

# The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, AHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

OCTOBER 25, 2024 | VOL. 60 NO. 8



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## Las Lomitas teachers commence a strike

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Las Lomitas Elementary School District teachers and staff took to the streets in front of La Entrada Middle in Menlo Park School on Wednesday morning, Oct. 23, marching, holding signs and chanting as they began the first day of a strike after failing to come to an agreement over pay with the district by Tuesday night. They were joined by over 50 educators, parents, students and community members in support for higher pay. To district administration's knowledge, this is the first strike to date in the district.

"Our power is our strike. Our power is our unity and that's why we are here standing together. Our members have supported us and trusted us throughout this entire process," said Daniella Lefer, co-president of the Las Lomitas Education Association. LLEA has been pressing for a 10% raise.

Negotiations were down to the

wire on the evening of Tuesday, Oct 22, but the two parties failed to come to an agreement. That evening, the district's bargaining team and governing board offered the LLEA a 7% salary increase for 2023-24 and a 3% ongoing pay raise starting in 2024-25. The LLEA countered the district's offer, asking for an 8% ongoing salary increase starting in 2023-24. LLEA co-president Jennifer Montalvo said they were prepared to bargain but the district stated they were not authorized to bargain beyond their only offer.

The LLEA rejected the district's 5.5% salary raise offer on Oct. 20.

Bus drivers, paraprofessionals and office staff are also on strike as a show of sympathy.

According to the district, Las Lomitas Elementary School and La Entrada Middle School will still be open during regular school hours but after school activities including the



Anna Hoch-Kenney

California Teachers Association organizer Memo Durgin chants into a loud speaker as he walks the picket lines in front of La Entrada Middle School during the Las Lomitas Education Association's strike for higher wages and a better contract on Oct. 23.

See **STRIKE**, page 16

## Facing state punishment, Atherton approves housing plan in the eleventh hour

By Eleanor Raab

At the conclusion of a five-hour meeting that at times got rowdy with staff asking members of the public to stop interrupting on Oct. 16, the Atherton City Council unanimously voted to adopt the third version of the town's housing element update. The city will now submit it to the California Department of Housing and Community Development.

HCD has rejected two previous versions of the town's housing elements, which were submitted in summer 2022 and January 2023. HCD told

Atherton in September that it had to finalize a revised housing element to submit to the state by the end of the council's Oct. 16 meeting or face consequences such as monthly fines ranging between \$10,000 and \$100,000, ineligibility to receive state funding and grants, and the loss of all local land use authority.

While discussing whether to remove some of the properties from the plan on Wednesday night, Mayor Diana Hawkins-Manuelian said that "you have to weigh the individual rights of the people whose houses (are nearby), and believe me, that breaks my heart."

"But you have to weigh the fact that if we start to incur \$50,000 a month, we're putting the entire city's finances in jeopardy," she said. "There's a whole bunch of hammers and more coming."

Council member Rick DeGolia said that the council was forced to act in response to feedback from residents during the meeting who asked the council to delay a vote on the plans.

"Nobody should have any imagination that we want to be authorizing multifamily housing," he said. "We're doing this because we're required to."

After tweaking the town's housing element plans over several meetings during the

last month, the council landed on a final housing plan, which includes the following notable elements:

- A 10-unit per acre multifamily zoning overlay applied to eight sites throughout the town, which are currently zoned for single-family housing, as well as the Gilmore house in Holbrook-Palmer Park, the Menlo Circus Club and land owned by Cal Water;
- Twenty-unit and 40-unit per acre multifamily zoning overlays applied to school sites and open space sites throughout town. The town expects these overlays, along

with the 10-unit per acre overlay, will create 96 units of housing, 71 of which are projected to be affordable at the low and very-low income levels;

- Programs to encourage the construction of ADUs throughout the town. The town expects ADUs to create 208 units of housing throughout the town, 124

See **ATHERTON HOUSING**, page 18

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# Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY



Eleanor Raab

Attendees at the Flyway Trail opening ceremony celebrate the new trail and trail signage on Oct. 19.

## New trail opens at Bedwell Bayfront Park as part of ongoing marsh restoration project

By Eleanor Raab

The Saturday morning, Oct. 19, was crisp, breezy and full of excitement, as nearly 300 people gathered at Bedwell Bayfront Park to celebrate the opening of the park's newest trail: The Flyway Trail in Menlo Park. The opening of the Flyway Trail was the cherry on top of an approximately decade-long

wetland restoration project that has been underway in the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, which is situated directly next to Bedwell.

In December 2023, excavators crawled out onto levees separating a long-barren industrial salt pond from the San Francisco Bay, and sliced through the dirt mounds. This levee breach allowed

thousands of gallons of bay water to surge into the 300 acres of flat dirt, located just across from Meta's headquarters, that had been used for salt harvesting since the 19th century. The water brought with it nutritious bay sediment as well as small crustaceans, and seeds of plants from nearby marshes, which have slowly begun to

See **NEW TRAIL**, page 17

## Menlo Park once again deems two 'builder's remedy' applications incomplete

Plans for developments at former Sunset Magazine headquarters site and 104 Constitution Drive will need to be resubmitted

By Eleanor Raab

The city of Menlo Park announced that city planning staff had once again deemed the city's two formal "builder's remedy" applications incomplete due to items missing from the applications.

On Oct. 11, the city deemed the application for the controversial development at the 6.7-acre, former Sunset Magazine

headquarters site located at 80 Willow Rd., incomplete for the second time. The developer, N17, had previously been told that their formal builder's remedy application for the site was incomplete in June. They resubmitted their application on Sept. 12.

Renderings show that the project, dubbed "Willow Park" would consist of three towers that contain 665 housing units. There

would also be more than 350,000 square feet of office space, a Montessori school, a 130-room hotel and nearly 40,000 square feet of retail space.

On Oct. 16, Menlo Park deemed the application for another builder's remedy project from developer Greystar, located at 104 Constitution Dr., to be incomplete as well. This

See **BUILDER'S REMEDY**, page 16

## \$5K per month rent hike means uncertain future for a North Fair Oaks church, food bank and family resource center

By Eleanor Raab

Verbo, a church in unincorporated North Fair Oaks, is facing an uncertain future as it has been hit with a 25% monthly rent hike. The church's rent will be raised from \$20,000 to \$25,000 monthly starting Nov. 1, according to Verbo's pastor Orlando Cardona.

Cardona said that since the church moved into the space that they currently occupy 17 years ago, the rent has been increasing steadily at about 3% per year, until the church received a letter from their landlords earlier this year letting them know that their rent would be increasing steeply.

Though church services fill the building on Sunday, every Wednesday, hundreds of cars line up outside the church for a different reason — to receive groceries from the food distribution center that Verbo runs.

Verbo hands out full bags of groceries to families at their weekly Wednesday distribution, and they serve another group of families on Friday evenings. The distribution center is run by dozens of volunteers, many of whom had previously used the food distribution center themselves.

Cardona said that the number of families that need Verbo's food distribution fluctuates depending on economic conditions and other factors, but last month approximately 1,700 people made use of the church's food distribution service each week. This, he says, is a dramatic increase in people who need food, even since this summer.

Verbo received the food that it distributes through donations from local grocery stores such as Lucky, Trader Joes, Costco and Target, though it is also

supplied by Second Harvest of Silicon Valley.

Cardona said that this food distribution location is extremely important to the community in part because of its physical location, as many of its clients do not have access to cars and must walk to the church to receive food. Additionally, Verbo's distribution program does not require its clients to present them with any paperwork to receive food.

"As you can see, there are a lot of people who walked here from the North Fair Oaks community," he said, gesturing at the line of people waiting to pick up groceries. "There is no other food distribution program close by, so if we're not able to serve these families, they're going to have problems bringing food to their tables. They barely make it to pay rent."

Communities of color, like North Fair Oaks, have been hit the hardest by food insecurity. According to September 2024 data from the California Association of Food Banks, 35% of Black households and 31% of Hispanic households are facing food insecurity, compared to just 15% of white households in the state. According to Cardona, approximately 90% of the households that use the church's family center and food distribution services are low-income and Spanish speaking.

Several nearby elementary schools offer occasional monthly grocery distribution, but Verbo's food distribution center is the only free food that is available on a weekly basis in North Fair Oaks, according to Second Harvest's map of food resources in the Bay Area.

"We are right here where the need is," he said. "Anybody can

See **CHURCH**, page 7

INSIDE

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# Finance Committee explores new ideas to rectify Portola Valley's financial situation

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

The Portola Valley Finance Committee met on Oct. 15 to discuss possible short-term and long-term avenues the town can take to take pressure off of the current financial crisis. In preparation for the Oct. 23 Town Council meeting, the committee prepared a pros and cons list of different approaches for the council to consider.

During the Finance Committee meeting, committee members proposed charging housing element expenses to the affordable housing fund and charging open space maintenance to the open space fund for short term opportunities. Long-term opportunities include private fundraising, renegotiating the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office contract and renegotiating property taxes with the county.

The Town Council has already been presented with three options during the meeting early this month to consider a 2% user utility tax, a parcel tax or to become a charter city.

## Short-term methods: Affordable housing funds, open space funds, UUT

The Finance Committee emphasized that to create a balanced budget, services will need to be cut and revenue must be redirected. Short-term opportunities will help the town's finances for about three to 12 months until long term methods can take effect.

Finance Committee Chair George Savage discussed the use of the town's \$4.5 million affordable housing funds to offset the accumulated housing element costs. Over the past few years, the town has spent about \$1.2 million on consultants and legal fees related to the housing element.

In the town staff report, the committee writes that this option would double the general fund reserve but the committee is unclear on whether this is "legally appropriate."

"I also emphasize my prime recommendation which is to consider charging back the housing element-related expenditures if legally acceptable to the affordable housing fund since all those activities that we're required to comply

with are related to creating affordable housing," said Savage during the committee meeting.

Finance committee member Chris Rittler supported Savage's recommendations along with the UUT which will allocate money for open space maintenance from the general funds to the open space fund.

The open space fund currently has \$8 million and grows annually by \$400,000. The 2% tax would annually redirect a UUT of \$400,000 every year. This would "avoid increasing maintenance obligations on [the] general fund." The cons to this include public dissatisfaction on using open space funds for other town expenditures, according to the staff report.

## Long-term methods

Savage also recommended that the Town Council fund an attorney to work with San Mateo County to renegotiate the Sheriff's Office contract and the town's percentage of property tax revenue from the county.

The staff report explains that negotiating with the county on property tax rates would allow

more of the residents tax dollars to be directed to the town. The county currently pays Portola Valley 7% of its property tax payments to the county. "The county may be underpaying the town by as much as \$210,000, the report states.

"Go back and renegotiate all of those long-term service contracts because I believe there's some lack of affordability," said Town Council candidate Carter Warr during public comment.

The committee also received a new idea from town resident Ronnie Krashinsky who proposed a fundraising campaign as a method to raise revenue.

"If you look at the Portola Valley School Foundation, they raise about \$1.2 million per year from 300 families. I think it's possible that with the right campaign that we could raise significant funds," Krashinsky said to the committee.

## Upcoming discussions

The Town Council planned to discuss these opportunities during a meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 23, after The Almanac's Wednesday afternoon press deadline. ■

# State informs Portola Valley its housing element still requires tweaks

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

The California Department of Housing and Community Development sent the town of Portola Valley a new letter on Oct. 16 asking the town to revise its zoning ordinance and general plan to meet state requirements.

The letter is intended to provide the town with guidance on how to bring their housing

element back into compliance with state requirements. It provides the town with technical assistance, which is HCD's first step to holding the town accountable for its decertified housing element, according to HCD website. The Housing Accountability Unit also "holds jurisdictions accountable for meeting their housing element commitments and complying with state housing laws," it says.

The housing element is required by the state for all local governments to develop a plan to meet housing demands across California every eight years. Portola Valley's housing element was decertified on March 16 and the town has actively been working to revise its plans to bring their housing element back into compliance.

HCD notes that the town's zoning ordinance does not state whether the mixed-use sites will be residential. Interim Planning and Building Director Terrence Grindall told The Almanac that this will only require a simple rewording in the ordinance as the same language requested by HCD is already included in the housing element. The change will need to be considered by the Planning Commission and Town Council, according to the town.

Additionally, the town included the Dorothy Ford Park site in the zoning ordinance which could potentially fit an apartment complex of about 50 units, said Grindall. However, due to ongoing concerns from the community to explore other sites for development, the town did not rezone the property. HCD is now

asking Portola Valley to zone the property as residential, but Grindall said this will require some discussion between Interim Town Manager Corie Stocker-Pedalino and staff to make recommendations to the council.

A town announcement clarifies that since the Dorothy Ford Park site is town-owned, the site cannot actually be developed unless the Town Council takes action to sell or lease the property.

"Failing to have a compliant housing element carries various consequences, including ineligibility for certain state funding programs and being subject to the "builder's remedy," said HCD Communications Specialist Alicia Murillo. Builder's remedy is a state provision that allows developers to streamline building application processes and bypass local land-use regulations if a city does not have a compliant housing element.

The town has until Nov. 26 to provide a written response to HCD. ■

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## CRIME BRIEFS

### Attempted burglary reported in Atherton Tuesday night

A group of people reportedly tried to break into a construction site on the first block of Santiago Avenue in Atherton on Tuesday, Oct. 22, evening, police said.

At 9:46 p.m., the Atherton Police Department responded to the scene of the reported would-be burglary, according to a police news bulletin. Police said they identified three suspects, but no arrests have been made.

The incident is under investigation.

The Almanac reached out to the police department for further details on how the suspects were identified, but did not hear back by The Almanac's Wednesday afternoon press deadline.

Police reported another commercial burglary last Friday morning, Oct. 18, on Atherton Avenue, according to the town's police blotter.

To have your alarm system monitored for free by Atherton's PD Dispatch Center, you can call 650-688-6500. ■

—Embarcadero Media staff

# Las Lomitas superintendent announces retirement

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Las Lomitas Elementary School District Superintendent Beth Polito announced she will be retiring at the end of the 2024-25 school year. Her five-year tenure as superintendent of LLESD will end on Aug. 30, 2025, according to a district announcement on Oct. 16 obtained by The Almanac.

The announcement comes in the midst of a contentious contract negotiation process between LLESD educators and the district. Over 800 community members signed a Change.org petition expressing that they have no confidence in Polito's leadership.

Prior to working at LLESD, Polito served as the superintendent of the Woodside Elementary School District for eight years and carries 31 years of experience in education. At LLESD, Polito received \$383,021 in total compensation annually.

In June 2023, Polito went on medical leave when she was diagnosed with leukemia. After receiving a bone marrow transplant and going through recovery,



Magali Gauthier

Beth Polito, Las Lomitas School District superintendent, poses for a portrait in the district office in Menlo Park in 2019.

she returned to the district in January 2024.

"Just a few days ago, I reached the one-year anniversary of my bone-marrow transplant. I'm cancer free and feeling really strong," Polito said in the announcement. "I can safely spend as much time as I want on campus, so expect to see much more of me as I work with staff, students and the community

to manage our current circumstances and complete the work of the strategic plan in its fifth year."

Polito states that she intended to retire at the end of the 2023-24 school year, but was "waylaid" by her leukemia diagnosis and wanted to have an opportunity to spend more time working on campus.

She told The Almanac that she had always planned on retiring when she turned 55 and that her mother died of cancer at 56 years old. "I think life's too short and I've been working hard since I was 11 and it's time to concentrate on other things," she said.

Polito shared her retirement plans with school board President Heather Hopkins over the summer and the rest of the board in September. The school board will be taking the time to recruit and onboard a new superintendent before next school year.

"I think there's a bit of a shelf life when you're superintendent and I think I will be hitting mine in August," she said.

For the incoming superintendent, Polito said they will need "thick skin" along with a love

of kids, strong communication skills, and a working knowledge of budget, facilities, student services and more.

"The board is grateful to Dr. Polito for her over five years of service to the Las Lomitas Elementary School District and her lifetime dedication to students and their education," said Hopkins in a statement to The Almanac.

Polito felt that the timing of her announcement would allow the board to have ample time to determine how they will fill her position. Her end date of Aug. 30, 2025 will allow two months of overlap where she can work with the incoming superintendent during the transition, she explained.

Although Polito's last school year as superintendent started with a tense and ongoing contract negotiation process, she is hopeful that the situation will be resolved soon and all staff will be able to enjoy the remaining eight months of school.

"That's a good amount of time to try and get ourselves back on track and continue some of

the work that has been kind of paused and reestablish our relationship. I do not believe things are broken," she said.

Polito expressed that she's received a lot of hurtful comments from educators accusing her of "lack of leadership." Despite how upsetting it is, she recognizes "that this is a process that is used so that folks who have associations can get their voices heard."

"I look forward to finishing this year strong and having plenty of time to celebrate our successes, experience the joy of the work, and reconnect after this time we've spent apart and in conflict," said Polito in her announcement.

Polito noted in her statement that over the last five years, the district has faced some very eventful times fraught with big challenges such as: "COVID, which hit nine months after I started here at LLESD; Flooding at Las Lomitas; Construction at both sites; Dare I say, Twittergate; Conflict about our Ladera School site; and Impasse and a possible (teacher) strike." ■

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## CHURCH

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say 'well just look for a cheaper place,' but everything is so expensive right now that even though we're paying a lot more money, if we move, we'd have to pay double what we're paying right now."

Verbo is currently located in a former print shop on the 2700 block of Bay Road. Its front door is right across the street from Stanford University's new Redwood City Campus, which opened in 2019.

"(The print shop) building was all destroyed, and we remodeled everything," Cardona said. "We have many different classrooms,

and even a space for indoor soccer, along with our warehouse for the food."

Cardona said that in the 17 years that Verbo has been at its Bay Road location, the neighborhood has changed a lot, as Stanford and tech companies like Meta have grown. He is worried that if a company offers to buy Verbo's building from their landlord, the church will have no recourse and nowhere to go.

Verbo functions as more than a church and food distribution service, the nonprofit also provides family services to the local community, such as after-school tutoring and martial arts programs for

kids, nightly indoor soccer and English as a second language classes for adults. Cardona says that these programs serve the function of keeping kids off the street and out of trouble after school.

Cardona hopes that the church and food distribution center will not have to relocate, but the church is still figuring out how it will make ends meet following

the rent increase on Nov. 1.

"People have been giving us donations," he said. "Long term, I hope there is somebody who has a warehouse who will tell us that we're more than welcome to move there and keep going with the program."

Verbo isn't the only food distribution service that has been impacted by rent hikes. In June of this year, Second Harvest had

to close its largest warehouse in San Jose due to a looming rent increase, and several other food banks around the Bay Area are facing similar struggles.

If you need food bank resources, check out Second Harvest's map of food resources in the Bay Area at [shfb.org](http://shfb.org). ■

Email Staff Writer Eleanor Raab at [eraab@almanacnews.com](mailto:eraab@almanacnews.com).



Anna Hoch-Kenney

Marcos Fernandez, who has volunteered on and off for the last eight months, carries a box of food to a recipient on foot at the Verbo Food Pantry in North Fair Oaks on Oct. 16.

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# Portola Bistro offers a homey fine dining experience in Portola Valley

Owners say they want to keep prices down and keep bringing diners back

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Portola Bistro is bringing a fine dining experience blending French, Italian and Mediterranean-inspired cuisine to the Ladera Country Shopper in Portola Valley. Owners Allen Isik and Dino Tekdemir, who also own Barbayani Taverna in Los Altos, opened the restaurant in the former space of Portola Kitchen, which closed in March after 20 years in business.

Portola Bistro aims to create a homey and ambient atmosphere with relaxing music. The restaurant started with a soft opening in September and catered to passersby and those with reservations. A grand opening event was held on Oct. 10.

Isik, who loves visiting Europe, felt that Ladera Country Shopper resembled the bazaars of London and Vienna, “the type of places [with] a soul.” With Bianchini’s Market right across from Portola Bistro, he felt the location created a similar atmosphere, perfect for their vision. It was also a plus that the prior restaurant in the space, Portola Kitchen, was a mainstay in the community.

The mix of different cuisines offers customers an array of options on the menu so groups can enjoy both French and Italian dishes at one restaurant.

According to Isik, the most popular appetizers are the ahituna tartare, filet mignon carpaccio and deviled eggs with truffles. The most ordered main courses are the pizzas, beef bourguignon and braised lamb with mushroom pappardelle.

Isik said what makes them special is that they uphold high service standards and only use



Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Portola Bistro in Portola Valley offers a blend of French, Italian and Mediterranean-inspired cuisine.

freshly delivered ingredients everyday. “Whatever you see here, from beginning to last, from sauce to meat, everything is here. Nothing is pre-made,” he adds.

During their soft opening, Isik was happy to see the restaurant at full capacity every night. He said there are customers who have been dining with them every day since opening doors.

“What we want to do instead of making money, we want to charge less and bring more people here. [We want] to make them happy and that way we can make ourselves happy as well,” said Isik.

Over 20 years, Isik and Tekdemir have built a strong reputation in the restaurant industry. They say hiring qualified chefs and employees is not a challenge for the duo as they’ve also created a system that encourages the growth and promotion of each employee. “Even until now, we haven’t searched for anybody [to hire] for our restaurant. They find us,” Isik said.

The restaurateurs call their chefs,

**Portola Bistro**, 3130 Alpine Road, Unit 350, Portola Valley; 650-800-7248, Instagram: @portolabistro. Open Sunday through Thursday from 5-9 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 5-9:30 p.m.

servers and dishwashers a family.

“Wherever we open, we open it with our team. The line cook comes into the next place as a chef, and another guy replaces his position. That way we’re always growing,” Isik explained.

The restaurant is now hosting lunch service from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Collaborations with local jazz artists and bands for live music are in the works, according to Isik. ■

Email Staff Writer  
Jennifer Yoshikoshi at  
jyoshikoshi@almanacnews.com.

## OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include:

**Bonnie Craig Miller**, 96, a long-time member of the Allied Arts Guild in Menlo Park and an active member for many years in the Palo Alto Women’s Golf Club at Baylands Golf Links, on Sept. 1, 2024.

**Isabel Perez Murray**, 92, a Palo Alto resident for 64 years, on Sept. 8, 2024.

**Kirstin (Kris) Nichols**, 77, an accomplished research scientist, first working as electron microscopist, and then as an Information Technologist with the Alza Pharmaceutical Company in Palo Alto, on Oct. 19, 2024.

To read full obituaries, leave remembrances and post photos, go to Lasting Memories at [AlmanacNews.com/obituaries](http://AlmanacNews.com/obituaries). ■

## Vehicle fire extinguished off of Highway 280

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

San Mateo County Fire Department and San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department responded to a construction vehicle fire at 11:30 a.m. on Oct. 18 off of Highway 280 near Edgewood Road.

“The winds did not play a factor in the fire. The fire was contained to the vehicle of origin with no spread to the neighboring vegetation,” said Alex Pino, battalion chief of San Mateo County Fire.

The driver of the vehicle is safe and no other individuals were injured.

Cal Fire also responded due to the fire’s potential threat to spread into wildlands, but state response was canceled after the fire was contained by the county and San Mateo fire, according to Cal Fire Public Information Officer Cecile Juliette.

Smoke from the fire could be seen on the Alert California camera to the north at the College of San Mateo.

Local fire agencies including Woodside Fire Protection District and Cal Fire have increased staffing during current conditions of high fire risk due to strong winds and dry air. ■

## COMMUNITY BRIEFS

### Halloween Spooktacular at Atherton Town Center, Oct. 25

The Atherton Police Officer’s Association will host its annual Halloween Spooktacular at Atherton Town Center, 80 Fair Oaks Lane, on Friday, Oct. 25, from 3-5 p.m.

There will be: festive decorations and activities to kick off the spooky season; a walking costume showcase; sweet treats; and the Atherton Library will be hosting craft activities and a magic show.

This is a free event and everyone is welcome.

### Comment period open for Atherton housing element by Oct. 29

Any comments on the recently adopted 2023-31 Atherton housing element should be sent to [bbendix@ci.atherton.ca.us](mailto:bbendix@ci.atherton.ca.us) by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 29.

These comments will be included in the packet of materials sent to the state Department of Housing and Community Development for its subsequent review of the adopted element and related zoning code changes.

### Trick-or-Treat Street, Oct. 30

Menlo-Atherton High School is hosting its annual Trick-or-Treat Street on Wednesday, Oct. 30, from 5-8 p.m. The event includes trick-or-treating, games, prizes, music, candy, and a whole lot more!

Bring a bag and a friend for the event at 555 Middlefield Road, Atherton.

Costumes will be available to those who need them, according to organizers.

### Menlo Upper School Drama presents ‘Urinetown: The Musical’

Menlo Upper School Drama is presenting its fall production, “Urinetown: The Musical,” a biting, Tony Award-winning comedy, on Friday, Nov. 1, and Saturday, Nov. 2, both at 7:30 p.m. A final performance will take place on Sunday, Nov. 3, at 5:30 p.m.

The show takes place in the Spieker Performing Arts Center, 50 Valparaiso Ave. in Atherton.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students at [menloschool.org/tickets](http://menloschool.org/tickets).

— Angela Swartz

### Learn from kid-trepreneurs at the Sparklez Children’s Business Fair

Sparklez, a nonprofit organization run by 10-year-old entrepreneur Myra Saxena, is hosting a children’s business fair from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 26, at the Arrillaga Family Recreation Center, located at 700 Alma Street, Menlo Park.

Kids from around the Bay Area were invited to develop a brand, create a product or service, then build a marketing strategy. The 25 young entrepreneurs will present their products at this one-day marketplace.

From cupcakes to friendship bracelets, there will be many kinds of kid-founded businesses to explore at the Children’s Business Fair. Admission to the event is free, and no sign up is required for attendees.

### Menlo Park residents are invited to apply to be on the East Palo Alto Sanitary District advisory committee

Menlo Park is seeking applications from Menlo Park residents who live in the East Palo Alto Sanitary District to serve on the EPASD advisory committee. The Menlo Park representatives on the committee will advise the district on legal, operational, maintenance and financial matters, and review annual budgets, capital improvement plans and service rates.

Interested Menlo Park residents over the age of 18, who live in the EPASD service area are encouraged to apply. Request an application by emailing [jaherren@menlopark.gov](mailto:jaherren@menlopark.gov) Applications close on Nov. 8 at 5 p.m.

Check your sanitary sewer provider district at [menlopark.gov/utilities](http://menlopark.gov/utilities).

— Eleanor Raab

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# Menlo Park, county join forces to address safety concerns on Ringwood, Coleman avenues

By Eleanor Raab

The city of Menlo Park and San Mateo County are working together to make changes to the area around Ringwood and Coleman avenues. Residents say the area is plagued by speeding drivers, illegal parking and other safety issues affecting children who use these streets to get to school. At its Tuesday, Oct. 22, meeting, the Menlo Park City Council discussed proposals for a pilot program to address these issues.

There are a number of schools in the vicinity of the two streets: Menlo-Atherton High School, Laurel Elementary School and the Peninsula School as well as KIPP Valiant Community

Prep and the Silicon Valley International School closer to Willow Road. Coleman Avenue is shared by the county and the city, and Ringwood is primarily owned by the county.

“On Coleman, I hear about cars speeding past young children while honking, and hyper-aggressive cars passing other cars who are going slow because there are children in front of them,” said Meredith Bergen Bailey, one of the Safe Routes to School co-chairs for Laurel Elementary School at the Oct. 22 meeting.

After several years of outreach, the county’s transportation consultants came up with a long-term plan to address the issues on the two streets.

However, despite initial

support for the plans, residents on the streets signed petitions expressing dissatisfaction with the design due to fears that speeding would not be adequately addressed, and concern that the plans would involve the removal of the heritage oak trees that line Coleman Avenue.

The county has now returned with proposals for several pilot concepts for the streets so that officials they can test out changes to the streets with cheaper materials before making the more expensive long-term changes.

Any pilot implemented is expected to come before the start of the next school year, and to last for approximately six months. There are no pilot plans proposed for Ringwood Avenue.

Ideas for the short-term trial include turn restrictions onto Coleman from Willow Road and Ringwood Avenue during peak hours; a full road closure at the county-city border on Coleman, with “not a through street” signs on either end of the road to eliminate cut through traffic and the installation of temporary traffic calming measures such as rubber speed bumps.

However, the pilot plan that has received the most vocal support from public commenters and residents is the conversion of the county portion Coleman to a one-way street at the county-city border. The one way traffic would flow toward Ringwood, and the other side of the street

would function as a dedicated bike and pedestrian lane. If this plan is implemented, there would be a barricade closure at the city-county border, and the city portion of the street would remain open to two-way traffic.

The one-way plan was endorsed by school district representatives in a letter sent in September as well as at the City Council meeting, and by a community petition that was presented to the county. Nearly 20 community members commented in support of the one-way alternative at the Oct. 22 meeting.

“We are responsible for the safety of our students, and we believe the smoothest and quickest way forward to increase the safety of Coleman Avenue, at this time, is to go with the one-way pilot,” said the letter from school district

See **RINGWOOD SAFETY**, page 19

# VOTE



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VOTING INFORMATION

Voting is now open for the 2024 election. Early in-person voting is now open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays at the San Mateo Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder office at 555 County Center in Redwood City and the Registration & Elections Division office at 40 Tower Road in San Mateo. Voting will be open to voters on the following weekend days: Oct. 26 to 27, and Nov. 2 to 3. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked on or before Election Day and must be received no later than seven days after Election Day. No postage is required. Ballots that are returned in-person must be received by 8 p.m. on Election Day to any authorized drop off location in San Mateo County.

- Official ballot drop box sites on the Midpeninsula:**
- Menlo College**  
1000 El Camino Real (Atherton)
  - Woodside Town Hall**  
2955 Woodside Road (Woodside)
  - Town Center**  
765 Portola Road (Portola Valley)
  - Boys & Girls Club**  
401 Pierce Road (Menlo Park)
  - City of Menlo Park**  
701 Laurel Street (Menlo Park)
- Don't forget to sign your ballot envelope. All voting information is available at [tinyurl.com/votecentersmc](https://tinyurl.com/votecentersmc).*

# East Palo Alto City Council candidates talk priorities at bilingual forum

Eight candidates are vying for two seats on the council

By Lisa Moreno

Seven of eight active East Palo Alto City Council candidates attended “Foro Latino,” the Latino forum, to discuss housing and the local economy on Oct. 17.

Current and former city officials Laura Martinez, Elvira Macias, Luis Vizcardo, Betsy Yañez and Ruben Abrica hosted the event, giving candidates three to four minutes to answer pre-distributed questions in Spanish and English. Candidates were given the option to translate their own answers, bring an interpreter or ask city officials to translate, and were able to dedicate as much time as they liked to either language.

Council member Abrica first asked the candidates what they considered to be the primary needs of the city and the particular needs of Latino residents.

Ravneel Chaudry, who spoke first, stood apart from his fellow candidates by discussing distinct action plans to keep Latino residents in the know.

He proposed partnering with the East Palo Alto Library and Cañada College to create more English-Spanish language classes for residents and develop city-sponsored courses to educate Latino residents on complex legal and financial matters with translation.

Similarly, Webster Lincoln highlighted the need for more

bilingual services and hopes to provide more translators throughout city programs, schools and job training initiatives. His top priorities for the city are affordable housing, youth empowerment and economic development through partnerships with local tech companies, which he said should prioritize local residents.

Gail Wilkerson critiqued the city for its single “monotone” supermarket — or the Latino grocery store Cardenas. Instead, she would like to see East Palo Alto engage all of its residents, she said. She was unable to provide a Spanish-language answer due to time constraints.

Mark Dinan said that primary city issues like a lack of housing and common local necessities don't just affect one group of people. If given the chance, he would like to prioritize the addition of more local businesses.

East Palo Alto residents sleep in the city but leave to work and spend money, Dinan said.

While most of her fellow candidates focused on increasing housing, which she believes is important, Maria Rocha said, she wanted to discuss emergency preparedness against floods, earthquakes and fires.

If elected to council, Rocha would aim to identify local risk-factors, update multilingual emergency communication systems — through text and radio — and create deeper

relationships with local first responders, she said.

“I think many of my colleagues have talked about what they want to do, but they haven't put out plans about how to do it,” Carlos Romero said, focusing on his role as an incumbent and decades of work in the city.

His main concerns are about resident displacement and he hopes to continue his work, passing pre-existing local initiatives like Measure JJ, which would fund tenant rental assistance, and a parking permit program that would reduce street traffic.

Deborah Lewis-Virges called out candidates like Romero for only focusing on housing, an “easy problem,” rather than tackling long-standing issues.

Instead, should she serve on the board, Lewis-Virges said she would address less popular concerns like the city's “50- to 60-year-old” sewer pipes.

“It's easy to run to easy problems like housing,” she said,

Candidate Dennis Scherzer did not attend the event and Ofelia Bello notified this publication that she has dropped out of the race, but did not provide a statement on why.

Voters can read more about East Palo Alto City Council candidates at [AlmanacNews.com/Election](https://almanacnews.com/Election). ■

Email Staff Writer Lisa Moreno at [lmoreno@almanacnews.com](mailto:lmoreno@almanacnews.com).

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Lydia Kou will continue to speak out against “builder's remedy” projects that are out-of-scale with adjacent residential neighborhoods, while backing the creation of affordable housing that meets the needs of teachers, nurses, police, and other service workers.

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## LYDIA KOU

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## LA CIUDAD ESTÁ BUSCANDO APLICANTES PARA COMITÉ ASESOR DEL EPASD

La Ciudad está buscando aplicantes para representar a Menlo Park comité asesor del Distrito Sanitario de East Palo Alto (EPASD) y apoyar la misión del EPASD de proveer servicios de alcantarillado sanitario seguros, eficientes y rentables a porciones de East Palo Alto y Menlo Park.

### EL COMITÉ ASESOR

- Servirá como el nuevo cuerpo asesor del EPASD
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- Revisará presupuestos anuales, planes de mejoramiento de capital y tarifas de servicio

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- Aplicar antes de las 5 p. m., viernes 8 de noviembre
- Debe ser residente en el área de servicio del EPASD
- Debe ser residente en Menlo Park
- Mayor de 18 años

### PARA MÁS INFORMACIÓN

- Visite [menlopark.gov/sanitarysewer](https://menlopark.gov/sanitarysewer)
- Escriba a [jaherren@menlopark.gov](mailto:jaherren@menlopark.gov)
- Llame al 650-330-6620

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# Philip Zimbardo, creator of Stanford Prison Experiment, dies

Remembered for his 'prolific and influential' work, Zimbardo died at 91

By Gennady Sheyner

Philip Zimbardo, a pioneering Stanford University psychologist who studied the impacts of environmental factors on individual actions and who is best known as one of the architects of the controversial Stanford Prison Experiment in 1971, has died, the university announced. He was 91.

A native of New York City, Zimbardo joined Stanford faculty in 1968 after stints in New York University and Columbia University. Over the following decades, he was at the forefront of research into shyness, alienation, persuasion and ways in which environmental pressures shape human behavior. His most famous study, the Stanford Prison Experiment, transformed the basement of the Department of the Psychology building into a mock prison and recruited about two dozen graduate students to spend two weeks as either prisoners or guards.

The experiment was halted after six days because of emotional abuses that transpired, according to the university. In a

paper that he co-wrote with psychologist Craig Haney in 1998, Zimbardo reflected on the dramatic changes that participants went through in university's "minimalist" prison and their implications for the nation's incarceration system.

Even though the "guards" in the experiments were not armed, all participated "in one way or another in the pattern of mistreatment that quickly developed," in some cases escalating their behavior to become "highly feared, sadistic tormentors."

Half of the "prisoners" left the experiment early because they could not tolerate this pain.

"The pains were as much psychological — feelings of powerlessness, degradation, frustration, and emotional distress — as physical — sleep deprivation, poor diet and unhealthy living conditions," Zimbardo and Haney wrote in *American Psychologist*.

Zimbardo, who played the role of prison superintendent, told Stanford News Service at the beginning of the experiment most people go through life "assuming that they have more



Courtesy L.A. Cicero via Stanford University

Philip Zimbardo, creator of the Stanford Prison Experiment, died in October 2024. He is pictured here in 1994.

control over their behavior than they actually do."

"We are often unaware of the tremendous power which social situations exert upon us to shape, guide, and manipulate our behavior," Zimbardo said in 1971.

Over the following years, Zimbardo conducted research into shyness, which he called "a form of imprisonment," and the phenomenon known as "bystander effect" in which individuals are less likely to help someone in need if other people present. He also conducted research into cults and mind control.

He wrote in a 2002 column that mind control, when systematically practiced by the state, the military or cults, "can induce false confessions, create

converts who willingly torture or kill 'invented enemies,' engage indoctrinated members to work tirelessly, give up their money — and even their lives — for 'the cause.'" He later founded the Heroic Imagination Project, a nonprofit organization that seeks to promote what he called "the banality of heroism," an idea rooted in the belief that all seemingly ordinary people are capable of performing heroic acts.

In an article for Stanford News Service, Claude Steele, a Stanford University psychology professor, called Zimbardo "one of the most prolific and influential psychologists of his generation — a true pioneer of the field of social psychology."

"Virtually all of Phil's research shows how important

phenomena of real-life human behavior can be studied scientifically. For a young science like social psychology, this has been an especially important contribution," Steele said.

Zimbardo retired from Stanford in 2003. Four years later, he received the Richard W. Lyman Award from the Stanford Alumni Association for his volunteer service, according to the university. Mark Lepper, former chair of the Department of Psychology, called Zimbardo a "highly decorated teacher."

"In quarters when he taught Introduction to Psychology, lines formed around the Main Quad with students wanting to take his course," Lepper told Stanford News Service.

Zimbardo became president of the American Psychological Association in 2002. Ten years later, the association awarded him the Gold Medal Award for Life Achievement in the Science of Psychology. His other awards include the 2006 Havel Foundation Prize and the 2015 Kurt Levin Award.

Ewart Thomas, a Stanford psychology professor and former dean of the School of Humanities, said Zimbardo was "famous for inspiring many of his students to pursue research and teaching careers in which they, like their mentor, were recognized for their distinguished teaching." ■

Email Staff Writer  
Gennady Sheyner at  
gsheyner@almanacnews.com.

## Joseph Patrick Zotter

1945 – 2024

Joseph Patrick Zotter passed away peacefully at Sequoia Hospital in Redwood City, CA, on October 15, surrounded by his family. Born in 1945 to Joseph L. and Clothilde M. Zotter in Oakland, CA, Joe spent his early years there, attending Bishop O'Dowd High School, where he made lifelong friendships. He earned both his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Santa Clara University.



Joe served his country as a Captain in the U.S. Army before embarking on a successful 35-year career as a top sales producer at IBM. He later founded a travel consulting business, where he became his own best client.

Throughout his life, Joe embraced adventure, enjoying water and snow skiing, golf, and travel. As a loving husband, father, and grandfather, he was a generous host and talented chef with a passion for fine wines, good food, and boating at Lake Tahoe. Joe and his wife, Renee, lived in Menlo Park for over 50 years, where they were deeply involved in the community. A committed Catholic, Joe always put others before himself, and we are forever grateful for the wonderful times we shared with him.

He is survived by his wife of 57 years Renee Chaput Zotter, his son Stephen, daughters Chantal and Danielle, and granddaughter Colette Zotter. He was preceded in death by his granddaughter Chloe Zotter.

Service to be held at St. Raymond Church on October 28, 11 AM. Reception to follow.

PAID OBITUARY



## EPASD ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECRUITMENT

The City is seeking applicants to represent Menlo Park on the East Palo Alto Sanitary District (EPASD) advisory committee and support the EPASD's mission to provide safe, efficient and cost-effective sanitary sewer services to portions of East Palo Alto and Menlo Park.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

- Serve on the EPASD's new advisory body
- Advise on legal, operational, maintenance, and financial matters
- Review annual budgets, capital improvement plans and service rates

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Apply by 5 p.m., Friday, Nov. 8
- EPASD service area resident
- Menlo Park resident
- Over 18 years of age
- Committed to attending scheduled meetings beginning January 2025

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Janet CalRE# 00621176  
John CalRE# 01155772



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**STRIKE**

*continued from page 1*

homework center and sports will be canceled. The district encourages student attendance and parents should notify the school of their child's absence.

Bus services will be limited to students participating in the Tinsley Transfer Program and the Strategies class. "Special education services will be provided to the best of our abilities," states the district's announcement on Oct. 21.

District teachers have been out of a contract for three years and have been negotiating for almost over a year. The district says that the association's initial ask for a 10% raise is "excessive and would significantly deplete the reserves," according to a fact-finding report.

The arbitrator in the fact-finding hearing recommended that it would be appropriate for the district to offer a 7% raise to which the panelist representing LLEA argued it would still not be enough.

"There are many financial hardships that we are going through. We have nearly 60% of our staff with two and three jobs [and] the healthcare deficit that we are feeling in our paychecks," said Montalvo.

Without a contract, staff are also vulnerable to their work environment and have no protection and security within their jobs, Lefer explained. She adds that there is potential for the district to lose teachers due to the current situation as "the morale is incredibly low."

"This strike should not happen.

We're beyond devastated that our management and leadership let us down last night," Montalvo added. Teachers and staff are not getting paid while on strike and students are not receiving their regular instruction, she said.

Parents and students also showed their support for the strike holding picket signs as they marched along the sidewalk in front of La Entrada Middle School.

"We were always amazed by the academic standards and the support we got from the teachers. We are heartbroken to see that it [has] come to this that yesterday [teachers] had to walk out with their personal belongings," said Thomas Been, a district parent.

Been and his family moved to Menlo Park from France 12 years ago. His family was drawn to

LLESD's quality education. His oldest daughter, who is now in college, began at Las Lomitas not knowing a word of English. He appreciated how quickly teachers welcomed her and treated her the same as any other student.

While on strike, teachers and supporters are not allowed to be on school property.

Parents of the district were notified on Tuesday, Oct. 22, of the planned schedule for students who attend school during the strike. The district promises that students will be taught lessons focused on visual arts, physical activity, social-emotional learning, literacy, math and community building.

Classrooms are guided by guest teachers who were brought in by the Association of California

School Administrators which is supporting LLESD during the strike, according to Superintendent Beth Polito.

"The board and district leadership deeply value the significant collective impact of our teachers and staff on our students, schools and community. For the sake of our students and the entire community, we hope to come to an agreement soon so that we may move forward together," according to a district email to families late Tuesday night.

LLEA representatives will continue to strike until the district invites them back to the bargaining table, according to Lefer. ■

*Email Staff Writer  
Jennifer Yoshikoshi at  
jyoshikoshi@almanacnews.com.*

**BUILDER'S REMEDY**

*continued from page 5*

is the third time that Greystar's application for the site has been deemed incomplete.

104 Constitution Drive is a 0.87-acre parcel of land located between Highway 101 and the Bayfront Expressway, near Meta's headquarters, which is currently occupied by a surface parking lot. Before this application was submitted, the site was slated to be developed into office buildings.

This parcel is located on a portion of the project site for the Vasara housing development, which is also being developed by Greystar.

These two rulings from Menlo Park's planning department do not mean that the developments cannot go forward. Each developer will have the option to once again resubmit a formal application to bring it into compliance with city requirements.

There is no limit to the number of times a developer can resubmit an application. However

Assembly Bill 1893, also known as the Housing Accountability Act, which was signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom on Sept. 19, will change this.

Under AB 1893, if a city or local agency determines that a builder's remedy application is incomplete after two resubmissions by the developer, the city or agency will have to establish that the determination is not an effective disapproval of the housing development project. This bill takes effect on Jan. 1, 2025.

If the city receives a resubmitted application from a developer between now and Jan. 1, it will have 30 days to review the application for completeness. Once an application is deemed complete, it will then be reviewed by the city for compliance with environmental and development standards, as well as other city requirements before plans can be fully approved by the city. Builder's remedy projects are not exempt from environmental review.

The developers could also

choose to appeal Menlo Park's determination of incompleteness for the projects.

Anyone can view the application materials, including architectural drawings, for the two projects in person at the Menlo Park City Hall, 701 Laurel St. Follow along with the projects and learn more about builder's remedy on Menlo Park's website, menlopark.gov. ■

*Email Staff Writer Eleanor Raab  
at eraab@almanacnews.com.*

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**NEW TRAIL**

*continued from page 5*

restore the previously arid area to its former marshy glory.

The levee breach at Don Edwards and the Flyway Trail opening at Bedwell Bayfront Park are part of a larger restoration project that aims to restore 15,000 acres of dry salt ponds into wetlands across the southern portion of the San Francisco Bay.

“You can see how much the vegetation is already growing in ... one year ago, it looked like that,” said Dave Halsing, executive project manager at the South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Project, gesturing at a dry area that has not been restored. “Now we’ve got the beginnings of a marsh!”

Since California became a state, the region around the San Francisco Bay has lost approximately 85% of its original wetland habitat, largely due to nearby development and conversion to industrial salt ponds. This vital marshland not only offers habitat for shorebirds and other animals, it also serves as a buffer from rising sea levels that can help protect the regions bordering the bay from rising sea levels and flooding. However, restoring these areas is not easy.

“I’d argue that conservation is probably (harder) here than anywhere else in the country,” said Jeff McCreary, director of the western region of Ducks Unlimited, a nonprofit dedicated to wetland and waterfowl conservation. “Not only do you have the bay, which creates its own tidal challenges, but you have an urban interface, power lines and everything else that goes on around here.”

As tides rise and fall, new sediment and new seeds will be deposited on the bottom of the former salt pond, and Menlo Park residents will be able to see the change in the scenery along the half-mile long trail as it fills in with vegetation and animal life. However, restoration along the bay’s former marshes is still ongoing.

“We are indeed celebrating one of the final steps in making this project complete, but we can’t stop here,” said McCreary. “The threats are coming all around us.

The sea level is coming up, people are still moving here, and there’s degradation all across the bay.”

Halsing said that the first step of the project was locating enough dirt to build up the levees at the sides of what would become the new marsh.

“Our goal was not to build a true flood protection levee, but to raise the old salt pond berms enough to contain the tidal flows,” he said. “So that means finding upwards of 500,000 cubic yards (of soil).”

The berm on which the new Flyway Trail sits was created out of this imported soil, which South Bay Salt Ponds and its partners sourced from construction sites after screening it for cleanliness and suitability. It was designed to gradually slope into the restored marsh, which provides much better protection from rising waters than the straight sides and deep ditches that used to line the salt ponds, said Halsing.

Project managers also had to balance competing conservation goals. The new levees not only separate the tidal flows from the nearby Bayfront Expressway, but also from a dry salt pond that will never be restored to tidal marsh for a good reason.

“We want this one dry because there is a really important bird, the western snowy plover, that uses it,” said Halsing. “It’s a critical species — and very cute.”

Halsing said that dry salt ponds have become a favorite nesting ground for the threatened western snowy plover. The salt crystals in the drained ponds closely resemble the sandy coastal beaches that plovers used to rear their chicks before development pushed them out. South Bay Salt Ponds and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service restored this dry area to be an ideal habitat for the small birds to raise their young.

Birds aren’t the only beneficiaries of the new Flyway Trail. The trail offers expanded recreational opportunities for Menlo Park’s residents as well.

“It’s been a pleasure for me to be a part of this project, not just on the Menlo Park City Council, but as a resident that lives just on the other side of (Meta’s West Campus) buildings,” said Menlo Park Mayor Cecilia Taylor.

Meta’s West Campus, which sits just across the Bayfront expressway from the new trail and the newly restored marsh, is connected to the Flyway Trail and the Bay Trail by a newly constructed pedestrian bridge. This connection allows Menlo Park residents to more easily access the existing network of trails at Bedwell Bayfront Park and other bayside open space preserves.

The Flyway Trail is aptly named for the great Pacific Flyway, one of the major north-south sky highways that birds follow each year as they migrate in spring and fall. In fact, Bedwell Bayfront park

sits within a California Audubon Society-designated “Important Bird Area.” Important Bird Areas are sites that provide essential habitat for birds that help support the state’s bird diversity.

That diversity is on full display at the Flyway Trail, as it is situated at the intersection of three separate kinds of habitat that attract a variety of amazing birds, both migratory and year-round residents.

One side of the trail is bordered by a pond that supports waterfowl such as pintails, green-winged teals, northern shoveler ducks, great egrets and more. The other

side of the trail is split between views of the newly restored tidal marsh, which provides habitat for many kinds of migratory shorebirds like American avocets, greater yellowlegs, black-necked stilts, and the restored snowy plover habitat.

“I grew up in the Bay Area — I used to live in that neighborhood right over there in my 20s,” said Halsing. “This all happened so quickly, and it’s great seeing three different habitats, a trail, and neighbors, the community walking over the bridge. This is everything that we should be doing in one spot on Earth.” ■



Eleanor Raab

The newly restored marsh at Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, with the beginnings of vegetation growing in post-levee breach on Oct. 19.

**TOWN OF WOODSIDE  
2955 WOODSIDE ROAD, WOODSIDE, CA 94062  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
NOVEMBER 6, 2024, 6:00 PM**

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC THAT WISH TO ATTEND AND/OR PARTICIPATE IN A MEETING MAY DO SO IN PERSON OR BY JOINING THE ZOOM MEETING [HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/86068472736](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86068472736) PUBLIC COMMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED BOTH IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM MEETING. ANY EMAILS SENT TO [JPAPING@WOODSIDECA.GOV](mailto:JPAPING@WOODSIDECA.GOV) PRIOR TO 5:00 P.M. ON THE DATE OF THE HEARING WILL BE PROVIDED TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION PRIOR TO THE MEETING.

IN THE EVENT THAT ANY MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION PARTICIPATES IN A MEETING BY TELECONFERENCE OR VIDEO CONFERENCE, PURSUANT TO THE RALPH M. BROWN ACT, GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54953, ALL VOTES OF THE COMMISSION SHALL BE BY ROLL CALL.

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**Remote Public Comments:**

Meeting participants are encouraged to submit public comments in writing in advance of the meeting. Members of the public participating remotely may comment on items during the hearing.

**Email:** [jpaping@woodsideca.gov](mailto:jpaping@woodsideca.gov)

**PUBLIC HEARING**

1. Townwide

ZOAM2024-0003 (ADU/JADU Regulations)

Town of Woodside

Planner: Melanie Olson, Associate Planner

Review and Approval/Denial of a Resolution of Intention and Recommendation to the Town Council to Amend Municipal Code Chapter 153 (Zoning) implementing Housing Element Programs H1.3.a (allowing additional ADUs on larger properties), H1.3.b (remove barriers to construction of ADUs and JADUs), and H4.3.a (update the definition of Emergency Shelters pursuant to State Government Code Section (65583(a)(4)).

This resolution is exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”), pursuant to Public Resource Code Section 21080.17 (CEQA is not applicable to local ordinances regulating the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units), and pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) for updating the definition of Emergency Shelters (no possibility that the minor code amendment will have a significant impact on the environment), of the CEQA Guidelines (Title 14, Chapter 3 of the California Code of Regulations).

2. 300 Family Farm Road

ASRB2024-0020; X2DR2024-0001

Kevin Schwarckopf, CJW Architecture

Planner: Sarah Filipe, Associate Planner

Presentation and consideration of a proposal, requiring Formal Design Review (ASRB2024-0020), to construct a new horse barn that includes an ADU, and associated paddocks, fencing, and turnout areas; and a Second Driveway Exception (X2DR2024-0001), to construct a new driveway to serve the proposed barn and ADU. The lot is currently developed with a single-family residence, swimming pool, and accessory structures.

This application is Categorically Exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines §15303(e), new construction of accessory structures.

3. 35 Skywood Way

XSET2024-0002

Marshall Schneider, Schneider Design Associates

Planner: Keigo Yamamoto, Asst Planner

Presentation and consideration of a setback exception, requiring Planning Commission Review, to partially encroach a main residence addition into the side setback.

This application is Categorically Exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines §15301(e), additions to existing structures not exceeding 2,500 square feet.

THE APPLICATION MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW BY CONTACTING MELANIE OLSON AT [MOLSON@WOODSIDECA.GOV](mailto:MOLSON@WOODSIDECA.GOV), SARAH FILIPE AT [SFILIPE@WOODSIDECA.GOV](mailto:SFILIPE@WOODSIDECA.GOV), AND KEIGO YAMAMOTO AT [KYAMAMOTO@WOODSIDECA.GOV](mailto:KYAMAMOTO@WOODSIDECA.GOV).

**ATHERTON HOUSING**

*continued from page 1*

of which are projected to be affordable at the low and very-low income levels;

- Direction that the Gilmore House site be considered for the development of five or more units, with the provision that town staff clear any legal issues related to the underlying deed provisions on the site;
- Objective design standards for multifamily housing developments that restrict the maximum height of such developments to 34 feet, restrict the sidewall height of such developments at the front of the lot to 28 feet and the sidewall heights at the side setbacks to 21 feet;
- Ministerial review for multifamily developments that conform to town zoning standards and objective design standards.

In total, Atherton is planning for 433 units of housing throughout the town this eight-year cycle (2023-31), to provide a buffer for the state's required regional housing needs allocation of 348 units.

Per state rules, in order to affirmatively further fair housing, Atherton cannot opt to place all of their multifamily rental housing on schools, private clubs and colleges — as the town previously attempted to do — because renters would have to be affiliated with those institutions to gain access to the housing.

**Locations for multifamily housing**

Though most decisions regarding the housing element update were made in the prior Oct. 2 meeting, the council had one last big decision to make: which sites throughout town will actually be included in the zoning overlay for multifamily housing?

Several single-family home sites were identified for inclusion in the 10-unit per acre multifamily zoning overlay. These sites include 197 Ravenswood Ave., 175 Ravenswood Ave., 185 Ravenswood Ave., 999



Eleanor Raab

Atherton resident Elizabeth Jenson addresses the council on Oct. 16.

Ringwood Ave., 352 Bay Road, 318 Bay Road, 296 Bay Road and 23 Oakwood Blvd. The plans also include the Gilmore House property at Holbrook-Palmer Park, which will now be under the 10-unit per acre zoning overlay as well.

There are also sites on several school and college campuses included in the town's housing element update — Sacred Heart Schools, Atherton; Menlo School; and Menlo College — for students and/or staff at a density of 20 or 40 units per acre, depending on the site. Several park and open space sites are also included in the housing element plans, such as a section of the Menlo Circus Club and California Water Service land, which are eligible to be redeveloped for staff members.

The three sites along Bay Road and the site on Ringwood Avenue have been subject to much discussion over the last few months of the housing element update process. When the housing element plans were reviewed by the Atherton Planning Commission on Aug. 28, commissioners recommended that the City Council remove those four properties from consideration for multifamily housing.

Multiple neighbors had complained to the planning commission and City Council about the possible unsuitability of those sites for multifamily housing due to the sites' proximity to single-family homes, and the increase in traffic at that intersection.

Neighbors allege that the additional traffic coming in and out of multifamily homes would add to safety issues for kids biking and walking to the several schools located nearby.

"(I am afraid) that you are adding more (traffic) to a place that is already congested, that is already unsafe," said Elizabeth Jenson, an Atherton resident who lives one street away from the four Bay Road and Ringwood Avenue properties. "We are not protecting our children by building these multifamily housing (units) on these

four lots at the corner."

The town's environmental analysis of the sites found that traffic and noise would not be an issue at those four sites, or that the traffic issues could be mitigated. However, several residents commented saying that they believe that the town's analysis did not accurately assess the impacts of the sites, given that several large developments, such as Menlo Park's Parkline development on the SRI campus and educator housing project on the

**'You have to weigh the fact that if we start to incur \$50,000 a month, we're putting the entire city's finances in jeopardy.'**

ATHERTON MAYOR  
DIANA HAWKINS-MANUELIAN

former site of the Flood School, are expected to be built.

Atherton City Attorney Mona Ebrahimi said that the town could not mandate that new applicants fix an issue that is pre-existing, such as the traffic that already troubles the intersection of Bay Road and Ringwood Avenue. Another issue is that Atherton does not have rights for Bay Road or Ringwood Avenue, as both roads are under Menlo Park's jurisdiction. This limits the mitigation that Atherton can do on either road.

Town Planner Brittany Bendix had said in the staff report for the meeting that planning staff was not confident that the state would approve Atherton's housing element if those four properties were struck from the plan, and urged the council to keep the four lots. Bendix also said that if the council had opted to include more sites in the town's environmental analysis, they would have more flexibility at this point in time.

The council also considered removing just the lot on the corner of the intersection, 999 Ringwood. Council members DeGolia and Bill Widmer each

said that they met with planning commissioners separately before the meeting, and each council member said that planning commissioners regretted recommending the removal of all four properties, and if they could go back, would recommend the removal of just the Ringwood property. The council ultimately decided to deal with all of the properties as a block.

All five City Council members agonized over whether to include these four properties in the town's housing plans.

"This is one of the hardest decisions that we are making," said Vice Mayor Elizabeth Lewis. "I've been on the council for 16 years, and this is one of the hardest motions (to make)."

Mayor Hawkins-Manuelian agreed, saying that these properties "would not be the properties that I would pick," but that she is more worried about state enforcement should HCD not approve the housing element.

The council ultimately unanimously voted to include the four properties in the list that will be subject to the 10-unit per acre zoning overlay, with the provision that town staff work with the town of Menlo Park to expedite the process of alleviating traffic impacts and improving bike and pedestrian safety at the intersection of Bay Road and Ringwood Avenue.

**Gilmore House**

The council also discussed how many units to place on the site of the Gilmore House in Holbrook-Palmer Park, where Atherton's police chief currently resides.

At a meeting earlier this month, the council opted to limit the number of units of housing that could be built on the site to a maximum of four, despite the theoretical maximum that could be allowed on the site under the 10-unit per acre zoning overlay being nine.

The council reconsidered this stance at the Oct. 16 meeting, and opted to allow a higher number of units on the site.

"I believe that we have an obligation to show the town that we have some skin in the game," said Widmer. "I'm not saying we're going to develop it ... but the opportunity to be developed, I think, should be there. I'm changing my vote to support (the higher) number."

The Gilmore House is the only property owned by the town of Atherton that was eligible for multifamily housing.

Lewis said she was opposed to going above four units on the site, as it would "really change the character" of the park. DeGolia was worried about legal issues with the site's deed. Olive Holbrook-Palmer deeded

her family's estate to the town in 1959 on the condition that the town only use it for recreational purposes, and that if the property ceased being used as a park, it would go to Stanford University.

Ebrahimi said that the town could consider seeking a court order to declare its rights to the property, which could mean the town could have the property free and clear of the deed restrictions.

The council voted 3-2, with DeGolia and Lewis in opposition, to change the phrasing to allow "five or more" units on the Gilmore House site. The council included the provision that town staff clear any legal issues related to the underlying deed provisions on the site before redevelopment.

**Residents push back**

Throughout the housing element update process, Atherton residents have pushed back against the prospect of adding more housing to the town, which has historically been zoned for only single-family homes.

Residents also accused the town and the town's planning contractors, M-Group, of "fear mongering" about consequences from the state and urged the council to take more time on the plan, despite HCD giving the town a hard deadline of Oct. 16.

"I think you're hearing loud and clear that this is not the right thing, nor is it the voice of your constituents," said resident Warren Jenson.

Housing advocates have also pushed back against Atherton's newest housing element plans. Jeremy Levine, the policy manager for the Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County, suggested that Atherton is overestimating the affordability of ADUs, and exaggerating the development potential of school sites. He also suggests that the limited rezoning of single family homes fails to truly affirmatively further fair housing in the exclusive town.

**Next steps**

Atherton planning staff will implement all changes requested by the City Council at the Oct. 16 meeting. After a seven-day public review period, where the fully updated housing element document is made public, Atherton staff can then submit the document to HCD.

Atherton City Manager George Rodericks said that once the full housing element package is submitted to HCD, the department will review it and provide the town with a formal comment letter. This process is expected to take 45 to 60 days. ■

*Email Staff Writer Eleanor Raab at eraab@almanacnews.com.*

**LEHUA GREENMAN**

*"On Halloween you get to become anything you want to be. Be safe and have fun!"* 🎃

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**RINGWOOD SAFETY**

*continued from page 9*

representatives, which was signed by Kristen Gracia and Crystal Leach, superintendents of the Menlo Park City School District and Sequoia Union High School District, respectively. The letter was also signed by the principals of several local schools.

Many speakers urged the council to, above all, act quickly on whatever pilot plan they choose to endorse.

“Elected officials and the community have tried and failed for more than two decades to improve safety on this 0.7 mile corridor that our students use daily,” wrote school officials in the letter. “Some of the most invested elected leaders with the most institutional knowledge of Coleman will be leaving their seats in December (Supervisor Warren Slocum, Menlo Park Council member Jen Wolosin), and in the interests of not further delaying this project, we urge you to vote for and fund a one-way pilot before new elects come on board.”

Ultimately, the council settled on writing a letter to the county, urging them to move forward quickly with the

one-way pilot option.

“The one-way pilot is a relatively low-cost opportunity to make space on Coleman for all modes of travel,” the council wrote in the letter unanimously endorsing the one-way pilot. “The one-way pilot has emerged as the compromise option that most are willing to try and ... the use of temporary materials will enable it to be easily removed if necessary.”

The council also emphasized that the county should put this issue on the Board of Supervisors agenda quickly, and to not require resolutions from the MPCSD board and SUHSD board to agendize the matter. Council member Wolosin said that at an earlier Board of Supervisors meeting, Supervisor Ray Mueller indicated the item would not be agendized without resolutions from the school districts.

“My understanding is that County Public Works is currently considering and pursuing appropriate street level safety enhancements to Coleman Ave. Such safety improvements need not be added to the Board of Supervisor’s agenda,” said Mueller in an email to the City Council on the morning of Oct. 23. “Council member (Jen) Wolosin represented there was

new found community support for this one way design, despite survey results during project community outreach indicating otherwise. In our meeting, a request was made for resolutions from the City of Menlo Park, MPCSD, and (SHUSD) to demonstrate the new support for the design change.”

The council included a copy of the September letter signed by school district representatives in their letter to the county as well.

Council member Maria Doerr also emphasized that the city should follow up with the county to try to get some quick-build or short-term alternatives installed on Ringwood to improve safety for school children soon.

“Ringwood needs attention, but I’m worried that if we try to bundle it with this, it’ll sink the whole thing,” she said.

The council also opted to move forward with exploring the installation of an all-way stop sign at the intersection of Santa Monica and Coleman avenues, as well as the installation of temporary traffic calming devices on the city-owned portion of Coleman. ■

*Email Staff Writer Eleanor Raab at eraab@almanacnews.com.*

# Employment

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# Public Notices

GOLDEN STATE VALLEY CONSTRUCTION  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
FILE NO.: M-298748

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) GOLDEN STATE VALLEY CONSTRUCTION, located at 1775 Tulane Ave, East Palo Alto, CA 94303.

Registered owner(s):  
V J PALO ALTO CONSTRUCTION

1775 Tulane Ave  
East Palo Alto, CA 94303

State of Incorporation/Organization: CA  
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.  
Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 09, 2024.  
(ALM Oct 25, Nov 1, 8 and 15, 2024)

AUTO MATCH FRIEND  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
FILE NO.: M-298656

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) AUTO MATCH FRIEND, located at 1036 Walnut Street, San Carlos, CA 94070.

Registered owner(s):  
MARK STEPHEN LUBECK

1036 Walnut Street  
San Carlos, CA 94070

This business is conducted by: an Individual.  
Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 01, 2024.  
(ALM Oct 11, 18, 25 and Nov 1, 2024)

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GUIDE

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The Almanac

# Artscene

PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCES IN ARTS  
AND ENTERTAINMENT

## Holy Terror

Bay Area drag icon  
Peaches Christ talks  
the origins of her drag,  
love of horror and more



Courtesy Stanford Live  
Peaches Christ hosts an evening  
of music, humor and special  
guest performers with her  
Unholy Sunday performance on  
Oct. 27 at Stanford Live.

By Heather Zimmerman

**P**eaches Christ claims the titles of filmmaker, event producer and cult leader, but even that may not totally capture her wide-ranging résumé. From hosting regularly sold-out drag shows at San Francisco's Castro Theatre to co-producing haunted house Terror Vault, she is a Bay Area drag icon.

She collaborates with conductor Edwin Outwater for musical performances that have been staged with the San Francisco Symphony and the BBC Concert Orchestra in London. She co-hosts the cult-movie podcast "Midnight Mass" with filmmaker Michael Varrati.

Peaches Christ is the stage persona of performer Joshua Grannell, who has also written and directed half a dozen short films and a feature and acted in numerous films as Peaches Christ. Ahead of Peaches' Oct. 27 Unholy Sunday performance at Stanford Live, we chatted with Grannell. (For the purposes of this interview, we will use Grannell's stage name. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.)

**Embarcadero Media:** How would you say your work has evolved since you started in drag?

**Peaches Christ:** In the earliest days, drag was, how should I say it? Well, it was not lucrative. I try to explain it to young people who grew up with "RuPaul's Drag Race" and a world that's very accepting of drag, including

a queer community. When I started doing drag, the gay community at large didn't really want to have anything to do with us. Marriage equality and "Don't ask, don't tell" were the big things. Folks were working toward AIDS recovery. So it was like, "we don't really want you marching in the parades. We don't really want you," which, of course, I loved because I was punk rock and weird and strange and freaky. And I loved that drag was so punk in a way, at least the drag scene that I fell into in the mid-'90s.

So what's really changed is that I never, ever could have envisioned that it would be something I did for a living. And that was true of most of us. There was no industry for it. Artistically, it was something I did to express myself as an angry punk rock young person who was mad at the church, mad at society. As I've grown older, I'm still mad about stuff, for sure, but the drag is less aggressive, less intentionally offensive. Maybe I've mellowed a little, you know, in my old age, I don't know. I still really, really love pushing buttons, but it's just that the world has changed, and I've changed along with it.

**Embarcadero Media:** What has being a filmmaker brought to your drag?

**Peaches Christ:** Well, they're kind of infused with each other. There's this marriage of the two. Drag, for me, has always been synonymous with cult movies because of the drag that I like, and then also because of the drag

that I created. So my real holy trinity of drag inspirations for me was watching *Elvira* as a kid, being fascinated by *Elvira*, but not really understanding at that time that she was kind of like a cis woman doing drag. And then, growing up in Maryland, I was a kid going to Catholic school who was super weird, super strange and just felt like a complete outsider. Hollywood movies felt like a million miles away until they were making "Hairspray" just up the street. For (director) John Waters, it was a real crossover movie for him. And all of a sudden, on the local news channels at night, I was hearing about this crazy movie that was being made, and that's how I found out about *Divine* (an actor and singer best known for drag roles).

Then once I learned about *Divine*, it was all over. I went to the video store, and of course, this is back in the '80s, when people didn't really care what kids rented. And I remember seeing (Waters' films) "Pink Flamingos" and "Multiple Maniacs" and "Female Trouble" and just being completely blown away. This is before I knew I was queer or any of that. I just knew: "These are my people — I want to hang out with these people." And then the third thing that I discovered shortly after that was "Rocky Horror." And so as a teenager, that combination of *Elvira* the movie hostess, *Divine* the movie star and (the character of) *Frankenfurter*, from the cult musical — that was drag to me.

That was my understanding of drag, and so I created Peaches to be basically a pulp movie queen, and my first time in drag was for my senior thesis film. So for me, drag and movies have always gone hand in hand.

**Embarcadero Media:** Horror is a prominent genre in your work. What draws you to horror?

**Peaches Christ:** I think that as a queer person, growing up in the '80s and loving horror, I really thought that I was alone. Now looking back on it, my perspective is so different. My straight male counterparts were going to the movies to see things like *Freddy Krueger* because they liked the scenes with topless girls, or the thrills and chills of it all. And I was going because I identified with the final girl — I identified with overcoming adversity and standing up to a bully and being the nerdy person who was going to make it to the end. Now I can see how horror really helped me cope with things like bullying in elementary school, in high school — that all comes with age and introspection.

Now I can really look at it and go, "Oh my god, I'm really sensitive and really empathetic, and horror is a safe outlet for me to sort of exorcise my fears," and it still is to this day. Now I'm realizing, the more I read about horror, the more that's been studied — and also, I've been lucky enough to be featured in books now about queer horror, and essays — I'm actually learning

as people analyze me, and I read these books. What I'm realizing is so many of us horror fans are profoundly sensitive people.

**Embarcadero Media:** What can audiences expect from your Unholy Sunday show?

**Peaches Christ:** I think they can expect a more intimate, interactive drag show with maybe more live singing than they're used to. It's an evening of spooky songs being sung, many of which I think that the audience is going to know well enough to sing along. We also have some of the Stanford drag troupe performers coming, who I got to work with at *Dragfest* this past spring, and they are just so great. So you will have some lip syncing, some dancing, some traditional drag and very horror-driven drag alongside sing-alongs.

Read a longer version of this interview online at [almanacnews.com/arts-culture](http://almanacnews.com/arts-culture). ■

Email Arts & Entertainment Editor Heather Zimmerman at [hzimmerman@almanacnews.com](mailto:hzimmerman@almanacnews.com).

"Unholy Sunday" takes place Oct. 27, 5 p.m., at Bing Studio, Stanford. At press time, the show was waitlisted. For more info, visit [live.stanford.edu](http://live.stanford.edu). The Terror Vault haunted house takes place through Nov. 3 in San Francisco. The *Midnight Mass* podcast is available on Apple Music, Spotify and Amazon Music.

# Finding Fall

New show of paintings at Pamela Walsh Gallery celebrates fleeting beauty of the changing season

By Sheryl Nonnenberg

Ask any East Coast transplant to California what they miss most about the place they left behind and they are likely to say “fall.” Here in Northern California, we are fortunate to have discernable seasons with a sense of autumn provided by Japanese maple and black oak trees. But if you are longing to see settings with the brilliant panorama of colors that this season is best known for, make your way to Pamela Walsh Gallery in Palo Alto where the landscape paintings of New York artist Larry Horowitz are on view. This debut show, entitled “East Coast Echoes,” is on display through Nov. 27.

Walsh explained that she has been familiar with Horowitz’s work for several decades and decided to offer him a solo show because of his dedicated fan base in this area, and in the hope of introducing him to a new audience. “East Coast Echoes” resonates with the nostalgic feelings many of us have for the East Coast, featuring the sensational colors of fall and reflecting on a fading American landscape,” she said. She said that she and Horowitz decided to expand the show from just New England scenes to the idea of “chasing fall” as the artist traveled from Canada to the Carolinas in order to document untouched places that are slowly disappearing.

Paintings like “Autumn Leaves Reflections” and “Vibrant Stream” certainly do capture quiet, pristine settings that might require hours of hiking to find. But once discovered, the reward is the quintessential autumn scene; leaves that have turned brilliant shades of gold, orange and red — nature’s technicolor wonder that is awe-inspiring and all too brief.

In an email interview with the artist, Horowitz explained his working method and what he looks for in a site. “When working en plein air there are hundreds of changing stimuli — clouds moving, the sun going in and out, someone can walk into a scene, anything is possible. A plein air painting for me is not about a moment in time but rather a short passage of time.”

Working in oils, pastels and watercolors, Horowitz said that he usually makes smaller sketches on site then refers to them as he makes his larger oil paintings in the studio. “The larger oils can take up to 100 hours to complete,” he said.



Courtesy Larry Horowitz/Pamela Walsh Gallery

Larry Horowitz paints on the “rough, dynamic and unforgiving” surface of hemp in works such as “Autumn Leaves Reflections.”

The viewer can get a sense of the time and craft that goes into a large landscape like “Rushing Waters.” A meandering stream carries the eye from the foreground deep into the scene where short, staccato strokes of color create the fall foliage backdrop.

Look carefully at the paintings and a strong sense of texture is apparent. Yes, the artist has used both a brush and palette knife, but there is something even more fundamental. These works are not created on canvas but on hemp. Horowitz said, “As an artist it is very easy to become complacent. I always want to place myself out of my comfort zone. Hemp is probably the hardest surface to paint on. It is rough, dynamic and unforgiving.”

In another effort to challenge himself, Horowitz has chosen not to use a neutral gesso for his ground but rather dark hues that he must work around and over in order to achieve the end goal color. In “Rushing Waters” the ground is a deep purple that underlays the entire scene. For Horowitz, it is a chance to be stimulated and “off balance.” “Sometimes I even let my 6-year-old grandson choose the ground colors for a painting. I love the sense of randomness.”

Horowitz is a master colorist and explained that as a young artist he used to make pastel sticks for other artists such as Jennifer Bartlett, Willem de Kooning and his mentor, Wolf Kahn. “I have a special relationship, not just with color, but with the actual properties of each pigment. During the Renaissance aspiring artists started out in the studio of the master by grinding pigments into paint. I am a

contemporary artist who sees color through the eyes of a young apprentice in the 1600s.”

Given his affinity for color and his predilection for challenging techniques, it is not surprising to learn that his life long influences have been the Old Masters. He cites specifically a work by Peter Paul Rubens that he saw in a museum in the late 1970s. “The painting depicts a landscape that has three different compositional elements: a daytime scene, a sunset, and a night scene. The painting holds as a cohesive whole and, to me, is one of the greatest landscapes of all time painted by someone who is famous for nudes.”

In all of the paintings, Horowitz has evoked a profound and indelible sense of place. We have probably all encountered landscapes like the one shown in “Majestic View,” with its open fields, shining lake and gently sloping hills. They are sacred places worth seeing and preserving for future generations, and we all have our own way of capturing them in our memories. Horowitz says that he is inspired by what is left of the vanishing American landscape. “I feel that every artist has their own visual language. I hope my language speaks to the viewer and enriches the way they see the world.” ■

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East Coast Echoes is on view through Nov., 27 at the Pamela Walsh Gallery, 540 Ramona St., Palo Alto. pamelawalshgallery.com

## Worth a Look



Courtesy Go2Films

Actors Robert Carlyle, left, and Jeremy Piven in “The Performance,” the opening night film for the Silicon Valley Jewish Film Festival. The film screens Oct. 26 at the Oshman Family JCC.

## Silicon Valley Jewish Film Festival

The festival returns this year with a bountiful lineup of events both in-person and virtual. In-theater screenings include opening night’s “The Performance,” based on a short story by Arthur Miller about an American dancer, Harold May (Jeremy Piven), and his troupe on tour in 1937 Europe who are booked to perform for Hitler. May must choose between keeping his Jewish identity a secret or revealing who he is. The family-friendly documentary “Shari and Lamb Chop” tells the story of the children’s entertainment legend Shari Lewis and her sheep sock puppet. The closing-night feature, “Call Me Dancer,” follows a young Mumbai street dancer who attends a dance school against his parents’ wishes and whose path crosses with a curmudgeonly Israeli teacher who becomes a mentor. Check out the full program for much more.

Oct. 26-Nov. 10, in-theater events held at the Oshman Family JCC, 3921 Fabian Way, Palo Alto and the AMC 14 theater, 700 El Paseo de Saratoga, San Jose; see program for schedule, locations and tickets; svjff.org.

### Jackie Ryan

Jazz vocalist Jackie Ryan plays two shows at local jazz hotspot Meyhouse in Palo Alto, along with the Michael O’Neill Trio. Ryan, who’s been singing professionally since her youth, has performed nationally and internationally at major jazz festivals and venues including Jazz at Lincoln Center and Ronnie Scott’s Jazz Club in London. She sings in multiple languages and embraces a range of styles. Her albums include 2022’s “Recuerdos de mi Madre,” featuring Latin American love songs and dedicated to her mother, who was also a professional singer.

Oct. 26, doors at 5 p.m. for earlier show and 8 p.m. for later show, Meyhouse, 640 Emerson St., Palo Alto; \$50 (requires \$20 food/drink minimum); meyhouserestaurant.com.

### The Mother Hips

Beloved and long-running Bay Area psych-and-folk-tinged rock band The Mother Hips make a stop at the Guild to celebrate the release of their latest record, “California Current,” which came out in late September and is the group’s 13th studio album. According to the band’s website, “After 30 years of recording and touring, ‘California Current’ proved to us that there is still so much to explore with our hearts, minds, and voices — and, once again, we laid it all down for the world to hear.”

Oct. 26, 8 p.m., The Guild Theatre, 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park; \$44.03; guildtheatre.com.

# Food & Drink

## Disappearing act

Ghost kitchens are losing hype. Here's why these 4 restaurateurs set up shop at a new Sunnyvale ghost kitchen

By Adrienne Mitchel

Many ghost kitchens are now, well, ghosts.

Once lauded as the future of the restaurant industry, ghost kitchens are beginning to decline in popularity. Characterized by an emphasis on delivery apps and no physical space to dine in, ghost kitchens boomed during the pandemic, with CBRE, the world's largest commercial real estate services and investment company, estimating ghost kitchens would account for 21% of U.S. restaurant sales by 2025.

But last year, Kitchen United MIX, Crave Kitchens, Maggiano's Italian Classics and Wendy's REEF Kitchens all closed, and ghost kitchen revenue in the U.S. is expected to decline 5.2% in 2024.

Still, some ghost kitchens are continuing to expand post-pandemic, including CloudKitchens, owned by Uber co-founder Travis Kalanick. With the recent addition of Sunny's Food Hub, located at 1026 W. Evelyn Ave. in Sunnyvale, the Peninsula now has three CloudKitchens locations, including San Mateo Food Co and Redwood City Eats. The creation of Sunny's Food Hub brought 28 new restaurants to the Peninsula, with tenants citing the food hub's low startup costs as an attractive way to test out a new market.

While some concepts, like Craft Roots, hope to use Sunny's Food Hub as a launching pad for additional brick-and-mortar restaurants, other concepts like Koshin Bento plan to concentrate on expanding within other ghost kitchens. Secondary uses like recipe development and producing food for other projects are of greater priority for concepts like Slice of Homage and Teo Chow BBQ Express.

But there are pitfalls as well. Some restaurant owners say marketing a ghost kitchen is more difficult than a brick and mortar, food options have to be well-suited to takeout and there's consumer misconception about how food at ghost kitchens is produced.

I interviewed four local

businesses that recently set up shop at Sunny's Food Hub about their thoughts on ghost kitchens and their goals for their new locations.

### Koshin Bento

Koshin Bento is serving bento boxes featuring items like wagyu yakiniku, grilled mackerel and duck confit — all handcrafted by Koji Miyamoto, who hails from Yokosuka, Japan, but now lives in Sunnyvale with his wife Cecilia Miyamoto.

Koshin Bento was established in 2018 out of a shared kitchen in Santa Clara. It later moved to a shared kitchen in Campbell, and now it operates out of Sunny's Food Hub — a decision mainly influenced by ease of delivery services and keeping labor costs down. While operating out of the shared kitchen, Koshin Bento had to abide by a time slot and wasn't able to use delivery services. CloudKitchens provides Koshin Bento with its own kitchen space and has designated workers who manage food distribution.

Translating for her husband, Cecilia Miyamoto said, "He can concentrate on his cooking so he doesn't have to worry about managing the restaurant,

because there's a lot of other things that you have to take care of when you're in a restaurant. So this way he can provide food that has a much higher quality."

And it's not just about the quality for Koshin Bento — it's about the cost too. By avoiding additional labor costs, the prices of his food can stay lower, at \$14.50-\$21, Cecilia Miyamoto said.

"Eating out these days is so expensive," she said. "So for people who get off work being so tired and not wanting to cook, I think his business gives a really reasonable price with the quality of food that he's providing."

In addition to his ghost kitchen, Koji Miyamoto is also a private chef and does corporate catering. He doesn't want a brick-and-mortar restaurant; instead, he hopes to continue expanding to additional ghost kitchens.

*Koshin Bento, Instagram: @koshinbento. Open Monday to Friday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.*

### Craft Roots

Vegan food that doesn't taste vegan is what owner Justin Gaich aims to achieve with



Courtesy Craft Roots

Craft Roots' tofu katsu sandwich with Japanese barbecue sauce, firecracker slaw and wakame aioli on a brioche bun (\$20).

Craft Roots, a family-owned vegan restaurant established in Morgan Hill in 2019.

"A lot of customers in my restaurant don't even know it's vegan," Gaich said. "We're not in your face about it ... It's more of just, 'This is another way to eat, and we're going to work on textures, flavors and unique offerings.'"

Gaich wasn't always vegan. In fact, he was the general manager at Trail Dust BBQ in Morgan Hill for a decade.

"The wifey watched a bunch of documentaries one day, flipped a switch, and I just did it with her, and we never looked back on going vegan," he said. "Running a barbecue restaurant really didn't align with the values ... So we got some cash together with the family members and bought a restaurant in downtown Morgan Hill."

This year, Gaich was ready to expand Craft Roots, but he wanted to test how it would do in a fast-casual setting, as opposed to his sit-down restaurant with a full bar in Morgan Hill.

"(A ghost kitchen) was a perfect opportunity to test it with a pretty low burden of buy-in compared to a brick and mortar," he said.

The biggest transition from a full-service restaurant to a ghost kitchen for him has been learning how to do delivery.

"I'm an old-school restaurant guy that has paper menus and glassware and silverware and no QR codes," he said. "So I'm trying to keep up with the times and see how Craft Roots does."

And while he doesn't think ghost kitchens will ever be as



Courtesy Koshin Bento

Koji Miyamoto, the chef-owner of Koshin Bento, prepares food at a client's home as part of his private chef business.

popular as they were during the pandemic, he thinks habits stick.

“It’s the same with craft beer,” he said. “Once you drink craft beer, you don’t really go back to Coors Light, and craft beer’s popularity has completely plateaued and saturated. The demand is nowhere near as extreme as it used to be, but it’s still very viable income.”

Gaich hopes to eventually have three physical locations of Craft Roots: one in Morgan Hill, one in the Sunnyvale-Los Gatos area and the other along the coast.

“I get if you’ve never had vegan food why you wouldn’t want to spend your money on it,” Gaich said. “But I think if people could just take a leap of faith, they’d be pleasantly surprised and realize that maybe the stomach doesn’t hurt so much after their meal, or ‘I feel kind of good after all this.’”

*Craft Roots, 831-515-8407, Instagram: @craftroots\_mh. Open Wednesday and Thursday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Friday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., Saturday from 2-10 p.m. and Sunday 2-9 p.m.*

## Slice of Homage

Known for its crisp and chewy Detroit-style pizza, Slice of Homage began in 2020 out of owner Steven Barrantes’ San Jose apartment. Since 2022, he’s owned Slices by Slice of Homage at San Pedro Social in San Jose, and in late June he opened his ghost kitchen in Sunny’s Food Hub. Next year, he plans on opening a brick-and-mortar restaurant with an expanded menu in downtown San Jose.

Barrantes began his journey in the pizza industry at 16 years old as a dishwasher at a San Jose pizzeria. He went to culinary school and received a business degree from San Jose State University. But his passion for pizza particularly ignited while training under John Arena, World Pizza Champion and co-founder of Metro Pizza and Truly Pizza, Barrantes said.

“Everything is like a connection: the flour, the yeast, the tomatoes that we get, the cheese, everything,” Barrantes said. “There’s a connection to every aspect of it, and that’s really the craft, and that’s why it’s never ending. There’s so much technique and styles.”

While the primary reason Barrantes chose to open within Sunny’s Food Hub was to service a new market, he is also using the new location to prepare food for corporate catering and to test new recipes in preparation for opening a San Jose brick and mortar next year. Expect tavern-style and deep-dish pizza soon



Courtesy Slice of Homage Pizza

Steven Barrantes, the owner of Slice of Homage, makes a Detroit-style pizza out of San Jose nightclub Myth.

on Slice of Homage’s Sunnyvale menu, styles that Barrantes plans to offer at his future brick-and-mortar restaurant.

“There’s an actual art form to (pizza) in every capacity,” Barrantes said. “There’s no way I can get bored ... I feel like I’m learning something every day as a pizza maker and as a business owner.”

Barrantes has previous experience working out of a ghost kitchen, formerly operating out of San Jose nightclub Myth Lounge. Because there’s less visibility operating out of a ghost kitchen, he’d only recommend it for established or niche brands.

“It could be challenging if you’re a new operator, if I’m

really being honest, because the visibility is a little different,” he said. “You have to go heavy on marketing. It’s just a different strategy for this type of business.”

Another challenge he’s encountered at Sunny’s Food Hub is customer perception, with some customers interpreting the CloudKitchen as a delivery pickup zone with pizza being shipped over from San Jose.

“Everything is made on-site,” Barrantes said. “There’s nothing being transferred or traveled ... We have a kitchen here, and we do everything exactly as it’s done and prepared in San Jose.”

Barrantes said he hopes to introduce San Jose and the

South Bay to regional styles of pizza they haven’t tried before.

“Pizza brings people together,” Barrantes said. “It’s deeper than pizza for me. I think there are connections that happen. It’s a communal food ... and who doesn’t love bread, cheese and sauce?”

*Slice of Homage, 669-588-9238, Instagram: @sliceofhomage. Open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 4-9 p.m. and Friday to Sunday from noon to 9 p.m.*

## TC BBQ Express

Established in September by husband and wife Calvin Ng and Winnie Chen, TC BBQ

Express is a Cantonese-style barbecue concept serving barbecue pork, roasted duck and roasted pork belly. It’s the third restaurant under the Teo Chow name, which was created by Calvin Ng and his father, Kwong Ng, in Fremont in 2012. The brick and mortar, Teo Chow Noodle Shack, still operates today and focuses on Chinese noodle soups.

Teo Chow opened its first ghost kitchen, Teo Chow Express in Hayward’s East Bay Eats, earlier this year in response to customers asking for a Teo Chow location closer to the East Bay and the Tri-Valley. But the new Sunnyvale ghost kitchen wasn’t to please customer requests: The primary reason was to support production needs in Fremont.

“One of the biggest constraints we have has been our most popular dish, the roast duck and barbecue pork for the noodle soup, because our facility is not big enough in Fremont, as much as we want to just be able to produce more,” Calvin Ng said. “And that’s where Sunnyvale came in originally, is to really support the existing stores. But at the same time, it’ll be cool to give the option for customers around that area, Sunnyvale (and) Mountain View area, to try Cantonese barbecue.”

Calvin Ng said the ghost kitchen model attracted him because it bypassed the high costs of a building, renovation costs and the permitting process. As a consumer himself, he said he loves ordering from delivery services like DoorDash and Grubhub, but that not all food translates well to delivery, which is why the menus at his ghost kitchens are limited.

“We’d love to keep expanding, to give our consumers more options,” Calvin Ng said. “I love eating noodle soup. I love that wherever I go, I can always find really good ramen, I can find really good pho. But one thing that I can never find is Chinese noodle soup. Personally, I feel like it’s not readily available. And that’s kind of the ultimate goal. We want to be able to expand that to where customers get to have more options.”

*TC BBQ Express, Instagram: @tcbbqexpress\_sunnyvale. Open Monday to Friday 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ■*

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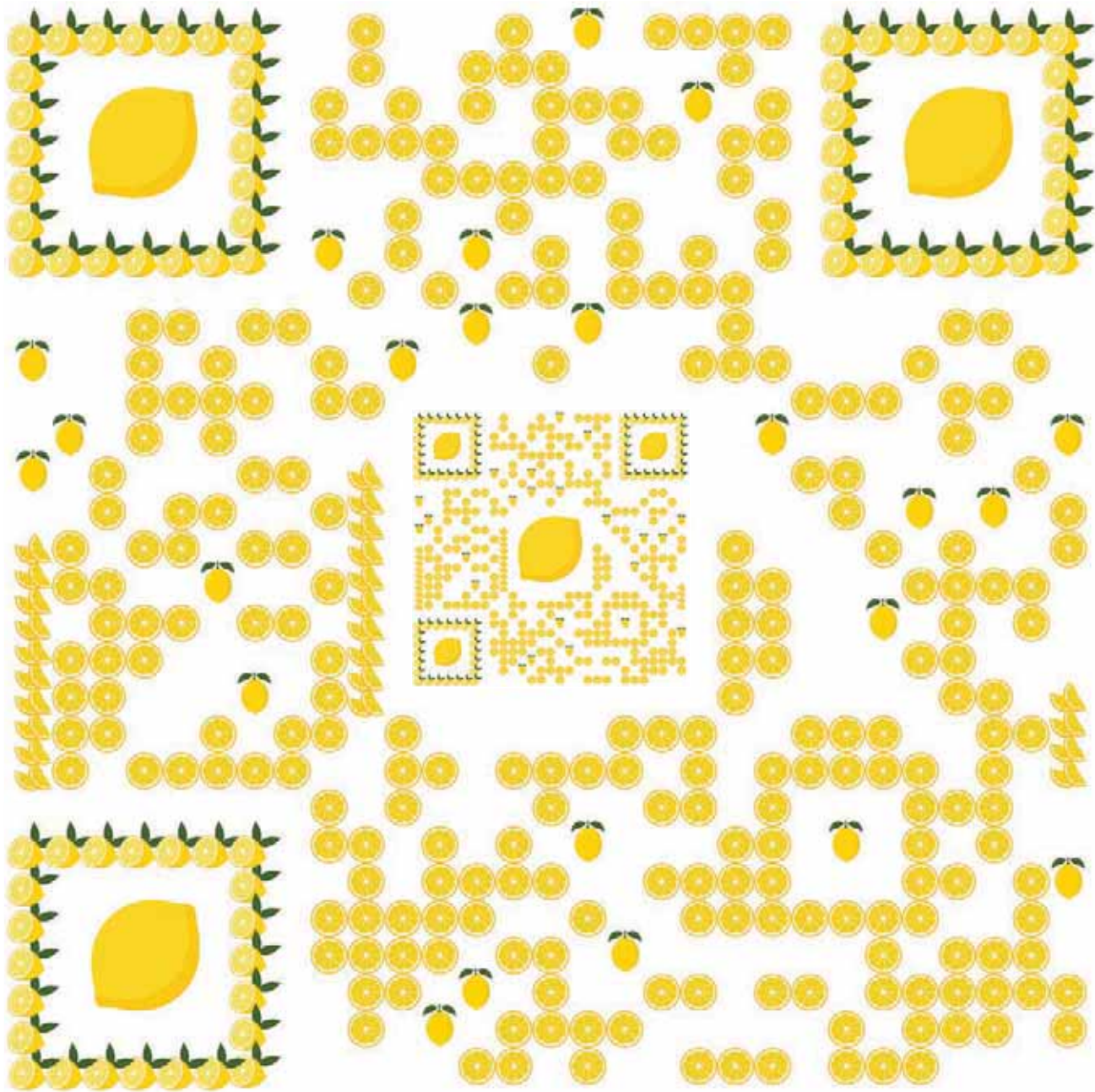


Courtesy Teo Chow

Roasted duck produced at TC BBQ Express in Sunnyvale is used in signature noodle soups at Teo Chow Noodle Shack in Fremont.

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