permanently."

— Penny Thompson

COLLEGE AVENUE NEEDS PARKLETS EDITOR:

I am writing to ask if the community would support a streetside parklet in front of Market Hall. The sidewalks there are very crowded and the seating and tables seriously restrict pedestrians. A parklet could fix that. Other College Avenue sites could also be considered.

— Donald Swetlick

RCPC LAND USE COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR RESPONDS:

Parklets have become a popular idea in the Bay Area, where land for full-fledged

parks is becoming as scarce as hens' teeth. Small areas of greenery can provide a welcome respite and can help relieve sidewalk congestion. However, there are a number of things to keep in mind:

1) The city does not have the resources to maintain the many parklets proposed. Consequently, local groups or neighboring property owners must ensure they are maintained. The support (both moral and monetary) of neighboring property owners and the surrounding community is critical.

2) Without proper maintenance and clean-up, a parklet could easily become an eyesore. Again, commitment of money and resources from the owners of Market Hall and the Rockridge District Association (RDA), the local Business Improvement District for College Avenue, would make the parklet's approval more likely.

Rockridge News readers can email their opinions to info@rockridge.org.

— Stuart Flashman, co-chair,
RCPC land use committee

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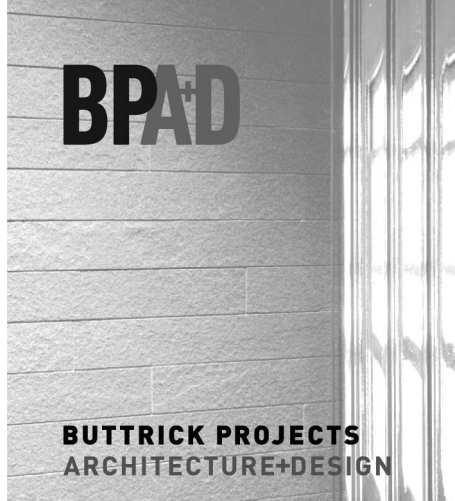


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Mayor Schaaf

from page 1

Business Improvement District annual Holiday Breakfast.

The mayor also chose Millennium restaurant, recently moved to Rockridge, for a private observance of her 50th birthday in November. Schaaf told us that she had often marked her birthday at Millennium's long-time location in San Francisco. Smiling, she added: "Now we can keep our tradition and do it in Oakland."

She had a public celebration as well – a "50 Years of Oakland Love" fundraiser that also honored her as Oakland's 50th mayor. She asked that contributions go to fund 50 college scholarships for Oakland students. "We raised \$1 million in four weeks."

"In some ways Rockridge has now caught up with itself," Schaaf said, apparently speaking to the clamor for homes and the bustle of the area's stores and restaurants. "People like the convenience of being next to an authentic shopping district and transportation."

In her mind, the building boom at the southern end of Rockridge that will add approximately 465 living units to the city's housing supply as well as remodeled and new retail space, "is long overdue. The intersection of 51st and Broadway is one of the major intersections in the city," Schaaf said. "When I was growing up in Oakland, everyone went to Long's Drugs" which preceded the now-demolished CVS in the former Rockridge Shopping Center — soon to be known as The Ridge.

Confronted with the fact that almost all of the new living units will command market rates, she said: "We need more housing at every income level. Income diversity is hard to achieve. The power of the government can't always overcome the strength of the marketplace."

So, in addition to new developer-initiated housing, "we are looking to relax the regulations on granny units," Schaaf said. She sees the added secondary units that then could be permitted as a quick way to create added, variably priced housing stock in the city.

This centers on the city's easing restrictions on auxiliary structures, setbacks and off-street parking. A special town hall on how these secondary unit and off-street parking revisions could impact Rockridge

was held at the Rockridge Branch Library December 9. (See related story, page 3.) The city will take the proposed regulations under consideration beginning this month.

Despite the overall increase during 2015 in crime against persons, as well as general property and auto-related crime in Rockridge and throughout Oakland, Schaaf still says, "We do feel what we're doing is working." Although homicides, home, and car burglaries are up, "We've had three consecutive years of double-digit decreases in shootings, and home invasion robberies are way down," she said.

More police, the mayor promises, are in the pipeline – with a special emphasis on attracting local and diverse candidates through a high school cadet program and a partnership with Samuel Merritt University's criminal justice program. In addition, the Oakland Police Department's (OPD) crime analysis unit, shuttered during the recession, is up and running. Also, a federal grant will partially fund 15 walking officers for commercial areas although Oakland will bear 85 percent of the cost.

"Will they be on College Avenue?" we queried. Schaaf sent a quick text message to OPD Chief Sean Whent. Moments later, she told us: The chief has confirmed that Rockridge will be included. "Walking officers are good for relationships," she added. "We as a city can't just go from 911 call to 911 call."

Asked her feelings about the private patrols that Rockridge and other Oakland neighborhoods are funding, the mayor said: "I always start out by apologizing to residents that they feel the city is not adequately protecting them, because that is our job." At the same time, "I appreciate that people are willing to band together to enhance safety for one another. That is what I like about private patrols. It represents a communal effort. We all chip in to take care of each other."

A communal effort is also happening within city governance, Schaaf says. "Oakland has a tremendous alignment of all the leadership positions," meaning the mayor, the chief of police and new Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) Superintendent Antwan Wilson are on the same page.

Education is Schaaf's passion, the OUSD in particular. Her two children attend Joaquin Miller Elementary as she did before them. Her goal: "For every child in Oakland to have a college degree. Nothing could be more transformative for this city. We as a community have the experience, skills and resources" to make sure Oakland students finish high school and college. "It's not just the job of the schools," she said.

As a result, the mayor will unveil "The Oakland Promise," a "cradle-to-career strategy," at the end of January. Over the summer, she appointed a director of education to work with the schools and community on policy (funded by the Oakland Public Education Fund) and a director of equity and strategic partnerships (funded through the Mayor's Office and grants from philanthropic centers and foundations) to work with foundations, corporations, non-profits and the community for fund-raising and implementation.

"This city is a very compassionate city," Schaaf said. "I think there are a lot of people out there who really want to help. I just love raising money for Oakland."

To comment on or suggest future topics for this column, email judyberne@att.net

Part two of the interview will be published in the February issue of The Rockridge News.

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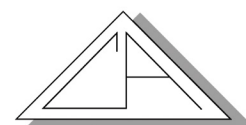


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Off-Street Parking Changes

from page 1

parking requirements to 50 percent of the normally required amount for new residential housing construction. The reductions would be “by right,” i.e., the reductions would be automatic. Strategies include: unbundled parking (i.e., charging for parking spaces separately from apartment rent), onsite car-sharing, incorporating affordable housing, and location within one-half mile from BART or other public transit hubs. The ultimate goal is to have residents own fewer cars. However, as of now, the proposed regulations would allow residents of new

units to opt out of purchasing or renting off-street parking for their vehicles and instead purchase a residential permit sticker, probably at a much lower cost.

Current regulations require one or more off-street parking space for each new residential unit, with a possible waiver of up to 50 percent of the required spaces through a conditional use permit, based on specific findings. For example, the Nautilus Project on Telegraph Avenue at 51st Street has asked for a 50 percent reduction to its required off-street parking under this procedure, based on its being a very bicycle-friendly project that is relatively near to public transit.

Other proposals include:

■ Reducing the number of required off-street spaces for residential zones close to College Avenue, for senior housing, and for large restaurants.

■ Allowing the off-street parking requirement to be satisfied by offsite remote location parking spaces (in a separate parking lot or structure, for example). The aim is to make it easier for new residences and commercial businesses to satisfy the city’s requirement if they encourage “car-free” living.

The City seeks public comment from the Rockridge community on the draft proposals (see: bit.ly/OffStreet). A revised proposal incorporating that feedback could be considered by the Zoning Update Committee during February.

Learn more at the RCPC Special Town Hall Meeting, Thursday, January 21, 7 p.m., Rockridge Branch Library, upstairs meeting room. Be sure to make your opinion count: email Councilmember Dan Kalb (dkalb@oaklandnet.com) and City planner Neil Gray (ngray@oaklandnet.com).



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Letters: Chabot Road Parking Hazard Concerns Garner Response

Rockridge resident Ron Sipherd has written two letters to the editor relating his concerns for pedestrians who are often blocked by cars parked on the shoulder of Chabot Road between Roanoke Road and Golden Gate Avenue, and must walk in the street to get around them. He has also written to the Public Works Department.

The matter has come to the attention of Councilmember Dan Kalb, who sent Mr. Sipherd the following note, copied to The Rockridge News:

"Hi Ron,

"I was following up again with our Public Works Department on some yet to be resolved Public Works related requests from earlier this year and was just informed that there was some back-and-forth email traffic on a matter you wrote to The Rockridge News about between late August and early October [*'Cars regularly park across the entire width of the sidewalk on the south side of Chabot Road between Roanoke Road and Golden Gate Avenue. There is no sidewalk on the north side of Chabot Road, so pedestrians are forced to walk in traffic.'* Ed].

"My office had previously inquired with staff about this earlier this year and I'm glad to see that they will be following up.

"We will continue to monitor this with staff, and will make sure our Public Works staff receives any related communications from other neighbors on this matter.

"Please copy Olga on my staff on any future correspondence with city staff.

"Thanks very much and merry holidays to you.

"Dan Kalb, Councilmember, District 1"

Council Resolution Recognizes Yasai Market's Years of Service in Rockridge



In joint celebration of National Small Business Week and of the 34 years of serving the produce needs of the Rockridge community – 23 years under ownership of sisters Youza Pak, center, and Bo Pak – the city of Oakland passed a resolution recognizing the sisters and their business – College Avenue's Yasai Market – for "providing the community with quality selections while maintaining a low carbon footprint." Presenting the City resolution to the Paks, District 1 Councilmember Dan Kalb noted that it called upon residents of Oakland to "patronize existing small businesses in Oakland and to encourage the development of new small businesses throughout the year."

/OLGA BOLOTINA



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Land Use Committee

from page 3

between 51st Street and Claremont Avenue. Although the project is just outside of RCPC's area, it sits right on the Rockridge border and could have major impacts on Rockridge residents, so RCPC has been quite involved. While this revamped project has been brewing for several years, formal environmental review has begun, with both a traffic study and a shadow study that should be publicly released shortly. RCPC has been promised by Nautilus Group that there will be at least one more community meeting to hear about the final project plans and provide feedback before it is taken to the Planning Commission for approval. Watch for an announcement on the rockridge.org website, or sign up on the website to receive updates on this and other Rockridge events.

Another major change, relating at least as much to transportation as to land use, is the **"Safe Routes to Transit" project** being funded largely with Oakland's settlement money from the Caldecott 4th bore improvement project. There will be several intersection reconfigurations along both College Avenue and Broadway, as well as two new minipark areas at the intersections of Shafter Avenue and of Miles Avenue with College Avenue.



Report: Special Town Hall

from page 3

full set of proposed changes can be accessed at: <http://bit.ly/SUnits>.

While a few audience members expressed concern about increasing the number of secondary units in Rockridge, most seemed willing to entertain, and some to applaud, the proposal because it could help supply needed affordable rental housing and because it could allow retiree homeowners on fixed incomes to supplement that income with rents. There were, however, concerns about secondary units being used as short-term transient rentals through accommodation listing services such as Airbnb. Ranelletti acknowledged that concern and said the city intended to address it. He noted that rentals of less than two weeks are considered a commercial use not generally allowed in residential areas. Enforcement, he acknowledged, has proved problematic.

Of major concern to Rockridge residents are changes to the off-street parking requirements. Currently, secondary units require an extra off-street parking space beyond those required for the main house. The proposal would make two changes:

- Tandem parking (i.e., parking one car behind the other in a driveway), would be allowed everywhere;
- Within one-half mile of a BART station, Rapid Bus Line such as the 1R on Telegraph Avenue, or a major bus transfer point (there are none in Rockridge), no

off-street parking space would be required.

It was the latter point that drew the most audience remarks at the meeting. Comments focused on the potential for new secondary units to exacerbate the existing on-street parking shortage on Rockridge residential streets, particularly because the current RPP rules allow three permits per residential address, including secondary units. At a follow-up meeting with Ranelletti and District One Councilmember Dan Kalb, RCPC representatives suggested a compromise, where new secondary units near transit would not have the off-street parking requirement, but would also not be eligible for their own RPP zone permits. With the property owner's consent, however, the secondary unit could share one of the three permits allowed to the main address.

The proposed zoning changes are scheduled to go to the City Council on January 5. Please check the RCPC website at Rockridge.org for updates.

City Proposes Changes in Off-Street Parking Requirements

Oakland Strategic Planner Neil Gray also gave a short presentation to meeting attendees about broader changes being proposed to off-street parking requirements for new development.

These changes are also aimed at encouraging more residential development, particularly in transit-rich areas such as Rockridge. Because these proposals are at an earlier stage, **major discussion was put off to the January RCPC Town Hall, to be held January 21.** Please put that date on your calendar to learn more about how these changes would affect Rockridge.



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12/11/2015	2	1	5820 Ayala Ave.	\$649,000	\$649,000	5	\$705,000
12/20/2015	2	1	321 Hudson St.	\$795,000	\$649,000	14	\$1,088,500

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Parcel Tax Rebates

from page 1

Measure N) for seniors (age 65 and over). In his article, Rafael noted that the school district has agreed to extend filing dates and has posted notice of the rebate filing process and required forms at <http://www.ousd.org/parceltax>. According to filing forms, the deadline to submit claims for reimbursement for 2015-16 is April 15, 2016.

Rafael reports that "OUSD is officially accepting late filed June 30, 2015 Measure N \$120 refund claims from over-65 homeowner-occupants, one per home."

"They are unofficially accepting late filed Measure N \$120 refund claims for low-income homeowner-occupants, one per home, regardless of age."

"OUSD has still not announced whether it will accept late filed Measure G \$195 low-income homeowner claims. My advice is to send in both your late Measure G and N claims."

"You have nothing to lose and should receive from \$120 to \$315 refunds."

Find Len Rafael's article here: <http://postnewsgroup.com/blog/2015/11/03/oakland-homeowners-may-qualify-property-tax-exemptions/>

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Information about each measure is posted on the district's web site: "Measure G: An exemption is authorized for owner-occupied single-family residential units if the combined family income (from all sources from January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014) is at or below the income level qualifying as "very low income" for a family of such size under section 8 of the U.S. Housing Act (42 U.S.C.A., 1437 et seq.). Eligible owners must apply for the exemption each year." [\$195.]

"Measure N: The low income exemption is available for owner-occupied of single-family residential units if the combined family income (from all sources from January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014) is at or below the income level qualifying as "very low income" for a family of such size under section 8 of the U.S. Housing Act (42 U.S.C.A., 1437 et seq.). The senior citizen exemption is available for single-family residential units owned and occupied by senior citizens. Eligible senior citizens and

low-income owners must apply for the exemptions each year." [\$120.]

Other parcel tax information is available at https://ballotpedia.org/Parcel_tax_elections_in_California.

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Compiled by Jo Ellis

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Greater Rockridge Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)

Note: No Jan. Mtg. Discuss crime and public safety with reps of OPD. **2nd Thurs. every other month starting in Feb. (2/11) 7:30pm.** Rockridge Library, 5366 College (at Manila). More info: www.rockridgencpc.com or chair@rockridgencpc.com.

District 1 Councilman Dan Kalb

Drop-in Community Office Hours at the Temescal Farmers Market, **5300 Claremont Ave. (off Telegraph) at DMV parking lot** on the 3rd Sunday each month, 10:30am-12:30pm. For times and locations of other Office Hours and more information from Dan Kalb: www.dankalb.net/contactdan.

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- **Pre-School Story Time:** (ages 2 to 5); Thursdays, 10:30am.
- **Toddler Story Time:** (up to age 2); Thursdays, 10:30am, upstairs.

All story times followed by Play Time; parents and caregivers invited.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

WINTER BINGO: continues until Jan16. If you have done 5 activities in a row, bring your completed bingo card and pick up your prize book. For babies & toddlers up through 5th graders.

- **ATTN. FILM MAKERS: Sun., Jan 10 is the deadline to submit your short film to the 90-Second Newbery Film Festival.** See details and get your free ticket to save a spot at: <http://jameskenedy.com/90-second-newbery/>. The films will be screened and celebrated here on Sat., Feb.13 at noon. **Free for all ages.**
- **Make Valentines:** Sat, Feb. 6, 3 - 4:30pm. Bring a list of your classmates and make a valentine for everyone. **All materials provided.** Ages 5 to 13 years. (Children under 9 years old must come with an adult.)

CALLING ALL 'TWEENS: Starting Jan.12, 6:30 - 7:45pm, Rockridge Library will host a monthly tween-directed writing, reading, crafts, and community volunteer group. Each month we will plan the next 3 months of tween-choice activities. **Art supplies, snacks, and camaraderie provided free to all participants ages 9 to 12 years.** More info: Children's Librarian Erica Siskind, 597-5017.

FOR TEENS

- **Teen Advisory Board (ages 14-18):** Meet with other teens, plan and organize library activities, and get community service credit for school. 1st Sat. each month, 1 to 2pm.
- **Teen 'Scape:** Play video & board games; make crafts; do homework. **Snacks provided.** Tues, Thurs, and Fridays: 3:30 - 5:00 pm and Wednesdays: 1:30 - 5:00 pm.
- **Make Fingerless Gloves:** Bring your own pair of socks to transform, or we'll provide you with a pair,

Jan. 20 at 2 pm.

FOR ADULTS

- **eBook Help:** download eBooks to your Kindle, Nook, smart phone, or laptop. Tuesdays (**by appointment**), 6 - 7:30pm. Make appt. at the library or online at www.oaklandlibrary.org. Call 597-5017 for more info.
- **Writers Support/Critique Group: All writers welcome.** Bring 15 copies of up to 5 pgs. (double-spaced, MS margins) of any prose for on-site reading/discussion (also welcome to come empty-handed). **Third Sat. each month, 1 to 5pm;** wheelchair-accessible. Sponsored by the Calif. Writers Club, Berkeley branch. Info: 420-8775 or Writefox@aol.com.
- **Lawyers in the Library:** Free legal advice and referrals. **1st Tues each month** January, 5 to 7pm. **NOTE: New times and procedures starting in Feb: 6 to 8pm.** Sessions are popular: We will use a lottery drawing 15 minutes beforehand to determine who may see the lawyer. (Advance sign-up starts 4 pm at adult reference desk). Call day of program to confirm: 597-5017.
- **Home Sweet Oakland:** Are you new to Rockridge? Meet other new residents, existing residents, local merchants, and city government and service staff. Have you lived in Rockridge for a while? Help us welcome new residents. Enjoy good company, tasty snacks, and learning all about the great neighborhood and city we live in. Tuesday, Jan. 26, 6:30-7:30 pm. (Home Sweet Oakland is a system wide initiative to help newcomers integrate into Oakland. Ours is the first of six events this spring happening in libraries all over Oakland.)
- **Making Sense of Medicare:** Workshop presented by **Denise Lombard** for those eligible for Medicare, or those caring for someone who is. **Free coffee and light refreshments.** Sat., Jan. 30, 11:30am.
- **A Journey to the Heart of Cheddar:** Cheese monger **Gordon Edgar** will read from his new book, *Cheddar: A Journey to the Heart of America's Most Iconic Cheese*, and provide some tasty samples. Known as the "Barbara Mandrell of the Cheese Counter," Gordon has sold cheese for Rainbow Grocery co-op since 1994. Tues., Feb., 9, 7pm.

LIBRARY HOURS

Tues, 12:30 to 8pm. Wed, Thurs & Sat: 10am to 5:30pm.

Fri, 12 to 5:30pm.

Closed: Sun and Mon; also Tues, 1/19.

Diesel Book/Poetry Readings & Events

FREE and open to the public.

- Sat, 1/16, 7pm. **Carlos Labb: *Loquela*.** Joined in conversation by the translator, **Will Vanderhyden.**
- Sun, 1/17, 3pm. **Leif Wenar: *Blood Oil: Tyrants, Violence, and the Rules that Run the World*.**
- Fri, 1/22, 7pm. Celebration for **ZYZZYVA: The Winter Issue.** Readings by present and past contributors, **Heather Altfeld, Dan Alter, David L. Ulin, Elizabeth Tallent, and Anthony Marra.** Warm cheer and good wine included.
- Tues, 1/26, 7pm. **Warren Zanes: *Petty: The Biography*.**
- Thurs, 1/28, 7pm. **Ian Rankin: *Even Dogs in the Wild*.**
- Sun, 1/31, 3pm. Guest poets **Jewelle Gomez, Stephen Meadows, Kurt Schweigman, and Kim Shuck** will be reading selections from *Red Indian Road West:*

Native American Poetry from California.

DIESEL, A Bookstore, 5433 College Ave. More info (other events and discussion groups): 653-9965 or events@dieselbookstore.com.

Jazz at the Chimes

Featuring veteran jazz saxophonist/clarinetist **Noel Jewkes** and his quartet with **Alan Steger** on piano, **Adam Gay** on upright bass and **Jake Shandling** on drums. Standards from the '30s to the '60s plus original compositions. Sunday, Jan. 17, 2 pm. Tickets at the door (cash only) beginning 12:30pm (doors open 1:30): \$15 general; \$10 srs. (60+) and students. Refreshments and reception follows to meet the performers. Info at www.noeljewkesjazz.com. The concert series honors the individual stories and unique artistry of Bay Area jazz musicians in a landmarked Julia Morgan venue: Chapel of the Chimes, 4499 Piedmont Ave. **Wheelchair accessible. Free parking.** More info: www.jazzatthechimes.com, chimesjazz@gmail.com or 654-0123.

Wisteria Ways House Concert

Lisa Lynne and Aryeh Frankfurter: a multi-instrumentalist duo with Celtic Harps, Swedish Nyckelharpa, Ukranian Bandura, Bouzouki, Cittern and more. Traditional and original music with wondrous stories and humor entwined. Sat., Jan 23, 8pm. More info: www.lisalynne.com and www.lionharp.com. Inside venue; not wheelchair accessible. \$15-20 donation for musicians (cash only at the door). 383 61st Street. For reservations (highly recommended), RSVP to info@WisteriaWays.org or 655-2771.

North Oakland Senior Center

Programs include: Arts/crafts; health counseling; dancing and exercise; trips, tours and theater outings; Alzheimer's caregivers support groups, computer classes/more.

- **Senior Homeowners Free Workshop:** Presented by the City of Oakland and HERA to keep you living safely at home. Topics include home maintenance; pros and cons of reverse mortgages; avoiding foreclosure, and more. Tues., 1/26, 10:30 - 11:45am. **Refreshments at 10:15.** RSVP
- **Yosemite 2016 Trip:** Bring your roommate and sign up for our signature trip to Yosemite by Amtrak on May 10 - 12. \$399 for 3 days/ 2 nights at Yosemite Lodge. Flyer at Center has more details.

RSVP for all programs at 597-5085.

Annual \$12 membership entitles seniors 55 + to discounts on activities and trips. Mon. - Fri., 9am to 4:30pm. 5714 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. Subscribe to "The North Oakland Senior Times" for full schedule of classes/ events, lunch menus, and volunteer opportunities. Info: 597- 5085.

Square Dance In North Oakland

Music by The Squirrelly String Band. **Calling by Jordan Ruyle or Evie Ladin.** 1st Fridays each month, 8 - 10pm. All levels welcome; all dances taught on the spot. \$5-10 sliding scale donation. The Niebyl-Proctor Marxist Library, 6501 Telegraph Ave. Info: squirrellystringband.com.

Temescal Farmers' Market

Open Sundays, 9am to 1pm (**all year**). Locally grown fruits and vegetables; fresh ranch eggs; home-made bakery items; fresh cut flowers; unique prepared foods, fresh locally caught fish, handcrafts and more. Sample the goods; meet the grower. **Live music. Bring reusable bags.** 5300 Claremont Ave. (off Telegraph) at DMV parking lot.





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