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DEC 2025-JAN 2026

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VOLUME 83 NUMBER 10



Mail a Letter to Santa, Tell Off the Grinch, Belt Out Carols, and Donate to Kids— It’s December at the Farmers Market

By Karen Yencich

Santa’s special Express-to-the-North Pole Mailbox will be out at the Kensington Farmers Market again this year starting on Sunday, December 7. Kids can drop their letters into the mailbox and expect a personal reply from Santa before Christmas. (Please make sure your address is legible. Santa’s eyesight isn’t what it used to be.) The last pick-up from the mailbox will be on December 21.

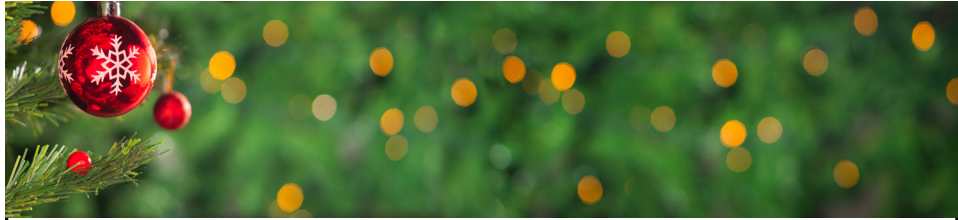
Or have a personal word with Santa and his good friend, the Grinch, when they stop by the market on December

21 for a visit.

The Kensington Carolers will return to the market again this year on December 21, to sing for you and with you. And as it has done every year, the market will host a Toys-for-Tots barrel to gather up new, unwrapped, Holiday toys for underserved children.

The Kensington Farmers Market will not be held December 28, so the December 21 event is the last market of the year. Thanks to everyone who comes to shop, gossip, or bust a move at the bandstand. The market will reopen on Sunday, January 4.





Home for the Holidays- and Grateful Every Step of the Way

As we celebrate this *holiday season*, I’m filled with gratitude for my clients, friends, and community who make what I do so meaningful. Whether you’ve found your dream home or are planning your next chapter, thank you for allowing me to be part of your journey.

If you’re thinking about a move in 2026, now is a wonderful time to start creating a plan. I’d love to meet you and share how my seller benefits can save you money and make your transition smooth and stress-free.

Wishing you a season filled with joy, warmth, and the comfort of home.

Warmly,
Ruth Frassetto

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COMPASS

Unique Handmade Crafts at Saint Jerome's Christmas Sale Dec. 6 and 7

By Mary Ghidella
The crafters of Saint Jerome Church at 308 Carmel Avenue in El Cerrito meet weekly to make hand-knit items for the annual Christmas sale Saturday, December 6, 11 am to 6:30 pm and Sunday, December 7, 9 am to 1:30 pm.

There are many colorful knit creations ranging from sweaters and blankets for baby, scarves and fingerless gloves, hats and shawls for adults, and colorful Christmas ornaments. Large totes, zippered bags and purses, and smaller cosmetic bags are constructed from recycled jeans, heavy canvas remnants, and vintage tablecloths.

Stressed? Meditate for Calm Awareness

By Sara Laferte
The community is invited to a quiet time of meditation in this busy season. Imagine the soft voice bringing us to grounding, the pleasurable flow of gentle harmonies opening our hearts and clearing our minds, the calm and beauty of our surroundings beckoning us in silence. It all combines to create an atmosphere that enhances the awakening of our hearts and spirits and deepens our relationship with our creator. Everybody is welcome, regardless of your spiritual affiliation.
Please join us as we gather in meditative contemplation from 10-11am on Saturday, December 27. Another session being planned for a Saturday in January. Visit the church website for updates: arlingtoncommunitychurchucc.org
Arlington Community Church UCC, 52 Arlington Ave.

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The Kensington Community Council is dedicated to the improvement, development, and education of the community, and to the promotion of social welfare in Kensington. It enriches the community by providing educational and recreational programs for all ages and by publishing the Outlook, a monthly newsletter that covers local events and issues. KCC also provides a forum for all Kensington community groups to meet and coordinate their respective efforts toward the common good of the community.

F E B R U A R Y - 2 0 2 6
Advertising Deadline ❖ JAN. 8
Editorial Deadline ❖ JAN. 10

Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are those of the writers and do not reflect the opinion of the Outlook, its editor, or the Kensington Community Council. Letters must be signed and include the resident's phone number and address (which will not be printed). Letters 350 words or under will appear in the print edition (space permitting). Any letter over 350 words will be printed in the online edition only. Publication of letters and articles is subject to space and the editor's discretion. Obituaries of Kensington residents are printed without charge. All material must be received by the 10th of the month preceding issue date; submit by email to editor@kensingtonoutlook.com. No press releases or PDFs; Word documents or text in the body of an email are acceptable.

Use one space, not two, after all periods.

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October Police Activity Log

Oct 4: Suspicious circumstance detail on Coventry Rd.
Oct 7: Vehicle impounded on Beloit Avenue.
Oct 8: Outside Assist for EBMUD on Colusa Circle.
Oct 10: Suspicious circumstance reported at the police station.
Oct 11: Battery reported on Purdue Ave.
Oct 14: Attempted fraud reported at Wells Fargo Bank.
Oct 14: Stolen vehicle plate reported at Yale Ave.
Oct 16: Trespassing detail on Highgate Rd.
Oct 17: Traffic collision hit-and-run on Arlington Ave.
Oct 17: Grand theft from a vehicle reported on Coventry Rd.
Oct 19: Casualty reported on Arlington Ave.
Oct 20: Suspicious circumstance reported on Kingston Rd.
Oct 21: Welfare check detail on Richardson Rd.
Oct 22: Stolen property reported on Arlington Ave.
Oct 22: Embezzlement detail reported on Columbia Ave.
Oct 22: Attempted check fraud reported on Highland Ave.
Oct 22: Stolen property reported on Arlington Ave.
Oct 22: Stolen property reported on Arlington Ave.
Oct 22: Suspicious circumstance reported on Arlington Ave.
Oct 22: Grand theft auto reported on Berkeley Park Blvd. Officers leveraged Flock community safety camera database to identify leads.
Oct 22: Stolen property reported on Arlington Ave.
Oct 23: Stolen property reported on Highland Blvd.
Oct 24: Traffic stop on Arlington Ave. & Kensington Park Rd.; driver cited for driving without a license and vehicle impounded.
Oct 24: Traffic collision hit-and-run on Highland Blvd.
Oct 26: Casualty reported on Colusa Avenue & Berkeley Park Blvd.
Oct 26: Officers arrested a driver with misdemeanor warrants during a CHP-funded DUI operation.
Oct 28: Officers responded to a report of a bicycle colliding with a vehicle on Arlington Ave. The cyclist had ridden their bike into the back of a vehicle, causing the rear window to break. Upon arrival, officers determined the rider of the bike, who was injured, was under the influence of alcohol. Officers also determined the bike rider had been involved in a hit and run as he had fled the scene. The suspect was arrested for DUI on a bicycle and misdemeanor hit and run.
Oct 30: Officers investigated an identity theft. The investigation is ongoing.
Oct 30: Officers investigated a theft of property from a motor vehicle.

From Solstice Shadows to Choral Splendor: Contra Costa Chorale Mounts “Darkness to Light”



By Regina Marchione

As winter's hush descends and the days grow shorter, the Contra Costa Chorale invites audiences to gather in warmth and wonder for its evocative fall concert, “Darkness to Light.” This seasonal program will be performed on Friday, December 5 at 7:30pm at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley in Kensington, and again on Sunday, December 7 at 4pm at the Orinda Community Church. A livestream of the Friday performance will also be available.

Artistic Director Dr. Brad Schultz offers insight into the concert's inspiration, drawing connections between the rhythms of the season and the role of music in marking time: “December is a time when we most notice the changes in our landscape and our daily patterns as we move toward the shortest day and longest night of the year. Yet the upcoming holiday season is also a time of great musical creativity in our culture, and this concert celebrates both angles of the calendar. The way we use music as a means of patterning time is a fascinating phenomenon, and I'm excited to explore this with the chorale and our audiences.” Among the concert's many highlights are the evocative poetry of Robert Frost and the spiritual resonance of George Frideric Handel. The evening opens with Randall Thompson's beloved *Frostiana*, a seven-movement choral suite that sets Frost's iconic verse to music. With its shifting moods and textures, the piece showcases the chorale's expressive range and the enduring power of American poetry.

The journey continues with *A Winter Breviary*, a contemporary work by Los Angeles-based composer Reena Esmail. Blending Indian and Western musical traditions with the lyrical poetry of Rebecca Gayle Howell, the piece offers an introspective meditation on the winter solstice—its stillness, mystery, and quiet transformation.

Toward the close of the evening Handel's radiant *Foundling Hospital Anthem* brings a sense of spiritual uplift. In this sacred work Handel draws on themes and melodies from earlier masterpieces and builds to a triumphant reprise of the “Hallelujah Chorus” from *Messiah*. The evening offers other beautiful surprises—moments of lyricism, warmth, and wonder that round out this richly textured musical experience.

Now in its 60th year, the Contra Costa Chorale remains a cornerstone of East Bay musical life. Under the direction of Dr. Schultz and accompanied by Martin Morley, the ensemble of over 70 singers presents two major concert sets each year.

New voices are always welcome to join at the start of each season in August and January. Advance tickets to the Chorale's December concert are available at [ticketstripe.com/](https://www.ticketstripe.com/) cocochorale and on the Chorale's website: www.ccchorale.org.



Seed Saving, Magician, Sustainability Headline Library Programs

By Jenny Rockwell
Enjoy free programs offered by the Kensington Library at 61 Arlington Avenue. Call 510-524-3043 with questions. Thanks to the Friends of Kensington Library for making library programs possible.

DECEMBER

Tues, Dec 2, 6:30pm Friends of the Kensington Library Friends of the Kensington Library, a 501c (3) nonprofit organization, has worked to improve and financially support library services in Kensington since 1959. Open to all Kensington residents.

Tues, Dec 2, 6:30pm Castoff's Knitting Club Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month. Open to all levels of knitters. Bring your own yarn!

Tues, Dec 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, 6:30pm Family Storytime Lots of picture books, songs, rhymes, and fun! Stuffed animals & pajamas welcome.

Wed, Dec 3, 3pm Pollinator seed-saving get together Join Berkeley Transition Network in a social gathering of processing and packaging pollinator seeds that have been harvested from local parks and public spaces. The seeds will then be made available at urban gardens. Participants at this get-together will be able to take home a few packets of seeds, as well as learn how native seeds are harvested and processed. To learn more about this habitat-supporting project, visit: <https://www.transitionberkeley.org/>

Fri, Dec 5, 11am eBook Workshop Come learn how to use Libby and Hoopla, the library's apps for eBooks, eAudiobooks, and digital magazines. Feel free to bring in your devices, such as tablets, smart phones, and e-readers.

Tues, Dec 16, 2-5pm Cloth Produce Bag Sewing Circle Join the Kensington Seamsters Union local 94707 in transforming donated natural fiber fabric into bags that will be given out for free at the Kensington Farmers Market. We need you to help measure, cut, iron sew and thread drawstrings, and create community.

Tues, Dec 23, Read to a Dog Join us and a licensed therapy dog for a 15-minute reading session every fourth Tuesday afternoon, 3-4pm. Same day, drop-in sign-up starts 15 minutes before the read session.

Tues, Dec 30, 6:15-7:45pm Kensington Library Book Club The club meets online via Zoom, this month meets on the fifth Tuesday. The selection for December is *The Last of the Mohicans* by James F. Cooper.

December through mid-January, Art Exhibit: Forever Falastin An interactive exhibit by Albany/El Cerrito for Palestine. Engage with the mosaic of Palestinian peoples, their art, music, food, books, films, and textile traditions, with a special focus on local connections. Learn about the region's history from the perspective of one of the world's oldest olive trees starting as a seed 4,000 years ago. The exhibit celebrates the joy and resistance of queer Palestinian artists, poets, and performers.

JANUARY

Tues, Jan 6, 6:30pm Friends of the Kensington Library Friends of the Kensington Library, a 501c (3) nonprofit organization, has worked to improve and financially support library services in Kensington since 1959. Open to all Kensington residents.

Tues, Jan 6, 6:30pm Castoff's Knitting Club Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month. Open to all levels of knitters. Bring your own yarn!

Tues, Jan 6, 13, 27, 6:30pm Family Storytime Lots of picture books, songs, rhymes, and fun! Stuffed animals & pajamas welcome.

Tues, Jan 13, 6pm In Depth on County Sustainability Come learn about Contra Costa County's Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP): a strategic approach to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improve energy efficiency, reduce waste, develop renewable energy and expand green infrastructure. Guest speakers will be Jody London and Emily Groth from the County's Sustainability Team and Shoshana Wechsler from the Sustainability Commission.

Tues, Jan 20, 6:30pm Biblio Spectacular with Magician Brian Scott! Join us at the Kensington Library for magic with Brian Scott! This interactive show is designed for family audiences and brings the world of books to life with magic, comedy, and pure fun.

Tues, Jan 20, 2-5pm Cloth Produce Bag Sewing Circle Join the Kensington Seamsters Union local 94707 in transforming donated natural fiber fabric into bags, which will be given out for free at the Kensington Farmers Market. We need you to help measure, cut, iron sew and thread drawstrings, and create community.

Tues, Jan 27, 6:15-7:45pm Kensington Library Book Club The club meets online via Zoom, usually on the fourth Tuesday. The selection for January is *James* by Percival Everett.

Tues, Jan 27, Read to a Dog Join us and a licensed therapy dog for a 15-minute reading session every fourth Tuesday afternoon, 3-4pm. Same day, drop-in sign-up starts 15 minutes before the read session.

Mid to end of January, Art Exhibit: Collage art by Abby Noyes Cut paper pieces

Cass Duggan Speaks Out on Her Time with the Police District

By Linnea Due

Cassandra Duggan retired as a Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District director on October 1, the same day that the KPCCSD itself retired to reemerge as the just-hatched Kensington Community Services District. The new special district now includes the fire district, which was dissolved and melded into the KCSD (the fire district could only manage fire- and medical-related services, while a community services district can offer multiple services, so the CSD had to be the surviving entity).

Duggan was elected in 2022 as part of a dual-district slate that included Julie Stein, Jim Watt, and Daniel Levine for the fire district and Alex Aquino-Fike, Sarah Gough, and Duggan for the police district. The six ran under the rallying cry “Save Kensington’s Future,” pledging to protect Kensington Park from future building, find a home for the ousted police department (either moving back into the remodeled Public Safety Building or crafting a “sensible” solution that did not involve the park), and consolidate the two districts into one governing body. The last promise has come into being, but the police are still in El Cerrito, and the park has been proposed as a possible site for a building predicted to cost anywhere from \$10-\$15 million.

The fact that Duggan retired due to health concerns saved the new district the task of adding an appointed director in order to achieve an odd number on the board. Nine directors now serve, though these will be whittled down through elections until the board reaches its mandated five seats.

The *Outlook* conducted the interview with Duggan on November 7.

Outlook: What was your intention when you first ran?

Cass Duggan: I got involved because of the issue of the police being kicked out of the PSB. I really did want the police to go back there at least until we found them a better location. The point of Save Kensington’s Future was to listen to the people of Kensington. There was a disconnect between the boards and Kensington residents.

And consolidation always seemed the most logical solution for our dysfunctional government. It’s like we created a divorced family on purpose. So, I wanted to have the districts consolidate, get the police back into the PSB, and save the park. I have always loved trees and open space, and I had spoken up when PG&E wanted to remove trees on the EBMUD land [along Berkeley Park Boulevard].

Did you agree with the platform you ran on?

I did agree with that platform. And I fought for it. But I didn’t really fight hard enough. When Alex and Sarah made themselves into a committee of two [to determine whether the police could go back into the PSB], I didn’t understand that gave them the power to offer the solutions. I was new to office and they were my slate partners. I kind of backed off on that one and I regret that.

Was it a disappointment to not meet some of those objectives?

It was very disappointing. I did want us to keep the police in the PSB at least for a number of years until we had a bigger space. The police chief was happy to have moved to a larger space in El Cerrito. I understand that they needed more space and that they felt happier in the portables, so that was why it all fell out the way it did.

On the plus side, the KCSD’s administrative people will be on the ground floor of the PSB. There will be an open office. It’s unclear whether they’ll have office hours. Now we have two remote general managers. We’re trying to hire a full-time GM and that person better be local. There should be some days with office hours.

There’s been a horrible gap of connection and availability of public officials. We need to make sure that a GM and an office staffer have open office hours to answer residents’ questions, no matter what kind of questions. Maybe half the answers are redirecting people to the county, but that is part of the job. We need an office downtown.

Do you feel voters understand the issues in Kensington?

I feel that there is a small portion of the voters who do. Perhaps 25 percent. A quarter of the people in Kensington follow Kensington governance. But consolidation has increased interest, and the PSB has interested people. Hopefully having one district will help, one meeting and eventually five directors.

Also, we need to use the *Outlook*. I’ve been trying to educate my fellow directors. They don’t understand how important the *Outlook* is. It’s always been one of the clear channels to reach residents. I want to see an effort made to speak to the public.

What do you think is most important to voters?

Fire safety. I really do. I think everyone is very aware, especially after the fires in LA of the potential for a terrible fire coming out of Tilden. People are joining and creating Fire-Wise communities at a fast rate. Fire Safe Councils are also useful in educating people. Hopefully they’ll get volunteers. I worry about seniors and the disabled who live alone. I’m very concerned about whether fire trucks can pass on all the narrow streets if those streets are fully parked up. If there’s a fire and there’s an evacuation, how can fire trucks even get through?

People want real drills and more clarity. All this distraction about the PSB and consolidation has taken away from more basic concerns about emergency planning.

What is the attitude of directors to voters?

I feel they’re more concerned than they used to be. They’re more aware that there may be little chance that Kensington voters will vote to raise their own taxes for a \$10-15 million dollar building in the park. So that’s good. I do feel that there’s somewhat of a tendency from those who tend to have more income and resources to overestimate the resources of many Kensington residents.

After all, 25 percent are over 65. Retirement may have left them with less money than they may have had 25 years ago. They may be strapped for cash.

There is a need for the board to listen to voters better, have more town halls, have more surveys and put in all the hot-button issues. They wouldn’t put the building in the park on the last survey. Directors need to stay in touch with voters.

Are you glad that you ran and served as a director?

Yes, it was a good use of my talents that did get a little reined in by having to raise a disabled daughter. I’ve had really high standards of how I raise my daughter. It was satisfying to have an impact on important public policy decisions. I’m very proud that we consolidated the two districts, which was the biggest problem we had. And I’m proud that we took ownership of the three paths. I’m hoping that more paths are accepted until all the paths are under Kensington’s ownership. I want to give 95% of that credit to the Kensington Pathkeepers and John Gioia.

What do you wish that you’d known before you ran for office?


Overall, it’s been mostly smooth sailing. I felt that Daniel Levine had a difficult situation on the fire board that he handled with such grace. Kudos to Daniel for really allowing the minority to speak up. Daniel allowed the minority opinion to be voiced. I think he made a

truly great board president.

It’s really important for there to be dissonant voices and dissonant opinions on a board. I hadn’t expected the pressure for all opinions to be subsumed into one board voice, which I do not think is healthy for a government. Too much cohesiveness means somebody isn’t being heard. The lower-income people formed a united front about putting the police into an existing structure [rather than building an expensive new structure]. Many of the populace were standing up for that. I hadn’t anticipated the pressure to go with the majority opinion, and I considered it an improper way to run a board.

Do you have regrets?

I would say overall no. I feel that managing consolidation in two and a half years was exceptional. When you have five people on a board, compromise is the order of the day. And yet, we achieved a lot. I am really happy with the current nine members of the KCSD board. We have some exceptional people on that board. My hopes for Kensington are high.



Duggan listed her recommendations for her past colleagues and the new district:

- Planning for a catastrophic potential wildfire should be the highest priority for the KCSD for the next few years. Creation of FireWise communities everywhere, making sure fire trucks can access all streets, parking concerns, evacuation planning and drills, and education has been somewhat neglected. LA just burned, and we could be next!
- I worry about disabled and elderly folks living alone. In the Paradise fire, some died alone with no help. Ask people to self-identify? Work individually with disabled and seniors who live alone or are caregivers to disabled family members? Get neighbors to volunteer to help them?
- Listen to Kensington voters! Do yearly surveys with all the hot button issues. Our last survey excluded the issue of where to house the police and building a new police building, though that has been the most controversial issue in years.
- It is good to have outliers on the board—it avoids group blindness. Too much cohesion is not good. Speak up, directors, have robust discussions! Board president: don’t try to quash dissenting opinions.
- Support all voters by reflecting their concerns in how you vote on the board. Listen to your voters! Get out and talk to voters, conduct town halls and surveys frequently. If you are well-off, make sure the opinions of lower-income residents are considered. Discuss and consider all options in your public meetings.
- Constructing a new police building in Kensington Park is too expensive and wastes our precious open space. Kensington voters don’t like it. There are more people living marginally in Kensington than you think—let’s not raise taxes and force them out or limit even more whether young families can afford to buy houses and live here.
- A better plan is to put the police in an existing building in Kensington by leasing a building from a local landlord. A 15- to 20-year lease would save us a lot of money. This could be their permanent home or allow saving to buy or build a building (not in the park!) without raising taxes.
- We need more services to seniors—65 percent of our population. More programs for seniors could create more community. Make sure people know of resources like Meals on Wheels, Mental Health Crisis Intervention, In Home Supportive Services, day care programs for disabled and elderly, etc.
- Add a social worker to the Kensington police force. Many police departments are going in this direction. Their salary would be half that of an officer. Could be helpful in mental health crises, or with disabled, mentally ill or elderly citizens with longstanding problems who need repeated police attention.
- Hire more women on the police force. All officers and volunteers are currently male, though our population is 60 percent female.



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December 21 @ 4:00 p.m.
Winter Solstice Service

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**Intergenerational
Christmas Eve Service**

10:00 p.m.
**Candlelight
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Peace on Earth
from the
Outlook

Kensington Property Owners Association Celebrates Unification at Annual Meeting

By Rob Firmin, KPOA president

This year’s KPOA Annual Membership Meeting at the Community Center was unusual because the informational session was followed by a sit-down luncheon celebrating the realization of the unification of our two special districts into one, together with recognition of the many people who made that reorganization possible over the years. It featured several speakers who addressed the unification (consolidation) of Kensington’s dual districts into the Kensington Community Services District (KCSD), how it came to be after more than two decades of effort, the structure of the new district, and the district’s plans to enhance delivery of services.

The meeting began with an introduction by KPOA president Rob Firmin who outlined KPOA’s purpose and offered examples of a few of its accomplishments for the community, including its long-term vigorous advocacy and promotion of district unification. He asked the KCSD directors to stand so attendees could see who has been elected to serve them and to thank them for their dedication and success with unification, which was met with loud applause.

KPOA Director Jennifer Jacobs gave an informative presentation on some of the milestones in Kensington’s history, including natural history and human settlement phases from the arrival of the indigenous Muwékma Ohlone people more than 10,000 years ago, through Spanish and American settlement to today’s population and activities. KPOA Director Gail Feldman gave an overview of the financial reasons for unification of the districts, explaining how the former two independent districts’ tax allocation structures were inequitable, making it an inefficient model for meeting Kensington’s service needs, including forcing the police services district to raise taxes while the combined revenue is now sufficient under a unified district.

KCSD Interim General Manager David Aranda and Interim General Manager of the former fire district Mary Morris-Mayorga spoke on how they are working on staffing for the KCSD. They emphasized that the strengthened full-time staff will be able to support board directors and the public with improved information and have substantially lower turnover. An additional financial benefit for the community is saving money for other initiatives and stronger reserves. They also explained the recruitment process for a single full-time general manager. Both speakers thoroughly addressed a number of questions from attendees.

KCSD president David Spath gave a clear overview of how unification consumed decades of analysis by the boards of the two former districts and why the KCSD will be able to fully fund the now completely staffed police department for the first time while building stronger financial reserves. He thanked board directors of the former two districts, other citizens and the KPOA for its public communication efforts to explain single-district advantages. Former fire district president Daniel Levine concluded the informational section of the meeting with an enthusiastic explanation of how fire services will continue to be provided with excellence, including the expectation that the KCSD’s stronger finances will be helpful for its fire safety programs.

The KPOA is delighted that unification has finally been achieved, and that the Kensington community will benefit. In celebration of this achievement, the second hour of the meeting was a sit-down luncheon provided by Zaytoon restaurant. The luncheon and room setup would not have been possible without the help of many wonderful volunteers. KPOA is grateful for everyone’s work for the event.



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A Beloved Tradition: Handel’s Messiah Sing-Along at UUCB

By Charis Domador

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley invites the community to its annual Messiah Sing-Along, a joyful Bay Area holiday tradition now in its 50th year

With a professional orchestra, featured soloists, and hundreds of voices joining together, this festive event on December 21 brings Handel’s Messiah to life in an atmosphere of warmth and celebration. Everyone is welcome—experienced singers, shower soloists, and enthusiastic listeners alike. No music-reading skills required; scores will be available to borrow at the door.

Come sing your heart out or just bask in the sound of hundreds of voices raised in harmony. It’s one of the happiest ways to ring in the season.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley, 1 Lawson Road, Kensington, December 21, 4pm. General and Student tickets available online and at the door; no one turned away for lack of funds. Learn more at uucb.org/events/2025-messiah-sing-along/



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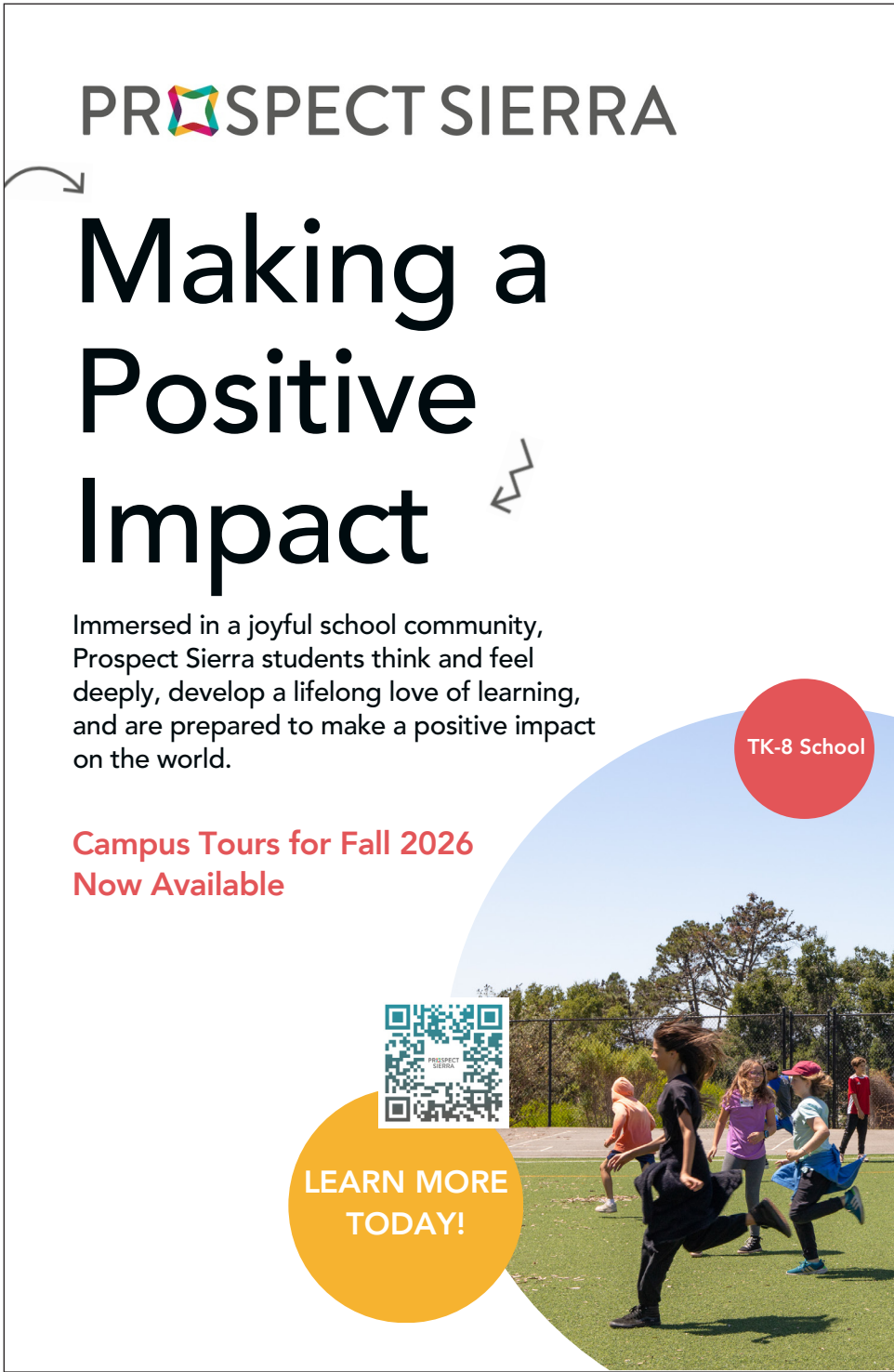
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- 1) Make sure your insurance provides replacement costs that reflect the times accurately! Rebuilding a home these days costs upwards of \$1000/sf.
- 2) If you hold your property in a trust, make sure the trust is named on your insurance policy. We have heard tales emerging from the recent fires of funds being delayed or denied because the policy did not name the trust.

Best wishes for a peaceful and restorative holiday season!

Contact us with any homeownership questions.

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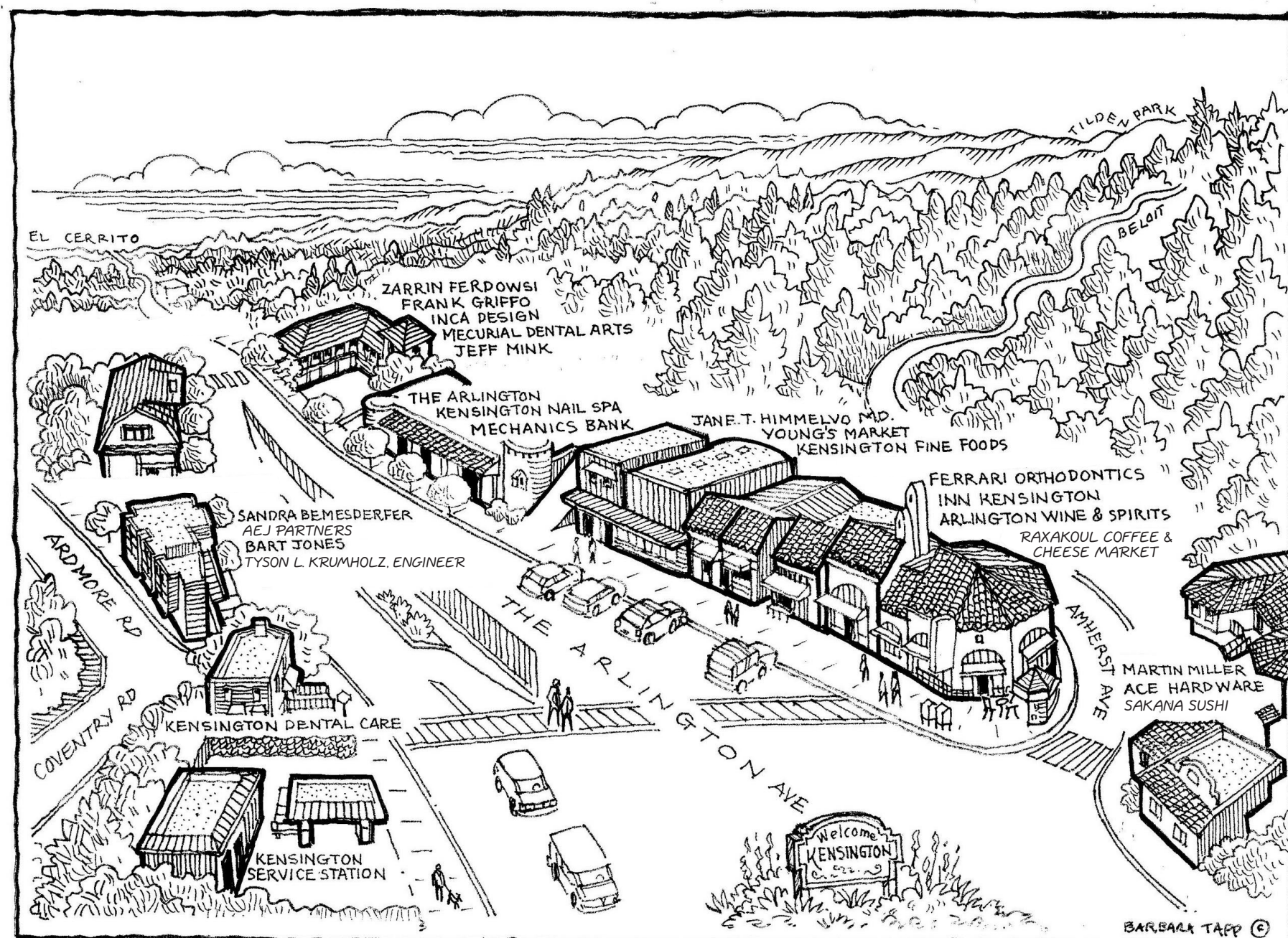
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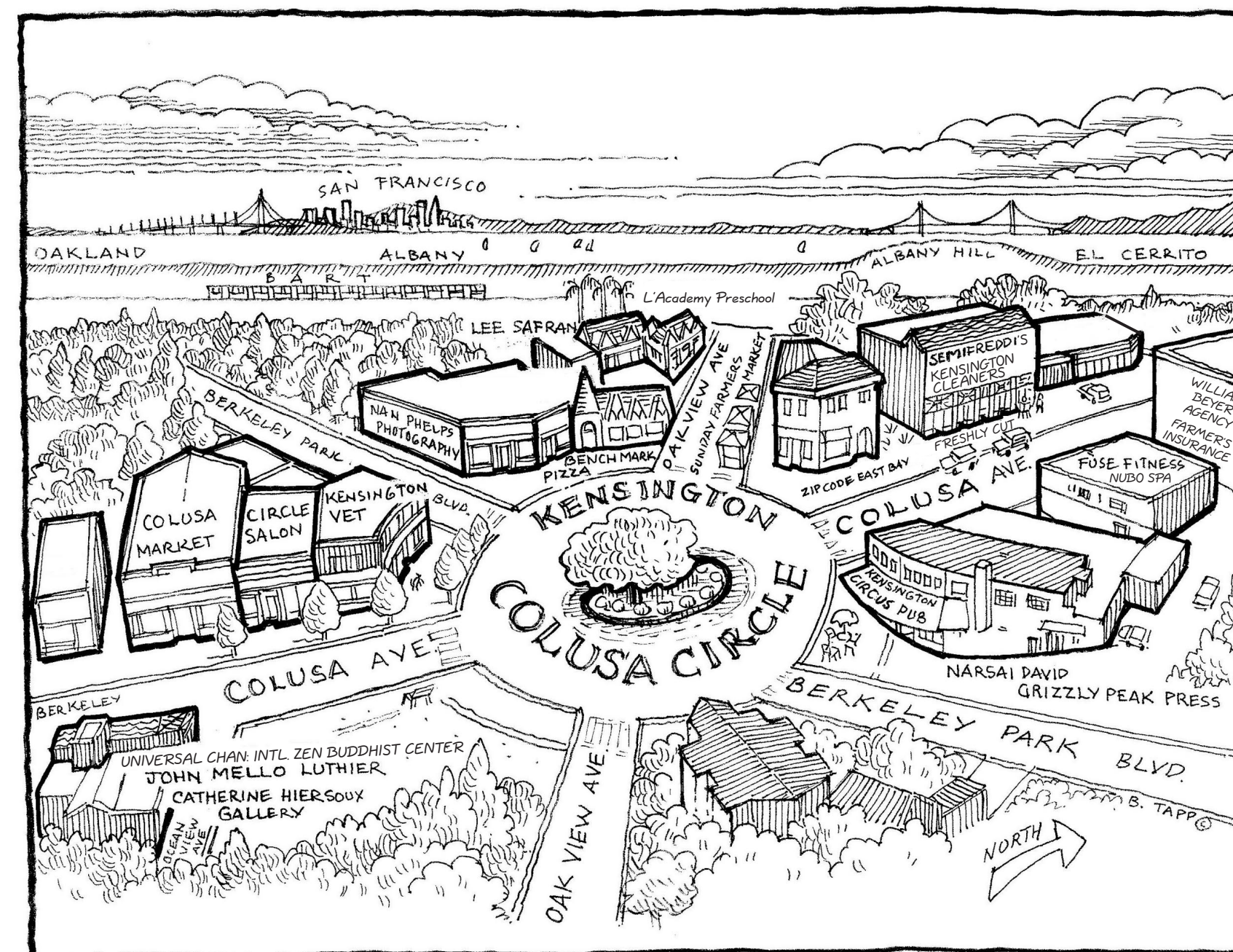
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Colusa Avenue



Colusa Circle Halloween Harvest Celebration Delights Crowds

By Rae Quigley

Colusa Circle came alive on Sunday morning, October 26, as costumed families, local merchants, and community members gathered for the annual Halloween Harvest Celebration. Hosted by the Kensington Farmers Market and the Colusa Circle Merchants Association, the neighborhood tradition once again transformed the area into a lively hub of laughter, music, and Halloween magic.

This year, the weather cooperated for the day—the clouds held off, and sunshine bathed the market through the end of festivities. The pumpkin and hay bale display at the center of the market was a focal point for families, where eager children posed for photos and picked out free pumpkins.

Costumed families filled the streets as the young explorers ventured around the circle's participating shops for the Scavenger Hunt. After collecting their stamps, scavengers celebrated their success with a sweet reward courtesy of Benchmark Pizzeria.

The costume parade drew cheers from onlookers as princesses, robots, animals, and fantasy characters made their way around the circle. Among this year's standouts were a stylish group of K Pop Demon Hunters who stole the show with their impressive, custom-made creations.

Over at Fuse Fitness, an energetic obstacle course kept kids moving and laughing, while families stopped by the photo booth near Benchmark Portavia to capture memories of their costumes and candy-filled adventures.

Later, Tracy the Animal Guy returned with his ever-popular traveling menagerie. Children were thrilled to meet his collection of friendly animals—fluffy bunnies, curious reptiles, and gentle birds among them—and many had their first chance to pet a tortoise or hold a baby chick.

As the afternoon came to a close, the Halloween Harvest Celebration once again proved that Colusa Circle isn't just a place to shop or dine. It's a place where neighbors come together to celebrate, share joy, and make memories that last well beyond the season.



Wildly Popular Tuesday Team Trivia Continues at ACC

By Sara Laferte

We have questions; do you have answers? Come to Arlington Community Church on Tuesday, December 9, from 7-9pm Team Trivia Tuesday. Bring your best team (three to five people recommended) or join a team when you arrive. The Trivia Guru will be John Chapman, host of the popular *49ers Rush* podcast.

Brush up on your sports, literature, movies and pop music knowledge. Or better yet, find that perfect addition to your team that knows what you don't! Adults, teens, and older children are welcome. There will be pizza, beverages, snacks, and prizes. You'll find easy parking across the street. Arlington Community Church, 52 Arlington Avenue.



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Kensington Community Education

Photo by Josh Kirk/Unsplash

KASEP-Kensington After School Program

New This Winter: Chess Club Comes to KASEP!

KASEP is excited to announce the addition of Chess Club to our winter session lineup for students in grades K-6!

Led by Checkmate Academy, this engaging after-school program introduces students to the exciting world of chess in a fun and supportive environment. Through hands-on instruction and structured play, students will learn key strategies, tactics, and game principles that build both skill and confidence.

Chess encourages players to think ahead, analyze positions, and make strategic decisions—valuable skills that strengthen focus, problem-solving, and critical thinking both on and off the board.

Join the fun this winter and discover why chess is known as the world's greatest strategy game! Fridays starting in January 1:30 for kindergarten students, 2:30 for grades 1-3 and 3:50 for grades 4-6.

Winter registration opens December 9th 7pm for TK & Kindergarten and 7:30 for grades 1-6. **The new session begins the week of January 5th, 2026.** Don't miss the chance to join in on the fun. KASEP offers more than 70 classes each week after school for kids TK-6th grade at the Kensington Park and Community Center.

Register at KensingtonCommunityCouncil/KASEP
Office: 59 Arlington Ave., Recreation Building Kensington CA 94707
E-mail: Info@KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org, or call 510-525-0292.
Our website is: www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org.



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Winter Schedule for Adult and Family Classes



Tai Chi with Nobuo Nishi
Wednesdays & Fridays from 9:30-11:00am
Community Center - Drop-in fee is \$15



Chair Yoga with Angi Love
Thursdays 10-11am
Community Center - Cost is \$15 drop in or register online



Yoga with Anja Borgstrom
Strength & Balance Yoga - Tuesdays at 8:30am
Community Center - Cost is \$20 drop in or register online



Holiday Party Ideas with April Schlanger
Tuesday, December 9th 6pm-8pm
Community Center Kitchen - Cost \$45

Learn how to host a memorable holiday party with style and ease! This class will cover creative appetizer and drink pairings, festive décor ideas, and simple entertaining tips to impress your guests without the stress. Perfect for anyone looking to add sparkle and fun to their seasonal celebrations.

An Introduction to Kensington's Flock Cameras

By Anya Sophe Behn

Perhaps you, like me, have been wondering about the Kensington Police Department's community cameras and police software.

My curiosity was piqued a few months ago, after reading Chief Mike Gancasz's updates in the chief's report about how valuable Flock cameras are in identifying the license plates of stolen cars, and individuals with outstanding warrants.

During our August National Night Out party, many of us shared questions and concerns about the cameras with our visiting police officers. During these conversations, I was reassured by the answers the officers gave, which promised that data is deleted after 30 days, the cameras monitor license plates but not drivers or passengers, and our privacy has been taken into consideration.

However, when I hear "cameras in public spaces," I can't help but think about the possibilities of over-the-top surveillance and privacy concerns. I am not comfortable with it. Here is why.

How Data Collection Works

Within software companies, collecting all the data possible has been all the rage for the past two decades, even when no one knows how it could be useful. Why? Initially because disk space became cheap and "you never know..."

The downside to collecting Everything (which cameras in public places often do) is that the majority of what is collected is irrelevant to policing. We are the ones most often captured on our Flock cameras.

The approach previous to saving absolutely everything was to only collect the data that was required. This was to protect individuals' privacy, and because, "Why would we collect more than we need to?"

Why does this matter? Because privacy is important to people. People fought for privacy. In software companies, protecting privacy was the industry standard, and the expectation that everyone had. Violations and abuses of privacy were a huge deal, with negative repercussions for an organization. Think of how the NSA's indiscriminate phone tapping of Americans was not well-received.

AI and Policing

Back to the Flock cameras: they use computer vision and what is commonly referred to as AI.

Why would the use of AI in police software and cameras be problematic? Because it can introduce errors caused by training and unmitigated by human judgment.

The concept of Artificial Intelligence was introduced in the 1940s, when scientists, science fiction authors, computer programmers (originally all women), and others begin thinking about artificial intelligence.

People refer to "AI" as a shorthand. What the term refers to are the programs resulting from teaching them to give the desired results. There are several types of AI, but none are actually "artificial intelligence," which refers to a programmed machine becoming conscious of itself and the world around it. This has not happened, and many experts on AI do not think it will happen anytime soon, despite the current hype.

The most talked-about type of AI in the past couple of years has been generative AI. These are Generative Pre-Trained Transformers (GPTs), which use an immense amount of data and electricity to train and run language and other models. The data used to train the models has to be digital, and the largest conglomeration of 'free' data is the Internet, aka the World Wide Web. The Internet repository is not the most stellar example of human interaction, and offline data is ignored.

Note that AI is not a given. It really doesn't have to be in every product. We can push back against it.

Facial Recognition Software and Bias

Tech workers have protested against their companies selling AI facial recognition technologies to police departments and governments because of very real negative impacts.

One issue is that the makers of "AI" programs, facial recognition software, cameras, and other police software systems are not necessarily aware of the consequences of uninformed decisions, and may not be educated about the criminal justice system.

Programmer biases are built into these systems. Worse, the data "AI" is trained on is skewed from the start. Who gets arrested most often, despite doing nothing, in the US? "Driving while Black" should not be a crime. Yet it is sadly still a reason for being pulled over.

Racist actions give us skewed data in police reports, as do limited data dimensions. Arrests and charges—without including the exonerations or dismissals of those arrests—gives an inaccurate picture of who is actually committing crimes. Some models only use arrest data and nothing else, which gives a more inaccurate depiction of reality.

When you combine one beginning initial vector (arrests) with facial recognition systems that cannot differentiate dark-skinned faces—men from women, for example, because the model was trained on light-skinned faces—you end up with the wrong people being arrested. The mistakes genAI can make have massive repercussions for people, on top of mistakes law enforcement can make. GenAI "hallucinates," which means it literally makes things up.

And then we have a recursive loop that makes the biases worse, because more faulty data is fed into the systems, on and on.

Dr. Joy Buolouami has done great work on this topic and was one of the first to realize



Photo by Anya Sophe Behn


that computer vision was not recognizing dark-skinned faces. Dark-skinned humans were literally invisible to computer vision programs. This is just one example of built-in bias which can cause real world harm.

What can our Kensington Police department do to address concerns like this? What are our anti-bias policies? These are concerns that our new combined special district, the Kensington Community Services District, could take up to allay our legitimate worries.

Note: Some of us have installed Ring cameras, which this fall announced a partnership with Flock. That is a lot of video of people. In addition, reportedly, ICE, Border Patrol, FBI, the Secret Service, and other Federal agencies already have access to Flock camera data. See <https://techcrunch.com/2025/10/16/amazons-ring-to-partner-with-flock-a-network-of-ai-cameras-used-by-ice-feds-and-police/>

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Home Business a Labor of Love

By Lin Due

Kensington baker Sara Jaffe and her business, Sara Jaffe Bakes, is now well into its second year. The *Outlook* first covered Jaffe's baking business as it was ramping up to production (see October 2024). Now Jaffe has expanded into popups, community events such as the recent Red Flag Ready Fest, and is considering offering cooking classes to residents. "Everything's going too fast," Jaffe said with a laugh. "I've been doing popups regularly now," she said. "I'm doing one December 6 at Tea on Piedmont." She has done several popups at El Cerrito events and also at Oaktown Spice Shop on Solano Avenue. "At those, people bought slices or cakes and took them away. The one at Tea on Piedmont will have different packaging so that people might just eat them right there. It's a different crowd, and it'll be interesting to see how they respond."

Jaffe has been working on various avenues to publicize and expand the business. "Doing the popups is one way. I'm also exploring treat boxes, a selection of several items so people can get a sampler. Also, people can drop by the house for a slice."

The idea is that, as she explained, "I offer different levels of action so people can get introduced to the product."

A happy group of firefighters got to taste several of Jaffe's offerings at the recent Red Flag Ready Fest, organized by Kensington Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Johnny Valenzuela. "I was really happy to be part of the Red Flag day," Jaffe said. "Johnny Valenzuela is fabulous. He has so much energy. The firemen had a good time judging the cakes." Jaffe also dropped off eight dozen butter cookies at KCC's picnic for people to taste.

Besides constantly trying new recipes and experimenting with flavor matches, Jaffe is trying a new approach to the holidays. "I'll be making galettes and tarts for the holidays. People can get the galettes fresh or as frozen and unbaked. You can pop it in the oven in the morning. And the tarts can be fresh or frozen and then brought to room temperature to be served. It's another option for people."

As to patterns that she's observed over time, she said, "I'm learning a lot, and trying a lot. And I still feel like this business is so new. I don't know that I see patterns. Sales go up, sales slow down. Mainly, I'm trying to build my repertoire. I have a much bigger selection than when we first talked."

Jaffe still does it all herself. "I'm getting more organized," she said. "I don't bake every day, but I work on it every day because there's marketing, packaging decisions, talking to people. I'm trying to figure out the right packaging at popups. At Oaktown, the packaging was too labor-intensive. I need to balance how things stay fresh, how much time does the packaging take, and of course how appealing it is."

Jaffe said that gingerbread is the biggest seller during the holidays. "I'll keep going with that through Christmas. I've also tried to featured cranberry items, such as cranberry upside-down cake and cranberry tart.

"The other thing I've been developing is gluten-free flour cakes. I have a small repertoire of gluten-free flour products. And I have a flourless nut torte."

What sells best changes with the season. "During the summer, I had a lemon cake with a strawberry buttercream that was very pretty. Apple walnut, apple cranberry tarts during

the warm months...It's too overwhelming to have too many choices!"

Despite the work, she is very glad that she took on baking as a second career after working as a designer for many years. "It's creative. It could be really exhausting, but it's fun. I have to be patient with it like with any other business. And there needs to be more than one way for the business to develop."

Hence the popups, treat boxes, and now cooking classes. "It would be a class focused on baking for just four to six people. People may have a group that they want to do it with. Or they may want a class on making something special." Jaffe plans on starting the classes in January or February, after the holiday rush.

Her business is all pre-order, with pickups at Jaffe's Purdue home. Order through the website sarajaffebakes.com or call 510-917-9276. She suggests that people enter their emails on her site to learn about special events, cooking classes—and of course the new scrumptious items Jaffe has created.



Civic Calendar

Attend board meetings, join a board, involve yourself in Kensington affairs. Your voice is important to the community and citizen participation is necessary for good governance.

Kensington Community Services District (KCSd) board meeting, December 18 and January 15, 7 pm, Community Center

Kensington Community Council (KCC) board meeting, December 8 and January 12, 6:30pm, Recreation Building, Kensington Park.

Kensington Improvement Club (KIC), January 26, 7pm, Community Center, Room 3

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KENSINGTON EATS OUT

Tackling Food Insecurity in the Bay Area: Ensuring a Place at the Table
By Ittai Shiu

Food insecurity isn’t hidden away—it’s present in our neighborhoods and shared among families, students, and seniors. Rising living expenses, the lingering effects of government shutdowns, and uncertainty around assistance programs continue to push more households toward instability.

In the Bay Area especially, our high-cost ecosystem often conceals how many residents struggle to keep fresh groceries on the table. Local relief organizations report surging demand as families stretch their budgets between rent and basic necessities. Access to healthy food remains unequal: communities of color, older adults, and students face the heaviest burdens. And hunger isn’t just about empty stomachs—it affects health, learning, and overall stability.

For all the abundance we celebrate in our food-obsessed region, far too many still go without. Thankfully, several organizations are stepping into the gap with compassion, scale, and commitment.

1. Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano (<https://www.foodbankccs.org>)

Serving two counties, this organization truly moves mountains—distributing over 2.7 million meals each month, two-thirds of which are fresh produce, proteins, and dairy. I first featured them two years ago, when a group of middle school students joined a food-sorting event—an eye-opening experience that revealed how widespread need can be. Every dollar counts here: just \$1 provides two meals, and 97¢ of every dollar goes directly to local food programs.

2. Alameda County Community Food Bank (<https://www.accfb.org>)

Covering Alameda County, this group supports more than 400 partner agencies—including pantries, childcare centers, and senior programs—and distributes enough to serve roughly 300,000 people each week. Their mission underscores an essential truth: hunger isn’t a matter of geography, but economics. In the Bay Area, even stable employment doesn’t always guarantee a stocked pantry.

3. Bay Area Rescue Mission (<https://www.bayarearescue.org>)

Located in Richmond, this long-standing organization has been addressing homelessness and hunger since 1965. Today, it serves thousands daily—providing meals, shelter, clothing, and life-skill programs. Its food pantry and distribution center help prevent homelessness by supporting families before a crisis hits.

Volunteering Time or Materials Means Everything

Small actions can have a big impact. Donating fresh produce, dairy, or proteins can stretch resources into countless servings. Volunteering your time—packing boxes, serving lunch, or driving deliveries—provides the human power these groups rely on. You can also help by sharing their stories, raising awareness, and reducing stigma. Hosting a food drive at your school, workplace, or faith group is another simple way to contribute. Local businesses can participate, too—becoming drop-off sites or sponsoring meal voucher programs in underserved areas.

Each act, no matter the size, nourishes more than bodies—it strengthens connection and hope. These nonprofits extend their tables to thousands each day; the rest of us are invited to join. Because when we help fill someone else’s plate, the entire Bay Area grows richer. Bring your time. Bring your generosity. Bring your curiosity.

Together, we can ensure everyone who calls this region home can sit at the table with dignity.



More Audio Troubles Disrupt District Meeting
By Lin Due

The second iteration of the newly formed Kensington Community Services District board meeting on November 13 got off to a rocky start when the audio did not work. Those on the Zoom webinar could hear Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Johnny Valenzuela (on Zoom himself) confirming that no one could hear anyone at the Community Center. Finally, after about ten or so minutes, something was fixed, and those online could hear.

At least hear *someone*. Of the nine directors, only Dave Spath, Daniel Levine, and Sylvia Hacaj were able to be heard clearly. Librarian Jenny Rockwell, at the microphone, sounded like she was speaking from under Pacific waves, while the general managers—David Aranda and Mary Morris-Mayorga—were inaudible. This ensured that trying to make sense of the meeting was like putting a jigsaw together without a photo on the box to guide the way.

The board approved the language for a brochure advertising for a permanent general manager with a filing deadline of January 4. To minimize confusion, it decided to maintain two separate budgets from the old districts until the end of the fiscal year.

In the most contentious agenda item, Jim Watt had listed a number of possible capital projects that he hoped his fellow board members would prioritize so that preliminary steps might be taken to consider them. This idea fell flat on its face as board directors said that they did not feel comfortable identifying individual projects to support or even discuss. Most felt that there needed to be a strategic plan before capital projects were initiated (Sarah Gough pointed out that hiring architects and making preliminary plans could run into tens of thousands of dollars).

Some of the projects Watt identified were not within the purview of the board (widening streets, for example), while others were. But the question is moot at the moment, though Aranda said that if Morris-Mayorga or he found grants for any projects, they would bring those to the board absent a strategic plan.

It is difficult to understand why a Zoom and audio setup that worked during the pandemic is now so problematic. Kensington residents with hearing difficulties found Zoom meetings helpful because volume on personal computers could be turned up, and there was no ambient noise. Several said they could finally hear what was going on. This needs to be a priority for a board hoping that more people participate in Kensington governance.

KCC Parade Hits Big, Over 300 Meals Served at Picnic

By Anne Forrest

For the first time in six years, the sound of a marching band could be heard along Arlington Avenue on October 19—and it was the Cal Straw Hat Band, no less! The Kensington Community Council took a big chance this year in bringing back the Kensington parade to precede the annual KCC picnic, and it worked! The sixty-plus-year tradition is alive and well.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who participated in the two events, and thanks to our sponsors Mechanics Bank, Red Oak Realty, and Nation’s for making the day such a wonderful community strong event. We had a good turnout this year (over 300 picnic lunches were consumed), and the weather was just right for an afternoon of music with the Korematsu Middle School Jazz Band and the Great Space Coaster Band.

Many young families enjoyed the art projects provided by KASEP’s own Vicky Brodt, and as always, Sterling the Bubblesmith provided lots of bubbles for the kids to pop! And Kensington baker Sara Jaffe contributed dozens of cookies for picnickers to enjoy.

Events like these couldn’t happen in Kensington without people stepping up and volunteering. The Kensington Community Council is always looking for volunteers for its annual events, including Movie Night and the parade and picnic.

Our monthly meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 6:30, and the public is always welcome. For more information: 510-525-0290 or email: info@KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org.



Photo by Mark Altenberg

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YEAR IN REVIEW 2025
with ZIP CODE EAST BAY

PROUDLY SERVING KENSINGTON FOR MORE THAN A DECADE!

As we reflect on 2025, we're proud to celebrate an incredible year serving the Kensington community. We're so grateful for the opportunity to help neighbors navigate one of life's most important decisions. Below are a few of our highlights from the past year:

- ★ Tied for #1 real estate team in Kensington (# of transactions)!
- ★ 20 transactions totaling over \$22.3M in sales (as of 11/10/25)!
- ★ 30% increase in staff volunteer hours (yielding 300+ hours)!
- ★ More than \$4,000 raised for the Watershed Project at the Colusa Circle 5K (prioritizing the planet over profit)!
- ★ 45% of our suppliers are women-owned or underrepresented populations (prioritizing people over profit)!
- ★ B Corp recertification score of 91.1 (increased from 87)!
- ★ Thousands of puzzle pieces placed (we love our hobbies)!
- ★ Millions of steps & countless memories made (go team)!

THANK YOU, KENSINGTON, FOR YOUR CONTINUED TRUST AND PARTNERSHIP. AS WE LOOK FORWARD TO 2026, WE'RE EXCITED TO KEEP WORKING WITH YOU TO ACHIEVE YOUR REAL ESTATE GOALS. HERE'S TO ANOTHER YEAR OF GROWTH AND COMMUNITY!

EACH OFFICE IS INDEPENDENTLY OWNED AND OPERATED. DRE 02029039.

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