The Almanac

NONPROFIT LOCAL NEWS FOR THE MIDPENINSULA

OCTOBER 30, 2026 | VOL. 62 NO. 9 WWW.ALMANACNEWS.COM



Allyson Moore

Halloween Hoopla

Moyi Fu, 2, wears a dinosaur costume during the Halloween Hoopla Carnival at Fremont Park in Menlo Park on Oct. 24. See more photos on Page 12.

Menlo Park candidate pitches alternate housing plan, but the devil's in the details

By Hannah Bensen

Plan would move affordable units from downtown to other sites.

Laura Melahn, a Menlo Park City Council candidate, has a detailed housing plan that she says is a cheaper, more realistic path to providing very-low-income housing units in Menlo Park. But critics of the plan, who include her opponent for the District 4 council seat, call the plan a "smoke screen" designed to block housing on the city's downtown parking lots that doesn't pencil out.

Melahn, who is running against Charlotte Reed for Mayor Betsy Nash's seat, published the housing plan on her campaign website in July.

Her proposed amendment to the city's housing element aims to address a shortfall in planned affordable housing by shifting capacity for 345 very-low-income units away from city-owned downtown parking lots to two other sites: Parkline, an approved housing development on the SRI campus, and the former U.S. Geological Survey campus, where the development application is still pending.

Melahn proposes securing deeper affordability restrictions on units planned at these two sites, which would make them affordable to lower-income households than what's currently envisioned. To do it she would use money from the city's Below Market Rate housing fund, in which $4 million is currently available.

Critics of Melahn's plan say it is

See **MELAHN PLAN,** *page 16*

Menlo Park's downtown housing plans hinge on millions in city subsidies

City Council debates how to fund the project. Opponents don't want it at all

By Arden Margulis

As Menlo Park voters weigh a measure that would restrict affordable housing development on city-owned parking lots, city officials face an unresolved question about the proposed project: how to close a multi-million dollar funding gap.

At the same time, the Menlo Park City Council needs to convince voters not to take away its authority over the parking lots. Measure P, which will be on the Nov. 3 ballot, would require voter approval for any plan to redevelop the downtown parking lots.

Menlo Park officials expected that the city could get replacement parking and affordable housing on three downtown parking lots in exchange for a long-term, $1-a-year ground lease, without direct financial contribution from the city. That hope has seemingly been quashed by an independent financial analysis by Strategic Economics. The findings were "disappointing," Mayor Betsy Nash said at the Sept. 29 City Council meeting.

The three proposals on the table would require subsidies ranging from $19 million to $45 million, Strategic Economics found. To help Menlo Park to meet its state-mandated affordable housing goals, city officials hoped to provide land on three downtown parking lots through a 55-year ground lease in exchange for a developer covering the cost of building 345 affordable housing units for households earning between 15% and 80% of the area median income, along with 556 public parking spaces, in addition to parking for residents.

"We need to start to begin the conversation with residents that they will have to pay for this, which is not what we've said," Councilmember Drew Combs said. "We can move forward, but we are moving forward into a brick wall because at some point, the piper has to be paid. And if people don't feel that the council had a true and transparent discussion with them about that, then they're gonna be really upset."

Councilmember Jennifer Wise was the only member of the council to say she had always expected the city would need to contribute funds.

The hours-long council discussion centered on how to close the funding gap. Strategic Economics presented four main options: reduce the parking requirement, reduce the number or affordability level of the housing units, establish a special tax district or increase the city's sales tax.

Councilmembers largely agreed that the city should not consider reducing the affordability levels or number of housing units. Nash said she was interested in exploring reduced parking requirements, but Councilmember Cecilia Taylor, who was largely silent during the meeting, joined Wise and Councilmember Jeff Schmidt in opposing that option.

Councilmembers also discussed two types of special districts: a parking benefit district that would issue bonds tied to paid parking revenue and an enhanced infrastructure financing district to help fund the project.

Schmidt said he would be open to a sales tax measure,

See **DOWNTOWN HOUSING,** *page 14*

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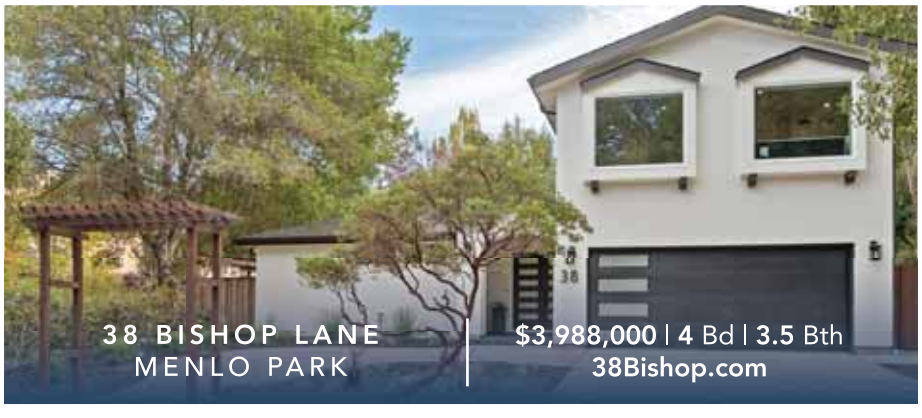
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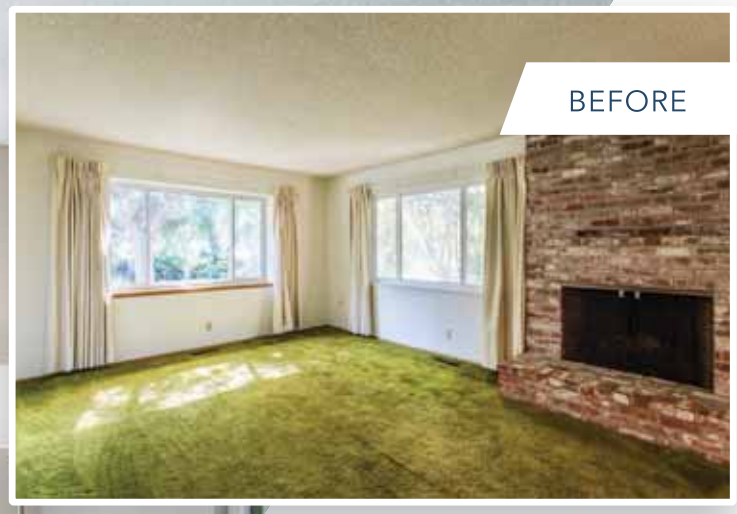
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Allyson Moore

An exhibit highlighting the history of the Woodside Fire Protection District features historical photographs and firefighter equipment at the Woodside Community Museum in Woodside opens to the public on Nov. 7.

Museum's new exhibit celebrates 100 years of Woodside Fire

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

The Woodside Community Museum has opened its newest exhibit celebrating 100 years of the Woodside Fire Protection District. Volunteers on the History Committee have been preparing for the opening for two years.

Panels in the museum tell the story of Woodside Fire's formation in the 1920s and follow its evolution to the modern-day work firefighters and paramedics are doing today with high-tech equipment.

The first fire station was built on a vacant lot at 2991 Woodside Road, where the Firehouse Bistro currently stands. Antone Davis was appointed the first fire chief in 1926.

The exhibit honors longtime fire chief John Volpiano, who served from 1932 to 1973. At the age of 23, he became the youngest fire chief in California history. Volpiano was known for leading the fire district through its transition into the modern era of firefighting.

Under his leadership, Woodside Fire expanded to three stations across Woodside, Portola Valley and Emerald Hills.

The museum also features a list of major fires that have burned in Woodside, including the 1859 lumber mills fire that destroyed 40,000 feet of lumber and multiple mills, resulting in $30,000 in losses.

Notable fires over the last few decades include the burning of the Morshead Estate in 1973, the 1992 arson fires, the destruction of Woodside Elementary in 1993, the Albion Fire in 2002 and the 2003 3-alarm fire that damaged two homes in Portola Valley.

Woodside native and exhibit committee member Lisha Mainz said she remembers how frightening the arson fires were. During the summer

See **MUSEUM,** *page 15*

Measure P would mandate voter approval for Menlo Park parking lot plans

By Arden Margulis

Menlo Park voters will decide Nov. 3 whether to require a citywide election any time the city plans to sell, lease or make significant changes to eight city-owned downtown parking lots.

Measure P reached the ballot through a citizen initiative petition organized by Save Downtown Menlo, a group of businesses and residents opposed to the city's plan to build affordable housing on three of the parking lots.

Supporters say the measure would give residents the final say over the future of publicly owned parking lots and protect access to downtown businesses. Opponents say it would hinder the city's ability to meet state housing requirements, which could come with steep penalties, and block affordable homes for teachers, first responders and local workers who cannot afford to live in market-rate units.

The measure would require voter approval before the city could sell, lease, trade, donate or otherwise transfer all or part of a parking lot, or designate the property as surplus land under state law. Construction, alterations or changes in use that permanently reduce the "availability, access or convenience" of public parking would be put to a citywide vote.

Under current law, the Menlo Park City Council determines how city-owned property is used.

Menlo Park contracts with San Mateo County for election services and reimburses the county for its expenses. The county estimated that the city's Nov. 3 election would cost $78,733 to $94,500, with no additional charge for including Measure P on the council election ballot. Campaigns for and against Measure P have raised a combined total of over half a million dollars, according to the latest fundraising reports.

The measure would not prohibit maintenance, repairs, renovations and improvements intended to preserve, improve or expand parking availability, access or convenience, even if construction temporarily affects parking.

It also would allow the measure's proponents to defend the ordinance in court or appeal an adverse ruling if the city declined to do so. The city would be responsible for paying their legal expenses, up to the amount it would have spent defending the ordinance itself.

If adopted, the ordinance could only be amended or repealed by voters, not by the council. A yes vote would establish the restrictions; a no vote would leave the council's existing authority in place.

The measure is endorsed by former Menlo Park councilmembers Robert McNamara and John Boyle, 2026 Nobel laureate in economics Robert Hall, Richard Draeger and the Palo Alto Daily Post.

The "No on P" campaign is endorsed by a slew of current and former local politicians, including three current councilmembers: Drew Combs, Betsy Nash and Jennifer Wise. The San Mateo County Democratic Party, ACLU of Northern California, League of Women Voters of South San Mateo County, Silicon Valley Association of Realtors and Planned Parenthood Mar Monte all oppose the measure. ■

Man sentenced 15 years for shooting in Menlo Park 7-Eleven parking lot

By B. Sakura Cannestra

The man accused of carrying out a 2022 shooting near the Menlo Park Caltrain station was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

East Palo Alto resident Sosefo Ahofono, 20, pleaded no contest on Aug. 31 to charges of attempted murder and use of a firearm in the shooting that left one person injured. San Mateo County Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Jackson denied Ahofono probation and handed down the sentence on Oct. 20, which includes 15 years in prison and a $370 fine.

On Aug. 21, 2022, Ahofono opened fire on a car in the parking lot of the 7-Eleven on Oak Grove Avenue and Alma Street, across from the Caltrain station, injuring one person. Ahofono had "conflict" with the victim in the past and fired 16 rounds from his rifle into the victim's truck before fleeing in his car, according to a case summary from the county District Attorney's Office.

Jonathan McDougall, Ahofono's lawyer, did not respond to a request for comment.

San Mateo County District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe said he's happy with the outcome. The attempted murder and firearm charges could have carried a sentence of up to life in prison, but Wagstaffe said his team weighed multiple factors in the case when negotiating the plea deal, including that this was Ahofono's first offense, that he was 20 years old at the time of the shooting and that the shooting took place in an area with a lot of foot traffic.

"I do believe justice was done in this case," Wagstaffe told The Almanac. "He'll have a good number of years to think about what he did and hopefully decide he never wants to be in criminal justice again." ■

Email Staff Writer B. Sakura Cannestra at scannestra@almanacnews.com.

Menlo Park's District 1 council candidates

By Arden Margulis

Menlo Park's City Council District 1 represents the Belle Haven and Bayfront neighborhoods.

Wonman Lee

Wonman Lee, 44, thinks that District 1 has a bright future. Tech company Snowflake moved its headquarters into the district, Belle Haven Elementary School recently completed renovations and the city opened a new community center in 2024.



Wonman Lee

But with all of those changes, some things remain the same: Belle Haven does not have a full-service grocery store, a pharmacy or a commercial center.

"I want not just my family but all families in Belle Haven to be able to walk on a weekend, for example, to a breakfast place, order a plate of waffles and enjoy their time," Lee, one of two candidates for the District 1 seat on the Menlo Park City Council, told The Almanac. "We literally cannot do that right now."

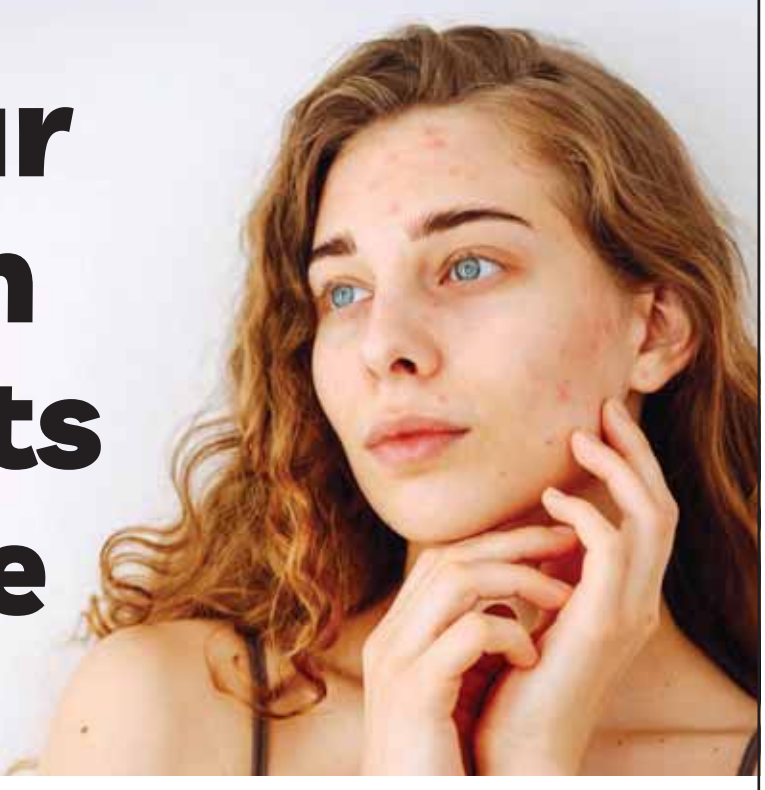
Lee currently serves on the city's Parks and Recreation Committee, where he saw how heated discussions can get when it was deciding whether to name the new Belle Haven Community Campus after late community activist Onetta Harris.

"Those meetings were focused on such a narrow issue — what to name the facility — instead of talking about what services we're going to provide," Lee said.

See **DISTRICT 1,** *page 19*

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OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include:

Arthur William Hammar, 87, a longtime Palo Alto resident who was born in Chicago, who worked at SRI International as director of computer systems until retiring in 2001, who taught evening classes in BASIC and FORTRAN at De Anza College, and who served as treasurer of First United Methodist Church of Palo Alto, was the first chair of its Centennial Endowment Fund Committee and served on the California-Nevada United Methodist Foundation for 30 years, died on Oct. 19.

John (João) Neves, 85, a longtime Palo Alto resident born in Brazil who was one of the first 32 members of the legendary Homebrew Computer Club in Palo Alto in 1975, who spent decades in analog, video and digital engineering, who was a dedicated teacher and performer of Brazilian music and formed Escola de Samba ensembles at both Stanford University and the Community School of Music and Arts in Mountain View, where he coordinated the CSMA Jazz Combo Program, died on Oct. 20.

Owen Dimock II, 94, a Palo Alto dentist who retired in 1999 moved to Fitch Mountain in Healdsburg, who traveled abroad frequently with his wife Pat, who was an avid reader with particular appreciation for Tolstoy, Steinbeck, Pynchon, Vonnegut, McCarthy, and Rushdie, and who, in his 80s, wrote a three-book series that he self-published, died on Oct. 24.

To read full obituaries, leave remembrances and post photos, go to Lasting Memories at AlmanacNews.com/obituaries. ■

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Menlo Park's District 2 council candidates

By Arden Margulis

Menlo Park's City Council District 2 represents the Willows, Flood Park Triangle, Lorelei Manor and Suburban Park.

Drew Combs

Councilmember Drew Combs, 49, said he's seeking another term on the Menlo Park City Council to serve his neighbors, not to advance a particular issue or build a political career.


Drew Combs

"I don't have larger political ambitions," Combs said. "I hope one day to see there is a president that comes from Menlo Park. I promise you, it will not be me."

Combs, a director in Meta's product risk department, is seeking a third term representing District 2 against Finance and Audit Commissioner Vamsi Velagapudi. First elected in 2018, Combs is the only Menlo Park incumbent seeking reelection on the Nov. 3 ballot.

During his two terms on the City Council, Combs said he has delivered for District 2. He said his advocacy led to improvements to Willow Oaks Park, restored gymnastics programs after the pandemic, improved landscaping at the Interstate 101 and Willow Road interchange and improved safety on streets across District 2.

Combs also said that he ensures the city operates transparently by hosting weekly office hours and sending out a monthly newsletter.

"This role is about me trying to be of service to my neighbors. It's about community and relationships — that's what drives me," Combs said.

On major issues, Combs has sometimes been the sole dissenting vote among his council colleagues. Combs said one reason he may disagree is his unique approach: he's not there to advocate for a specific agenda.

"My motivation is not like some singular driving issue," Combs said. "Well, I guess my singular issue is about serving my fellow residents, my neighbors."

Even when he dissented, Combs said he felt he helped sway his colleagues to his viewpoint and productively guided the council's discussion.

In 2025, Combs pushed to reopen the eastbound lane of the 600 block of Santa Cruz Avenue in downtown, which closed to traffic during the COVID-19 pandemic to facilitate outdoor dining and gathering. He proposed preserving space for people to gather but allowing cars to use the eastbound lane. A council majority favored keeping the lane closed.

By October 2026, that support had shifted to reflect Combs' proposal: Mayor Betsy Nash said she had done a "complete 180," and most council members backed a pilot project to reopen the lane while retaining a smaller gathering area in the parking spaces.

Combs was the only councilmember who voted against approving the state-mandated

See **DISTRICT 2,** *page 18*

Menlo Park's District 4 council candidates

By Arden Margulis

Menlo Park's City Council District 4 represents downtown Menlo Park, Allied Arts and parts of central Menlo Park.

Charlotte Reed

A singer. A communications professional. A church cantor. Charlotte Reed is no stranger to making her voice heard, and now she wants to use her voice to bring Menlo Park together.

Reed, 31, is one of two candidates vying to replace Mayor Betsy Nash to represent District 4 on the Menlo Park City Council.

Much of the discussion around downtown Menlo Park has centered around a controversial plan to build affordable housing on three city-owned parking lots. In 2025, 135 businesses signed onto a statement asking the Menlo Park City Council to reconsider the parking lot plan.

As the council moved forward, some business owners and residents launched Save Downtown Menlo to get Measure P on the Nov. 3 ballot. Measure P would require voter approval before affordable housing or other major changes could be built on the downtown parking lots.


Charlotte Reed

Reed supports the plan to build affordable housing on the parking lots and opposes Measure P. But regardless of the outcome, Reed said she wants to work to unify Menlo Park after the election.

"Over the past several years, shopping on Santa Cruz Avenue has become a political statement, and I feel really strongly that we need to get partisan politics out of our downtown," Reed said. "As a city councilmember, it's my job to be an objective bridge-builder that can pull resources from all people that have been doing work to support our downtown."

In addressing concerns from business owners to the housing development plan, Reed said that the city has had a communications problem. She said she wants to use her communication background to help people understand the city's plans.

"Our business community unfairly has been made to believe that building housing as a way to revitalize our downtown will harm them, and that's not true," Reed said.

Reed said she wants to focus on revitalizing downtown and addressing concerns of businesses by creating a specialized city commission.

Reed also said that if Measure P passes, the city would be in violation of state law and would risk expensive litigation. If the city's housing plan is decertified by the state, Menlo Park may be subjected to the builder's remedy provision of state law, which overrules many local zoning rules until the housing element is recertified. When the city did not have a certified housing element in early 2024, a developer submitted a skyscraper proposal for 80 Willow Road, the former headquarters of Sunset Magazine. The developer is now suing Menlo Park for allegedly illegally stalling the proposal.

Reed's opponent Laura Melahn has pitched a way for the city to amend its housing element to remain in compliance without building on the parking lots. Reed said that Melahn's ideas will not work.

"Any alternative housing

See **DISTRICT 4,** *page 19*

Real Estate Q&A

by Monica Corman



One Should Have A Will and A Trust

Dear Monica: My elderly aunt owns a house and doesn't have a will or a trust. What should I advise her to do?
Pamela G.

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San Mateo County's Measure U would create independent commission for redrawing district maps

By Alise Maripuu / Bay City News Service

San Mateo County voters are deciding in the Nov. 3 election on Measure U, a ballot measure that would establish an independent redistricting commission charged with drawing up the boundaries for the county's five districts instead of the Board of Supervisors itself.

The county is divided between five supervisorial districts that change every 10 years based on population shifts after each federal census so that each supervisor represents about the same number of constituents. While the county used an advisory commission for the 2021 redrawing made up of residents that made suggestions on redrawing district maps, the board still has the final say over the district lines.

Measure U would instead give redistricting authority to an independent body.

District 1 Supervisor Jackie Speier, District 4 Supervisor Lisa Gauthier and the presidents of the League of Women Voters chapters in San Mateo County submitted an argument in support of Measure U. They argued that the supervisors' decisions on district mapping could be made to serve a personal interest since they can ultimately decide the areas and populations they represent.

"The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors has final authority over district boundaries," the argument reads. "But this is a self-interested group that has, most recently, overridden the recommendations of citizen members."

In 2021 when maps were being redrawn, the board did not adopt the recommended maps drawn up by the citizen advisory commission. At the time, some members on the board saw flaws in the proposed maps, saying the district lines were unbalanced and could result in representation on the board that does not reflect the communities a supervisor would serve.

The board instead adopted a different map with minimal changes to the prior one.

Giving an independent redistricting commission the authority over district lines could eliminate any potential conflicts of interest, Measure U supporters say.

No ballot arguments opposing Measure U were submitted to the Elections Division. ■

HOW TO VOTE

Registered voters can submit their ballots until Election Day on Nov. 3. There are currently three vote centers open in the county. Additional centers will open on Saturday, Oct. 31, bringing the total to 50 vote centers.

A map of vote centers and ballot drop off locations across the county can be found at smcacre.gov/elections/vote-center-and-ballot-drop-box-lookup.

San Mateo County's Measure J proposes extending timeline for filling vacancies in elected offices

By Alise Maripuu / Bay City News Service

Voters in San Mateo County are deciding this November on whether the Board of Supervisors should get extra time to figure out how to fill a seat in an elective office when it becomes vacant.

Currently, whenever a vacancy occurs in an elected position, the board has 30 days to either make an appointment or call for a special election. Measure J on the Nov. 3 ballot proposes doubling the time limit to 60 days and also requiring the board to hold at least one public meeting prior to appointing someone.

The measure was placed on the ballot by the board, as 30 days may be too much of a time crunch to find qualified candidates, interview them and get public feedback if the board decides to fill a vacancy through appointment.

The board experienced the reality of the 30-day timeframe a year ago when it ousted former Sheriff Christina Corpus over misconduct and abuse of authority. Supervisors had to quickly decide whether to appoint her replacement or hold a special election.

Once the board decided to fill the vacancy through appointment, county staff and the board had to take an all-hands-on-deck approach to craft and post the job opening, identify qualified applicants, interview candidates in several rounds, and hold public meetings in a rushed process in order meet the 30-day deadline.

No opposing arguments for Measure J were submitted to the county's Elections Division.

The measure is a charter amendment that will appear on the ballots of all registered voters in San Mateo County and requires simple majority approval to pass. ■

WE ALL AGREE

NO ON P
DOWNTOWN NEEDS PEOPLE
PEOPLE NEED HOMES



" Measure P would create another barrier to housing, including affordable homes. Menlo Park needs more opportunities for housing, local business growth, and a vibrant downtown."

Betsy Nash,
Mayor, Menlo Park



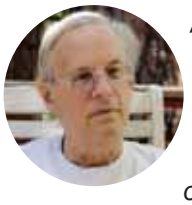
"I stand with Menlo Park residents, local businesses, and community leaders to oppose Measure P, which would inhibit investment in downtown and block affordable housing for young families, teachers, firefighters, caregivers, and emergency responders in Downtown Menlo Park."

Sam Liccardo,
U.S. Congressmember



"Now more than ever, Menlo Park needs more affordable housing, not less. Measure P undermines democratic, representative governance and blocks the construction of affordable homes and replacement parking."

Lucia Tedesco,
President, South San Mateo County League of Women Voters



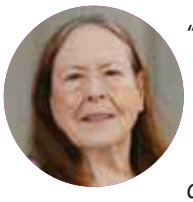
"Our firefighters deserve a chance to live in the community they protect. If Measure P passes, our firefighters, caregivers, and nurses will continue to be priced out and forced into long commutes."

Peter Carpenter,
Former President and Director,
Menlo Park Fire Protection District



"As an architect and small business owner, I've worked hard to build my business here in Menlo Park. But rising costs may force me to close my downtown office because all but one of my seven-person staff are forced to commute long distances, and the other lives in a converted garage. It's painful to think about leaving the community I'm proud to be part of."

Ana Williamson,
Small Business Owner



"I use a walker, so convenient parking and accessible routes make a real difference in my daily life. Measure P would block much-needed downtown parking and accessibility improvements and require a citywide vote for future changes."

Lynn Huidekoper,
Retired Nurse

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Ad paid for by Menlo Park Neighbors and Small Business Owners for Affordable Homes, Sponsored by Housing San Mateo. Top funders: Housing San Mateo Issues Committee

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San Mateo County Measures AA and L propose updates to charter preamble

By Alise Maripuu / Bay City News Service

Voters in San Mateo County are being asked this November whether to add new provisions in the county's Charter Preamble related to extreme weather preparedness and reinforcing equal rights for all residents.

The proposed charter amendments would include new additions to the preamble, which is an introductory statement briefly summarizing the goals of the county government.

The suggested additions are ceremonial and aim to underscore the county's priorities regarding equity for all residents and resilience to extreme weather events, subjects that were not previously a part of the preamble.

The current charter preamble reads as follows: "We, the people of San Mateo County, adopt this Charter to provide a local government responsive to our social, economic, physical and environmental needs and goals in a democratic, just and efficient manner."

Measure L proposes updating the preamble to include another paragraph aimed at emphasizing the county's commitment in building resilience to emergency weather events.

If approved by a majority of voters, the following paragraph would be added:

"It shall be the policy of San Mateo County that long-term resilience against extreme weather events — including fire, flood, wind, rain, heat, drought, and sea level rise — is a County priority, to be undertaken collaboratively with cities, districts, and other public entities."

Measure AA also asks voters whether the preamble should have another new paragraph related to civil and equal rights.

The paragraph that would be added reads as follows:

"The County of San Mateo affirms its commitment to the dignity, civil rights, and equal protection of all County residents in a manner that promotes equity, fairness, inclusion, belonging, accessibility, and opportunity."

The proposed amendments were drawn up by a Charter Review Committee that met eight times over several weeks to create recommendations. In June, the Board of Supervisors moved to have the measures decided on by the voters in the election on Nov. 3.

No opposing arguments to Measures L and AA were submitted. ■

Expenditures rise for new Menlo Park school board candidates

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Newcomers seeking to fill a seat on the Menlo Park City School District board are spending thousands on advertisements and mailers while the incumbents are keeping a lower profile.

Candidate Maya Herstein, a parent of three students in the district, reported contributions of $4,048, which include a $2,000 loan to herself, during the period of Sept. 20 through Oct. 17. Herstein's largest donation, of $1,000, came from Sheryl Sandberg, former chief operating officer of Meta. Her fundraising total as of Oct. 17 was $11,442.

Herstein's campaign spent $6,409 on postcards, newspaper and text message advertisements, and processing fees. Campaign ads were placed in The Almanac and Palo Alto Daily Post, according to the most recent campaign finance report.

During the previous filing period from July 1 through Sept. 19, Herstein raised $7,393 and spent $4,007.

Andrew Barnes, who works for the Santa Clara County Facilities and Fleet Department, reported receiving $725 in contributions in the most recent filing period and loaned himself $5,000. That brings his reported total war chest to $8,526. He reported spending $1,101 on lawn signs and $4,169 on campaign mailing materials.

Previously, Barnes reported a $5,000 loan to his campaign and a total of $1,599 raised and spent on lawn signs, door hangers and his website.

Incumbents Jed Scolnick and Sherwin Chen previously told The Almanac that they filed forms declaring they did not anticipate raising or spending more than $2,000 for their campaign. ■

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

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River otter sighting on San Mateo County coast delights conservationists

By Bay City News Service

Conservationists are celebrating after a North American river otter was sighted recently along the San Mateo coast for the first time in more than 100 years.

The otter was photographed by wildlife cameras within a closed area of the Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve in Pescadero in July, August and September.

The cameras were set up to photograph other animals, such as foxes, so it was a welcome surprise when a river otter made an appearance, according to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

"Checking wildlife cameras can be like Christmas, but river otters haven't been known to occur on the San Mateo Coast since the 1800s," said Ken Hickman, an independent researcher and Midpen partner. "I knew Midpen and State Parks biologists would be as surprised and interested as I was to see the photos."

The river otter species Lontra canadensis once ranged along the west coast of North America, from Alaska down to Santa Barbara County, but the 19th-century fur trade and pollution decimated their populations.

There has been a resurgence of the otters north of the Golden Gate and some appearances in the San Francisco Bay wetlands, but virtually no sightings along the Pacific Coast.

Because river otters thrive in clean water with abundant food supplies, the sighting has ecological significance, according to Midpen officials.

"River otters can serve as vital bioindicators," said Midpen biologist Matt Sharp Chaney. "Their presence in Cloverdale Ranch Preserve and the reclamation of their historic range offers evidence of the species' recovery post-fur trade in protected resilient landscapes that also support coho salmon and steelhead trout."

Representatives of the River Otter Ecology Project were also celebrating the sighting."This discovery suggests that what we have long expected is happening: river otters are making their way to excellent habitat along the San Mateo coast," said Megan Isadore, executive director of River Otter Ecology Project.

"It reminds us that people have the knowledge and ability to protect and restore the habitats that allow river otters, and many other species, to recover," Isadore said. "We must continue to support that recovery."

The River Otter Ecology Project encourages the public to submit river otter observations to Otter Spotter, its community science observations platform at riverotterecology.org/become-an-otter-spotter/. ■



Courtesy Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District via Bay City News

A North American River Otter spotted in the Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve in Pescadero marks the first documented return of the species to the Pacific-facing side of the San Francisco Peninsula since the 1800s.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Flood Park playground ribbon-cutting

San Mateo County Parks is hosting a ribbon-cutting event for the opening of a new playground at Flood Park, located at 215 Bay Road in Menlo Park. The event will be held from 8:30 to 10 a.m., Tuesday, Nov. 10.

The play structure features a climbing tower, zip lines, slides, spinners and swings, along with informal play space and a separate area for children ages 2 to 5.

The long-awaited opening of the playground was expected in June but was delayed over safety concerns because the metal slide reached dangerously high temperatures in the summer.

Reserve a spot for the ribbon cutting on smcgov.org/parks/rsvp-flood-park-playground-ribbon-cutting-nov-10.

— Jennifer Yoshikoshi

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HAVING A BALL AT MENLO PARK'S HALLOWEEN HOOPLA

By Andrea Gemmet | Photos by Allyson Moore

On a sunny Saturday, downtown Menlo Park was overrun by minions and wizards, princesses and dinosaurs, witches, skeletons and at least one very large squirrel.

The city's annual Halloween Hoopla on Oct. 24, which kicked off with a community parade down Santa Cruz Avenue, drew a costumed crowd that converged on Fremont Park for a carnival and magic show. Local businesses joined the celebration, handing out candy to loads of little trick-or-treaters. ■







Clockwise from top: The Lori and RJ Show perform skits during the Halloween Hoopla Carnival at Fremont Park in Menlo Park; participants march in the Halloween Hoopla Parade along Santa Cruz Avenue; Selene Han, 6, helps her sister, Estelle Han, 2, select candy from a bowl; Yani Torres, left, friend Stephanie Hernandez and Hernandez's son Luca, 1, pose for a portrait.











Clockwise from top left: La Entrada Middle School band members march in the Halloween Hoopla Parade; a Menlo Park employee dresses as city mascot Nutty the Squirrel; Zoe Chen, 2, trick-or-treats at Gallery House; from left, Audrey Hanson, 4, Ethan Xia, 6, and Alex Puggelli play a game at The Joy Culture Foundation/Little Bookworm Library booth; young musicians play during the Halloween Hoopla Carnival at Fremont Park.

DOWNTOWN HOUSING

continued from page 1

which could also fund other city projects, or a general obligation bond. Wise suggested exploring a vacancy tax on downtown storefronts.

The viability of the funding measures and the public's willingness to support them were hotly contested. One of the most controversial options was charging for parking.

Nash and Schmidt advocated for paid parking. Nash went further, saying the city should start charging for parking regardless of the downtown development.

"Why are we saying parking has to be free?" Schmidt said. "We've got big things to pay for, and I personally don't believe that paying for parking downtown discourages customers from coming to a business."

"I don't go: 'Oh well it cost me $1.50 to go park or $3 to go park, so I'm not gonna go shop at Ace Hardware.' That feels like a very false argument to me," Schmidt added.

Combs argued that charging for parking would undermine the business community's trust in the council.

"For downtown businesses, (that) would represent an enormous loss of faith in the council," Combs said. "We went from a promise that we're going to replace all the parking to, probably now we're not going to replace all the parking and then your customers have to pay for parking."

Combs also said he did not believe some of the proposed measures could realistically raise enough money to cover the shortfalls, but he did not want to rule out any of them.

The developers offered their own suggestions on how to bridge at least part of the funding gap.

Alliant, which identified a nearly $20 million funding gap, proposed that the city take out "soft debt," meaning a loan that Alliant would be responsible for but that would leverage the city's ability to get more favorable terms. Alliant also wanted the city to provide a loan using the impact fees for the development, which are funds used to offset the impact of new development on local infrastructure.

Presidio Bay, which forecasts a $45 million gap, asked the city to waive all development fees, estimated to reach $20 million, and use $20 million in benefit payments from its other project in the city, the proposed multi-use redevelopment of the former USGS site at 345 Middlefield Road, to pay for its downtown parking lot development. Some of the fees Presidio Bay is asking the city to waive are intended to cover city staff time for reviewing the development.

Related California and Alta Housing, two developers that teamed up to craft a joint proposal, did not provide ideas on how the city could close the estimated more-than-$19-million funding gap.

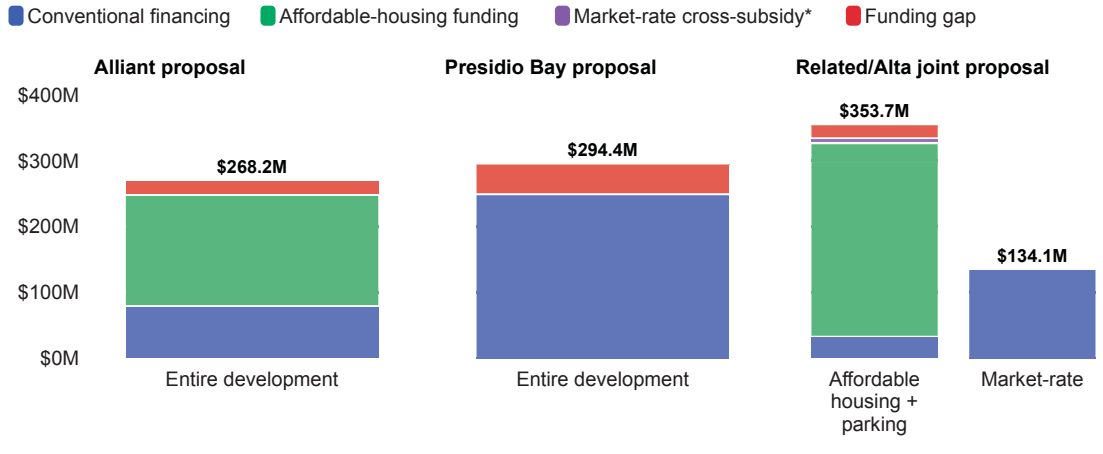
In addition to potentially needing city subsidies, the proposals from Alliant and Related/Alta rely on state housing grants, which have an uncertain future. Alliant estimated it would need $10 million to $15 million from state sources, while Related/Alta's joint proposal budgeted for $29 million. Presidio Bay does not plan to use state funding.

Strategic Economics said some state funding programs have recently exhausted their funding or been restructured. State funding availability could be significantly reduced if voters do not pass Proposition 1, an $11 billion statewide affordable housing bond on the Nov. 3 ballot, the firm said. ■

Email Staff Writer Arden Margulis at amargulis@almanacnews.com.

Suggested funding sources for the three proposals on the downtown parking lots

Related/Alta's joint proposal suggests separate funding for the marking-rate portion



Source: Menlo Park • Note: Funding gaps include proposed city assistance and/or unidentified funding. *Related/Alta proposes transferring $7.5 million from its market-rate component toward affordable housing and public parking.
Chart by Arden Margulis.

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Photos by Allyson Moore

Above: Vintage fire alarms and memorabilia in a display case at the Woodside Fire Protection District exhibit at the Woodside Community Museum in Woodside on Oct. 21. Right: Historical photos on display next to a modern fire alarm. Below: An exhibit highlighting the history of the Woodside Fire Protection District, including historical photographs and firefighter equipment.

MUSEUM

continued from page 5

and fall of 1992, several fires were set in Woodside, Portola Valley and Emerald Hills by a local tree-cutter who was later apprehended, according to the exhibit.

Woodside Fire dates back to 1924, when Woodside residents James Neuman, Selah Chamberlain Sr. and Portola Valley resident Standley Morshead, petitioned the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors to create the fire district. The district was officially formed in 1925 and the three petitioners became its first commissioners.

Across the museum, visitors can also view old artifacts donated by the fire department and families of former fire chiefs, including a log book from 1932, Volpiano's white fire chief hat and a melted emblem from a fire engine.

Display cases also showcase retired fire Chief Mike Fuge's customized helmet with a painting of a cartoon surfer riding a wave and a commemorative axe presented in honor of his 14 years of service. Fuge was the fire chief from 1992 to 2006.

On Oct. 25, the Woodside History Committee invited guests and firefighters to an exclusive opening of the exhibit. Woodside Fire celebrated its 100th anniversary in March 2025 with the grand opening of Station 7 on Woodside Road, which took 12 years to complete.

The exhibit committee spent hours researching and creating the exhibit, which they said is expected to be open for a few years. The committee members are Mainz, Thalia Lubin, Di Qiu, Gretchen Tenenbaum and archivist Jeanne Thivierge.

Visitors can see the exhibit on the first and third Saturday of each month, from 1 to 3 p.m. starting on Nov. 7 at the Woodside Community Museum, 2961 Woodside Road in Woodside. ■

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



Employment

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MELAHN PLAN

continued from page 1

designed to block housing development downtown. They also argue that the BMR fund cannot be used for the buydown approach that Melahn's plan describes.

Three of the downtown parking lots earmarked for 345 affordable units under Menlo Park's current housing element have for years inspired fervent debate, and the city has fallen behind its self-imposed timeline for delivering the homes by 2027. Melahn argues that her plan would create a more realistic financial path by delivering the affordable units elsewhere. She also notes that the parking lots would remain zoned for housing.

"I wrote this housing plan because I see how stuck Menlo Park is right now," Melahn told The Almanac. She added over email, "The economics have to come before the promise. This amendment prices the homes first, secures them where the agreements are actually being written, and promises the state what Menlo Park can fund."

But critics of Melahn's plan contest the premise of relocating affordable housing units to another site and the financial feasibility of the plan.

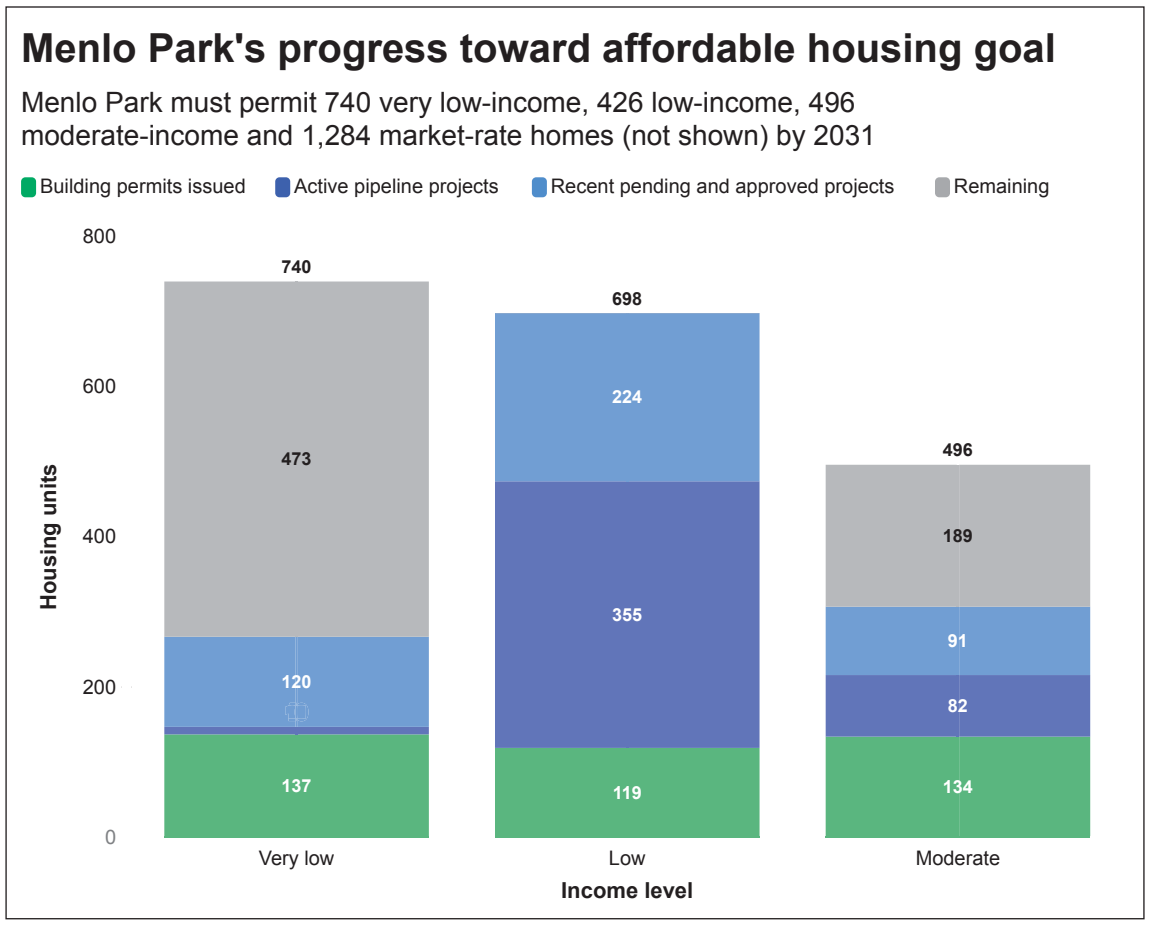
"My opponent's plan in particular is out of sync with how housing is financed," said Reed over email. "Suggesting we 'buy down affordability' at alternative sites, instead of developing downtown, is not maximizing the development potential of any site in an efficient way."

Both sides agree, however, that preserving the city's state-mandated housing element compliance is paramount — and each argues that their opponent's policy would put compliance at risk.

In Menlo Park's housing element, certified in March 2024, the city articulated its blueprint for 2,946 new housing units by 2031 — a number assigned by its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). Of these, 740 units must be affordable for very-low-income households, 426 for low-income households and 496 for moderate-income households, for a total of 1,662 affordable units.

Cities can face enforcement for violating state housing-element law. The state can revoke a city's housing-element compliance finding, triggering consequences that could include ineligibility for some state funds, court-imposed financial penalties and the "builder's remedy," which limits a city's ability to reject qualifying housing projects.

Menlo Park, which got its housing element certified a few months late in March 2024, already has one controversial builder's remedy application, a controversial high-rise project at the former Sunset Magazine campus at 80 Willow Road, that is the subject of litigation.



Source: City of Menlo Park. Data from July 2026 regional housing needs allocation progress report. Graphic by Hannah Bensen

A report written by city staff in July showed that Menlo Park is indeed lagging in its production of very-low-income housing. As of the end of 2025, 137 of the 740 very-low-income units — roughly 19% — had been permitted, and an additional 130 units were in the active pipeline or in pending projects. That leaves 473 units unaccounted for in the very-low-income category.

Melahn said that her housing plan, and the housing element amendment she proposed, respond to two changes from the city's 2024 Housing Element: Meta's decision to shelve its massive Willow Village redevelopment project, which would have added a substantial number of market-rate homes and 306 affordable units, and delays to the downtown parking lot developments, which account for a significant share of the city's planned affordable housing.

"We as a city have experienced a situation where basically two of our biggest swings are challenged," Melahn told The Almanac. "What I don't want to see happen to Menlo Park is have us once more be surprised when we fall out of compliance with the state and become subject to builder's remedy."

"I would call it a smoke screen to cover blocking housing and a plainly illegal attempt to not comply with the city's housing element, which was approved by HCD," said Jeremy Levine, a policy manager at the Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County, referring to the California Department of Housing and Community Development.

HCD did not respond to a request for clarification about how housing element noncompliance is assessed.

Levine said debate over the downtown parking lots has stalled progress toward building housing there. The years-long controversy prompted Measure P, a citizen-led initiative that would require voter approval for any project that would significantly alter all eight city-owned lots and is on the Nov. 3 ballot. Though Melahn has remained neutral on the measure, her proposed housing plan would shift planned housing from the lots to other sites, aligning with Measure P supporters' goal of maintaining surface parking in the downtown business district.

Melahn's plan and supporters

Melahn has a spreadsheet on her website that models her housing plan and has drafted a housing element amendment for Menlo Park that would implement the plan.

Melahn said her approach would cost the city less public money than the three proposals that have been submitted to redevelop the three downtown parking lots located between Santa Cruz and Oak Grove avenues. Those three proposals, which differ in size and other details, all say that building replacement parking garages creates a project funding gaps ranging from $19 million to $45 million associated with building replacement parking garages, according to a report commissioned by the city from the consulting firm Strategic Economics.

The City Council, faced with several unpalatable options for bridging the funding gap, discussed its options last month but hasn't made any decisions yet.

Melahn's plan hinges on the idea that, if the city is going to have to help fund low-income housing development by subsidizing replacement parking, it would be better off subsidizing the difference in affordable rents for units at projects that are already in the pipeline: Parkline at SRI and the former USGS campus on Willow Road, where Presidio Bay plans a mixed-use redevelopment.

Parkline, a mixed office and housing redevelopment approved by the City Council in 2025, has no very-low-income units, 244 low-income units, seven moderate-income units and 549 market-rate units in its current iteration. Melahn calls this "the one-notch problem," saying the project "misses the category where our most critical shortfall lives by one notch" — very-low-income housing. Of the 244 low-income units, 154 are in a dedicated affordable housing building restricted to households earning up to 60% of area median income (AMI), which is currently $126,000 for a family of four in San Mateo County.

But Parkline, the former SRI International research campus at 333 Ravenswood Ave., has since submitted a revised "phase 2" proposal that would add 282 homes to the development. Melahn sees the revision as leverage to negotiate deeper affordability for the building with 154 affordable units, lowering the income limit from 60% of AMI to 50% of AMI, which qualifies as very-low-income housing.

Figures in Melahn's plan are based on several assumptions, including market-rate and below-market-rate rents and the number of bedrooms in each apartment. Under her proposal, the city would compensate the developer for the difference between the rent a tenant pays for a more affordable apartment and the rent the developer could otherwise charge. For example, Melahn's model estimates that the difference between rents at 60% and 50% of AMI for a two-bedroom apartment would be about $452 per month, or $5,424 per year.

The challenge is estimating that cost over the 55-year period during which a unit must remain affordable. The model assumes that the $452 monthly gap remains constant for 55 years and that the unit is never vacant.

To estimate what those future payments would be worth in today's dollars, the model applies a 5.5% annual discount rate. That rate accounts for the time value of money: funds available today can be invested or otherwise put to use, while future payments are worth less in present-day terms. Under those assumptions, the present value of the additional subsidy would be about $93,000 per unit, Melahn's model says. That means the city would have to spend $93,000 per unit to compensate the developer for the loss of rental income over 55 years.

Melahn estimates that the public contributions sought by developers for the three parking lot development plans proposed by Alliant, Presidio Bay and Related/Alta amount to $100,000 to $250,000 per unit. The difference between those two figures, too, rests on a range of differing assumptions, including how to value the city's land. For example, Melahn's lowest estimate for the Related/Alta funding gap is $100,000 in public funds per unit. But that figure drops to $74,000 if using the funding gap number — $19.2 million — provided by the city's consultant Strategic Economics.

Melahn's plan argues that public funds could go farther per-unit by paying the difference in rent.

Melahn added that the same buydown strategy could be used for the Presidio Bay's USGS development, which is still under negotiation. The more units that would be subsidized by the city, the higher the cost to the city.

Melahn's plan offers multiple scenarios that would add 345 to 452 very-low- and low-income homes at a cost of $15 million to $59 million in city cash. The lower-cost end of that range, however, assumes that 85% of the cost at USGS would be absorbed by the developer through entitlement negotiation.

Melahn concedes that the figures in her plan, including the additional per-unit public cost of the affordability buydown plan, are estimates. Her housing element amendment would require the city to commission

an independent analysis which assesses the public benefit valuation of projects including USGS.

Save Downtown Menlo, the group backing Measure P, supports Melahn's plan.

Former councilmembers Paul Collachi and Steve Schmidt, and former planning commissioners Ben Eiref, Patti Fry and Henry Riggs are listed as contributors on the housing element amendment.

What critics say about Melahn's plan

Critics of Melahn's plan maintain that both the premise and the financing are wrong.

Stephen Levy, an economist who serves as the director for the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy in Palo Alto, notes that the plan doesn't expand the number of housing units and costs the city money.

"So it does nothing to assist Menlo Park in meeting their housing element goals," said Levy, who donated to the No on Measure P campaign.

Levine of the Housing Leadership Council added that "the housing element is not like SimCity," the video game that allows users to build a city from scratch. He cited an April 2023 letter from HCD which found that Menlo Park's housing element needed revisions before it could be certified as substantially compliant with state law. Among the state's concerns was that the city had not committed to developing city-owned sites that include the downtown parking lots.

Menlo Park's final housing element that was certified in March 2024 added specific commitments for development of affordable housing on the downtown parking lots.

"There is a really strong commitment from the city and a really strong expectation from HCD that the city is going to follow through," Levine said. "Menlo Park can't just move around the commitments it's made and just choose to toggle up the numbers in one place and toggle them down."

This month, a city analyst cast doubt on whether the BMR fund can be used for Melahn's buy-down approach.

In an Oct. 9 housing commission meeting, city management analyst Adam Patterson said that Menlo Park's funding program may not allow the city to pay a private developer to deepen affordability in existing units.

Menlo Park's BMR fund currently contains $4 million, according to a recent notice of funding availability. Melahn's website said the city would first draw on the city's affordable housing fund, but does not say where additional funds for her plan would come from.

"Housing policy experts, elected officials, and all sitting members of Menlo Park's planning commission know her plan doesn't pencil, which is why they have endorsed me and supported my vision for our city instead," said candidate Reed via email.

Reed's campaign has been endorsed by two current councilmembers, Jeff Schmidt and Jennifer Wise, all seven current planning commissioners, and four of the seven current housing commissioners. ■

Public Notices

MENLO PARK INTELLIGENCE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305061
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) MENLO PARK INTELLIGENCE , located at 31 Willow Rd, Menlo Park, CA 94025.
Registered owner(s):
THE AI AND CYBERSECURITY INSTITUTE
31 Willow Rd
Menlo Park, CA 94025
State of Incorporation/Organization: Delaware
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 01, 2026.
(ALM Oct 23, 30, Nov 6 and 13, 2026)

CALIFORNIA CLEANING CREW
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305193
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) CALIFORNIA CLEANING CREW , located at 612 MAPLE AVE, SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94080.
Registered owner(s):
SEBGHATULLAH AHMADI
612 MAPLE AVE
SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94080
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 19, 2026.
(ALM Oct 30, Nov 6, 13 and 20, 2026)

HAYWARD
HAYWARD BUILDERS CENTER
HAYWARD BUILDING SYSTEMS
HAYWARD DOOR AND WINDOW
HAYWARD HOME DESIGN CENTER
HAYWARD LUMBER AND HOME SUPPLY
HAYWARD LUMBER CO.
HAYWARD SERVICE CENTER
HAYWARD LUMBER
HAYWARD LUMBER COMPANY
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305003
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) HAYWARD , 2.) HAYWARD BUILDERS CENTER , 3.) HAYWARD BUILDING SYSTEMS , 4.) HAYWARD DOOR AND WINDOW , 5.) HAYWARD HOME DESIGN CENTER , 6.) HAYWARD LUMBER AND HOME SUPPLY , 7.) HAYWARD LUMBER CO. , 8.) HAYWARD SERVICE CENTER , 9.) HAYWARD LUMBER , 10.) HAYWARD LUMBER COMPANY , located at 2511 Garden Road, Suite A300, Monterey, CA 93940. Mailing Address: PO BOX 16009 Monterey, CA 93942.
Registered owner(s):
HOMER T. HAYWARD LUMBER CO.
2511 Garden Road, Suite A300
Monterey, CA 93940
State of Incorporation/Organization: California
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 01/01/2013.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on September 24, 2026.
(ALM Oct 9, 16, 23 and 30, 2026)

SIGONA'S FARMERS MARKET
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305241
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) SIGONA'S FARMERS MARKET , located at 2345 Middlefield Rd, Redwood City, CA 94063.
Registered owner(s):
BROTHERS PRIDE PRODUCE, INC.
2345 Middlefield Rd
Redwood City, CA 94063
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12/27/1984.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 23, 2026.
(ALM Oct 30, Nov 6, 13 and 20, 2026)

INDIA GROCERY OUTLET
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305050
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) INDIA GROCERY OUTLET , located at 336 Alden St, Redwood City, CA 94063. Mailing Address: 4021 Pacific Blvd San Mateo, CA 94403
Registered owner(s):
MANUBHAI TANDEL
4021 PACIFIC BLVD
San Mateo CA 94403
State of Incorporation/Organization: Califronia
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, 2026.
(ALM Oct 9, 16, 23 and 30, 2026)

EGC COLLECTIVE
GUSTAVE WORKS
GUSTAVE COLLECTIVE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305177
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) EGC COLLECTIVE , 2.) GUSTAVE WORKS , 3.) GUSTAVE COLLECTIVE , located at 1970 Alden St, Belmont, CA 94002.
Registered owner(s):
ERIC GUSTAVE CARL
1970 Alden St
Belmont, CA 94002
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 16, 2026.
(ALM Oct 23, 30, Nov 6 and 13, 2026)

MOMENTUM STRATEGY CONSULTING
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305144
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) MOMENTUM STRATEGY CONSULTING , located at 2151 Camino de los Robles, Menlo Park, CA 94025.
Registered owner(s):
MALCOLM HOBBS
2151 Camino de los Robles
Menlo Park, CA 94025
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 01/01/2000.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 13, 2026.
(ALM Oct 30, Nov 6, 13 and 20, 2026)

LUMA MENTIS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305202
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) LUMA MENTIS , located at 626 Jefferson Av, Redwood City, CA 94063.
Registered owner(s):
ORLY EITAN
626 Jefferson Av
Redwood City, CA 94063
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 20, 2026.
(ALM Oct 30, Nov 6, 13 and 20, 2026)

DG EVENTS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305181
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) DG EVENTS , located at 1901 Kentfield Ave. , Redwood City, CA 94061.
Registered owner(s):
DEBORAH GORDON
1901 Kentfield Ave.
Redwood City, CA 94061
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 09/25/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 16, 2026.
(ALM Oct 30, Nov 6, 13 and 20, 2026)

BISHOP CONSTRUCTION & CONSULTING
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305118
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) BISHOP CONSTRUCTION & CONSULTING , located at 12970 Skyline Blvd., Redwood City, CA 94062.
Registered owner(s):
GARY LEE BISHOP
12970 Skyline Blvd.
Redwood City, CA 94062
SUSAN MARGARET BISHOP
12970 Skyline Blvd.
Redwood City, CA 94062
This business is conducted by: a Married Couple.
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 07, 2026.
(ALM Oct 16, 23, 30 and Nov 6, 2026)

NAUGHTY GOAT BODY SOAP
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305180
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) NAUGHTY GOAT BODY SOAP , located at 3110 Woodside Road, Woodside, CA 94062.
Registered owner(s):
FIONA MARGARET RYAN
3110 Woodside Road
Woodside, CA 94062
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 16, 2026.
(ALM Oct 23, 30, Nov 6 and 13, 2026)

YADI'S LEARNING SERVICES
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305025
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) YADI'S LEARNING SERVICES , located at 180 Buckingham Ave, APT 105, Redwood City, CA 94063.
Registered owner(s):
ADA YADIRA AYALA HEREDIA
180 Buckingham Ave, APT 105
Redwood City CA 94063
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 09/28/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on September 28, 2026.
(ALM Oct 16, 23, 30 and Nov 6, 2026)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 26CIV06835
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Sarah Nicole Perlroth Thomson filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
SARAH NICOLE PERLROTH THOMSON to NICOLE PERLROTH THOMSON
SARA NICOLE PERLROTH to NICOLE PERLROTH THOMSON
THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.
NOTICE OF HEARING: 11/30/2026, 9:00am, Southern Branch of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.
A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:
ALMANAC
Date: October 1, 2026
Stephanie G. Garratt
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Oct 23, 30, Nov 6 and 13, 2026)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 26CIV06841
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Sarah Nicole Perlroth Thomson, on minor behalf filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
HOLMES OLIVER THOMSON to HOLMES OTTO TRISTAN THOMSON
THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.
NOTICE OF HEARING: 11/30/2026, 9:00am, Southern Branch of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.
A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:
ALMANAC
Date: 10/1/2026
Stephanie G. Garratt
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Oct 23, 30, Nov 6 and 13, 2026)

The Almanac is adjudicated to publish in San Mateo County.

- Fictitious Business Name
- Abandonment of Fictitious Business Name
- Name Change
- Partnership Withdrawal or Dissolution
- Petition to Administer Estate - Probate Hearing
- Notice of Bulk Sale
- Legal Summons
- Trustee Sale

Visit AlmanacNews.com/legal_notices/

The deadline is Sunday at 11:59 p.m.

Alon Shiran raises thousands more than opponent in Sequoia high school district campaign

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

The race for a seat on the board of the Sequoia Union High School District representing Area A, has one candidate raising thousands more than the other. Compared to incumbent Amy Koo, Belmont parent Alon Shiran reported receiving about $11,000 more in contributions during the most recent report for the reporting period, Sept. 20 through Oct. 17.

In the latest campaign finance report, Koo reported receiving a total of $2,149 in donations from residents of San Bruno, Vallejo, East Palo Alto, Belmont, San Mateo and Redwood City. In the previous reporting period, from July 1 through Sept. 19, Koo raised $3,198. Her total fundraising as of Oct. 17 was $8,648.

She received a $100 donation from incumbent Maria Cruz, who represents Area E on the Sequoia district board. Cruz is not up for reelection this year.

The biggest single donation at $1,500 was from Alicia Aguirre, former mayor of Redwood City.

Koo reported spending $1,133 on campaign flyers, advertisements, her website and online donation processing fees during the most recent filing period. Her total expenditures total to $5,233

Shiran continues to lead in fundraising with a total of $24,316.

He reported raising $14,111 during this period, receiving multiple donations of $1,000. Contributors include philanthropist Eugene Fooksman and Ilya Lipkind, co-founder of Claritype, an AI startup. His largest donation was $5,000 from Hagit Shekel, co-founder of the Bay Area Jewish Coalition.

Shiran also received $999 from Gary's List Action, a political committee started by Gary Tan, CEO of startup Y Combinator.

Other contributions ranged from $100 to $500 and came from residents of Belmont, Atherton, Emerald Hills, Menlo Park, Portola Valley and San Carlos. Shiran previously raised $10,205 during the period from July 1 through Sept. 19.

Shiran reported spending $3,104 on yard signs, campaign T-shirts, text and email outreach to voters and online processing fees. His campaign spent $2,335 in the previous reporting period, bringing his total expenditures to $6,073. ■

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

DISTRICT 2

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housing element. The plan was certified by the state several months after the deadline, triggering a controversial state provision called the builder's remedy that overrides local zoning policies.

The missed deadline led to a skyscraper proposal at 80 Willow Road, the former headquarters of Sunset Magazine. The developer behind the project is suing the city for allegedly illegally stalling the project. Combs said he has organized local and regional leaders to oppose the project and has also identified a buyer for the site, should the current reported owner, a Russian national with ties to the Kremlin, want to sell.

Combs also said that during the housing element process, he voiced concerns that the city had not done enough outreach to businesses about its plans to build affordable housing on the three downtown parking lots.

In response to the approved housing element, business owners and residents organized a group called Save Downtown Menlo to stop the parking lot development and put Measure P on the Nov. 3 ballot, which would require a citywide vote before the council could build affordable housing or make any other major changes to all eight city-owned parking lots.

"Wherever you are on that plan, it's clear that the outreach didn't happen. It's clear that was something the city missed," Combs said.

At the time, he said he also pitched developing one parking lot before building on the other two — an alternative that did not gain support from the council majority.

While Combs has endorsed the No on Measure P campaign, in an unusual move, Save Downtown Menlo endorsed Combs.

In its endorsement announcement, Save Downtown Menlo said Combs has "proven his independence and pragmatism." Combs told supporters that he opposes Measure P because of the high barrier it would create to downtown housing and that he supports building higher-density, affordable housing downtown.



Anna Hoch-Kenney.

"I voted" stickers at the Belle Haven Community Center vote center in Menlo Park in 2024.

Combs is endorsed by Councilmember Cecilia Taylor, county Supervisors Ray Mueller and Lisa Gauthier, Congressman Sam Liccardo and both the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter and Silicon Valley Association of Realtors.

Vamsi Velagapudi

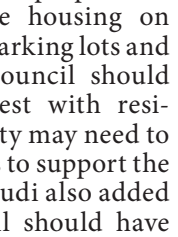
Vamsi Velagapudi, 47, has worked all over the world. Originally from London, Velagapudi advised companies, public agencies and nonprofits in the United Kingdom, United States, Singapore, Australia, Brazil, India and China before moving to Menlo Park in 2018.

As a consultant for McKinsey, Velagapudi said he helped set and execute high-level strategies for organizations. Now retired, Velagapudi wants to take his advising skills to the Menlo Park City Council. He is challenging two-term incumbent Drew Combs for the District 2 seat, which represents the Willows, Flood Park Triangle, Lorelei Manor and Suburban Park.

Velagapudi said he is running for council to bring a fresh voice, help fix the city's problems, plan for growth and make Menlo Park more family-friendly.

Among the most pressing issues facing Menlo Park is a controversial skyscraper proposed for the site of the former headquarters of Sunset Magazine. The project was filed under the state builder's remedy loophole, which is intended to punish cities without a state-approved housing plan by allowing developers to bypass local rules.

Menlo Park did not have an approved housing element for several months in 2024, opening the window for the 80 Willow project application. Velagapudi said he doesn't think the Menlo Park City Council did everything it could to get an approved housing element before the deadline. Mayor Betsy Nash has blamed the state for assigning a new reviewer in the middle of the process, which delayed approval.



Vamsi Velagapudi

"The state could have been more proactive in trying to problem-solve with us and that also means that we could have done that as well," Velagapudi said. Additionally, he pointed out that Combs was the only councilmember who voted against the city's housing element.

The state-approved plan includes a controversial proposal to build affordable housing on several downtown parking lots. A group of residents and businesses organized in opposition to the plan and proposed Measure P, a Nov. 3 ballot measure that would require a city-wide vote before the parking lots could be repurposed.

Velagapudi opposes Measure P and says it reflects a council that has failed to listen to residents.

"We needed to have a more honest conversation with residents," Velagapudi said. "I think the City Council sometimes struggles to say something because they know it's going to be unpopular. ... We need to be clear with residents. That's on us, not the state."

He supports the proposal to build affordable housing on the downtown parking lots and said that the council should have been honest with residents that the city may need to use public funds to support the project. Velagapudi also added that the council should have put a funding measure on the 2026 ballot.

Velagapudi serves on the city's Finance and Audit Commission and said he's had a front-row seat to discussions about Menlo Park's structural deficit.

To raise additional revenue, Velagapudi said Menlo Park needs to reform its business license tax. The city currently taxes businesses with an office or warehouse in Menlo Park based on the number of employees at each location, maxing out at $1,250 for offices with over 200 employees. Other businesses are charged based on gross sales in the city, capped at $8,000 for businesses with gross sales over $30 million.

The city could adjust the maximums to raise more revenue from larger businesses like Meta and Snowflake, major tech companies headquartered in Menlo Park, Velagapudi said.

Velagapudi also wants the city to approach major players like Meta to work collaboratively. Combs is a Meta employee and is required to recuse himself from discussions involving the company. Velagapudi points out that he would not have that restriction.

Besides the Menlo Park Finance and Audit Commission, Velagapudi serves on the Menlo Park City School District's Citizens' Bond Oversight Committee and is the Menlo Park representative on the East Palo Alto Sanitary District Advisory Board. He lives in District 2 with his daughter after moving from District 4 a year ago.

Velagapudi is endorsed by Councilmembers Jennifer Wise and Jeff Schmidt, the San Mateo County Democratic Party and the San Mateo County Central Labor Council. ■

Email Staff Writer Arden Margulis at amargulis@almanacnews.com.

DISTRICT 1

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"I feel like that marred what was something great, and a lot of those meetings turned very nasty."

Professionally, Lee is a software engineer at educational technology company Learneo, which owns tools like CliffsNotes and Course Hero. Lee said his philosophy aligns with parts of the New York Times bestselling book "Abundance" by Derek Thompson and Ezra Klein.

He wants the city to remove red tape preventing housing from being built and work to spur development, especially in areas near transit. He said that by encouraging more housing development, the city can help drive rents down in an area notorious for the high cost of living.

If elected, Lee said one of his main priorities would be to attract a full-service grocery store and commercial core to Belle Haven.

"As I've been speaking with residents, I've seen that there's this feeling that our district has been on the short end of the stick," Lee said.

Lee said this feeling has been amplified since Meta announced it was pausing plans for Willow Village, its massive mixed-use development proposal in District 1 that was set to bring amenities like a grocery store, bank and pharmacy to Belle Haven, which has been classified as a food desert by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

As part of his effort to attract development, Lee wants the city to thoroughly review what went wrong with Willow Village and what it can do going forward to attract a similar development.

Across the city, Lee said he supports development and wants to target places near public transit. With these new developments and additional residents, Lee hopes the city can use a growing tax base to fund things like expanding the city's gymnastics and aquatics programs.

Lee has been endorsed by councilmembers Jeff Schmidt and Jennifer Wise, the San Mateo County Democratic Party, both AFSCME Council 57 and SEIU Local 521 (which represent most non-swarn Menlo Park employees), State senator Josh Becker and Assemblymember Marc Berman. SEIU also endorsed Lee's opponent.

ELECTION CENTER

Find candidate profiles, answers to The Almanac's candidate survey, links to their campaign sites and more stories in our Voter Guide at **almanacnews.com/election.**

James Rohr

"I'm not a polished politician, I'm a neighborhood volunteer," James Rohr said in his opening statement at The Almanac's Menlo Park City Council candidate forum on Oct. 8.



James Rohr

Rohr, 48, moved to Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood from Sunnyvale in 2022 and immediately got involved in community organizations and volunteerism. Four years later, he is one of two candidates vying to replace Councilmember Cecilia Taylor, who is not seeking a third term, as the District 1 representative on the Menlo Park City Council in the Nov. 3 election.

Rohr served in the U.S. Army and worked in cybersecurity for 20 years. Now retired, he is seeking to ensure that District 1, which includes the Belle Haven and Bayfront neighborhoods, has equitable representation. He told The Almanac that he felt welcomed into Belle Haven when he arrived, particularly by Taylor (who endorsed Rohr), and wants to focus on preserving and beautifying the neighborhood.

One of the ways Rohr has connected with his neighbors is through gardening and said he wants to ensure that residents can lean on each other for support. He wants Belle Haven to have volunteer-based programs that check in on neighbors, deliver food and take care of community spaces.

"We want to make sure that anyone that lives within our area is given a helping hand, knows that there's a community to help them, and that people are happy to help them," Rohr said. He said that these programs can be organized through collaborations between the city and local nonprofits.

Rohr's platform centers on housing, tenant protections, food access and neighborhood improvements.

Rohr said he wants the city to focus development outside of District 1 and instead look for sites near transit. He sees developing new housing as only feasible outside of District 1's already existing residential areas.

"Unless three people sold their home at the same time to the same person to try to build something, it doesn't seem geographically possible," Rohr said of expanding areas for multifamily housing.

He also wants to ensure that the single-family areas of Belle Haven are protected.

"I want people to be able to enjoy their single-family homes that they've already purchased and lived in for generations," Rohr said. "If you go to Belle Haven right now, every single street you will find someone that's been there for 40-plus years. I don't think we ever really want to break apart that type of history and community-building."

For renters, Rohr wants the city to take a look at expanding tenant protections and ensuring access to legal representation for those facing eviction. He also supports funding a tenant resource center to help families navigate housing courts.

Access to groceries is another priority. Rohr wants to attract a full-service grocery store to Belle Haven so residents have access to fresh, affordable food. In the interim, Rohr said he thinks the city should organize a neighborhood farmers market to help connect residents with local produce.

Rohr is endorsed by Taylor and SEIU 521, which represents some city employees and also endorsed Rohr's opponent. ■

DISTRICT 4

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plans or proposed amendments to our existing housing element are designed to block housing development downtown," Reed said. "We must ensure that we retain local control, and these housing plans and proposed amendments are designed to take that away from us."

In addition to building more affordable housing, Reed said she wants to work on pedestrian and bike improvements in District 4.

"This is an important part of my platform when it comes to District 4: Identifying solutions to make sure that our kids are safe going to and from school, and our residents are safe commuting to and from work, is a priority for me," Reed said.

Reed grew up in Connecticut and moved to Menlo Park from New York about two years ago. She said she has been fond of Menlo Park since she met her husband Patrick, who grew up in the city, at American University.

Reed worked in communications for a tech company before leaving in August. She is a two-time Grammy-nominated ensemble singer and a cantor at St. Raymond Catholic Church.

Reed is endorsed by councilmembers Jeff Schmidt and Jennifer Wise, county supervisors Noelia Corzo and David Canepa, state Sen. Josh Becker, Assemblymember Marc Berman, the San Mateo County Democratic Party and the San Mateo County Central Labor Council.

Laura Melahn

As officials take sides on a ballot measure that seeks to block Menlo Park's plan to build affordable housing on three downtown parking lots, City Council candidate Laura Melahn responds differently: "Team Menlo Park."

"I am a mom of two young boys ... When they are upset about something, it serves no one for me to try to figure out which one is right. It serves everyone for me to figure out the way forward," Melahn said at The Almanac's Menlo Park City Council Candidate Forum. "That is a position that is focused on what's good for the city in the long run."

All five other candidates across three district races for Menlo Park City Council have come out against Measure P, which would require a citywide vote on any plan to repurpose or significantly alter the eight city-owned downtown parking lots.



Laura Melahn

Melahn, 41, has not publicly said whether she supports or opposes Measure P. That may be a surprise to some: Driving through Menlo Park, yard signs advocating for Measure P and for Melahn are often paired up. The Measure P advocates — Save Downtown Menlo — have endorsed her as well.

Melahn, who works in venture capital, grew up in Hawaii and moved to the Bay Area about two decades ago. She has lived in Menlo Park with her husband and two sons for six years. She has served on the city's Finance and Audit Commission since May 2025.

She is running against singer and communications professional Charlotte Reed to succeed Mayor Betsy Nash, who is not seeking reelection. District 4 includes downtown, parts of central Menlo Park and the Allied Arts neighborhood.

None of the three development proposals currently on the table for redeveloping the downtown parking lots meet the city's original requirements because they seek financial support in order to build replacement parking and affordable housing. Melahn has come up with her own plan for building affordable housing without touching downtown lots that hinges on using city subsidies to make units more deeply affordable at in-progress developments at the former U.S. Geological Survey and SRI International campuses.

While critics say her amendment would risk losing the city's compliance with state housing law and is designed to block housing, Melahn said that it provides a tangible path forward for the city.

"If there's a project that works, we should do it, and if there's not a project that works, we should move on," she said. "I want us to build affordable homes, and the path for doing that is not the one that we're on."

Even before announcing her candidacy for council, Melahn has been involved in downtown and revitalization. In 2025, she started the Downtown Menlo Fund with several other Menlo Park residents. Its goal is to use donations to increase the vibrancy of Menlo Park's downtown and form a business association.

This summer, it launched Fourth Fridays, a monthly event in downtown that brings live music to Santa Cruz Avenue and encourages businesses to stay open late. She also advocated for expanding the types of businesses allowed downtown and for reinstating the slow streets program, which allows residents to initiate requests for traffic calming measures and pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements.

Melahn said that her record shows she can be effective on the council.

"Ask yourselves, what have these people done for Menlo Park and what do we believe they can continue to do? And I believe that my track record speaks for itself," Melahn said at the candidate forum.

Melahn is endorsed by county Supervisor Ray Mueller and six other former Menlo Park mayors, 2026 Nobel laureate in economics Robert Hall and Richard Draeger of Draeger's Market. ■

Email Staff Writer Arden Margulis at amargulis@almanacnews.com.

Review:

THE FOOL'S ERRAND

Comedian Nathan Fielder co-directs a trip down the Elizabeth Holmes rabbit hole in "You Can See Everything"

By Peter Canavese

The great cinematic auteur Orson Welles also practiced magic, and understood the common ground he straddled between illusionism and the movies. "Every true artist must," he opined, "be a magician, a charlatan." But Welles also said of world-famous escape artist Harry Houdini, "I loved Houdini, but he wasn't an illusionist; he was a challenger. ... He set up a kind of Olympic game and then won it at the end."

It's fitting, then, that the wildly successful documentary film following convicted fraudster Elizabeth Holmes of Palo Alto's erstwhile medtech company Theranos, "You Can See Everything," first occurred to filmmakers Nathan Fielder and Lance Oppenheim on a visit to L.A.'s Magic Castle. After all, what is the film but an elaborate web of attempted trickery and a dual challenge, between subject and filmmaker, to a game of cat and mouse?

Holmes and her domestic and business partner Billy Evans invited A24 Films to observe their family in the month leading up to Holmes turning herself in to serve her 11-plus-year federal prison sentence for fraud. The couple agreed to let Oppenheim (director of this year's "To Catch a Predator" dramatization "Primetime") and Fielder (a previously TV-based comedian of ever-growing ambitions) into their home, even going so far as to invite the film crew to stay in their rented Del Mar beach house for the duration — hence, the titular promise.

Fielder accepts the offer to move in, upping the ante on an epic-length documentary that spins out from that queasily privileged month on the shore to yet murkier waters best left for viewers to navigate for themselves. What follows operates like a hall-of-mirrors tour reflecting the truths and distortions that complicate both Holmes' persona and the nature of so-called truth-based storytelling. Can a dramatization like Hulu's Holmes miniseries "The Dropout" or even a documentary like "You Can See Everything" succeed in locating and transmitting truths?

Backed by Oppenheim's cinematic heft, Fielder continues down the career path he's been clearing for himself as the true-comedy jester behind shows like Comedy Central's "Nathan for You" and HBO's "The Rehearsal." He's a genuinely curious intellectual determined to grow out of clever pranks designed to reveal personal character and into deeper commitments, further steps taken in a search for profundities. A completely unique comedic artist, Fielder has gone from teasing a coffee giant by opening "Dumb Starbucks" stores under parody law to learning to fly a 747 airplane and influencing Congress to address mental health in aviation.

In Fielder's least ostensibly funny work to date, he may have met his match in Holmes and Evans. An early scene establishes the untrustworthiness of the latter: Directly after insisting upon his total honesty, Fielder catches Evans in a white lie about why he takes a bowl of eggs out of Holmes' hands.

Much greater prevarications, most of them implicating Evans, follow, but the film's real juice is in parsing along with Fielder the couple's oddball statements and purported perspectives, the audience becoming a jury of Holmes' and Evans' peers. When one makes a wildly naïve comment, say, or makes a move that could be interpreted as throwing their partner under the proverbial bus, we're left to judge their credibility and motivations along with the filmmakers. Extreme closeups and intense eye contact invite us to read every microexpression or lack thereof and ponder, "Could Holmes possibly believe her own denials of guilt?" Awaiting a prison sentence that will separate her from Evans and her two young children with him, Holmes has good reasons to feel emotional rawness. But she also appears to be helping along her tears in a bid for sympathy. We may be able to see everything, but how do we know what we're looking at?



Courtesy A24 Films

The documentary "You Can See Everything" follows disgraced Theranos founder Elizabeth Holmes on the eve of turning herself into prison to serve a decade-long sentence for fraud.

This is the game: Holmes and Evans play it in the hopes that audiences see the softer side of Holmes — a loving mother who could never do anything dastardly, at least not on purpose — while Fielder and Oppenheim presumably hope to win by letting the couple dig their own graves, laying bare their true characters (one point about Holmes is clear: she remains an expert in double speak, fluent in corporate jargon). The impossibility of achieving objective truth becomes the true subject of the documentary, much more so than the well-trodden territory of Holmes' crimes and conviction.

The film expands over its nearly three hours to incorporate the tug-of-war of PR management that preceded the production, the all-American insistence on second-act comebacks (which Holmes pursues in an everything-old-is-new-again business venture with Evans), and the vexing impossibility of knowing what goes on inside anyone else's mind, whether it be that of a criminal con artist, a misguided entrepreneur, the person who lays their head on the pillow beside you, or the real-life figure it's your job to put on screen.

True to form, Fielder teases the audience about the filmmakers' inability to draw conclusions, and a susceptibility to bias through intrusive feelings of identification or affection.

Lest we forget, Fielder and Oppenheim are, like Holmes and Evans, untrustworthy magicians. Not unlike Holmes' patented magic box, which promised scientific advancement it couldn't deliver (and makes a cameo in this film), "You Can See Everything" winkingly promises what it can't deliver. Although Fielder lightens the footprint of his own awkward comic persona, he leaves us to wonder what's in his own heart, and how heavily he has put his finger on the scale to manipulate his manipulators. ■

Peter Canavese is a freelance movie critic and author of the website Groucho Reviews. You can reach him at GrouchoReviews@aol.com.

"You Can See Everything" is rated R and runs 2 hours, 54 minutes. It is showing at theaters around the Peninsula. Visit a24films.com/films/you-can-see-everything for showtimes and more info.

Author and doctor Abraham Verghese to discuss his works at Kepler's

The bestselling writer and Stanford physician will appear in a Nov. 16 event at the Menlo Park bookstore

By Heather Zimmerman

When Dr. Abraham Verghese visited Kepler's Books on his first book tour, he was surprised at the turnout for his reading.

"I distinctly remember it because first of all, I was shocked to see that there were more than 10 people there because this was my first book. It was a slow start, but there were about, I think, 30 to 40 people, which, to me, was great," Verghese said in an interview with this publication.

The physician and author was at Kepler's to discuss his 1995 memoir, "My Own Country: A Doctor's Story." Since that first tour, the crowds at his readings have grown, to say the least. He has published three bestsellers: a second memoir and two novels. Oprah Winfrey chose his most recent novel, 2023's "The Covenant of Water," as a Book Club Pick. He received a Heinz Award in 2014 and the National Humanities Medal from President Obama in 2015.

Verghese recalled from his first Kepler's reading: "I remember seeing a gentleman and his wife sitting there, and after the talk, I asked him what he did, and he said, 'Well, I'm in infectious disease.' He was very reluctant to talk about himself, but he finally told me he was Gary Schoolnik, who's been a legend in infectious disease at Stanford for a long time. So I never forgot that. And many, many years later, in 2007, I was recruited to Stanford and delighted to see Gary and remind him of that first encounter at Kepler's."

After nearly two decades as a physician and professor at Stanford University, he notes that he has now lived in the Bay Area longer than anywhere else. It turned out that during that 1990s tour stop, he was also visiting his future neighborhood bookstore.

He will be back at Kepler's Books on Nov. 16 for a special fundraiser event to discuss his works and help launch Kepler's Leadership Circle, a donor initiative to support the bookstore and Kepler's programming.

"I think there's a relevance to the fact that I've lived here for 20 years as a physician and a writer, and this really has informed my writing, my worldviews, and so I'm hoping that we have a discussion that wouldn't be the same if it took place anywhere else," he said.

Medicine eventually brought Verghese to the Peninsula, but long before that, it led him into writing. His first book that he discussed at Kepler's, "My Own Country," shared his experiences treating HIV patients in rural Tennessee.

When, in 1985, he moved from Boston to a medical school in Charleston City, Tennessee, he had been told he probably wouldn't see many patients with HIV. But in a relatively short time, he saw over 100 HIV patients. He realized that many patients, often young gay men who left to live more openly in cities, were coming back to their hometowns.

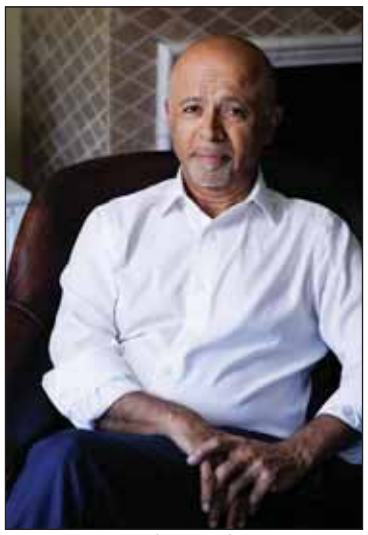
"Typically, their partners had died, and they were now ill. So they were coming home, and there I was at the tail end of this migration. So I wrote a scientific paper that was widely cited, describing this phenomenon. But even as I did, I felt that the language of science didn't begin to capture the tragic nature of the voyage. It didn't begin to capture the heartache of the families, and so that was kind of the moment I became a writer," Verghese said.

Medicine has been a thread through his other works, appearing in very different ways. His second book, "The Tennis Partner," told of Verghese's friendship with a medical resident who struggled with substance abuse, while his debut novel, "Cutting for Stone," follows the lives of twin sons born in Ethiopia to an Indian nun and British surgeon. Verghese was born and raised in Addis Ababa, where his parents, who were from South India, were working as teachers.

"The Covenant of Water" is set in Kerala, a state in southwestern India known for lush waterways. It follows multiple generations of a family from the 1900s through the 1970s that has lost many members over the years to drowning. Several of the characters are doctors. Verghese used his mother's family stories as a jumping-off point that established the setting and feel of the novel.

"My mother kept a journal for her granddaughter, my niece, and tried to recollect stories of her own time being a little girl in India," he said. "That manuscript was so rich, and there were things in there that I didn't know, but they were a reminder of that era, and the richness of a culture that may not be monetarily rich, if you know what I mean."

"When I used to visit as a child in summers from Africa, where my parents were working, it was a beautiful thing to go there and have candlelight and lamps and go to the well and draw your water. It never felt like a deprivation. Reading my mother's journal was a reminder that it would be rich to set a story in that setting, so that's really what it was. I think she was deeply helpful in that regard."



Courtesy Abraham Verghese

Dr. Abraham Verghese will discuss his works Nov. 16 at Kepler's Books in a special fundraiser event for the bookstore.

When Oprah Winfrey made "The Covenant of Water" a book club pick three years ago, she also co-hosted a six-part companion podcast with Verghese to take a deep dive into the book.

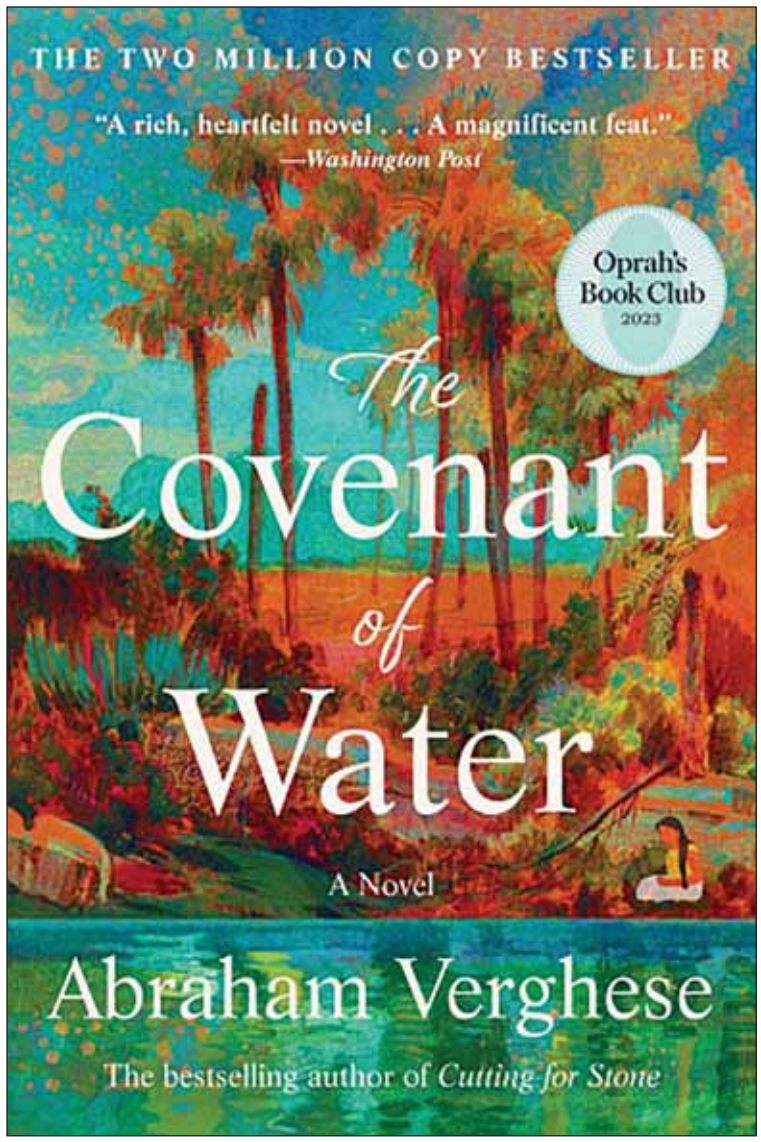
"You often hear from readers, but it's rare that you hear from a reader in such depth about the characters. And often, when I was pushed about 'Where did this come from and why this,' I found that very often I didn't know. I think the subconscious comes up with things that you know after the fact," he said.

Verghese also recently took part in a 30th anniversary episode for the book club, hosted by Winfrey, which also featured Ocean Vuong, Barbara Kingsolver and Viola Davis.

"When you find a book that resonates with you, it's because you recognize within yourself some of the truths that are being explicitly or otherwise made true for you there," Verghese said of what he hopes readers take from his work.

"I think every reader brings their own story, their own take on it, and if it resonates with them, it's for deeply personal and yet universal reasons that make it resonate for all of us. I never feel that this is a one-sided process. The author provides the words, but the reader provides their imagination, and the mental movie that takes place is in the reader's head, and it's absolutely unique to each reader."

He is working on a new novel, inspired by a hobby he took up after looking into repairing his late father's 1950s watch.



Courtesy Grove Atlantic

"The Covenant of Water" is the fourth book and second novel by Abraham Verghese, who is also a physician at Stanford. His short story "Abscond" was published in 2025.

"I take watches that are working and I seem to destroy them," he joked. He buys junk watches from places like flea markets and "I try to get them working, and that, to me, is absolutely mesmerizing."

Verghese noted that there are some similarities between the elements of the watch mechanism and the human body.

Of his new novel, he said, "I think it's going to have a lot to do with time, with perhaps watch movements and the history of watches. I'm fascinated with the history of that, and trying to tie it in with a medical story that I have in mind."

When that book is finished, it seems like a good bet he'll return for another reading at Kepler's.

"In this environment where it's pretty difficult for independent booksellers to compete against some of the giants, I think the function of a Kepler's is as a meeting place, as a repository of books, and as a place for people to meet writers that they've liked. I think it's just priceless. I'm flying from far away to come back for this event because it's so important for me," Verghese said. ■

Email Arts & Entertainment Editor Heather Zimmerman at hzimmerman@almanacnews.com.

Abraham Verghese will discuss his works Nov. 16, 5:30 p.m., at Kepler's Books, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. The event includes a post-program reception. Admission starts at donations of $263.49, which include a copy of one of Verghese's books. keplers.org/benefit.

This story is part of our quarterly **Title Pages** section. Visit almanacnews.com/arts-culture to read interviews with local author Steve Hawk about his debut novel "Nearshore" and Mountain View authors Mickey Lai and Natalie Woo, who will soon be publishing their picture book, "The ABC's of Basketball." Also find briefs highlighting recent and upcoming books by local authors.



Courtesy Auntie Em's Fine Foods.

Sapin sapin at Auntie Em's Fine Foods in South San Francisco.

Filipino Finds

8 Peninsula restaurants to try for Filipino American History Month



Courtesy Inda + Mely.

Kare- Kare, a dish of ox tail, brisket and tripe, at Inda + Mely in San Bruno ($37).

By Edwina Dueñas

October is Filipino American History Month. Get a taste of the island country by dining at these eateries around the Peninsula showcasing a range of Filipino flavors. Some spots have opened since our last guide, while others are local stalwarts worth revisiting. Whether you're craving a hearty breakfast, an all-you-can-eat spread, a boba drink or a cocktail made with Filipino spirits, this food crawl has you covered.

Russ Fam Kitchen in Daly City for Ilocos empanadas and street food

Russ Fam Kitchen takes the crown as the Peninsula's only Filipino restaurant located in an Exxon gas station. But don't let the location stop you from grabbing a bite.

For breakfast, order a silog-style plate Spam, sweet-and-savory pork tocino or marinated beef tapa, served with garlic rice and fried eggs.

For snacks, find street foods served in Manila and beyond, like kwek-kwek quail eggs and fish balls on a stick, both served with a vinegar-based dipping sauce. For another handheld bite, pick up a crispy, red-hued Ilocos-style empanada filled with green papaya, homemade pork longganisa and egg.

This takeout spot also offers an extensive party tray and buffet catering menu for larger gatherings.

People are showing up for Russ Fam Kitchen — so much so that the restaurant is expanding to a commercial kitchen in Redwood City later this year to serve even more of the Peninsula via takeout, delivery and catering.

Russ Fam Kitchen, 1216 Hillside Blvd., Daly City; 510-691-3658, @russfamkitchen_. Open Tuesday from noon to 7 p.m., Wednesday from 8:15 a.m. to noon and 2-7 p.m., Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. to noon and 2-7 p.m. and Sunday, 1:45-5 p.m.

Inda + Mely in San Bruno for reimagined favorites

You may have heard of Filipino-style spaghetti, but Filipino-style carbonara has a life of its own. A common menu item at casual eateries in the Philippines, it often features a cream-based sauce, mushrooms and other toppings.

Now, Peninsula diners can experience that dish and much more at Inda + Mely in San Bruno.

The eatery began as a pop-up in the Brisbane home of owners and mother-daughter duo Raquel and Justine Acuña. The brick-and-mortar location opened in 2025, and Inda + Mely has steadily built a base of diners seeking reimagined traditional Filipino flavors.

At Inda + Mely, the carbonara is topped with sisig, adding a different kind of protein to the pasta. Other dishes include Vietnamese spring rolls inspired by three styles of lumpia, filled with housemade longganisa, sprouts and mint. Milkfish, a popular Filipino protein often served grilled or fried, gets a Japanese-style aburi torching treatment before being topped with béchamel, sweet soy sauce and garlic aioli. On weekends, the restaurant offers breakfast burritos and rice plates.

Two entrees close to Justine Acuña's heart are the kare-kare and bistek Tagalog, which are her grandmother's recipes. Kare-kare, a peanut-based stew, is made with scratchmade peanut butter and shrimp paste. The bistek Tagalog is their take on steak frites, pairing soy-braised beef tenderloin with French fries, just as her grandmother served it.

In a nod to the restaurant's pop-up roots, Justine Acuña invites diners to experience true Filipino hospitality.

"Our restaurant is an extension of our home, and cooking for you is an extension of our dining room," she said.

Inda + Mely, 582 W. San Bruno Ave., San Bruno; 650-392-0363, Instagram: @indaandmely. Open Tuesday to Friday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 5-9 p.m., Saturday and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Karilagan in South San Francisco for its all-you-can-eat buffet

Seeking an all-you-can-eat Filipino food experience on the Peninsula? Before closing after a 32-year run earlier this year, Ongpin in South San Francisco was the go-to spot, offering a weekend brunch buffet.

Thankfully, its buffet lives on at sister restaurant Karilagan. Owners Manny and Ludy Noguera continue to serve a variety of Filipino entrees that guests can pile high onto banana leaf-lined wooden plates. The buffet costs $22.95 per person (half off for children) and is offered from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on weekends.

Savory items on the buffet line include tamarind-based sinigang soup; kare-kare; pancit noodles; and laing, taro leaves cooked in coconut milk. On the sweet side, try a bowl of champorado, a Filipino chocolate rice porridge. Coffee and juice are also included.

Karilagen, 1129 El Camino Real, South San Francisco; 650-589-4405, Instagram: @karilagen.ssf. Open daily from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. (buffet is 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on weekends).

Auntie Em's Fine Foods in South San Francisco for rice-based sweets and snacks

Founded in 2008 by Emee and Buddy Santos, Auntie Em's Fine Foods specializes in Filipino desserts, particularly kakanin. Made with ingredients like glutinous rice, coconut milk, and sugar, these traditional delicacies come in a range of regional varieties throughout the Philippines. The bakery is located next door to Karilagan in South San Francisco.

Start with bibingka, a traditional baked rice cake made with

Trailblazing Uyghur restaurant Mrs Khan shutters in Menlo Park

Mrs Khan founder Kalbinur Tursungjan reopens the restaurant as Dragon General, offering Peking duck and Dongbei specialties

By Adrienne Mitchel

When sisters Almira and Kalbi Tursungjan opened Mrs Khan in downtown Menlo Park in 2022, they established the only Uyghur restaurant along the Peninsula and quickly became a destination for chewy laghman and vibrant polo.

But last month, the restaurant silently shuttered — a decision Kalbi said she was forced to make after she couldn't find a chef who could cook authentic Uyghur dishes. Her sister, Almira, had already left the business, saying that "working at the restaurant is stressful and tiring," Kalbi said. "She left me alone and gave me all this stress 100%."

So she shifted concepts, bringing on Minjun Li as a new chef-owner and reopening the restaurant Oct. 14 as Dragon General. The new restaurant no longer serves Uyghur cuisine and instead offers a large menu showcasing a diverse selection of Chinese cuisine, including dishes from Li's home region of Dongbei, as well as from Beijing, Shanghai, Hunan and Sichuan. Kusan Bazaar in Mountain View is now the only Uyghur restaurant along the Peninsula.

Another major change is that Dragon General will offer beer and wine, something Mrs. Khan couldn't offer. Many Uyghurs are Muslim, and traditional Islamic teachings prohibit alcohol consumption. The ability to procure a beer and wine license was another factor for switching concepts, chef-partner Li said in Mandarin through an employee who acted as a translator.

Li has about 25 years of chef experience. He began his career in China at 16 years old and has worked at popular Chinese franchises including Ziguangyuan and Daiyali. Li moved to the Bay Area about six years ago and has worked at restaurants such as Nutrition House and Beijing Chef in Milpitas, both of which have since shuttered.

While most of Li's culinary career was in Beijing, he hails from Northeast China and offers specialities from that region at Dragon General. Dongbei dishes include the signature crispy sweet and sour pork, crispy eggplant with garlic and chili, and sweet and sour pork ribs ($18-$24).

Besides the signature crispy sweet and sour pork, Li said another must-order menu item is the Peking duck, available whole or half and served with shredded ginger, sauce and cucumber, plus your choice of salt and pepper duck carcass or duck soup ($48-$88).

The menu offers a large selection of housemade dim sum, including various soup dumplings, siu mai and potstickers; Sichuan dishes like snakehead fish and yellow croaker; Hunan offerings that include stir-fried pork with peppers and dry pot pork intestines; and a Chinese American section with familiar favorites such as walnut shrimp and Kung Pao chicken.

Transitioning from Mrs Khan to Dragon General also involved some minor aesthetic changes, including transitioning the formerly purple exterior wall to a more natural wood color, removing the flower wall at the front, adding decorative covers to the lamp fixtures and gray covers to the tabletops and replacing the artwork. The goal was to create a "more zen, relaxed feeling," Li said in Mandarin.



Courtesy Dragon General.

Sichuan dry pot squid at Dragon General in downtown Menlo Park ($28).

Li said he has been receiving requests to bring back some Uyghur dishes, something he's open to doing in the future after he scales back the size of the menu.

Dragon General is currently offering 12% off during its soft opening phase, and no grand opening date has been set yet. ■

Dragon General, 712 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park. Open Wednesday to Monday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 5-9 p.m.

Email Food Editor Adrienne Mitchel at amitchel@almanacnews.com.

rice flour, with a spongy texture and a topping of cheese or salted duck eggs. Or try kuchinta, an orange-brown steamed rice cake with a jelly-like texture. For something sticky and chewy, go for sapin-sapin, a tricolored treat featuring coconut and sweet rice flavors with a hint of ube.

The treats don't stop at kakanin. Auntie Em's Fine Foods also offers custom cakes and pastries, including buko pie with a creamy young coconut filling, leche flan, guava turnovers, and savory empanadas with beef, chicken, or tuna.

Auntie Em's Fine Foods, 1127 El Camino Real, South San Francisco; 650-588-6068, Instagram: @auntieemsfinefoodandpastries. Open Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.

Kapwa Cafe in Daly City for Filipino desserts in boba form

Part social enterprise, part boba cafe, Kapwa Kultural Center exists to uplift the community, educate the next generation, and promote Filipino heritage—all with tasty drinks in hand. Proceeds from Kapwa Cafe support the nonprofit's youth programming.

Kapwa Cafe tells the story of Filipino desserts through boba drinks. Turon, a caramelized egg roll filled with banana and jackfruit, becomes a milk tea with saba banana, cream cold foam, and turon chips. A matcha-infused buko pandan drink takes inspiration from the icy Filipino dessert made with young coconut strips, pandan, green gelatin and milk. For something refreshing, order the green tea-based Lychee Passionfruit Calamansi drink. Thai tea, brown sugar boba and strawberry milk with cold foam are also on offer.

As Daly City's first Filipino-centered cafe, Kapwa offers free wifi, a laptop friendly space and welcoming atmosphere.

Kapwa Cafe, 1-B San Pedro Road, Daly City; 650-993-4415, Instagram: @kapwakulturalcenter. Open Wednesday to Friday from noon to 6 p.m., Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Avenida in San Mateo for inventive cocktails

Since 2020, Avenida has served modern Filipino cuisine in its airy, art deco-style space. The downtown San Mateo eatery is part of the group behind Gerry's, a Philippine restaurant chain with a Bay Area outpost in Union City. Like Gerry's, Avenida specializes in grilled dishes, including grilled pusit (jumbo squid), barbecue skewers, branzino with garlic confit and beef short ribs.

What sets Avenida apart is its bar program. Filipino flavors and spirits like Tanduay Gold rum, coconut, ube, calamansi and pandan find their way into inventive drinks.



Courtesy Avenida Restaurant.

Purple Jeepney, an ube piña colada, at Avenida Restaurant in San Mateo ($18).

For libations and light bites, check out the daily happy hour menu at the bar or on the patio. Snack on sisig tacos, shrimp toast, liempo (grilled pork belly) or green mango salad. Pair them with a Manila Mule, made with lambanog, a Filipino spirit distilled from palm sap. For a dessert drink, try the Ube Espresso Martini, which features Fiesta Ube Cream Liqueur and Gruven vodka.

Stopping by for dinner? Explore other signature cocktails built around Filipino ingredients, such as the Black Pandan Old Fashioned, made with housemade pandan and toasted black sesame syrup, and the Purple Jeepney, their take on a piña colada featuring Tanduay Gold rum, ube and pineapple juice.

Avenida, 201 E. 3rd Ave., San Mateo; 650-781-3637, Instagram: @avenidasanmateo. Open Monday to Thursday from 4:30-9 p.m., Friday and Saturday from noon to 10 p.m. and Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

The Pantry in San Mateo for diner Filipino fare

The Pantry is a humble spot for breakfast staples such as steak and eggs, omelettes, pancakes and tuna melts. The eatery also serves a handful of Filipino dishes that expand its menu.

Breakfast rice plates with either longganisa or tocino come with eggs and a dipping sauce. Lumpia can be ordered by the tray for parties and get-togethers. For entrees, adobo and sisig are available daily. Other Asian-inspired offerings include teriyaki steak or chicken, teriyaki burgers and loco moco.

Located near the Concar Shopping Center, which is slated for redevelopment, employees at The Pantry say they remain open until further notice and have not received notice of demolition from the building owner.

The Pantry, 1855 S. Delaware St., San Mateo; 650-345-4544. Open daily from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Cafe Colma in Colma for 24-hour Filipino eats

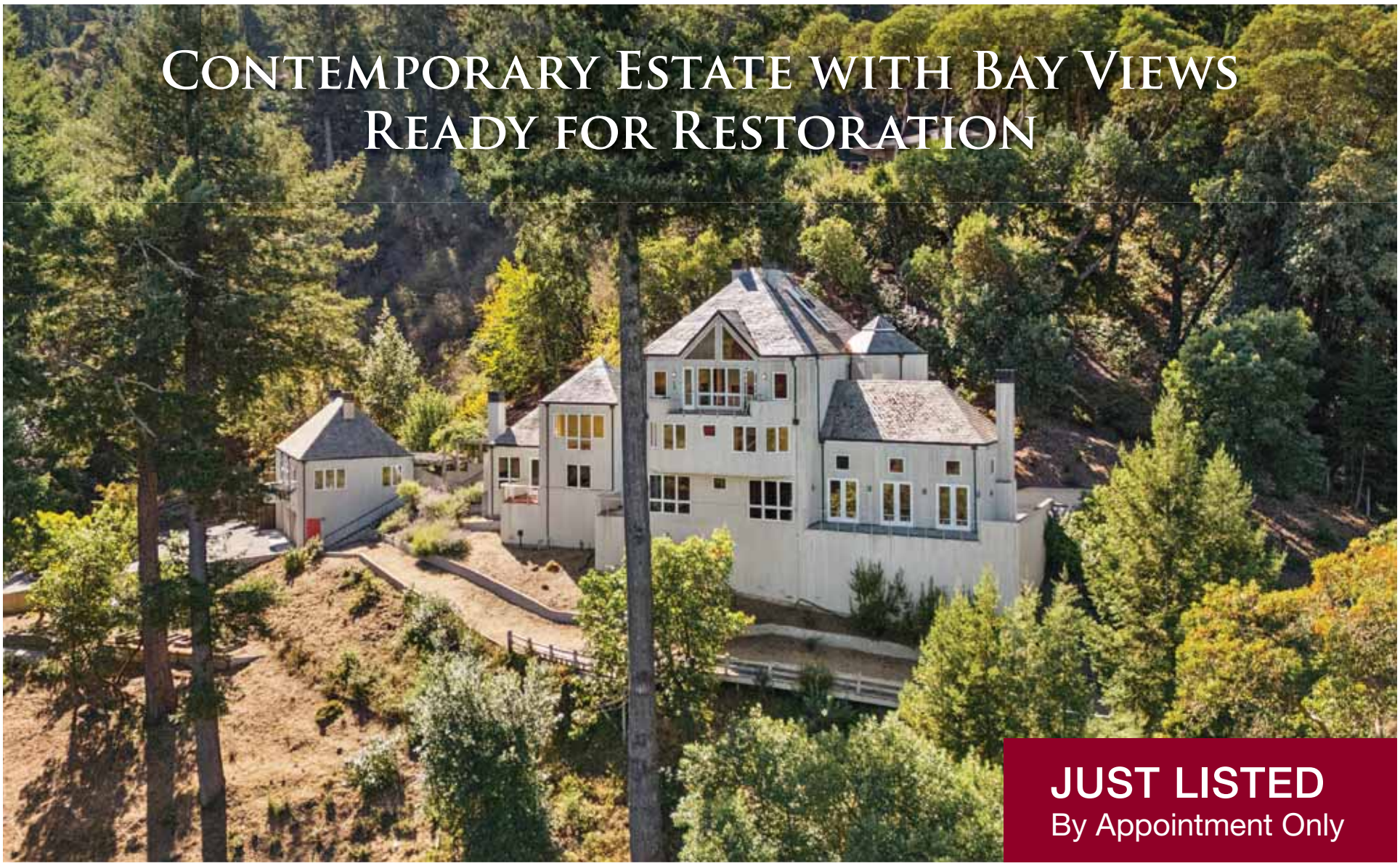
Since 1998, Cafe Colma has served hungry gamblers, late-night diners and locals alike at its 24-hour eatery.

The casino restaurant features a wide menu designed to satisfy all kinds of cravings, including American, Chinese and Vietnamese fare. In addition, Filipino food features prominently on the menu. Specialties include chicken and pork adobo, cooked in soy sauce and vinegar; pinakbet, mixed vegetables with shrimp and pork; pancit palabok, rice noodles in a rich pork-and-shrimp sauce; and halo halo for dessert. Nine varieties of silog breakfast plates are available around the clock. ■

Cafe Colma, 1700 Hillside Blvd., Colma (inside Lucky Chances Casino); 650-758-2237. Open 24 hours.

Dig into food news. Follow the Peninsula Foodist on Instagram @peninsulafoodist and subscribe to the newsletternewsletter at almanacnews.com/peninsula-foodist/ the latest openings and closings, learn what the Foodist is excited about eating, read exclusive interviews and keep up on the trends affecting local restaurants.

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- Second level: lounge/media room, office, 3 bedroom suites, laundry room
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