KENSINGTON OUTLOOK 59 ARLINGTON AVE KENSINGTON, CA 94707-1037

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
OAKLAND CA
PERMIT NO. 8058





FEBRUARY 2023

PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**VOLUME 81 NUMBER 1** 



Kensington Elementary School teacher Carolyn Landau is hard at work with her second and third grade students in one of the school's combination classes. This lesson is on history's "Changemakers." Photo by Megan Burnham.

## **Kensington Hilltop Elementary School Named California Distinguished School**

By Liz Sanders, West Contra Costa Unified School District Director of Communications Kensington Hilltop Elementary School has once again been recognized as a California Distinguished School by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Kensington was one of 350 elementary schools statewide to receive this award, which celebrates exceptional schools based on their performance in English Language Arts and Mathematics, along with other indicators reported on the 2022 Dashboard.

Despite the challenges of the past few years, students at Kensington continue to demonstrate a high level of proficiency in meeting academic standards.

See Distinguished School, page 5

## December District Meetings Consolidation Takes Center Stage at Police Board

By Linnea Due

Before the start of the hybrid Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District (KPPSCD) meeting at the Community Center on December 8, outgoing director Mike Logan said that this was the first meeting he'd gone to in person. Logan was appointed to take Cyrus Modavi's seat after Modavi resigned during COVID, so Logan's entire tenure was on Zoom. He was all smiles behind his N95 mask—an item now required by the KPPCSD board for in-person attendance.

The new board directors—Alex Aquino-Fike, Sarah Gough, and Cass Duggan—were sworn in before attending a closed meeting at 5:30. As the 7pm regular meeting started, board president Sylvia Hacaj announced that there were 22 attendees on Zoom, including director Eileen Nottoli. The four other directors sat at tables in the front, facing an audience of about 12 people.

The first item extended the Kensington Community Council's contract to February 28. After Rachelle Sherris-Watt chose not to run for reelection, Sylvia Hacaj has become the sole board member negotiating a new contract with KCC representatives Anne Forrest and Cathy Garza. Director Sarah Gough wanted to see the contract that's being negotiated, and Cass Duggan wanted to join the negotiating team. Board counsel Ann Danforth explained that was not possible as adding people was not on

See Meetings, page 3

See Joint Occupancy Plans page 7; Citizen Forum page 10

#### **Kensington and Beyond Update**

February 2023



NEW LISTING | 425 Yale Ave. Kensington | 4 BR | 3 BA Spanish architecture, vaulted beamed ceilings, and gorgeous updates throughout. Inspiring views of the Bay.

To view online, visit: 425yale.com OFFERED AT: \$895,000



#### NEW LISTING | 55 Kingston Rd. Kensington | 5 BR | 4 BA

Expansive, gorgeous home! Surprising in size and scale, sited on extra-large level parcel. Mid-way between Village shops and Colusa Circle. Bay views.

To view online, visit: 55kingston.com OFFERED AT: \$2,440,000

My primary objective is to identify and provide the service my clients need to accomplish their real estate goals, whether they are purchasing or selling a home. What is the Compass Concierge Program? It is a hassle-free way to sell your home faster and for the highest possible price. A majority of my sellers are taking advantage of the Concierge program, this ingenious program provides the funds you need to prepare your home, upfront. No catch, no hoops to jump through, no up-charge for this service. From painting to flooring and everything in between, Concierge-prepare your home with zero upfront costs and no interest-ever. It is one of the reasons I joined COMPASS. Compass Concierge is only one of an assortment of programs designed for me to serve you better while protecting your interests and realizing exceptional results.

If you are interested in knowing the vlaue of your home or what is required to sell a home in this market, call me. The appointment is confidential and complimentary.

Serving Kensington for over 30 years. Specializing in Residential Real Estate and Trust Sales. Consider me your real estate resource.



Ruth Frassetto, CRS | 510.697.8606 | ruth.frassetto@compass.com | DRE 00779030 Over 25+ years of experience. Consider me your Real Estate resource.

Compass is a licensed real estate broker and abides by Equal Housing Opportunity laws. All material presented herein is intended for informational purposes only. Exact dimensions can be obtained by retaining the services of an architect or engineer. This is not intended to solicit property already listed.

COMPASS

#### Kensington | Market Update 4th guarter 2021 vs 2022

Pending Sales



Detached Single Family

Median List Price

Median DOM

Median Sq. Ft.

10

Median List Price

Median Sales Price

Closed Sales

\$1,725,000 Median Sq. Ft.

DOM

10 Closed Sales Oct - Dec, 2021 Median List Price \$1,260,000 Median Sales Price \$1,495,000 Median Sq. Ft:

Comparison

1.994 DOM 14

2021

In summary Q4 2022 the market is up 14% from Q4 2021, however, this is changing and the trend is downward.

#### HOW CAN SELLERS PREPARE?

While market conditions that are tipped somewhat less in favor of sellers may be causing some hesitation among owners contemplating a sale- new listing inventory has been notably lower than they were one year ago for the last 4 months -sellers can have success in this market as long as they approach with reasonable expectations that are very different from what was the norm less than a year ago. Even in August 2022, our data show that home sellers were making more buyer-friendly concessions than they had 6-12 months ago. Examples include, accepting contingencies such as for appraisal, financing, and home inspection, making repairs, paying for buyer closing costs, or being flexible on the timing of closing. Of note, recent sellers more often reported making repairs before listing and were also more likely to make or pay for repairs during the contract period. In short, buyer budgets are stretched to the max and sellers who understand this and help buyers get a move-in ready home will have an edge. Each real estate market is unique and some are hotter or cooler than the national trends. I am happy to discuss the market with you and can help you put these trends in context for your property.



\*Information from realtor.com

If you are interested in knowing the value of your home or what it takes to sell a home in this market, call me. The appointment is confidential and

Ruth Frassetto, CRS | 510.697.8606 | ruth.frassetto@compass.com | DRE 00779030

Over 25+ years of experience you can count on

COMPASS

Compass is a licensed real estate broker and abides by Equal Housing Opportunity laws. All material presented herein is intended for informational purposes only. Exact dimensions can be obtained by retaining the services of an architect or engineer. This is not intended to solicit property already listed.

#### LICENSE #721226 **AURORA PAINTING & DECORATING** Serving Bay Area Customers for 20 Years

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR WATERPROOF COATINGS WOOD RESTORATION **COLOR CONSULTATION** RESIDENTIAL . COMMERCIAL SENIOR DISCOUNT **BONDED • INSURED KENSINGTON REFERENCES** 

CALL TODAY FOR A FREE ESTIMATE 510.655.9267

www.aurora-painting.com



- Interior and exterior
- Waterproofing
- EPA certified painters
- All work guaranteed

www.omnipainting.com



- Renovation and restoration

510.654.3339



## PREPARING FOR ATMOSPHERIC RIVERS

Many Californians were caught off-guard by the parade of winter storms that recently passed through our region. Concerns of flooding and erosion became so prevalent that the request for sandbags quadrupled compared to previous years. These January storms demonstrated the necessity to prepare for the impacts of a high volume of rainfall despite the persistent drought. Protecting our home from unexpected high-volume rainfall is another item added to the preparedness to-do list. Keeping sandbags available for your home and identifying vulnerable areas on your property to protect against water intrusion and erosion is a task we must all complete. If you used sandbags, consider the contaminants to which these sandbags may have been exposed during the flooding. It is recommended to use appropriate personal protective equipment while handling used sandbags. After handling sandbags, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. Uncontaminated sandbags may be stored on your property for reuse; however, mold can become a problem if they are wet. Ensure sandbags are stored dry. Learn more about sandbag use and availability by visiting www.kensingtonfire.org/sandbags —Johnny Valenzuela, **Emergency Preparedness Coordinator** 

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.

#### MARCH DEADLINES

Advertising Deadline \* February 8 Editorial Deadline \* February 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.

#### K E N S I N G T O N OUTLOOK

LINNEA DUE

ALMA KEY

PUBLISHER KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

59 Arlington Ave. Kensington, CA 94707-1307

Published ten times a year by the nonprofit Kensington Community Council. (Monthly, except for the combined July/August and December/January issues.) Available online at www.KensingtonOutlook.com, courtesy of AboutKensington.com. Non-Kensington residents can subscribe by mail for \$10 annually.

Editorial.....

editor@KensingtonOutlook.com Advertising......510-508-3241 advertising@KensingtonOutlook.com

#### Classified Advertising

Classified ad rates are \$8 a line (45 spaces or characters), with a 2-line minimum. Online ad forms are available after the back issues listings at: www.KensingtonOutlook.com. Mail: For display and classified advertising, please contact our advertising manager by phone or email. Other mail to: 59 Arlington Ave., Kensington, CA 94707.

Thank you!

## **Letters to the Editor**

#### Joint Analysis of Costs/Impacts Needed

Dear Editor:

This letter was sent by the board of the Kensington Property Owners Association to the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District (KPPCSD) and the Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD) board directors on January 10. Dear Board Directors:

We advocate that a comprehensive cost-benefits/operations evaluation of possible locations for our police department be completed jointly by both boards before a vote is taken on a decision.

For many years, the KPOA urged the KPPCSD and KFPD to work together to find a solution to house the police department in the existing Public Safety Building (PSB). After several architectural designs were done, it appeared that at least none of them adequately addressed the operational concerns of the police chief and staff. We are impressed with departmental reforms by Chief Gancasz, and think it wise if the two boards evaluate and decide on a location solution that preserves and rewards that progress, and evaluates any effects on the fire department's operations. It is also clear to us that our police department needs to return from El Cerrito to Kensington, either in the PSB or elsewhere.

In sum, it seems logical that the two boards cooperatively conduct a joint, thorough analysis of location options, with best estimates of the short- and long-term costs of each option, also including effects on the two departments' operations in addition to district financial effects—before voting on a final departmental location solution.

We have not seen any analysis that is nearly comprehensive. Separate board analyses will not be helpful. We think that only a joint analysis can provide a publicly acceptable answer.

#### Rob Firmin, President, Kensington Property Owners Association KPOA Board of Directors

#### Seize the Opportunity

Dear Editor:

At the December fire board meeting concerned citizens may have seen what I believe to be a fortuitous development for all of us here in Kensington: The new majority of said board is revising plans for the Public Safety Building (PSB) to include permanent occupancy for the police administration. This is a terrific opportunity to save millions of dollars for the community and keep the police centered geographically so as to minimize response times, evenly, to all portions of our town.

Having seen the new direction of the fire board, the police board needs to seize this opportunity and partner with fire board, ASAP, to reestablish long-term joint housing of our protective services in the remodeled Public Services Building. Failure to work effectively with the fire board this time may cause us great financial hardship, a poor location for police administration and/or the eventual outsourcing of the police function.

#### Andrew Reed

#### Vital Decisions Ahead for New Board

Dear Editor:

As an observer and participant since about 1990 in the ongoing factious KPPCSD debate on how vital police services were administered, I must reflect on the considerable progress that occurred over the last ten years after progressive candidates were elected. Resolved were severe mismanagement issues, police scandals, high legal costs, incompetent police services, and police union contributions to candidates. Separating the general manager and the chief of police positions enabled employment of a highly competent GM and a progressive COP, changes that encouraged the departure of troublesome officers, the recruitment of new professional officers, and the employment of new legal and accounting services to assure meetings and records were by the book. As an aside, the KPPCSD remodeled the community center on time and on budget.

Despite remarkable progress, the new KPD and KFD board members elected by a well-financed slate campaign must address important unresolved issues. Chief among these is the question of whether the KPD and the KFD can jointly occupy the remodeled Public Safety Building (PSB) that sits on the Hayward Fault. This proposal is opposed by both chiefs because the space does not accommodate modern fire trucks, joint occupancy would not meet regulations for either department, or other issues. Residents should visit the temporary KPD facilities on San Pablo Ave. in El Cerrito to see the functioning of our modern police department. Forced housing of the two departments in the PSB could lead to the departure of police officers, destabilizing progress and reintroducing dysfunction.

Removing old diseased bark beetle-infested Monterey pines is meeting with resistance, and the new KPPCSD must decide if the community's liability insurance is sufficient to compensate anyone injured by falling limbs and trees, or prudently remove weakened ecologically ill-suited trees in their jurisdiction.

The board has tasked itself to explore amalgamation of the KPD and KFD boards. This sounds like an innovative idea, but the devil will be in the details of the possible.

I hope the new KPPCSD board members will exercise independent non-slate thinking to solve these issues. Best wishes in moving Kensington forward.

#### **Andrew Paul Gutierrez**

#### Of Grace and Gratitude

Dear Editor:

At the Dec 14 Kensington Fire District board meeting, which I attended and later listened to, among items on the agenda were Certificates of Appreciation for former directors Janice Kosel and Kevin Padian, Janice for her 28 years of service with a long list of projects she championed, Kevin for his valuable work implementing Emergency Preparedness action.

However, Director Julie Stein immediately objected: First because the items hadn't been available until 6 pm. Yes, late, but then these are not items that merit any great analysis. Second because she fussed about some of Kosel's accomplishments, particularly an exaggeration of work on upgrading fire hydrants. The motion to award the certificate failed 3-2, Nagel and Watt voting to pass.

Director Stein then objected to one for Padian because of some concerns. I do understand those concerns, but Padian's work on Emergency Preparation was critical to raising community awareness and action on the problems of evacuating Kensington, particularly in case of fire, and should be recognized.

Normally such recognition would pass readily, without objection. As I stated to Stein in public comment: "You are being unkind!" I refrained from a stronger description. It is sad that we have people and leaders who can't be gracious. These directors did a lot of unpaid work and the least we as a community can give them is a Thank You for Your Contributions.

**Mabry Benson** 

#### **Meetings**

...from front page

the agenda, while interim General Manager Tony Constantouros said that the contract would be presented to the board after the three negotiators agreed upon its language. The new directors were assured that they would have a chance to weigh in on the contract.

Next on the agenda was raising garbage rates. Greg Christie from Bay View Refuse and Recycling explained that a 5.7 percent raise was allowable per the Consumer Price Index, but that the refuse company was asking for 4 percent. He did not have figures for how much volume the new food waste pickup had diverted from landfill. Perhaps the biggest announcement was that starting January 1, Kensington residents can take hazardous waste to the El Cerrito recycling station at 7501 Schmidt Lane. Elderly and disabled residents can call for a home pickup at Bay View at (510) 237-4614.

#### **Consolidation to be Studied**

An agenda item requested that the board endorse consolidation of the KPPCSD and the Kensington Fire Protection District (KFPD). Hand-in-hand with this item was a letter sent by the Kensington Property Owners Association (KPOA) urging both boards to prioritize consolidation and to consider hiring a general manager to serve both boards now. KFPD GM Bill Hansell left at the end of December, and interim GM Tony Constantouros leaves at the end of February.

Duggan said that she believed it the duty of the board to give serious consideration to consolidation and supported the plan that Contra Costa County's LAFCO (Local Agency Formation Commission) executive director Lou Ann Texeira, who would oversee the process, be invited to address the board.

Alex Aquino-Fike cautioned that a wholesale endorsement of consolidation was premature. She suggested that an ad hoc committee be formed to examine potential risks and costs, adding that basic fundamental questions needed to be answered.

Nottoli said that while she supports consolidation she too believes it needs to be studied. A fear is that the county could take a portion of Kensington's tax allocation if there is one special district rather than two. She thought it possible that a GM position overseeing both districts could attract a good candidate (the KPPCSD has had trouble attracting a part-time general manager). Aquino-Fike chimed in, asking board counsel Ann Danforth to examine the idea of a joint GM for legality and possible conflict of interest.

There was a great deal of public comment, most supporting consolidation. In the end, the board voted to endorse exploration of consolidation rather than endorsing the concept, and directors hoped that the fire board would also investigate the idea.

Alex Aquino-Fike was elected new board president, with Sarah Gough vice president. Gough noted that one of her goals is to reinstitute committees, both ad hoc and standing. **Fire Board Beset by Technical Problems** 

Consolidation was not on the agenda of the KFPD, so while that topic was raised during public comment, the board could not take it up. The meeting was held in the Fireside Room at the Unitarian Church, and the attempt at a hybrid meeting did not go well. Attendees on Zoom could not hear all the directors or see speakers at the podium. Echoes and feedback strained ears. And San Francisco Symphony members invaded the room to carry away many armless chairs. It's hard to play a cello in an armchair.

The first order of business was swearing in directors elected in November: Jim Watt, Daniel Levine, and Julie Stein. During public comment, board president Larry Nagel read the same KPOA letter urging consolidation that was sent to the police board. Julie Stein passed out long tubes containing plans for a police and fire presence in the Public Safety Building drawn by Kensington architect Bart Jones, and Jim Watt said that he had engaged a second architect to draw up shared-use plans utilizing the same configuration as the county-approved fire-only plan. This, he said, would reduce costs if the police went back into the PSB.



Outgoing president Larry Nagel delivers the oath of office to from left, far end of table, Jim Watt, Daniel Levine, and Julie Stein. Note the armless chairs which soon disappeared courtesy of the San Francisco Symphony. Photo by Linnea Due.

Two resolutions were proposed, thanking Janice Kosel and Kevin Padian for past service to the board. The resolution thanking Padian passed with 3 ayes and 2 abstentions (Stein, Levine) while that thanking 28-year veteran Kosel failed 3-2, with Stein, Levine, and Don Dommer voting against. After the meeting, Nagel said he was "both saddened and embarrassed by what happened." (District firefighters and the firefighters' union soon mounted redresses; see photo on page 4.)

A resolution to commend Kosel next appeared on the January 18 regular board meeting agenda, citing her 28 years on the board as opposed to the language on the aborted December commendation, which numbered twelve "where-as" clauses describing particulars. Also added to the January 18 agenda was a change in the policy manual that would limit future commendations to number of years of service with no possibly controversial descriptions of accomplishments. This new policy would leave past director Padian with a unique collection of six "where-as" clauses attached to his commendation.

Mary Morris-Mayorga, who served as interim general manager before Bill Hansell,

See Meetings, page 6



On December 27, El Cerrito/Kensington firefighters banded together to give outgoing Kensington Fire Protection District director Janice Kosel a commendation for her longtime service on the fire board. Kosel attended several hundred badge ceremonies, retirement dinners, board meetings, and other functions over the 28 years she served as director, and counts many present and past firefighters as friends. The department's Facebook post thanks Kosel for "ensuring that we had the training, equipment and support to do our job.'

From left to right: firefighter Daniel Rosas, fire chief Eric Saylors, Kosel, captain/paramedic Damien Carrion and engineer/paramedic Adam Birdsell. Later, on January 8, the firefighters' union gave Kosel an honorary plaque signed by every firefighter in the department.

#### **November Police Log**

- On November 2 KPD was dispatched to a residential burglary in the 500 block of Kenyon Avenue. During the investigation, it was determined that somebody smashed a side window to the house at about 12:57pm and ransacked the house, stealing only small items. Several pieces of evidence were collected and submitted to the crime lab for
- On November 4 at about 5pm, an intoxicated person was contacted in the 200 block of Arlington Avenue and arrested for PC 647(F)-Drunk in Public. The person was cited and released from the scene before being transported to the hospital for their safety.
- On November 5 at 5:04pm, KPD responded to a non-injury solo traffic collision involving a vehicle that was traveling too fast and ran off the road, before getting stuck in the mud on Arlington Avenue near Westminster Avenue.
- On November 6 at about 8:32am, two suspicious vehicles were spotted near the area of Highgate Road and Sunset Drive. While investigating the vehicles, it was determined that both vehicles were registered to the same VIN number, had switched license plates to possibly avoid paying registration fees and yet had a different VIN number on one of the vehicles. That vehicle was impounded, and the CHP VIN verification specialist was requested to determine the status of the vehicle. The investigation is ongoing.
- On November 14 at about noon, a residential burglary took place on the 100 block of Lam Court. A police K-9 search was conducted in the area with negative results. Only small items that are easily disposable were stolen.
- On November 16 at about 11am, KPD responded to a report of an elderly person who died overnight in the 700 block of Coventry Road. The Contra Costa County Sheriff's Department was notified and immediately released the body to the family, because the death was due to natural causes.
- On November 23 KPD responded to the 100 block of Windsor Avenue on a report of an online scam that defrauded the victim of \$500. An investigation was launched and determined the telephone scam originated on the East Coast with a fraudulent company name. The homeowner was fortunately reimbursed the money after filling out an Affidavit of Forgery with their banking institution.
- On November 23 at about 3:11pm, KPD responded to a welfare check in the 100 block of Jessen Court. The investigation resulted in the homeowner being safely located and being transported to the hospital.
- On November 27 at 12:05pm, KPD conducted a traffic enforcement stop in the 100 block of Arlington Avenue and cited the driver for violation of CVC 14601.2(A)-Driving on a Suspended License for violation of DUI.
- On November 28 KPD was dispatched to a cold Hit & Run collision in the 300 block of Berkeley Park Blvd.

#### **December Police Log**

- On December 3 at 05:26am, a vehicle was burglarized while parked in the garage when the garage door was accidentally left open all night in the 600 block of Beloit Avenue. Video of the incident was obtained and transferred into Kensington Evidence, via the Axon Evidence Citizen Link.
- During the month of December, nine catalytic converters were reported stolen throughout the District of Kensington. Evidence was collected at several locations and fingerprints were collected and submitted to the Contra Costa County Forensics Laboratory for analysis. As a result of the thefts, staffing was shifted, placing extra officers onto the streets during high peak time frames.
- On December 7 at about 1:15pm, a Hit & Run collision was reported in the 700 block of Wellesley Avenue.
- On December 8 at 04:34am, KPD responded to a disturbance in the 200 block of Coventry Road. Both parties separated to avoid the situation from escalating.
- On December 9 at 5:50pm, a Hit & Run Collision of a parked vehicle took place in the 300 block of Berkeley Park Blvd. A witness thought a post office truck may have witnessed the incident. The postmaster at the Berkeley PO was contacted to try and locate a potential witness with negative results.
- On December 14 a house in the 200 block of Los Altos Drive was burglarized between 7am to 9am. A video of the suspect was captured and transferred into Kensington Evidence, via the Axon Evidence Citizen Link. Multiple surfaces were fingerprinted with several latent prints collected and multiple objects were swabbed for potential DNA using the AddiPak Sodium Chloride Solution. All evidence was collected and submitted to the Contra Costa County Forensics Laboratory for analysis. The investigation is
- On December 14 at 11:03pm, KPD and KFD responded to a medical emergency.

KPD arrived on scene first and rendered assistance to the conscious person. After KFD arrived on scene the person collapsed and medics performed CPR and life-saving measures for approximately 32 minutes, including CPR. However, the person was never resuscitated and pronounced deceased on scene by the paramedics.

- On December 15 at 3:16am, KPD responded to a non-injury solo vehicle collision of a driver who fell asleep at the end of Grizzly Peak Blvd and Kenyon Avenue.
- On December 15 at 12:37pm, KPD and KFD were dispatched to a medical emergency in the 100 block of Sunset Drive. KPD responded and arrived on scene in 57 seconds and relieved the neighbor who was performing CPR on an elderly male who collapsed near his front door. KPD took over performing CPR until KFD arrived moments later. Additional lifesaving measures were performed. The male was transported to a local hospital and was later pronounced deceased.
- On December 19 at 5pm, KPD responded to a medical emergency in the 1600 block of Ocean View Avenue and remained until the person was transported to a local hospital for further evaluation.
- On December 16 KPD took a complaint for attempted extortion via cybercrime committed on the internet.
- On December 28 KPD and KFD responded to the 100 block of Purdue Avenue for an elderly fall victim who was transported to a local hospital for medical evaluation.



New Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District directors pose with outgoing president Sylvia Hacaj after being sworn in. From left, Alex Aquino-Fike, Sarah Gough, Cass Duggan, Hacaj. Photo by Tony Constantouros

#### KCC Annual Fund Drive Donors

KCC thanks you for your generous donations.

Donations up to \$100 Jack Miller

Mary Hammond Susan da Silva & William Mack

Deborah & Michael Feiler

Jonell & Heather Lucas Brent Green

Sharon & Napoleon Brandford

William & Mabry Benson

Naomi Lidicker & Victor Ishino

Edward Spiller David Kundtz & Robert Stenberg

Joseph Deville Janet Forsburg

Edison & Shirley Chan

Doreen Eger

Patricia & Joshua Bortman

Marvin Martin Holly Aaron

Katherine Gerwia

Lawrence Wong Kenneth & Carol Johnston

Reyes & Betty Barraza

Jadyne & David Buchholz

Lorraine Osmundson

Marcia Crawford Elisabeth Cornu

M. Catherine Bailey & Jack Telian

James & Irene Watt

Betty & William Webster Rosalyn Heimberg

Eugenia Bailey

David Eichorn Jon Bashor

John Ferreira & Mary Nelson

Eloise Fox

Lewis Feldman Teri & Ali Alvami

Ilene & Richard Sheng

Van Baldwin Kenneth Hempel

Terry Ann Cort Janice & Dick Eng

David Pyle

Philip Farrocco

M. E. Hutchings

Knute Fisher Mary Cochran-Abrahams

Michiko Asao-Wells Russell Wells

Franklin Zimring & Michal Crawford-

The Hazel Hung Trust in memory of

Alexander Karu Bart & Diana Jones

Agnes Chen

Roland & Susan Yourd

Lisa Coronna-Perley

Victoria Galland

Dagnija Peterson William Lee & Amy Resner Stephen Van Den Eeden & Assiamira

Judson & Jeanne King Mark Wegner & Mary Korn

Robin Noda & Mark Lorenz Marion Bar-Din S Kim Morimoto

Eileen and John Kramer Russell Dedrick & Betsy Gardiner Gloria Bayne

John & Cynthia McAfee John & Lois Hoagland

Joanne Phillips Glenn & Gloria Morrison

Anneliese Armstrong Marty Westby

Monica Sullivan Deborah Ruth Patricia Hosmer

Donations \$100 and above

Dane Gillette Diane Egelston

Jeannette & Gordon Dey David Hampton & Lillian Fujimoto

Patrick Schlesinger & Esther Hill

Ciara Wood

Jon & Anne Forrest

James & Carol Patton

Alison McLean Thomas Dean

Helen Kennedy

Beverlee French & Craig Rice Sally Nichols

Samuel Post

John and Diane Gossard David & Maria Laforge Lon Poole & Karin Bliman

Carol Tomlinson Balappa & Geetha Pugashetti

Annette McCoubrey -Hoyer

Sylvia Elsbury Susan Garfin

Julie Stein Gerard Walters

Susan Gann Adam Bastein

Louis & Judith Alley David & Sylvia Fike

Leigh Schneider Carl & Lisa Brodsky

Generous Donors \$1000 and above

Dale & Danielle Power Anonymous Donor

#### **Distinguished School**

...from front page

"We are extremely honored to have received this award, which celebrates the hard work and dedication of our faculty and staff, as well as the resilience of our students and the support of their families," said Megan Burnham, Kensington Elementary principal.

Kensington Hilltop first received the California Distinguished School Award in 1993 and again in 2018, when it was recognized for the Collaborative Intervention Model that it uses to support high achievement for all students.

That model, explained in the successful 2018 application for the Distinguished School Award, "targets improved outcomes for all students by providing a rich and broad range of enrichment and intervention programs available to every child. Our unique offerings of interdisciplinary enrichment and targeted intervention opportunities multiple times each week add value to all students' academic programs and actively engage them in learning.

The implementation of our model gives access to all necessary interventions and supports while providing a robust and rigorous learning environment in each classroom for all students."

Principal Burnham added that this model was implemented over the many years of service past principal Judy Sanders offered to Kensington. "It is a testament to her vision and dedication to have worked closely with teachers, staff and volunteers to ensure such a complete intervention model continues to thrive today," wrote Burnham in an email.

PassingsRosemary Kathleen Ford, a 73-year resident of Kensington, passed away peacefully in her home on November 7 at the age of 100 years.

During the Depression, Rosemary and her mother followed her father's welding jobs along the Pacific Coast. In the summers, they camped in the Sierras to pan for gold, which supported them during those months. Rosemary attended 33 schools because of this nomadic life and as a result, she loved to travel, made friends easily, and saw life as an adventure.

During WWII, Rosemary managed a daycare for "Rosie the Riveter" mothers who welded ships in Richmond, where her parents also worked. During this time, she also attended UC Berkeley and graduated in 1945.

During the war, Rosemary met Howard Gregory (Greg) Ford, an army officer from New York. They were married in San Francisco in 1949 and

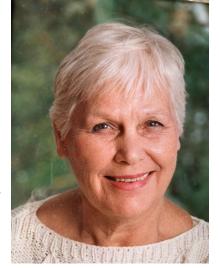
had three children, Rosemary Catherine, Gregory Terrence (Terry), and Carol Ann. Greg remained a career officer and brought the family with him to Oberammergau, Germany; Brooklyn, NY; and Camp Zama, Japan.

After Greg's passing in 1978, Rosemary became the Secretary of St. Jerome Parish and worked there for the next 17 years, retiring at age 74.

Rosemary will be remembered for her constant optimism, energy, intelligence, and caring soul. She was a rock for her children throughout her life and provided a safe haven in her home for several young adults needing to get back on their feet. Rosemary is survived by her daughters Rosemary C Ford and Carol Ann Olff, their husbands Leon Roueche and Michael Olff, her grandchildren Vel, Kathleen, and Bryan, her great-grandchildren Parker and Leah, and her cousin Sandra Hanna.

Jean Kukulan Reilly, a resident of Kensington since 1956, died on December 9 at the age of 102. Jean and her husband Joe sent two young boys to Kensington Hilltop School, and Jean was active as a volunteer in the schools and library. She continued her devotion to public schools by tutoring in the Berkeley schools for many years.

Jean loved her woodsy and tranquil neighborhood on Coventry Road, and over the years she organized with her neighbors to preserve its character. Reading literature and poetry was a passion of Jean's, and she was a devoted supporter of the Kensington Library. Jean was a passion ate member of a monthly poetry group originally organized by Cecile Weaver. During the COVID era this group converted to Zoom meetings, and Jean enjoyed her last meeting a month prior to her death.



Dedicated to the outdoors and hiking, Jean and a group of three friends—Marge, Evelyn and Margrit—hiked the Nimitz in Tilden Park every Wednesday for 40 years and created an enduring bond of friendship. A transplant from Seattle during WW2, Jean stayed in Berkeley while husband Joe was serving in the Navy. They stayed and loved the beauty of California from Carmel to Yosemite and were devoted to preserving these natural wonders.



#### YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

Connect with us throughout the week.

SUNDAY MORNINGS In-person & Online Worship at 11:00 a.m. followed by Coffee Hour (in-person)

Check our website for details and more ways to connect: www.uucb.org

Supporting beloved community —

RICK PARIS 310-630-9829

#### HOME REPAIR EXPERT I love fixing things, all things well, and am very good at it.

I can also do quality auto body repair work. My skills include carpentry, painting, color matching, small electric and plumbing jobs, windows, glass, doors, locks, drywall, fences, sprinklers, decks & any odd job.

Kensington • Berkeley • Oakland





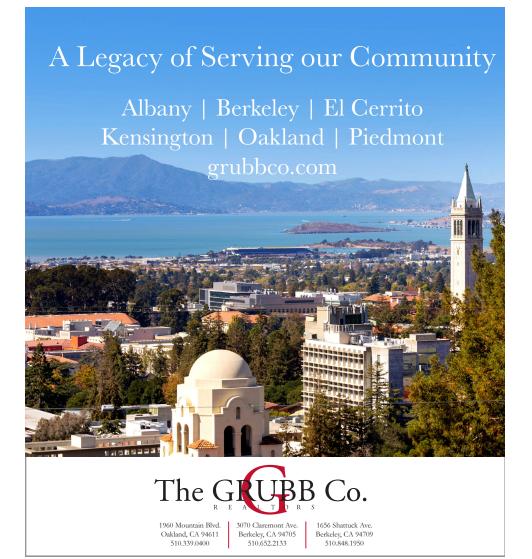
Caring for trees since 1978. Our services range from consultation

through all aspects of tree health care and removal. We have a 100% recycle policy for all materials generated by our activities. Certified arborists, licensed/insured. www.professionaltreecare.com

510·549·3954 or 888·335·TREE



Hard at work on the PSB. Photo: Byron Kawaichi





Prospect Sierra students engage in deep academic work, practice skills to hone greater self-knowledge, and demonstrate compassion and care for others. Immersed in a joyful school community, they develop a lifelong love of learning.

### PRZSPECT SIERRA

prospectsierra.org

#### **Meetings**

...from page 3

was voted in 5-0 as interim GM starting January 1. Consultant Brent Ives, who leads candidate searches, recommended that the board keep focusing on hiring a permanent GM; he said the suggestion that the board hire a dual GM (half fire, half police) required considerable discussion. Julie Stein noted that it could be hard to hire that dual person: "We'd have a recruitment problem to try to hire a GM to solve Kensington's political problems." Ives said that he believed there was no legal problem with a dual GM, but that the continuity of goals of the two districts was at present too far apart. He suggested that Morris-Mayorga work with the KPPCSD to study the idea.

To the relief of many, this was the last meeting at the Unitarian Church's Fireside Room. Because of a conflict on the second Wednesday, KFPD meetings will now take place on the third Wednesday (February 15) in the Community Center. This should make hybrid meetings far easier for residents to hear and understand. It will, however, put an occasional meeting beyond the Outlook's coverage window.

Julie Stein was elected board president, Daniel Levine vice president, and Larry Nagel secretary.

#### **January District Meetings**

#### **Watt Presents Joint Occupancy Plans**

By Linnea Due

On January 11, a special fire board meeting was called. New interim general manager Mary Morris-Mayorga scheduled a regular Zoom meeting rather than a webinar, so for the first time, attendees could see who else was at the meeting. New board president Julie Stein commented that while the regular Zoom format was unintended, perhaps it could work if residents would stay muted and not interrupt board business. The over 40 attendees proved polite and quiet unless invited to speak during public comments.

Stein appointed board members to temporary committees, which, according to the Brown Act, can tackle a particular project with an end date and then be dissolved. These committees, composed of either one or two board directors, do not have to meet in public. Daniel Levine was appointed to the information technology committee, with an eye to improving hybrid meetings, and he will also take on consolidation, liaising with the KPPCSD and LAFCO's executive director Lou Ann Texeira. Stein appointed herself and Jim Watt on the Public Safety Building committee; director Don Dommer said he wanted to be on that committee. Since only two can be on the committee, Stein said she would speak to Dommer to determine who would serve. Larry Nagel will continue as the board's representative at the Contra Costa County special district meetings, while Stein and Levine will work on updating the policy manual. Stein said that citizens cannot serve on these committees, only directors (as opposed to, for example, the KPPCSD's successful ad hoc committee, which was also temporary and projectoriented, but was composed of director-appointed residents with no serving directors).

Next Jim Watt gave a presentation to the board on shared use of the Public Safety Building. In his preliminary remarks, he noted that the structure was built for fire and police use, and that the fire district's policy manual says its main functions are police and fire services. All costs, he noted, are borne by Kensington taxpayers, while 40 percent of Station 65's calls go to El Cerrito. "El Cerrito," he said, "has no plans to upgrade Station 72, which is similar in size to Kensington's Station 65." He warned that we should not expect surplus revenues in the future, given that the contract with El Cerrito will increase. He added that the KPPCSD has about one million in available cash and no current location for a separate police department.

The plan submitted by Kensington architect Bart Jones gives the police about 1,322 square feet (SF), almost all downstairs. Watt had a separate plan drawn up, using the same layout as the approved plan by the county for a fire-only remodel. That plan utilizes both the upstairs and downstairs, and provides the police with a total of 1,974SF, including about 800SF shared with fire. (See interview with Watt on page 7.)

After Watt's presentation, Nagel said time was being wasted until fire and police chiefs and district general managers were asked for critiques of these plans. Levine agreed. "We need to immediately involve the fire chief, the police chief, the KPPCSD board, and the staff of both departments. There seem to be ways that these plans do not involve major structural changes." He warned that the board must not dither for months before determining if shared occupancy is possible.

Stein added, "My understanding is that a very important element of this is that the fire district can only do so much. We need a commitment from the KPPCSD to occupy a space that we provide for them."

#### **Public Safety Building in The Spotlight**

At the January 12 police board meeting, as at the fire board, board goals provided the context for the board president's committee assignments. New president Alex Aquino-Fike explained the nature of temporary committees (not obliged to meet publicly, dealing with particular projects within a defined time frame) and underlined the urgency of decision-making. "A significant portion of our community wants our two boards to collaborate immediately." One committee would determine where the police can land in Kensington and another would work on developing a strategy for replanting the park after trees that were determined to pose a hazard are removed. That strategy would take into account climate change and drought.

The language in the proposal for the first committee, composed of Aquino-Fike and vice president Sarah Gough, is both critical and controversial. Says the proposal: "To investigate and recommend a permanent location for the police and district offices within the borders of Kensington. The Committee will consider, inter alia: 1. available commercial, land, and residential properties within Kensington's border; 2. architecture plans submitted by Bart Jones; 3. architecture plans submitted by Jim Watt. The Committee will not consider properties located within Kensington Park, the Arlington Avenue parking lot, or in any other city/municipality's borders."

Said Gough, responding to comments she has heard about the year-long time frame of the committees: "Two new architecture plans will have to be evaluated immediately, and that is the number one priority. There is still quite a bit of information to gather... We can all see that the building is under construction, and time is of the essence. We are looking at weeks, not months... If [joint occupancy] is not a viable option, we really will need time to come up with a novel approach. We have no interest in revisiting prior ideas that are not popular with the community."

Longtime directors Eileen Nottoli and Sylvia Hacaj urged caution. Nottoli asked Gough and Aquino-Fike to talk to Chief of Police Mike Gancasz and Fire Chief Eric Saylors about the Bart Jones/Jim Watt plans. "It would be dangerous to force-fit them into one building if they cannot operate efficiently," she said. "We've been hearing from them consistently that a combined operation will not work, and I would ask you to

respect their opinions."

Hacaj expanded on that view. "What I would like to say to both boards and to the community is to really think again about what is the goal for housing our public safety personnel... I think our goal is to house and have public safety at a cost we can afford, not just now but decades into the future... Our goal should not be the cheapest solution, it should be the best solution... We owe a decent working environment to our public safety personnel."

Vice president Gough and director Cass Duggan were appointed to the park replanting committee.

In addition to the temporary committees were special assignments: Aquino-Fike will work on the interim/permanent GM search, Hacaj continue to negotiate the contract with the Kensington Community Council, Duggan to look into how to designate the park in perpetuity as recreation-use only, Gough to tackle consolidation. As Duggan said, "We have a lot on our plates right now."

#### An End to CommendationGate

The fire board's regular meeting on January 18 was held online, again with the usual Zoom faces-in-tiny-boxes format rather than a webinar. There were no interruptions from the audience or barking in the background. Attendees numbered 37 including eight district officials—directors, GM, fire chief and battalion chief.

The day before a two-by-two committee to investigate the possibility of joint occupancy of the PSB met. Julie Stein (Don Dommer decided he didn't want to serve on this committee) and Jim Watt met with Alex Aquino-Fike and Sarah Gough for approximately an hour and a half. Fire board GM Mary Morris-Mayorga was also able to attend. Little was revealed at the present meeting apart from that some conditions of police occupancy was discussed. Commented Daniel Levine: "It would be potentially useful if those meetings were public, and then the community can watch the sausage get made. It is the major topic about whether this can realistically happen or not..." Stein said that she was open to meeting in public and noted that she hoped to address the topic at a special meeting on the first Wednesday in February. Check district websites for date and time.

Consultant Brent Ives, who had found Mary Morris-Mayorga and Bill Hansell, was approved to begin a search for a permanent general manager. Then the regular meeting was halted for a special meeting at which the board voted to join with the KPPCSD to invite LAFCO executive director Lou Ann Texeira to address both boards on consolidating the two districts. That meeting, most likely on Zoom, may happen at the end of February. Again check district websites.

Levine, who is one (with Stein) of a two-person board policy committee, read a policy that would commend outgoing directors with a simple statement thanking them for years of service. He noted that people were upset by Kosel's failed commendation and that in his view the December meeting had gone poorly. After much back and forth, during which it became clear that the proposed policy had little support, Levine read comments that he wanted to read into the record at a meeting in which Kosel would be commended. Directors liked his comments, and so these paragraphs, describing her impact on the board, were added to Kosel's commendation. The amended motion passed by a unani-mous vote.

Upcoming regular board meetings are February 9 for KPPCSD and February 15 for KFPD. The KPPCSD meeting will be hybrid, and the KFPD may have moved its meetings to the Community Center. Check agendas.

# The thought of selling or buying a property can be overwhelming — how can I help?

Call me as I'd love to answer this and any other questions you may have.





#### LEIGH SCHNEIDER

REALTOR® · #2033564

510.390.0857 · leigh@redoakrealty.com www.leighschneiderhomes.com



· Living in and loving Kensington for over 18 years ·

#### Jim Watt Isn't from Missouri, But He Understands Show-Me

#### Two Plans for Joint Occupancy By Linnea Due

Before he was elected to the fire board in November, Jim Watt commissioned an architect to draw plans to house the police in what is now scheduled as a fire-only Public Safety Building. Watt was not allowed to present those plans in a meeting, and presumably they were not investigated, at least formally. After his election, Watt commissioned a second architect, whom he will not identify, to draw up another set of plans that uses the structure of the county-approved plans the contractor is now building. "I can't tell you the name of the architect," Watt said in an interview. "The architect is doing it as a favor to me and doesn't want to get in the midst of controversy."

Meanwhile, Kensington architect Bart Jones also drew up a set of plans, which he tried to deliver to the board. Apparently they sat in a corner of the vacated Public Safety Building for weeks until director Julie Stein presented them to the board at the December meeting.

Four plans, one scotched (Watt's first plan), one county-approved and being built. Two wait in the wings. The two in the wings share similarities but are different in scope. Both switch to police use the large downstairs offices and conference room allotted to fire administration.

"The first plan is no longer being looked at because it would require a major rearrangement of areas now under construction," Watt explained. "We wanted to see how the current plan could accommodate both police and fire. You can talk all you want about how you can fit the police in, but the final question has to be show me how you can do it. You have to be able to prove it can be done."

As Kai Ryssdal says on "Marketplace", let's do the numbers. In Bart Jones' plan, the police have 1039 square feet (SF) on the first floor, 100SF on the second floor. Areas shared with fire (for example, the front entry) come to 193SF for a total of 1,332SF. That is 21 percent of the total; fire retains 4,975SF, for a building total of approximately 6,300SF.

In Watt's plan, the police have 838SF on the first floor and 321 on the second. Shared floor area is 815SF. That total comes to 1974SF.

Watt explains that Bart Jones' plan was put together "in an effort to require the minimal amount of changes." The hope is that the rearrangement is so minimal that it would not have to go back to the county for approval and would therefore only add small change-order costs.

"My plan does have some changes that the county will have to approve," Watt said. "I've rearranged location of a toilet and some upstairs living quarters. That may require county approval. But all other aspects can continue to be constructed."

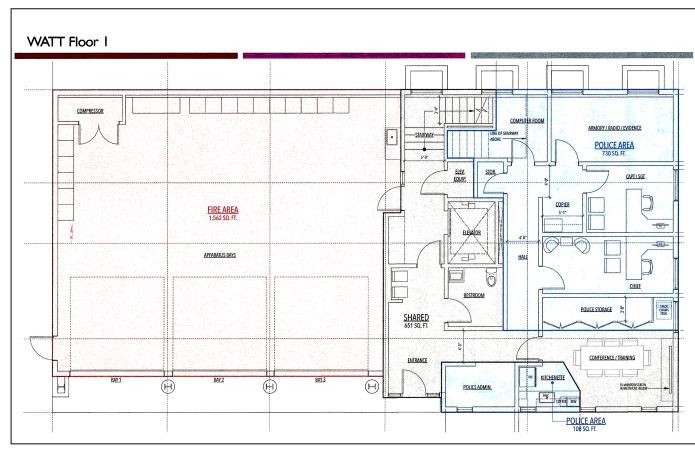
Watt emphasizes that neither plan would require a construction shutdown. "In Bart's case, it wouldn't require any shutdown on any part. Bart's plan has expediency, mine might require a minor slowdown in a certain area. Both plans might require additional cost. In Bart's case, probably not a great deal."

He continued, "Because of delays, [mine] could raise the cost by \$500,000. Is that a reason not to do it? The alternative is to find a location for the police department. The options are slim to none. The probability is buying a residence, tearing it down, and replacing it with a modular. That could run four to five million. The cost will be significantly more if we have two locations for police and fire. The KPPCSD would require additional financing. It might mean raising property taxes."

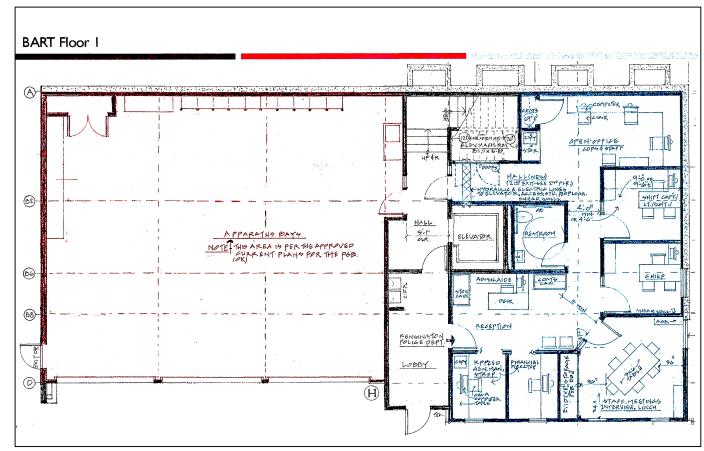
What would the fire department lose? On the fireonly plan, the entire downstairs apart from the bays are slated for offices and a large conference room capable of seating fourteen. These areas would go to police. On the second floor in Jones' plan, an area set aside for storage becomes a police locker room. On the second floor in Watt's plan, the firefighters' fitness room is relocated to where the current plans slate additional offices, with the police taking the 300SF formerly allotted to the fitness room.

Watt has not discussed his plan with the chiefs or general managers. "I've sent this plan to the two boards," he said. "I believe it's the responsibility of the boards to bring it to the attention of the chiefs."

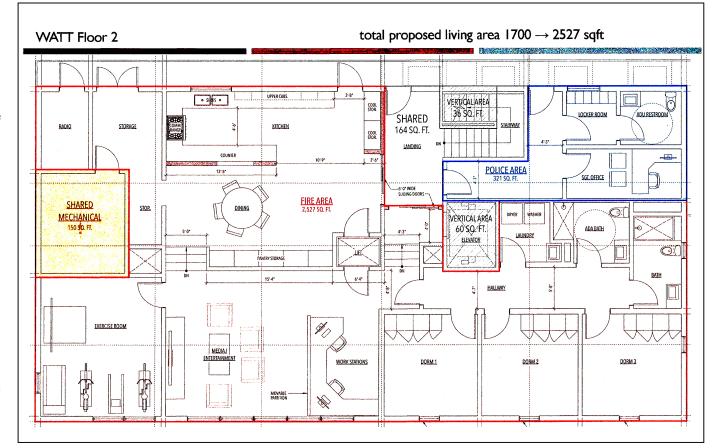
He adds this important reminder: "Whether it's the Bart Jones plan or the Jim Watt plan, these are concept plans. The inner areas can be moved around to meet the needs of the police chief. All these things can be changed, but the square foot total will not be changed."



Jim Watt's first floor plan changes the location of a restroom from alongside the elevator to in front of it. This allows a hallway that accesses the computer and armory and evidence rooms.



Kensington architect Bart Jones has made minor changes to the approved fire-only plan to fit in the police and KPPCSD administration. He writes on his plans, "The elevator, stairway, new piers, and grade beams, shear walls, etc., not to be altered from the existing approved plans." He regards his alterations as minor change orders, thus saving time and money.



Watt's second floor plan converts the exercise room for firefighters into the police locker room, a restroom, and a sergeant's office. The exercise room is moved to the north side of the building, which in the fire-only plan is slated for additional office space. In Jones' plan, not pictured here, there is only one change on the second floor: the storage room second to the left on the building's east side becomes a police locker room that can be accessed from the parking lot behind the building. All plans can be found on the district website, including the now-being-built fire-only plans. Go to www.kensingtonfire.org/files/59187c4b1/20230111\_08+Public+Safety+Building+Options+Presentation.pdf

#### KENSINGTON

## Community Education



Our winter session of KASEP began on January 3rd. We have a full schedule of over 60 classes each week at KASEP including many outdoor sports classes. The wet weather has not dampened the kid's enthusiasm and we continue to have KASEP classes even if it rains by relocating outdoor classes to an indoor space.

Important Dates: Winter break is February 20-24th there are no KASEP classes that week



#### Summer Camp

#### KCC Summer Camp 2023

KCC is already planning for another fun summer of KCC camp for 2023!

KCC Summer Camp is for children entering first grade in the Fall 2023 up through incoming 6th graders. We offer 9 weeks of camp, starting Monday, June 12th and ending Friday, August 11th. You may enroll by the week. KCC camp offers tennis lessons, daily arts and crafts with an afternoon of sports & games along with a themed activity such as carpentry, ceramics, Legos, and a whole lot of fun!

Scholarships are available. You can fill out an application through our website.

- Week 1: 6/12-6/16
- Week 2\*: 6/20-6/23
- Week 3: 6/26-6/30
- Week 4\*\*: 7/3-7/7Week 5: 7/10-7/14
- Week 6: 7/17-7/21
- Week 7: 7/24-7/28
- Week 8: 7/31-8/4
- Week 9: 8/7-8/11\*No Camp Mon 6/19
- \*\*No Camp Tues 7/4



Online enrollment starts Tuesday, February 28th at 7pm and is on-going. Our website will have all the details mid-February.

Camp counselor and CIT applications can be found on our website. We will begin interviews at the end of March.

#### KCC Adult Classes

KCC is always looking for new teachers for after school classes. If you have a special skill or talent and love working with kids or have a class suggestion contact our offices at info@kensingtonCommunityCouncil.org

#### Adult Art classes are back in person in the Kensington Recreation Building

Join us Wednesday evenings in February for Jewelry making with April Schlanger.

A lot of jewelry construction is the same. Learn the connection skills and the rest is creativity. Through each lesson you will learn a connection skill and leave with a beautiful piece of jewelry.

Wednesdays 6pm -8pm \$75 per class

February 1st Chandelier Earrings

February 8th Long Pendant necklace, with embellishments

February 15th Beaded tassel pendant

April Schlanger has a broad brush of skills and enthusiasm for working with and teaching all ages. She is the owner of Happyfoodwine, which sells, teaches, hosts, and promotes all of the "Happy" things in life: wine, food, crafts, canning, etc.

#### Keep checking our website for updated adult class schedules.

Adult Yoga Class at the Community Center

Strength & Balance Yoga -Tuesdays 8:30am Gentle Yoga -Thursdays 11:30am

Teacher Anja Borgstrom

Cost is \$20 drop in or register online

Anja Borgstrom is a warm-hearted, creative, teacher originally trained in lyengar inspired yoga @ The Yoga room in Berkeley. For 20+ years she has been offering safe, yet dynamic practices to a wide audience from pre-schoolers to 50+, as well as leading yoga retreats in Northern CA and Hawaii.

#### Tai Chi with Nobuo Nishi

Wednesdays & Fridays 9:30-11:00am Drop-in fee is \$15

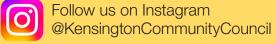
Class teaches Tai Chi for better health, improving students' strength, balance, flexibility, and dexterity. A gentle martial art, Tai Chi is a safe, rewarding activity for people of all ages and levels of health. Tai chi emphasizes the mind and body working in harmony. Relaxing the body and calming the mind help reduce stress and increase the flow of energy.

#### Family Yoga

Come join Lori Hess with Way to Glow Kids Yoga for some family yoga time where parents and kids will playfully explore yoga poses, breathing exercises, and mindfulness activities together. Family Yoga will take place on Saturdays @ 10:00-10:45 (kids aged 2 to 5) and @ 11:00-11:45 (kids aged 6 to 12) on the lawn outside the KCC office/Recreation Building (past the tennis courts). The next 4 week session will run on 1/21, 1/28, 2/4, and 2/25. If possible, please bring a waterproof blanket/tarp, two yoga mats (we will have extra mats available if you need), warm layers in case it is chilly, and a water bottle. Masks are optional. Suggested cost: \$25 per class; discounted tuition and scholarships are available. Please complete a registration form at https://bit.ly/38Sq91k and contact waytoglowkidsyoga@gmail.com with questions about the class.

Register at KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org/adult-and-family-classes

KCC/KASEP Office: 59 Arlington Ave., Recreation Bldg (Across the grassy field above the tennis courts in Kensington Park), Kensington CA 94707. E-mail: Info@KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org, or call 510-525-0292. Our website is: www.kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org.







Serving Kensington For Over 20 Years

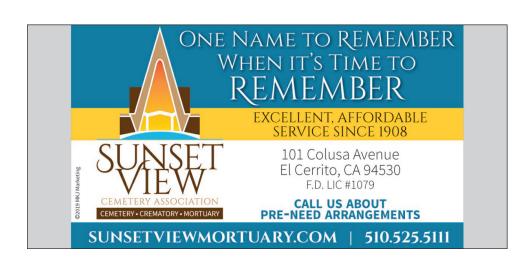
custom web programming
online marketing website management
hosting seo social media

website strategizing and consulting Wordpress database programming

www.pagepoint.com

510.558.1534





## Classified Ads

ABC GUITAR LESSONS FOR ALL AGES Vaccinated school music teacher. Berklee-Boston graduate. Mark Sorensen - 510-207-5118

ACKLEY PROFESSIONAL PAINT-ING SERVICES - 40 years experience makes a difference! We strive for clear communication and follow-through. Free estimates. License#528381. Phone: 510-220-4021 larryackley1953@yahoo.com

**AURORA PAINTING & DECORATING.** Interior, exterior, waterproof coatings, wood restoration, color consultation. License #721226. Kensington references. 510-655-9267 for free estimate.

**CAREGIVER AVAILABLE** – CAN and HHA. Local Kensington resident. Call Simone at 510-334-5682 or email: bouadana69@gmail.com

DESIGN-BUILD LOCAL CONTRACTOR - with 43 + years experience remodeling/renovation with creative solutions for handicap accessibility, kitchens, baths, ADU. Lots of local references. Learn more at www.baywoodbuilding.com or Yelp. Lic 357706-B Call Robert at 510-595-4231

HANDYMAN BRUCE, Small jobs and repairs, fences, decks, painting, and around the House repairs. Also replace locks and locksmith repair. 510-528-3419

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY TO THE LOVE OF MY LIFE! Hugs and Kisses Always!

HELPING HANDS, PERSONALIZED CONCIERGE SERVICES. Help around your home to make things easier for you. Organize, errands, de-clutter, home care. Ongoing or short term. Kensington resident, local references. Call to discuss your needs. Peggy 510-735-6965

KENSINGTON CONTRACTOR - Kitchens & baths, expert home repairs, painting, waterproofing. Reliable. Lic#606634 Thomas Cuniff Construction 415-378-2007

MEDICARE INSURANCE: Independent Agent specializing in Medicare plans contact Martha LaMair (CA lic#0E50665) at 510-301-3313 www.lamairinsurance.com

PETER the PAINTER-Winter Special! Get a free estimate from a Kensington favorite. Int/Ext Lic.Ins.510-575-3913

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHER - Quality Headshots to Family Portraits. Nan Phelps Photography located at 398 Colusa Ave. Learn more at nanphelps.com or YELP. Contact: nan@nanphelps.com or phone 510-528-8845

**PRE-MOVE PREP + HOME ORGANIZING.** If there's a move in your future, let me help you get your house in order. From downsizing, sorting, and planning, it's never too early to start. Liza 415-816-9799 / www.lessmoremethod.com

YOUR GREEN GARDENERS Unique, Beautiful, Sustainable Garden Designs. Garden Maintenance, Clean-Ups & Tree Pruning. Email: yourgreengardeners@gmail.com www.yourgreengardeners.com

CLASSIFIED ADS Monthly Rates \$8.00 per line (\$16.00 minimum). There are 45 spaces per line. Count each letter, punctuation mark, and space between words. Classified ad form available online at: kensingtonoutlook.com or email: advertising@kensingtonoutlook.com. Completed classified ads must be pre-paid (payable to KCC) and received by the 10th of the month preceding publication. Mail to: Kensington Outlook, P.O. Box 2212, El Cerrito, CA 94530

## THE KENSINGTON OUTLOOK CLASSIFIEDS



#### Monthly Rates: \$8.00 per line (\$16.00 minimum)

Name																													
Address																													
City																Phone													
1 or 2 lines: \$16.00 x no. of insertions = \$																													
Check Issue Classified Ad scheduled to run:																													
Feb	Ар	. Apr May_			June			July/Aug S				. S	Sept			_ Oct			_ Nov				Dec/Jan						
										Τ									T			Τ					$\top$	T	Γ

#### Instructions:

- Fill out the form, or use a separate sheet of paper if more lines are needed.
- There are 45 units in a line. Count each letter, punctuation mark, and space between words. Leave space at the end of line if word does not fit.
- Ads cannot be accepted over the phone.
- We reserve the right to reject any ad.

#### Please enclose:

- Completed form (or separate page).
- Payment payable to KCC for \$8 a line or part thereof. (\$16 minimum per issue.)
   All ads must be pre-paid.

#### **Deadline:**

 On or before the 8th of the month preceding month of issue. Published
 10 times a year: February, March, April, May, June, July/August, September, October, November, December/January.

#### **Email Address:**

• Advertising@KensingtonOutlook.com

#### Mail to:

Kensington Outlook P.O. Box 2212 El Cerrito, CA 94530

## **CITIZEN** FORUM

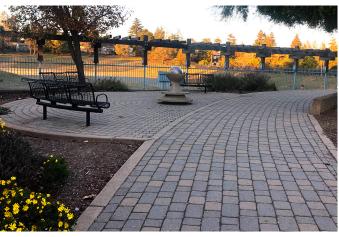
#### As Massive Project Nears Completion, EBMUD's Arrogant Stance Towards Neighborhood Has Not Changed

By Peter McNally

Over eight years ago in January 2015, we received a notice from the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) about its plans to rebuild the 5.4 million gallon reservoir and treatment plant on a 22-acre site that dominates our neighborhood. In the April 2021 issue of the *Outlook*, available online at kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org, is a thorough description by our neighbor Doug Gostlin of how EBMUD consistently ignored our pleas to mitigate the impact of the project, which rivals that of building a 75,000-plus seat stadium

After watching as hundreds of trees were removed from the site, in September 2019 we raised the issue with EBMUD and our county representative, Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia, who reached out to EBMUD in an effort to get cooperation in addressing our concerns. A public meeting was held soon after on October 30, 2019 during which EBMUD personnel and project managers were present at the Kensington Community Center. In that meeting the project manager, engineers, and local officials affirmed that they could not help us by re-routing truck traffic, but they did promise to develop and present several landscape improvement designs to help offset the impact of the exorbitant tree removal.

At that October meeting, EBMUD managers and project consultants promised to follow through with some perimeter amenities such as hiking paths, a pocket park, and arbors such as were installed at the recently completed reservoir rebuild located at the top of Spruce Street.

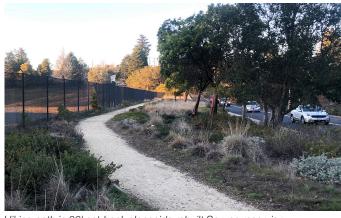


Pocket park with benches, fountain, and arbor at the side of rebuilt Spruce reservoir. Neighbors hoped for this kind of result from EBMUD.

Fast forward to our having to tolerate convoys of major truck and equipment traffic during a pandemic, coupled with attendant dust and noise. This December, our neighborhood received notice that EBMUD is planning to start replacing the old perimeter chain link fence around the site with a plastic-coated fence...with no reference to any aesthetic or landscape improvements.

There was never any follow-up on landscape design proposals as promised by EMBUD staff in the October 30 public meeting . . . what a shame!

Upon receipt of the December 2022 notice that EBMUD has imminent plans to install an eight-foot-high perimeter fence (we have a six-foot-high fence at present), we requested more details. Consistent with its continued arrogant approach, EBMUD simply



Hiking path in 30' set-back alongside rebuilt Spruce reservior.

replied that doing such perimeter aesthetic improvements would be an "illegal gift of public funds." Seeing that other nearby EBMUD facilities have such perimeter amenities, all we can say about EBMUD is WTF!

Those who want to step up for public accountability are encouraged to contact our state representatives Nancy Skinner (senator.skin-

ner@senate.ca.gov) and Buffy Wicks (assemblymember.wicks@assembly.ca.gov) with a copy to EBMUD Director Andy Katz (andy.katz@ebmud.com) who was present at the October 30, 2019 public meeting.

There is no point in contacting EBMUD's "Community Affairs" division or Contra Costa County, both of which have proven ineffective and showing no concern for any of our neighborhood issues.



A denuded landscape at the EBMUD site used to be covered with trees. Hundreds of trees were removed, and no effort has been taken to lessen the visual impact on neighbors. Photos by Peter McNally.

#### **EBMUD Answers Questions About Its Construction Plans**

(On December 21, Eileen Nottoli received an unsolicited email from EBMUD that the agency explained was responding to questions posed by neighbors on December 13. EBMUD did not respond to queries as to why Nottoli was sent the email.)

EBMUD received some inquiries from an email sent on 12/13/2022 regarding the construction of the new security perimeter fence on the San Pablo Clearwell Replacement and Water Treatment Plant Rehabilitation Project which will start on January 3, 2023. Below are the answers to all the questions posed by the residents.

- 1. Can EBMUD provide details regarding the new fence (height, color, material, etc.), a mock-up/drawing/photos of what the fence will look like? As a secured facility, the San Pablo Water Treatment Plant will be surrounded by the required security fencing, the same fencing used at Orinda Water Treatment Plant pictured below. The fencing will be eight feet in height, black vinyl-coated metal mesh.
- 2. EBMUD cleared a 15 to 20-foot area within its fence line for construction purposes before the new electrical shed was put in at the Stratford entrance. That area of tree stumps could easily hold a bench for folks resting on their way up the hill.

EBMUD will not install any seating or decorative features in relation to this project. This would be considered a municipal improvement and consequently, an illegal gift of public funds.

3. Is there any way you could pull the fence in a bit closer to the trees up between Lexington and Stratford?

The new fence will be placed back a few feet back from the existing fence line around the perimeter of the facility. All trees close to the fence will be trimmed back to prevent them from being used as an anchor to breach the security of the facility.

- 4. The area within the EBMUD facility in upper Kensington has a nice, land-scaped border with arbors and benches. Can you do the same here? There are no plans to place benches with arbors in this project. This would be considered an improvement and consequently an illegal gift of public funds.
- 5. The right-angle fence on Coventry Road could also be replaced with a fence the leaves a public triangle, that increases visibility for both pedestrians and cars

The Contra Costa County engineering department has reviewed and approved all aspects of this project including visibility, there will be no further changes to the angle of the fence line.

6. Will EBMUD plant new trees to replace those that were removed? Will you remove the new naturally growing trees close to the fence line? Aren't native trees protected under the law?

EBMUD removed trees that were dying and/or obstructing the area where the new equipment would be placed. EBMUD cannot plant or place any vegetation, including trees, over buried pipelines or close to equipment. Should the District need access to the underground infrastructure, the trees and vegetation would have to be removed.

15-gallon Coast Live Oaks will be installed as part of the project. They will provide the balance of immediate visual screening with adaptability and a good growth rate over the long term. While larger trees provide more immediate impact, they are prone to failure, grow more slowly, and may not thrive when planted on site. Smaller trees (e.g., trees in five-gallon and 15-gallon containers) adapt more quickly within the first couple of years.

PG&E removed trees around the electrical substation which it owns and operates on property it leases from EBMUD. Per California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) fire safety regulations, those trees will not be replaced. PG&E's tree removals are not part of EBMUD's San Pablo Clearwell Replacement Project.

7. Can I meet with gardening staff to provide input?

Landscape plans were made available at the beginning of the project and can be viewed at ebmud.com/spclearwell. You can share questions and concerns with EBMUD's community affairs team which will allow the facilities staff to work without interruption.

8. Will EBMUD remove the ivy from the old fence when they demolish the old fence?

EBMUD will be cutting and removing all vegetation that has grown over the fence and cutting that back to its property line. The new fence will be placed a few feet back from the old fence and any vegetation along will be cut or trimmed to allow placement of the new security fence.

9. Will EBMUD be doing more landscaping around the main entrance on Berkeley Park Blvd.?

Four 15-gallon Coast Live Oaks will be planted at the Berkeley Park/Ocean View entrance behind the fence, between the entrance and the existing pumping plant. Two 15-gallon Coast Live Oaks (one on each side) will be planted behind the fence at the Colusa entrance.

10. Will the area/site be cleaned, and equipment removed (debris, fencing material, stakes, cones, and other materials)?

After the completion of the any project EBMUD removes all equipment and debris from the area, this may take place over several days or weeks depending on the amount of equipment at the location.

11. Can EBMUD provide access to the site as an escape route in case of an emergency such as a wildfire?

The San Pablo Water Treatment plant is a secured facility, and public access is not possible. Consult with your local fire department and fire council for best practices in an emergency.

12. There is a big dirt pile on Coventry Road that was placed there as you excavated the area where your two new water tanks will be. Will you be removing that dirt and the white cement blocks in the back?

The mound of soil created due to excavation during the project will be used to shore up the landscape around the new tanks. Soil that cannot be restored will be trucked out of the site for use at a different location.

For more information about this project go to https://www.ebmud.com/about-us/construction-and-maintenance/construction-my-neighborhood/san-pablo-water-treatment-plant-upgrade. If you have questions, please contact Community Affairs at (510) 287-7208 or email Construction-north@ebmud.com.

#### **Kensington Library Ramps Up Post-Pandemic**

By Mary French

Take advantage of the free programs offered by the Kensington Library at 61 Arlington Avenue. Call 510-524-3043 with questions or for details.

**February 3, 10, 17 & 24**: Baby and Toddler Storytime, 10am. Fun stories, songs, action rhymes, shaky eggs, and more! Great for increasing early literacy skills, making friends, and just having a great time.

**February 3, 10, 17, 24:** One-on-One Tech Help. Get help using the library's website, e-books, email or your own phone, tablet, or computer, all for free! Call or visit the library to reserve an appointment.

**February 4, 11, 18, 25:** Math Club for grades 3-6, 11:30am. Each meeting covers a different math topic using puzzles and fun problems. No math skills needed, just a little curiosity.

**February 7, 14, 21 & 28:** Family Storytime, 6:30pm. Lots of picture books, songs, rhymes, and fun! Stuffed animals & pajamas welcome.

**February 7** Kensington Library Knitting Club "The Castoffs," 6:30pm. All levels welcome. Please bring your own needles and yarn. We will provide support, encouragement and help. Learn new stitches, share your talents, and meet new friends.

**February 17:** Beautiful Butterfly Craft, 3pm. Create a butterfly with cardstock, markers, glitter, pipe cleaners, and more. Ages preschool to Grade 6.

**February 21:** Celebration of Life: Drumming, Dance, and Songs with Onye Onyemaechi, 6pm. All ages welcome.

**February 27:** Kensington Library Book Club, 6:30pm. This month's selection for discussion is *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich. Contact the library to join. Meeting is held online.



Earthquake Strengthening Foundation Repairs Retaining Walls

Drainage • Remodels • Additions Leak Investigations Property Purchase Inspections

510.524.8058 www.IronwoodEngineering.com License B444427

## Goodbye from Pastor Celeste of Arlington Community Church

By Pastor Celestine Fields

The Northern California/Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ has called me to serve as Associate Conference Minister. I will be working directly with the Conference Minister serving all the churches in our conference. I am excited and feel honored to serve my conference and the 120 churches and clergy.

It is difficult leaving my friends at ACC. I have enjoyed serving and getting to know them in this short time. One of the reasons they called me was to engage with our community. I was just getting into the groove of feeling like a community minister, especially with the Blessing of the Animals.

Thank you for the warm welcome, visiting ACC, and attending our events. Here is a link to learn more about where I am going and the work I will be doing. https://ncncucc.org/nurturing-local-churches/.

Be Well! —Pastor Celeste



## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2022 TOP PRODUCERS!

COMPANY-WIDE TOP PRODUCING AGENT MAXI LILLEY #1919653





COMPANY-WIDE
TOP PRODUCING TEAM
NEGAR SOUZA &
FERI NIROOMAND
#1701667, 811861

#### 2022 RED OAK TOP PRODUCERS



Deidre Joyner



Sheri Madden



Ratoosh Group



Allie Pembleton



The TTL Team



The Jenssen Team



Corey Weinstein



Kathleen Wilson



Stacey Merryman & José Fernández #1448191, 1353359



Leaper Team #408309, 1741458



The Bloom Homes Team



Ana & Pasca Forest #1167613, 1234464



est #1751791



Lederer Team #1345197, 1325947, 1954708, 1975537, 2021776



Ann Arriola Plant



Scott Ward



Sari Coope



Roxanna Ahlbach



Team510 #1808145, 2048776



The Home Factor #1398898, 2137852







## KENSINGTON EATS-OUT

## Benchmark Pizzeria

By Ittai Shir

By Ittai Shiu

Benchmark Pizzeria is a keystone of Colusa Circle—and where we kicked off our first dine-in experience of 2023. With that initial bite, we remembered the first time we tried the corner restaurant's fried sage and brown butter pizza. It's been on the menu for years, and there's a good reason it's a mainstay for Benchmark.

Enthusiasts argue over what makes for a great pizza, but for me, it will always be about the dough! Benchmark makes theirs daily, allowing it to rise for 48 hours before topping it and cooking it in their wood-burning oven.



Within what seemed like just minutes after ordering, our server returned with simple perfection—a mouthwatering pizza with just enough char to remind you of the magic that comes from 700°F. Fresh mozzarella highlighted a perfect chewy texture and the brown butter and garlic added body to each delicious bite. The fried sage provided a surprising crunch, elevating the experience without taking away from the light, slightly sour, homemade dough.

Unsurprisingly, key ingredients such as cheese, pasta, and condiments are also all made in-house. Opened in 2012 by restaurant industry veterans Melissa and Peter Swanson, Benchmark is dedi-

cated to local and sustainable produce and meat that is nitrate- and hormone-free.

Stanley Tucci's show "Searching for Italy," introduced us to strozzapreti, the macabrely nicknamed "priest strangler" pasta, based on a story of gluttonous priests so enthralled by

its shape and taste that they ate too quickly and choked themselves. We were excited to find Strozzapreti Bolognese on Benchmark's menu, which arrived perfectly al dente in a traditional meat sauce. We are happy to report that we ate slowly enough to avoid choking.

Benchmark also features a robust wine selection and fun seasonal cocktails. I was tempted to try the Nitrum Martini made up of Mosswood rum, Nitro coffee, vanilla syrup, and whipped cream, but I did a double-take when I saw the message on the chalkboard above the counter: \$18 for the house wine. Accustomed to postpandemic inflation and the need for restaurants to increase prices to protect their margins, surely this was the price for a single glass, or at most a



half carafe, right? Nope, \$18 got us a full bottle of Montepulciano D'abruzzo, a great Italian table wine perfect for a casual night out of pizza and pasta.

We ended our lovely family dinner with the Benchmark Sundae, a not-so-basic vanilla ice cream sundae with chocolate sauce, sunflower seeds, whipped cream, and a cherry on top. I left curious about other soft-serve options including a Fior di Latte (Buffalo Milk cheese) and a Chocolate Vegan Oat Milk. All came highly recommended, but we ran out of room. Next time!

Just like all restaurants during the pandemic, Benchmark initially struggled to find a way to survive during such a challenging time. One solution involved expanding their space to include a charming, heated outdoor dining area that

turns out to be the perfect place to catch an East Bay sunset and a slice of pizza or two or three. Another great idea was to open up a retail location just a few doors down that offers Italian



groceries and convenient grab-and-go paninis and salads. Benchmark is aptly named because it has indeed found its standard in excellence, and is an ideal way to balance the Bay Area's natural bounty with the inspiration of traditional Italian pizza.

#### Benchmark Pizzeria

1568 Oak View Ave., Kensington https://benchmarkpizzeria.com

IT'S NOT A JOB... IT'S OUR PASSION Since 1986



SALES TAX"\*
\*On all installed jobs

"Low price guarantee!"

CARPET | VINYL | WOOD | LINOLEUM | TILE

**BETWEEN GILMAN & BUCHANAN ST.** 

CL#788850

510-525-5656

www.floor dimensions.com

1081 Eastshore Hwy. Berkeley



## RECYCLE YOUR BATTERIES

Are used batteries piling up at home?

We are here to help! Batteries pose a safety and environmental hazard when they are thrown in the trash, leaching toxic chemicals and contaminating groundwater. So we're making it easier for you to recycle them with our annual battery recycling drive!



BATTERIES with zip code east bay

WHAT: Zero Waste Battery Recycling

WHERE: Zip Code East Bay @ 388 Colusa Ave, Kensington

WHEN: All month! (tip: Headed to the Kensington Farmers' Market? Swing by then to drop off your batteries!)



We love being your local resource for green living and real estate.

Questions about the market? We'd love to talk!



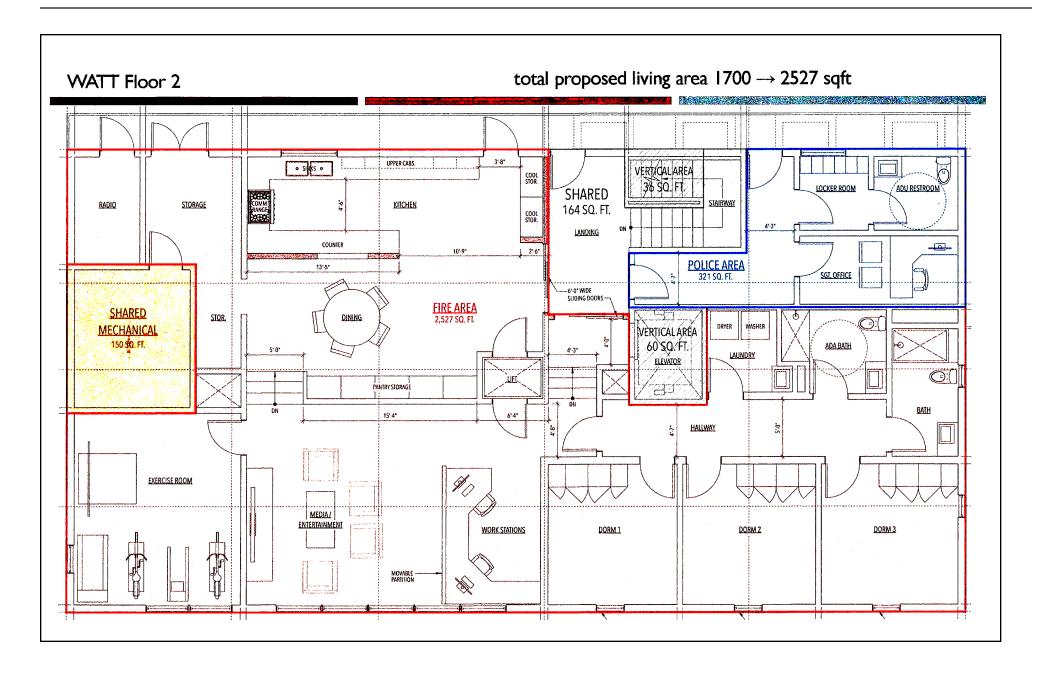
PLEDGE 1%

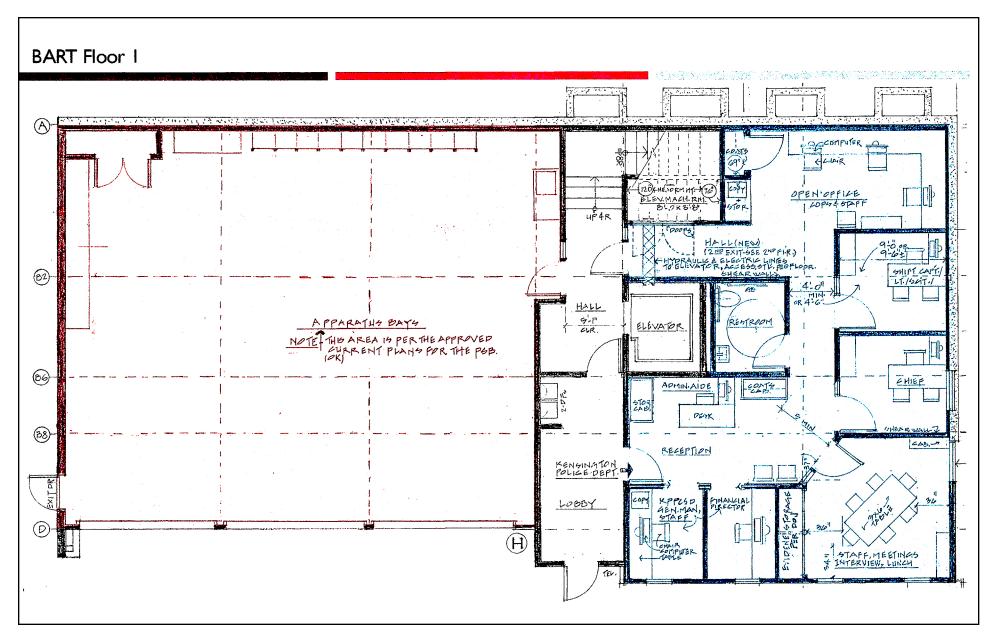
our commitment @

green

ZIPCODEEASTBAY.COM

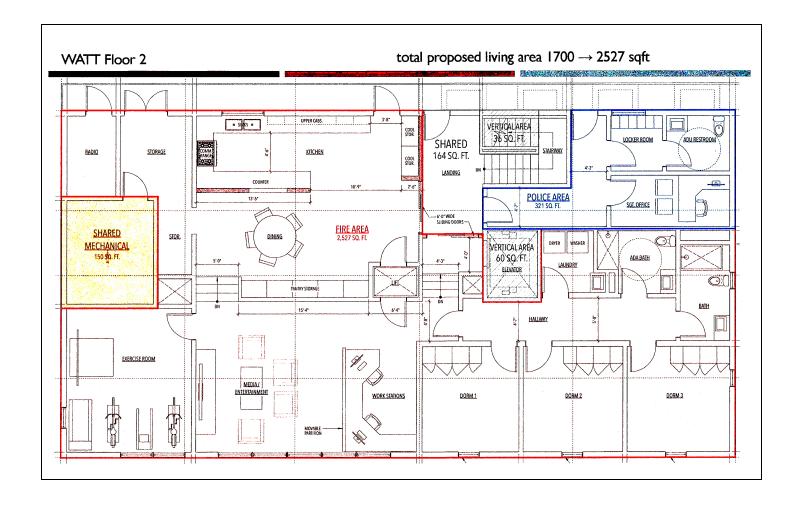
388 COLUSA AVENUE | 510.323.3669 | HELLO@ZIPCODEEASTBAY.COM a certified B Corporation & Green Business

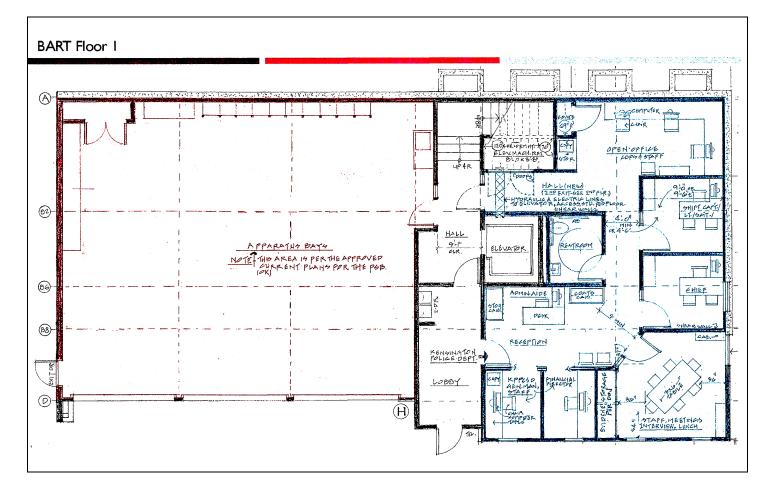




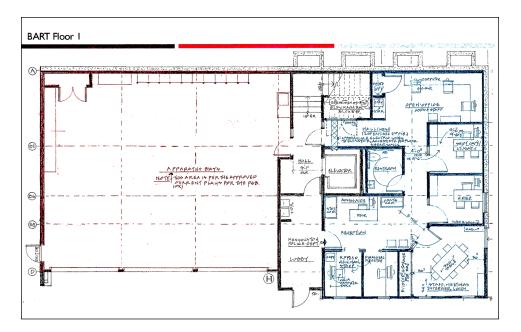
Jim Watt's first floor plan changes the location of a restroom from alongside the elevator to in front of it. This allows a hallway that accesses the computer and armory and evidence rooms.

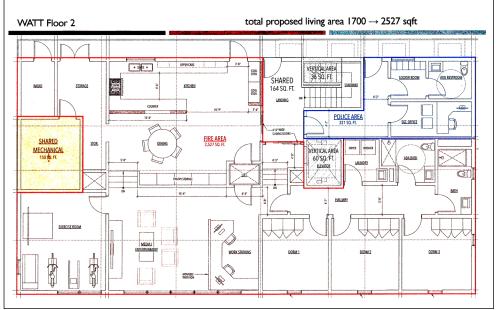
100%



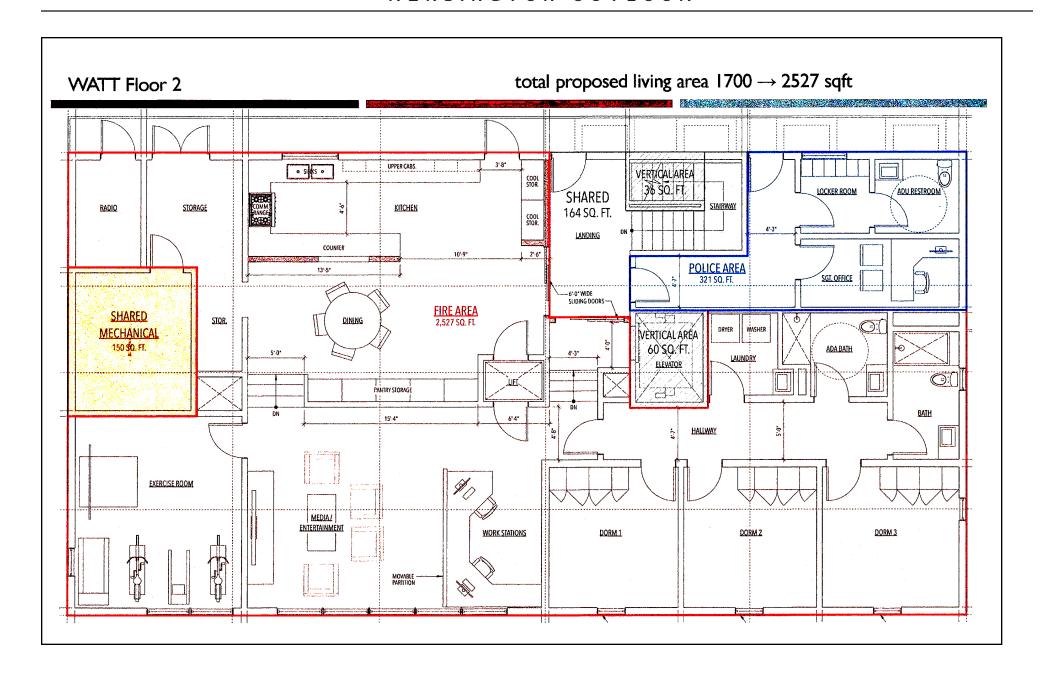


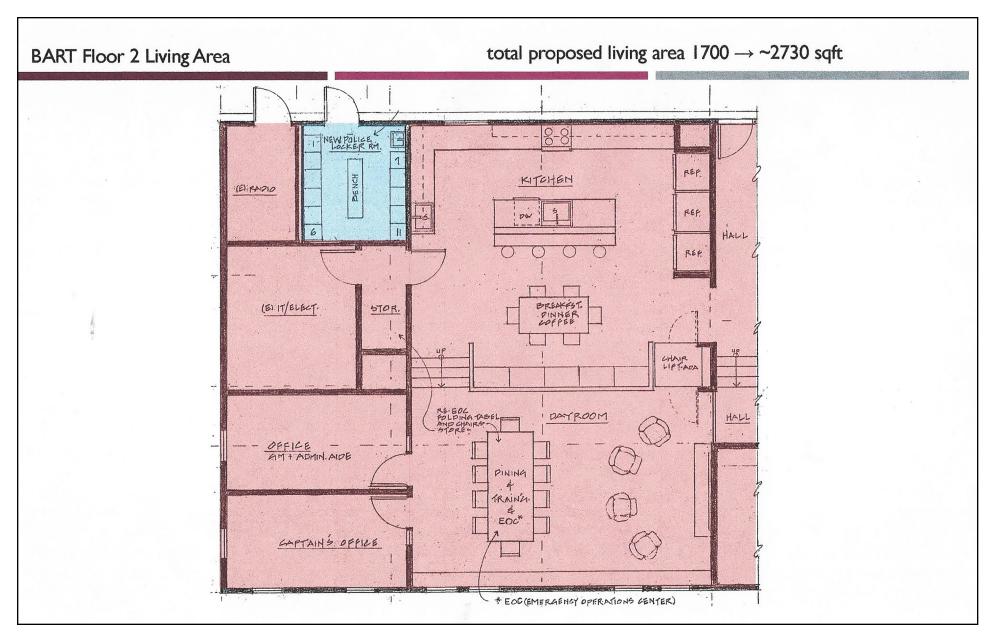
75%





50%





Jim Watt's first floor plan changes the location of a restroom from alongside the elevator to in front of it. This allows a hallway that accesses the computer and armory and evidence rooms.

100%