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NOVEMBER 2026 | A PUBLICATION OF THE KENSINGTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL | VOLUME 84 NUMBER 9



Bekka Fink and Mewsette. Photo by Marcus Wohlsen

Blessed Are the Pets

Folks and Their Furry Friends Commune

By Jill Stockwell and Marcus Wohlsen

The annual Blessing of the Animals at Arlington Community Church September 26 began as a foggy Sunday morning that gave way to sparkling sun. After a special worship service, Reverend Jen Chapman led the congregation and community members to gather with their pets on the church patio's labyrinth to chat, snack, bark, and meow.

To open the ceremony, Susanna Marshland gave a land acknowledgment, representing Good Guest Kensington, which supports the townspeople of Kensington to live as good guests on Lisjan Nation land.

She explained that the place now known as Kensington is located in Huchiun, a territory of the Lisjan Nation, and that the Lisjan Nation people have lived in this place for millennia, never leaving or ceding their land.

She said that the animals, plants, earth, and waters are our relatives, and that the Blessing of the Animals reminds us of ways to honor the connections we have with all of our relatives on and in the land.

See Blessing, page 4

KCC Needs Your Support

Annual KCC Fund Drive

By Todd Hodson, KCC President

The Kensington Community Council (KCC) invites you to contribute to our annual Fund Drive.

In this issue of the *Outlook* you will find a green envelope that we hope you will use to make a tax-deductible contribution to sustain our work in the community.

This year KCC is seeking funds for

Safety: KCC must fire-harden the recreation buildings that are used for KCC programming to keep our students safe. This is a one-time expense that was not anticipated.

Scholarships: With the library under renovation, more students are in need of KASEP (Kensington After School Enrichment Program) and Summer Day Camp scholarships.

The *Outlook*: Increased postage and production costs have outpaced advertising revenue for this free monthly newspaper. Help us bridge the financial gap with your donation.

KCC's Role in the Community

KCC serves to bring neighbors together around shared programs, events, and a communal sense of place. We focus on Kensington residents across all stages of life, offering programs, activities, and events that foster connection, learning, recreation, and belonging.

You may know KCC as providing

See KCC, Page 6

Photos of KCC's Fall Parade and Picnic, pg. 5; 20 Years of Books, pg. 8

Local Market Snapshot: Kensington & Beyond

9/1/2026 to 10/12/2026

What is the hottest market in the East Bay?

AREA	MEDIAN LIST PRICE	MEDIAN SALE PRICE	MEDIAN SQ. FT.	MEDIAN % ABOVE LIST
Kensington	$1,150,000	$1,720,000	1905	49%
El Cerrito	$999,000	$1,197,000	1707	20%
North Berkeley (94707–94708)	$1,395,000	$1,942,000	1884	39.2%
Albany	$1,150,000	$1,722,000	1437	49.74%

ALL AREAS **Average Days on Market: 14**

FEATURED LISTING

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COMPASS

September Police Log

Sept. 29. A report was received at the police station from Adult Protective Services. The investigation is proceeding.

Sept. 26, Arlington Ave. Misdemeanor traffic stop resulted in arrest for misdemeanor warrant.

Sept. 26, Highland Blvd. Prowling. Three individuals attempting to access a garage. Subjects fled on e-bikes before officers could make contact, no theft occurred.

Sept. 24, Arlington Ave. Grand theft, auto. Catalytic converter theft.

Sept. 22, Highgate Rd. Catalytic converter theft, no leads.

Sept. 22, Coventry Rd. Catalytic converter theft, no leads.

Sept. 22, Coventry Rd., Catalytic converter theft from work vehicle, case closed with no leads.

Sept. 22, Coventry Rd., burglary from motor vehicle, license plate theft, vandalism. Leads exhausted.

Sept. 20 Coventry Rd., catalytic converter theft, no leads.

Sept. 15, Trinity Ave. Neighbor dispute involving loud music. Investigation found the music ws intentionally aimed at a neighboring residence, victims declined to pursue prosecution.

Sept. 15, Wellesley Ave. Suspected child abuse report involving familial custody.

Sept. 14, Vassar/Yale aves. Vehicle illegally parked and blocking traffic. Vehicle towed, registered owner retrieved vehicle upon payment of release fees.

Sept. 14, Investigation is ongoing regarding a fraudulent nonsufficient funds check related to a Community Center rental reservation made in 2026. No arrests have been made and attempts to contact the subject are pending.

Sept. 13, Arlington Ave. Collision with injuries.

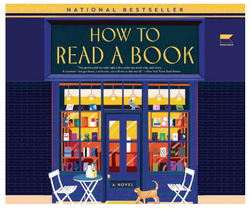
Sept. 11, Ardmore Rd. Catalytic converter theft, no suspects.



(L-R) Officer Jose Fajardo, Sergeant Brian Lande, and Chief Mike Gancasz at the commendation ceremony applauding Fajardo and Lande for their efforts during a shooting on San Pablo Ave. The two were first on scene, with Fajardo delivering emergency trauma aid to the victim while Lande maintained control of a large, emotional crowd of onlookers and then transitioned to preserving crime scene evidence. The two were awarded commendations at the October 8 meeting of the Kensington Community Services District. Photo by Sylvia Hacaj.

Forgiveness Grounds November Book Group

By Debbie Hamati



Neighborhood fiction lovers are invited to join the Kensington Book Group virtual meeting on November 17 at 6:15pm to discuss the popular novel by Monica Woods, *How to Read a Book*. Please note that the date is the third Tuesday of the month this time due to Thanksgiving.

Published in 2024, the story centers on Violet, a young woman recently released from prison and her interactions with Harriet, a retired teacher who runs a book club from prison, and Frank, the widower of a woman who has died in a tragic accident involving Violet. In this novel, the themes of second chances, redemption, forgiveness, and the transformative power of literature emerge, especially important topics during these times.

To join the monthly Zoom meetings, contact kensingtonbookgroup2026@gmail.com. The December selection is *Breathing Lessons* by Anne Tyler (December 29). 2027's selections will be announced shortly.

The group will continue during the Kensington Library renovations. For those ordering books via the Contra Costa County Library system, the closest branch is El Cerrito Library on Stockton 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.*

DECEMBER-2026
DEADLINES
Advertising Deadline ❖ NOV. 8
Editorial Deadline ❖ NOV. 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.

KENSINGTON OUTLOOK

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Letters to the Editor

Hate Speech Needs to Be Talked About

Dear Editor,

On October 19, students and staff at Kensington Elementary School found the n-word written on a wall in what appeared to be roofing tar. Tar was also smeared on outdoor walls and classroom door handles. Staff promptly covered the slur, and the Kensington Police Department is investigating.

This act of racial intimidation harms our entire community. I unequivocally denounce this racist vandalism and invite you to join me.

I urge every Kensington household to discuss hate speech and symbols and the harm they cause. We have a shared responsibility to recognize racism, speak out against it, and support those it harms.

Anyone with information or video should contact Kensington police at 510-526-4141.

Hate has no place in our schools or our community. We must work together to ensure Kensington is a community where all feel safe, respected and welcome.

Leslie Reckler
Trustee, West Contra Costa Unified School District*
*For identification purposes only.

Keep It Clean, Please

Dear Editor:

When rain comes to Kensington, we the people are responsible for keeping it flowing downhill, minimizing its chances of wreaking havoc on our streets, gardens and homes. Please take a look around your property now, all the way to the curb and beyond.

It's easy enough for you or a helper to sweep dry leaves off sidewalks and out of street gutters, and contain them for green waste pickup. It's much harder to cope with the consequences if you let them pile up.

In the middle of a downpour perhaps, you'll be expected to get out there and clear the clogged gutters and blocked storm drains outside your home, because if you don't do it, who will?

So, let's tidy up this town for the Super El Niño winter ahead. And we'll need to "rinse and repeat," as they say, all winter long.

Sylvia Elsbury

Zone Zero Heartburn and ADA Parking

By Lin Due

At the October 8 meeting of the Kensington Community Services District, director Daniel Levine described walking around his neighborhood. "Not one parcel would qualify under Zone Zero," he reported. "And if we actually did the amount of work required by Zone Zero, every parcel would be responsible for thousands of dollars of work."

Zone Zero is a state-mandated program meant to reduce fire danger, especially from embers traveling far ahead of a fire, igniting combustibles next to houses, and creating a firestorm that would (and has) engulfed neighborhoods. Zone Zero refers to the area from 0-5 feet around the perimeter of structures in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Much of upper Kensington is included in that zone.

Any new construction in the VHFHSZ is immediately subject to the law, which in its final form passed on August 19. Existing housing has three years to, as director Sylvia Hacaj said, "get going on this. We have three years to figure it out."

The rules the state has adopted are lengthy and particular, referring to vegetation beneath windows and vents, outbuildings, stairs, pergolas, fencing, and others. Levine pointed out that in Kensington in particular, decks are a sore point. The zero designation refers not just to the house itself (and its eaves) but to outbuildings, sheds, stairs, and attached decks. Prohibited in that zone are bark mulch, wood chips, fallen leaves, needles, firewood, wooden fences attached to the house, and sheds under 120 square feet made of combustible materials.

Existing trees can be kept so long as they are maintained with branches at least five feet from the roof and ten feet from chimneys or stovepipes. No ladder fuels can be under mature trees close to the house, and no new trees can be planted within Zone Zero. As Levine noted in his neighborhood appraisal, applying these rules in Kensington could be both difficult and costly.

However, local jurisdictions, in company with their fire agencies, can adopt altered rules that achieve the purpose of Zone Zero: no ember ignition against structures, while making that goal realistic in local conditions.

Wrote Levine in a report to the board, contained in the board packet of the October 8 meeting: "The statewide dimensional standards can have disproportionately restrictive effects on Kensington's small, closely spaced parcels, particularly the portion in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone to which Zone 0 applies. Most of the lots in the VHFHSZ are <5000 sq. ft., with relatively little space between structures. Our high-density community is exactly the sort of jurisdiction where alternative practices make sense."

What those alternative practices might be could have teeth. In June 2025, the now defunct Kensington Fire Protection District passed an ordinance that required property owners to request a defensible space and home-hardening inspection from the fire department before a property sale. The inspector would issue a certificate of compliance or noncompliance—and owners who did not comply could face a fine. The purpose behind this current exercise is to construct an ordinance specific to Kensington and its smaller, often oddly shaped lots.

Levine did not just walk around his neighborhood—he spent hours writing up proposed alternative practices, complete with photographs. Is an elevated balcony a deck? If windows on a grade are 10 feet above grade, does the rule around no vegetation within two feet still apply? What if stairs are concrete and not flammable?

And he also examined the VHFHSZ boundary compared to the High Fire Severity Zone, which is subject to different rules. Because many Kensington lots are oddly shaped and Cal Fire did not draw its maps by lot lines, some lots straddle both zones. Levine estimated that 24 lots only incidentally contact the Very High zone and would not be included in Zone Zero. 742 parcels are substantially within the Very High zone with small encroachment into the High zone. These would be subject to Zone Zero. There are 48 parcels in between, and they would need to be reviewed. Levine included a list of addresses in the board packet, along with maps that show the position of houses on the parcels.

The packet also includes a letter from El Cerrito-Kensington Fire Chief Eric Saylors, addressing Levine's recommendations, supporting a few while cautioning, "I do not want to introduce local exceptions that make those processes [inspection and certification] unnecessarily difficult to explain, inspect, document, defend, or certify."

That Pesky ADA Space Behind the Public Safety Building

Saylors also wrote an email included in the board packet under another agenda item. That one created a bit of a fire storm. Interim General Manager David Aranda introduced the topic, which had been proposed by director Jim Watt. Watt objected that the only ADA parking space to access the Public Safety Building is up a steep driveway marked Do Not Enter in large letters on the pavement.

A handicapped person using that space would knock on the upper door of the station, enter, and then use the elevator to descend to the first floor, where the district has established offices for the general manager and administrative staff.



Responding to Watt's complaint, Aranda explained that the county refused to make two vertical spaces on the Arlington to accommodate an ADA space in front of the building. Watt had also suggested that someone could park in front of the third apparatus bay, as the station's engines only use the first two bays. This idea was nixed by Saylors, who said that the third bay apron is used by visiting units, the chief, and others doing business with the fire department. The district lawyer also weighed in, saying that the ADA space at the top of the driveway was legal and usable.

Aranda said that when he had last visited, a pickup truck without a placard was parked illegally. "My recommendation is that we don't mess with what has been approved as an ADA spot," he said. "There was a pickup truck parked in the ADA spot. I had given direction that no one should park there who does not have a placard. Barbecues and other equipment block the entire walkway. Saylors doesn't want anyone coming in the second story. What I'm asking the board to do is to make a decision that we are leaving the ADA spot at the top and unanimously inform the fire chief that the spot remains vacant, and the walkway access is clear and remains clear." He also noted that the third bay had someone's personal car inside. "There is a misunderstanding of who owns the building, to be frank."

Saylors' email added fuel to the fire: "As we evaluate possible solutions, we may ultimately need to reassess our priorities for how the building is used. If routine public business cannot be conducted on the first floor while simultaneously ensuring safe and compliant access for the public and preserving the security and safety of Fire Department employees, equipment, medications, and operational areas, then we may need to reconsider whether routine public business should be conducted from the first floor of Station 55 at all.

"Station 55 was designed and constructed solely as a fire station. It was not originally designed or intended to function as a location for routine public business. That distinction is important because the operational, living, and secure areas of the building were designed around emergency response needs rather than regular public circulation through the facility."

Hacaj said she was extremely disappointed by Saylors' response. "The elevator and the ADA access was pivotal in designing the building. The fact that those items [barbecues,

See ADA, page 6

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Blessing
...from Front Page

Love Is a Four-Legged Word

Reverend Chapman then invited those in the circle to introduce their pets, including those in person or in photos.

Mia, or registered name Mama Mia, was with Linda Young. Mia is a Havanese, a toy dog breed that's known for being affectionate and intelligent and is the only canine native to Cuba. She's a registered therapy dog and works in the El Cerrito schools where children read to her.

Mia cuddled close to Linda during the blessing, regarding the proceedings from Linda's arms.



Linda Young and Mia strike a pose. All photos are by Jill Stockwell unless otherwise indicated.

Most Dogs Have Owners, Spaniels Have Staff

Riley is a three-year-old English Springer Spaniel who loves to walk in Blake Garden, says Carolyn Tipton, who has long enjoyed the companionship of the breed.

"They're beautiful. I love the black-and-white pattern. And they're just the right size for me—medium," she says. "They can get excited and enthusiastic, but they can also be very relaxed, and they'll sit underneath my desk and just be content."

Tipton, who today lives in the same house in Kensington where her parents moved in 1957, seeks out Springers from show breeders who keep one dog from the litter and find new homes for the others.

She found Riley in Washington State when he was a year-and-a-half. Though Tipton said Riley still "has a lot more training to go," he sat calmly among the furry commotion of the blessing. "Maybe it's just the right place," Tipton said.

Janice Kosel brought Otto, her Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, who she named after her dad because "Nobody else was." She added that Otto had chewed most of a shoe earlier that morning, which delayed her departure and almost made her late for the blessing.



Janice Kosel and Otto enjoy the day

Who Rescued Who?

Kim Bennett brought the family's rat terrier-chihuahua mix Bella to the blessing. While Bella's bark can be shockingly deafening for such a small animal—a decibel-meter app once registered it as the equivalent of a jackhammer at 50 feet—she was vigilant but silent in the blessing circle as the humans present introduced their animals.



Blessings and treats for Kim Bennett and Bella

"As an empty-nester, she is taking the spot of my adult child, and it's very nice of her," Bennett said.

Bennett and her family found Bella at Berkeley Humane in late 2019, not knowing yet that they and Bella would be spending a lot more time together than they had expected starting a few months later once lockdown commenced.

While a mercenary for treats, Bella is highly loyal and ergonomically optimized for laps. Her Yoda-sized ears are always vigilant for the sounds of critters, or the tiny clatter of a tortilla chip dropped on the floor.

"She fixed my life," Bennett said. "She's perfect."

Duncan the Golden Retriever brought his person Steve Controulis to the Blessing. Steve adopted Duncan during his recovery from a serious motorcycle accident. "Duncan brought me back to life." He described how walking Duncan opened him to meeting people and being out in the world again.

Duncan recently had his first outing with Steve as a certified therapy dog in an elementary school classroom where the children read to Duncan and lounged with him on the floor.



Steve Controulis and Duncan get blessed

Live Long and Pawspurr

In the 1962 animated musical *Gay Purr-ee*, Judy Garland is the voice of Mewsette, a beautiful cat who gets bored of her hum-drum life in the countryside and runs off to the City of Light. As kids, Bekka Fink and her sister tuned into Mewsette's adventures on Sunday mornings on Channel 44.

Today, Mewsette is Fink's real-life companion, a 23-year-old American Shorthair who has had a few adventures of her own.

Fink had just lost a beloved cat before Mewsette came into her life. A colleague of Fink's posted online about a feline in a bad situation who needed care. "I went and picked her up from a houseboat where she was being tortured by an orange cat. She came home with me really traumatized," Fink says. "She was biting holes in herself, and I had to put her on antidepressant medication that they said she'd be on for life. But I knew she just needed a good home, so I took care of her."

A dozen years later, Mewsette has some liver and kidney issues, but she still goes outside. She's also a vibrant presence in ceremonies that Fink conducts as a ritual healer in Berkeley.

"She always joins in and sits right in the spot in the circle where somebody is missing," Fink says. "She's brought me sacred items. She's an incredible old lady."

One Cat Just Leads to Another

Dudley Thompson had never thought of himself as a cat person. But around 2000, while living on Maryland Ave. in Berkeley near the Kensington border, his first feline companion walked in through an open window and ended up staying 10 years.

Years later, now with two cats, he was serving as the executor of an estate. He was responsible for liquidating everything in the estate—and finding a home for the two cats who came with it. "For a month or two I went down and fed them and built shelter for them in the rain. Finally, we brought them up to the house one day," he says.

The pair were indoor-outdoor cats, while Thompson's cats were indoor. But the coyotes around the neighborhood made venturing outdoors risky. "After two or three weeks and a couple of play dates, they were finally staying indoors, and the four of them got along."

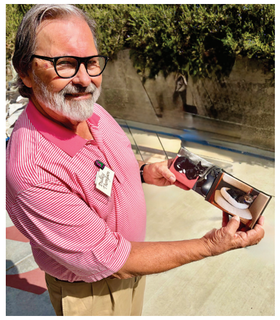

Photo by Marcus Wohlsen

Thompson brought portraits of his two surviving cats, Luna and Peppa, to the blessing. He's still grieving Spots, who died three months ago, and Mo, who passed away in 2024. He's grateful to the compassionate veterinarians who helped them make that final transition.

Now living in El Cerrito, he's committed to ensuring Luna and Peppa's future if they outlive him. "I'm 75. We talk about at what point you take on another pet, knowing there's a good chance I'll die before the pet," he says. "But every minute I get older, the more I need a pet. And you can make arrangements. Nothing should stop you from living."



Reverend Jen Chapman blessed Astro, who smiles for the camera with owner Joe Carlson

Pets Are a Blessing

Reverend Chapman then addressed the pets and their people.

To our pets

Thank you for your love.
Thank you for the smiles that you bring to so many.
Thank you for your warmth, for your care, for bringing so much joy to our lives.
Thank you for lifting us up when we're down.
Thank you for getting us up and out in nature.
Thank you for bringing so much to our lives and to this world.
We bless you.
We bless you because you are a blessing, and you are a gift from the creator to this world.
We bless the creatures around this circle today, and all those at home, who are beloved pets.
It's important to remember that we have options.
We can be people who bless; we can be people who curse.
And when we are people who bless, it means that we will care for the creatures of the earth.
We will lift them up when they are down.
We will protect them when they are threatened.
And may that care extend beyond the beloved pets among us and in our homes to all creatures everywhere.
And so we bless all the creatures of our world.
We are grateful for all they bring, and we vow to be a blessing to them as well.
Amen.

After the blessing, Reverend Chapman invited everyone to meet with her for a personal pet blessing, and many participated.

KCC's Parade and Picnic Brings Out the Best

By Anne Forrest

After the final hot spell of Bay Area summer weather this week, fall came to Kensington just in time for the annual Fall Parade and Picnic. Parade participants mentioned how thankful they were for cooler weather.

The parade has grown since our first year back from the pandemic. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, costumed pets, Kensington Hilltop School groups and preschoolers, the Path-keepers, and members of the Firewise groups all marched behind a 25-member strong Cal Straw Hat Band. Grand marshal, Kensington teacher Carolyn Landau, who is being honored as WCCUSD's teacher of the year, had a blast throwing candy to friends and neighbors standing along the Arlington.

This was the second year that the Kensington Community Council has worked to bring back this historic tradition. We appreciated all the time and support that went into making it a safe, fun experience for all those who participated in the parade, especially for the support from the Kensington Police Department.

When the parade participants turned the final corner at the library, the picnic portion of the event got underway with the Cal band continuing to play a short set, followed by the Korematsu Middle School Jazz Band, and last, but not least, the Great Space Coaster band finishing out the day. More than 300 friends and neighbors enjoyed lunch while listening to the music, creating magic at the art tables, and playing with giant bubbles courtesy of Sterling the Bubble Guy.

The Kensington Community Council thanks all the volunteers who made the day special and especially our sponsors: Mechanics Bank, Red Oak Realty, Nation's Restaurants, and the Leigh Schneider Foundation.

















A big thank you to Carolyn Day Flowers, Stacey Janoff, Cathy Garza, and Ittai Shiu, who shot photos of the parade and picnic.

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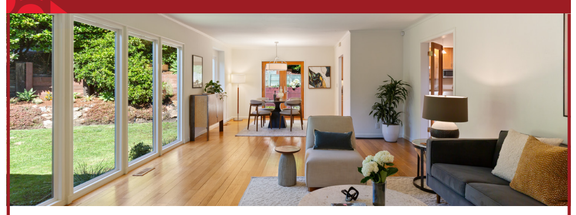

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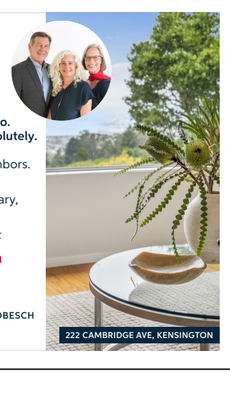


KCC
...from Front Page

afterschool programming and summer camp; hosting Septembers free movie in the park; organizing and running the annual fall picnic and parade; and for the monthly *Outlook* newspaper. But KCC also steps up to contribute to local infrastructure. KCC financially supported and facilitated capital improvement projects including remodel of the Recreation Building, remodel of the Community Center, and the building of the park bathroom.

We hope you will contribute generously by using the enclosed green envelope or make your online contribution of any size at https://kensingtoncommunitycouncil.org/support-kcc/. KCC's 2026 Annual Fund donors will be acknowledged in the February 2027 *Outlook*.

Kensington's November Meetings

Kensington Community Council Nov. 9, 6:30pm, Recreation Building, Kensington Park

Kensington Community Services District Nov. 12, 7pm, Kensington Community Center

Emergency Preparedness Committee, no Nov, meeting, Dec. meeting Dec. 3, 4pm, Room 3, Kensington Community Center

Kensington Improvement Club Nov. 30, 7pm, Room 3, Kensington Community Center

Kensington Municipal Advisory Council Nov. 25, 7pm, Kensington Community Center

Get involved in our community. All meetings are open to the public and citizen participation is deeply valued and encouraged.

ADA
...from Page Three

etc.] are on that pathway is really infuriating… I'm 100 percent in favor of issuing a memo to the fire chief and the city of El Cerrito."

Director Rodney Paul said he was shocked that "they're misusing the ADA spot. They could be cited for that. I just don't understand how a personal vehicle can be in our fire station. What is going on?"

Watt was not deterred from his mission to move the ADA spot to the front of the building. He said he wanted someone to do an analysis to bring to the county.

Aranda responded that there is no more discussion about working with the county, and Hacaj added that the county "has said no every which way in plain English." Hacaj also pointed out that the board does not have jurisdiction over the Arlington. "I don't know what else we as a board can do."

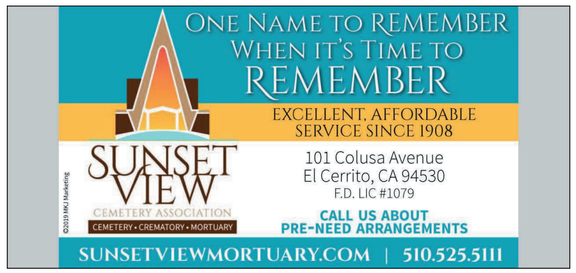
Levine pointed out that the fact that the pavement lettering says Do Not Enter while offering ADA parking on the side of the building is confusing.

"I agree," said Aranda, "and that will be painted over and that area cleared. You can turn around up there."

Hacaj added, "We can paint over it ourselves. It's our building."

Levine closed with a coda, "A lot of people were dissatisfied about how the PSB was handled, and this is another thing that was dissatisfying."





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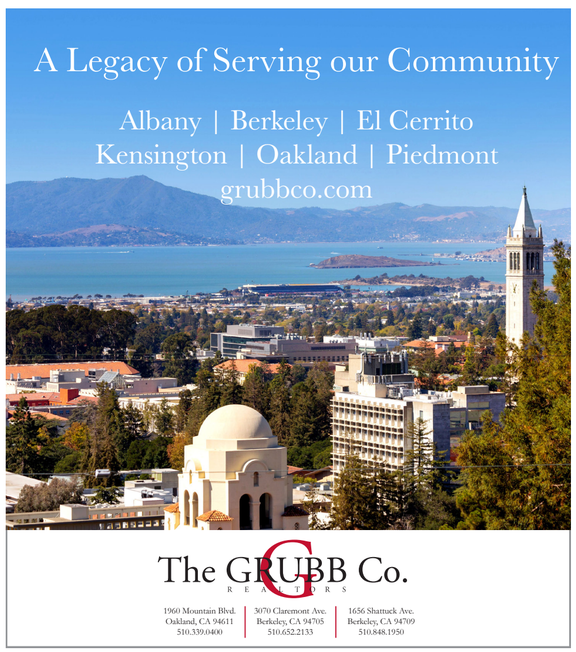



Kensington Community Education

Photo by Sindy Süßengut/Unsplash

The Kensington After School Enrichment Program (KASEP) continues to provide exciting opportunities for kids to learn, create, and explore new interests. This fall, students have been having a blast in classes like Cooking Around the World, where they've explored global flavors and learned hands-on kitchen skills; Carpentry, where young builders measure, hammer, and create their own projects; and Pastels, where creativity shines through colorful artwork.

KASEP offers more than 70 classes each week for students in TK through 6th grade, with something for every interest—from Coding and sports to art, music, and beyond.

This year we added an extended homework club, allowing students of all grades to come together in a safe, supervised and fun environment.

Winter registration opens December 8th, 7pm for Kindergarten & TK and 7:30pm for Grades 1-6.

The new session begins the week of January 4th, 2027. Don't miss the chance to join in and discover what makes KASEP such a special part of the Kensington community!

Register at KensingtonCommunityCouncil.org











Fall Schedule for Adult and Family Classes

ZUMBA Saturdays!
9-10am in the Community Center

Kickstart your weekend with Low-Impact Cardio!
No Dance experience needed. Come join in the fun!

November 7 and November 21

$15 / Single Session

Learn the Exciting Game of American Mahjongg

Adults interested in learning Mahjongg are invited to enroll in a Beginning Mahjongg class at the Kensington Community Center. This four-week course is designed specifically for newcomers and will provide a fun, supportive introduction to one of America's most popular tile games.

Classes will be held on Tuesdays from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on November 3, November 10, November 17, (no class Thanksgiving week), and December 1.

Space is limited, and advance registration is required.

Tai Chi with Nobuo Nishi
Wednesday & Fridays 9:30-11:00am

Drop-in fee is $15

Follow us on Instagram @KensingtonCommunityCouncil

Yoga with Anja Borgstrom
Strength & Balance Yoga -Tuesdays at 8:30am

Community Center-Cost is $20 drop in or register online

Chair Yoga w/ Angi Love
Thursdays 10-11am

Community Center - Cost is sliding scale

Family Yoga in the Park with Lori Hess
Sunday 11/1 and Sunday, 11/15, Suggested cost: $25 per class;

Please contact Lori Hess waytoglowkidsyoga@gmail.com with questions about the class.

Watercolor Splatter Art Workshop with Jeanne Rehrig
Monday, December14, 6:30–8:30pm Ages:12+

Get creative and have fun exploring the colorful world of watercolor splatter art! In this hands-on workshop, instructor Jeanne Rehrig will guide participants through playful techniques using watercolor paints to create unique, vibrant works of art. Experiment with color, movement, and texture while letting your creativity flow. No experience necessary—just come ready to have fun and make a splash!

This class is for Adults of all ages, but art-inclined teens are also welcome and encouraged!

Perfect for beginners and anyone looking for a fun, relaxing, and creative evening!



KENSINGTON EATS OUT

Find the Flavors of Algeria

By Ittai Shiu

Gusto specializes in North African and Mediterranean street food, where the goal isn't simply to serve a satisfying meal, but to share the warmth and hospitality of Algeria with a community that has been missing a dedicated place to experience its cuisine.

The owners founded Gusto to fill that gap, creating more than a restaurant: a cultural home where people from different backgrounds can gather around the table. Behind that vision is a story of loss, perseverance, and the decision to begin again.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, the owners lost their restaurant in San Francisco. Rather than letting that experience end their journey, they chose to start over in Berkeley with an even stronger sense of purpose.

The result is a restaurant rooted in community, generosity, and the belief that food can bring people together. Algerian cuisine reflects generations of cooking traditions and fragrant spices. At Gusto, couscous, house-made merguez, shawarma, and grilled meats offer a taste of that diversity.



Our visit offered a particularly memorable introduction to the menu. The tajine plate delivers a moment of anticipation before taking the first bite. Lifting the conical lid was part of the experience in itself, revealing the dish beneath along with a rush of sights and aromas. It's a reminder that a great meal engages more than just the palate; sometimes the reveal is half the fun.

The Joojeh Sultani Plate provides a shareable experience. A fresh salad of mixed greens, onions, and red cabbage provided a crisp counterpoint to the grilled meats, while the sumac dressing added a bright, lemony tang. Fluffy saffron rice brought its own delicate flavor, though we wouldn't have minded a more generous serving. Fresh flatbread was perfect for eating alongside the kebabs.

The star of the plate was the Joojeh chicken: marinated with yogurt, onions, bloomed saffron, and lemon juice, then grilled on a skewer. The result was exceptionally tender chicken, and the Koobedeh, seasoned, grilled meat skewers made a strong impression and are worth considering for anyone who enjoys a good kebab. A large grilled green pepper rounded out the plate, adding a smoky finishing touch.

Gusto's menu makes culinary exploration approachable with a mix of familiar Mediterranean favorites and dishes that invite you to broaden your horizons.

For Gusto's owners, food is also a way to build connections. They envision the restaurant as a welcoming table for people of every background and faith, particularly at a time when social and political tensions can divide communities.

Serving halal food is part of that commitment, allowing Muslim diners to eat in accordance with their dietary traditions. The owners express respect for the role food practices play in other faiths, while recognizing that halal and kosher requirements are distinct.

The larger message is simple: everyone should feel welcome to share a meal.

Gusto adds a distinctive voice to Berkeley's dining scene by introducing diners to Algerian and North African flavors while keeping the experience casual and inviting. Its story of resilience gives the restaurant a purpose beyond the plate, and dishes like the tajine, Joojeh Sultani, and Koobedeh give visitors delicious reasons to discover it.

gustoberekeley.com (510) 977-2477 1986 Shattuck Ave Berkeley





(left) Betsy Beazley has been the book group facilitator since 2007. Longtime group members (L-R) Maryann Jacobsen, Betsy Beazley, Beveree French, Debbie Hamati, and Jeanette Larsen. Photos by Maryann Maslan.

So Much to Read, So Little Time

Kensington's Book Group Celebrates 20 Years

By Debbie Hamati

On September 29, the Kensington Book Group met together at the Arlington Community Church for a festive evening dinner and program to commemorate their 20 years together. This special event was organized by two longtime members: Beverlee French and Maryann Maslin.

Until this summer, when Kensington's library closed in July for renovations, the book club has been an ongoing activity sponsored by the library. It met in the library every month until the COVID-19 pandemic, when it continued to meet on Zoom.

At the dinner at ACC, the original discussion moderator and former Kensington librarian, Louise O'Dea, presented the history of the group with special acknowledgements and memorials of former members.

Then Debbie Hamati and Jeanette Larsen described their process of book selection. Book titles are continuously suggested by all the members and reviewed by the committee for literary merit, discussion potential, balance of classics vs. current novels, as well as a variety of settings, characters, and author/protagonist gender.

The program concluded with an inspiring address by the current moderator, Betsy Beazley, who highlighted the value of discussing literature together with other fiction lovers and the importance of this process to people in our uniquely diverse Kensington community. The group conveyed their appreciation for Betsy's stewardship with the presentation of a plaque and a book filled with commemorative notes referring to highlight moments.

Longtime book group member Alice Chanowitz said, "Our book club is unusual in that it combines a wonderful facilitator who prepares background materials and summarizes questions contributed by members who select books and propel the discussion. We are a community of readers who welcome new members."

The group will continue on Zoom throughout the library renovation period and hopes to resume meeting in the library when it reopens sometime in 2028. To join the group, email kensingtonbookgroup2026@gmail.com. November's selection is *How to Read a Book* and December's is *Breathing Lessons*.

Black Wealth Builders Fund Benefit November 8

By Susan Russell

"Hope and Repair," a concert of spirituals to benefit the Black Wealth Builders Fund, will be held on Sunday, November 8, 4-5:30pm at Epworth United Methodist Church, 1953 Hopkins St., Berkeley.

Launched by Kensington's Arlington Community Church to help repair some of the damage of racist housing policies, the Black Wealth Builders Fund provides first-time Black homebuyers with down payment assistance. The fund has made 54 loans, helping more than 60 homebuyers, since its founding in 2021.

The fund currently has a waiting list. "We want to build the fund back up to help more of our Black neighbors," said co-founder Susan Russell. "Epworth has been a great partner for us and generously offered to host this benefit concert." Musicians from around the Bay Area will be featured, with a reception to follow. Suggested donation is sliding scale, $15-$100, though no one will be turned away for lack of funds. Tickets at door.

Donations to the Black Wealth Builders Fund can be made at any time by sending a check to the fund's community partner, the Richmond Community Foundation, 3260 Blume Dr., Suite 110, Richmond, CA 94806. Indicate Black Wealth Builders Fund in the memo line). Or donate online at www.blackwealthbuilders.org/donate



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