

Temescal News & Views

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Temescal News & Views is published bimonthly and distributed to 3,000 households, schools and businesses.

Our Mission

The mission of TNT is to enhance the quality of life in our diverse community through revitalization of our homes, businesses, schools and public services by providing an ongoing forum for community education, interaction and empowerment.

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Temescal Creek Cohousing

On a recent visit to Temescal Creek Cohousing (TCrC), Karen Hester took me on a tour of the seven-household community that extends between 45th and 49th Streets and sits across from Oakland Technical High. Karen is a founding member of TCrC and a community organizer who puts on street fairs in the East Bay, including Temescal's own. Karen fits right in to this community whose members are actively devoted to progressive causes such as the farm workers' movement, community organizing, education and public radio. She sees TCrC as a natural outgrowth of her life's work, which is to create community and celebrate diversity.

On the day of my visit, colorful Tibetan flags fluttered in TCrC's main courtyard, surrounded by houses painted green, yellow and red. Karen explained that the flags had no religious significance, but were left over from TCrC's recent benefit for a lesbian, gay and transgender group in Nepal. As Karen joked, "We're the hippies, pagans and Jews,"—to distinguish themselves from Temescal Commons Cohousing (TCC), the Christian cohousing community profiled in the September, 2005 issue of this newsletter. Despite the obvious differences, the two communities formed at about the same time in the late 90s and are grounded in many of the same principles, such as environmental stewardship, neighborhood improvement and a commitment to social justice.

Other than a small wooden sign on 45th Street, from the street the cohousing community is undistinguished, no different from the surrounding individually owned or rented homes in Temescal. Once inside, you can see how the five Victorian homes and a recently built community building are stitched together by a patchwork of landscaped areas that include fruit trees and vegetables. Environmentally friendly elements such as solar panels, cellulose insulation, recycled lumber, on-demand water heaters and bamboo flooring were used in the new building and incorporated as feasible in the older buildings.

Like TCC, TCrC schedules in community activities such as shared meals, monthly meetings and chore days. They've also developed holiday traditions such as a "bunny brunch" (a non-Christian celebration of Easter Sunday), Passover, and Halloween trick-or-treating followed by scary storytelling. Members hold spontaneous BBQ's and birthday parties around their fire pit, and played host to a

49th Street block party over the years until the Temescal Street fair got going. The group has also laid out rules to encourage group harmony, such as a "no gossip" policy, consensus decision-making (which means agreeing to "live with" a decision even if it is not your preference), and a "no dogs" rule to offset the higher impacts of dense human habitation.

While the community is diverse, a challenge for this mostly white, middle-class community has been to reach out to those less well off. As the community looks to expand (it recently acquired a neighboring duplex on 45th St.), this challenge has become even greater with house prices in the neighborhood at all-time highs. Nevertheless Karen hopes that her cohousing community can be a model for lower-income neighborhoods like West Oakland and Fruitvale where a cohousing community might take root.

—Carla Koop

For more information about TCrC, contact Karen Hester at 654-6346 or Karen@hesternet.net.

Santa Visits Temescal, Presents New Shopping Directory

On December 8 Santa Claus arrived on Telegraph Avenue via a very quiet sleigh, delighting numerous surprised children and parents. He was ably assisted by a quartet of Toy Soldier musicians, three strolling carolers, and Rockridge guitarist Jim Stahnke. Paid for by the Temescal Telegraph Community Association, the entertainers joined local merchants in the first Holiday Open House. Several merchants participated by placing strings of lights in their windows and offering treats and cider. Bank of the West put out a spread of sand-



Musicians entertain shoppers at the first Temescal Holiday Open House. Photo: Don Lowery/Jacqueline Minor

wiches. California Bank and Trust handed out treats and the newly created Temescal-Telegraph Directory. The directory lists all businesses along the Telegraph corridor, and most community organizations as well. A large foldout map is keyed to the directory. If you missed the open house, look for your copy at local merchants. — Donald Lowrey

Mixed-Use Development at 51st and Telegraph

Editor's Note: The following two articles deal with the subject of the proposed mixed-use development on 51st and Telegraph (former site of the Pussycat Theater). TNV is making a good-faith effort to cover all sides of the issue since it promises to affect the future of the neighborhood. We welcome responses from our readers.

In mid-November 50 people from both Temescal and Rockridge came out to hear plans for the new mixed-use, residential development project proposed at the corner of 51st and Telegraph. The developers, Ron Kriss, Roy Alper and Pat Zimski, along with their architects from Van Meter Williams Pollack, gave an update on various aspects of the project:

- the developers are looking into ways to make some of the 67 units available to lower income homebuyers.
- the project sets a new standard for "green" construction materials and operating systems, including large solar hot-water heaters and photovoltaic systems.
- discussions have begun with City CarShare to locate a car sharing "pod" at the site, not just for the residents/owners at the project, but for the neighborhood.
- the open plaza area at 51st/Telegraph has been redesigned to make it larger.
- a shadow study was completed at neighbors' request, indicating minimal impact to northerly neighbors on Clarke St.
- a traffic study was also completed at neighbors' request and this study indicates little to no change in traffic impacts caused by the project, in part due to the removal of the existing impacts of Children's Hospital's employee parking lot.
- no progress has been made with the commercial-space leasing efforts, and neighbors are encouraged to forward tenant leads to the developers.

There was considerable support expressed at the meeting for the project. However, one group of neighbors, although in

support of many elements of the proposal, indicated opposition to the proposed height and mass of the development.

The project was reviewed by the Oakland Planning Commission's Design Review Committee on November 16. The Committee members expressed their approval of the design as proposed. The project will next be heard by the full Planning Commission.

For more information contact Bill Lambert at 550-4200 x512 or bill@shastapro.com. — Bill Lambert

Temescal's Future: Whose Vision?

A new pattern of residential development is coming to Temescal, and it doesn't bode well. In the last couple of years, developers have increasingly viewed Temescal and lower Rockridge as a lucrative area for development. Suddenly, along Telegraph, Shattuck, Claremont and Broadway, there is a big push underway to put up market-rate, high-density, residential buildings (with a little retail thrown in) that are significantly taller than almost anything else in the neighborhood. As a 20-year resident of Temescal, a community artist who has done several projects about the history of our neighborhood, and as a participant in the 5-year community-visioning process around the future development of the vacant Pussycat Theater lot, I am concerned about how this new trend threatens to change the face of Temescal.

Currently, developers Ron Kriss and Roy Alper have proposed a 67-unit condo/townhouse project for the former Pussycat site on Telegraph and the adjacent parking lot on 51st and Clarke Streets. These are the same developers who recently built the 63-foot-high, 25-unit condo project that rises above 48th Street between Telegraph and Shattuck.

While many aspects of their current proposal for Telegraph and 51st are laudable—such as their use of solar energy and other green building technologies—the heights of this project would significantly exceed the city's zoning allowances and dwarf buildings around it. Proposed heights include a 65-foot tower at the corner of Telegraph and 51st that would be more than twice as tall as both the Global building next store and the historic block across 51st St. The 3-1/2 story townhouses proposed for Clarke St. would overshadow the mostly one-story homes on

Clarke, cutting off light and increasing parking and traffic on this residential street.

According to the city's General Plan, Telegraph Ave. has been designated as a transit corridor along which higher-density, mixed-use (residential and commercial) projects are to be encouraged. A question all of us who care about our neighborhood's future should be asking is, how much density is best for Temescal, and who decides?

Developers typically push for maximum density for their projects, as is the case with the developers of the Telegraph and 51st project. Rather than allowing developers maximum density in accordance with the principle that more is better, the city, together with the community and developer, should look at the unique assets of the neighborhood and tailor decisions about density and building height accordingly—just as the General Plan also advises.

Every neighborhood in Oakland has developed slightly differently, and it is these distinctive historical patterns that contribute to each neighborhood's unique character and appeal. Part of what makes Temescal's commercial district special—what differentiates it from Fruitvale, Montclair, or downtown—is its collection of individual, varied, well-maintained, human-scaled storefronts, many of which are historic. People standing before the two-story block of Telegraph between 51st and 49th streets immediately understand that they are at the heart of the district. New projects in Temescal should honor, reinforce, and build on this asset, not undermine it.

Wanting to make sure that new development enhances rather than overwhelms Temescal's unique, historic fabric, neighbors from Temescal and Rockridge have formed a



Areas in black are sites in Temescal and lower Rockridge that either are already controlled by a developer or have been eyed by developers as potential sites for projects, according to the Telegraph/51st Gateway Coalition.

coalition to communicate these issues to the developers and the city. As of mid-December, more than 300 people have signed a petition requesting height reductions on the Telegraph and 51st St. project. The Planning Commission is scheduled to rule on the developers' request for height variances and related issues at its meeting on January 18 at 6:30 PM (City Hall, hearing room 1). Whether or not you support aspects of this project, if you are concerned about the trend toward 65-foot, out-of-scale buildings in Temescal, come to this hearing to ensure that your voice is heard. Also let the Planning Commissioners (www.oaklandnet.com), Councilmember Jane Brunner (238-7001; jbrunner@oaklandnet.com), and Darin Ranelletti, the planner assigned to the project (238-3663; dranelletti@oaklandnet.com; case CMDV05-469) know how you feel in advance of the hearing. We also have resumed negotiations around this issue with the developers.

To learn more about these and related development issues in Temescal, or to add your name to the petition, contact the Telegraph/51st Gateway Coalition, 653-7190, jnorman@california.com. —Jeff Norman

NPCPC Seeks Local Talent for March Election

Your local Crime Prevention Council hosts its annual election of officers in March (flyers are forthcoming). We are looking for a few good people to serve as Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. Besides crime prevention, the NPCPC tackles such issues as residential and business development, blight, emergency preparedness, and school-community relations. As one of the most active of Oakland's 55 community policing beats, the Temescal NPCPC enjoys strong community support. We want to keep the spirit alive. You can help by joining our activities and becoming an officer. For more information contact Don Lowrey at 420-6974. —Donald Lowrey, NPCPC Chair

Winter Programs at the Temescal Library

In January-February 2006, the Oakland Public Library will be launching its first "One City, One Book" initiative featuring Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's 1998 novel, *The Mistress of Spices*. The library will be encouraging teens and adults in Oakland to read and discuss this amazing work, which author

Amy Tan called "a dazzling tale of misbegotten dreams and desires woven with poetry and storyteller magic." Set in Oakland in the 1980s and recently made into a major motion picture, *The Mistress of Spices* tells the story of Tilo, trained in the ancient art of spices, who operates a shop from which she administers curative spices to the local Indian community.

To encourage readers, the Oakland Public Library, participating Oakland bookstores, and other organizations will be hosting a series of free book discussions about *The Mistress of Spices* throughout the city, as well as related cultural programming. A Kick-off Celebration will be held on Saturday, January 7, 1:00-5:00 PM at the Oakland Main Library, 125 14th Street. A free reading and book signing co-sponsored by the Oakland Museum of California featuring the author of *The Mistress of Spices*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, will take place on Friday, February 10, at 7:30 PM in the James Moore Theatre, Oakland Museum of California. To find out more about all the events and programs, you can go to the library's Web site at www.oaklandlibrary.org or contact the Temescal Branch. We will be hosting a discussion of the book here at Temescal on February 27 in the evening.

For those of you who want to follow through on your New Year's resolutions, we have just the program for you! On Saturday, January 21, from 1-3 PM, professional organizer Joan Craig will be presenting her workshop "Start the New Year Right—De-clutter a Room." She will talk about how to de-clutter and re-organize your home, office, or garage, and how to set up a paperwork system that works.

I am in the process of planning two more workshops for February: "The Garage Sale Gourmet" and "The Art of Redesigning Clothing." We don't have dates and times yet, so please call the library for more details. We will also be starting another series of "French for You" in February.

Finally, the library will host a children's program on Tuesday, February 7, at 1:00 PM. Carl Winters' interactive assembly will include a brief discussion of African countries that feature the Kalimba (African thumb piano) and introduce various claps and songs.

We are looking forward to seeing you at the library this winter!

—Sally Bean, Branch Manager



Last year Charles Goldman's nomadic studio class from California College of the Arts helped Temescal Amity Works pick sweet oranges and lemons from a neighbor's back yard.

Citrus Harvest and Saturday Films at Temescal Amity Works

Citrus Season is about to begin and Temescal Amity Works is on the lookout for surplus oranges, lemons, grapefruits, limes, and tangerines that you don't have time to pick, or are too much to use for yourself. Maybe you have a neighbor in a similar situation. If so, please get in touch with us and we will come pick it or pick it up. Last year we harvested citrus from over 20 neighborhood yards!

Whatever we gather is re-distributed fresh or made into communal preserves, jams or sauces and given back to the neighborhood. This season we are planning to make a Temescal neighborhood marmalade again, which will be distributed free from our storefront. Drop by our storefront at 482 49th Street to pick up fruit during our open hours: Friday, 1-4 PM, and Saturday, 12-5 PM. We are also available to deliver fruit. E-mail us at bigbackyard@amityworks.org, or call 428-1210.

This winter Amity Works is sponsoring a Saturday afternoon film series. In December we screened *The Gleaners and I*, directed by Agnes Varda. Our next screenings will take place from 3:30-5 PM at our storefront and are free—details are below.

Saturday, January 7 - *If Only I Were an Indian*, directed by John Paskievich. A documentary about a group of Czechs and Slovaks disenchanted with both communism and its aftermath, who get in touch with the North American aboriginal way of life and live it.

Saturday, February 4 - *Rodrigo D: No Future*, directed by Victor Manuel Gaviria. "Almost a documentary" about children of the streets in Medellin, who are poor and have little to do but rob for a living, take drugs and fight for sport. Gaviria employs actual

Temescal Calendar

Saturday, January 7, 9 AM. Green Panthers beautification activity. All gardeners welcome! Meet at 51st and Telegraph. 655-8855.

Saturday, January 7, 1 PM. The Oakland Public Library presents a kick-off celebration of "One City, One Book," a program featuring the novel *The Mistress of Spices*. Oakland Main Library, 125 14th Street. 597-5049.

Wednesday, January 11, 6 PM. Temescal Merchants Association monthly meeting. All are welcome. Temescal Library, 5205 Telegraph. 653-7196.

Thursday, January 12, 7 PM. Temescal Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) Steering Committee meeting. Everyone welcome. Faith Presbyterian Church, 49th and Webster. 420-6974.

Friday, January 13, 7:30 PM. Poetry Saloon. Bring a poem that you have written and one by someone else to share, or just come to enjoy. 472 44th Street (between Telegraph and Webster). 594-2200.

Wednesday, January 18, 6:30 PM. City of Oakland Planning Commission Meeting regarding the development at 51st and Telegraph. City Hall (Hearing Room 1), 1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza. 238-3911.

Saturday, January 21, 10 AM. Help monitor water quality in Temescal Creek. Meet at the south end of Lake Temescal Park. 459-3967.

Saturday, January 21, 1 PM. Professional organizer Joan Craig will present a workshop titled "Start the New Year Right—De-clutter a Room." Temescal Library, 5205 Telegraph. 597-5049.

Saturday, January 28, 9 AM. Temescal Creek Cleanup. Meet at Temescal Creek where it runs through the DMV parking lot (at Claremont and Cavour). 655-1767.

Saturday, February 4, 9 AM. Green Panthers beautification activity. Meet at 51st and Telegraph. 655-8855.

Tuesday, February 7, 1 PM. Carl Winters presents a children's interactive program including a discussion of African countries that feature the Kalimba (African thumb piano) and various claps and songs. Temescal Library, 5205 Telegraph. 597-5049.

Wednesday, February 8, 6 PM. Temescal Merchants Association monthly meeting. All are welcome. Temescal Library, 5205 Telegraph. 653-7196.

Thursday, February 9, 7 PM. Temescal Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) Steering Committee meeting. Everyone welcome. Faith Presbyterian Church, 49th St. and Webster. 420-6974.

Friday, February 10, 7:30 PM. Poetry Saloon. Bring a poem that you have written and one by someone else to share, or just come to enjoy. 472 44th Street (between Telegraph and Webster). 594-2200.

Friday, February 10, 7:30 PM. The Oakland Public Library presents a free reading and book signing with Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, author of *The Mistress of Spices*, a book set in Oakland. James Moore Theater, Oakland Museum of California, 1000 Oak Street. 597-5049.

Saturday, February 18, 10 AM. Help monitor water quality in Temescal Creek. Meet at the south end of Lake Temescal Park. 459-3967.

street children in the film. We hope to see you this winter!

— *Susanne Cockrell and Ted Purves*

Join the Temescal Creek Clean-up

Please join the DMV Neighbors Association at Temescal Creek for a Volunteer Creek Cleanup, Saturday, January 28, 9 AM - noon. Meet your neighbors in a volunteer effort to clean up along Temescal Creek. We will be weeding, raking, picking up debris, sweeping, pruning, and cutting back ivy from Redondo to Clifton. We'll meet at 9 AM next to Temescal Creek in the DMV parking lot (at Claremont and Cavour) and work until noon. The DMV Neighbors Association will provide coffee and morning snacks. The City of Oakland Public Works - Environmental Services Division will provide tools, garbage bags, loppers, rakes, hoes, brooms, litter pickup sticks, gloves, etc. Bring your own favorite tools, well-marked with your name. We can always use wheelbarrows. Wear boots or shoes that you don't mind getting wet since it's likely that the creek bed will be wet. Rain cancels but heavy fog does not—some of our best winter cleanups have taken place on gray days!

Sponsored by the DMV Neighbors Association and the City of Oakland Environmental Services Division. Call Margaret if you have any questions, 655-1767. Please join us; we all appreciate having a clean, pleasant park!
— *Margaret Pinter*

Temescal Seed Swap Update

Are you harvesting seeds from your summer or autumn garden? Are you planning your spring garden? Your neighbors Sue Mark and Bruce Douglas, have created a place to swap seeds from local gardens. The seed exchange board, located in the Temescal Amity Works storefront, is stocked with a selection of seeds

from around the neighborhood. Gather your favorites from your garden, bring them in, label an envelope and hang it on our swap board. Or come by and take some local seeds home. This is the perfect time of year to plant flowers for the spring.

The swap board currently has some wonderful native and non-native flowers and plants, including organic fava beans, cilantro, purple needle grass, sweet peas, California golden poppies, sticky monkey flowers, echinacea, lilies of the Nile, calendula, love-in-a-mist flowers, hollyhocks and a flower mix of cosmos, cornflowers and scabiosa. More seed varieties are added by neighbors weekly. E-mail Temescal Amity Works at bigbackyard@amityworks.org for more information or to schedule a visit. If you would like someone to come gather seeds from your garden, please let us know!
— *Sue Mark*

Experience Corps Seeks Volunteers for Emerson Elementary

Experience Corps Bay Area has come to Temescal! Experience Corps is an innovative intergenerational program built on a unique national model, placing teams of adults 55 and older as tutors and mentors to children in need of additional support. Join the team and share your experience, time, and talents with Temescal youth at Emerson Elementary. Provide homework assistance, read one-on-one, help out in classrooms, or simply share your knowledge from your background or of your favorite recreational activities—during the school day or in after school programs. Studies have shown that it's good for your health! Members serving 15 hours a week are eligible to receive a monthly stipend of up to \$233. For more information or to get involved, contact Jessica Bullen at 495-4966 or jbullen_ec@yahoo.com.
— *Jessica Bullen*

Help Support This Newsletter and TNT. Volunteers are doing the work of getting out this newsletter (and occasional fliers)—but we still need to pay the printer! If you value our community efforts, please consider making a donation. Any amount will help. Make your check payable to TNT, and send it with this form to: TNT, c/o 469 Rich St., Oakland, CA 94609. — *Thank You!*

Yes, I want to help.

Enclosed is my contribution in the amount of:

\$10 \$25 \$50 Other \$ _____

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I'd like to volunteer. Please call me.

