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Temescal Neighbors Together
(TNT)

OUR MISSION

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

EDITORIAL POLICY

TN&V publishes submissions from community members. We do not fact-check, although we correct inaccuracies when we find them. We strive to achieve an unbiased tone and may edit articles accordingly, but ultimately TN&V reflects the point of view of the authors and not that of the editors.

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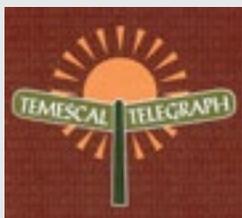
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Temescal News & Views

THE VOICE OF NORTH OAKLAND'S TEMESCAL NEIGHBORHOOD

MAY/JUNE 2014

Frazees Frustration



Mark Borsuk painting over graffiti on the Frazee Building. Photo by Tom Levy.

I'm probably the most expensive janitor in Oakland," said Mark Borsuk as he painted over graffiti on the former Frazee Paint building at 49th and Telegraph, which has been vacant since March 2013. A native Oaklander now living in San Francisco, Borsuk is the building's property manager and real estate broker. Owned by Borsuk's family since February 2000, the building is currently held by the Barbara J. Borsuk Trust, named after Borsuk's mother, another Oakland native.

The storied 1922 structure, built to house a Bank of Italy branch before it became a Bank of America in 1929, hasn't housed a bank since 1997; before Frazee left, it was a Hollywood Video outlet.

Quite a comedown for a historic Beaux Arts-derivative property designed by Edward T. Foulkes, the same architect responsible for the Tribune Tower. "The bank's monumental appearance and prominent location on Telegraph Avenue make it an important visual landmark in the context of the surrounding Temescal business district," said the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, part of the Oakland Planning Department, when it granted historic status to the site in 1994.

Borsuk, a former foreign exchange trader and Asian business consultant who lived in Japan for six years, is as frustrated as Temescal residents by the structure's graffiti-defaced appearance. He called the taggers "vicious vandals." Six months ago he said he paid \$2,500 to cover the building's windows with plastic to make it easier to remove graffiti. He also said he's talking to a "glass guy" about cleaning the windows. But when asked about graffiti on the roof, he declined to say when he would deal with it.

It wasn't supposed to be like this. A signed lease with Chase Bank, set to start on the heels of Frazee's departure, fell through at the last minute, said Borsuk. Later, BevMo! which expressed interest, changed its mind after neighborhood opposition and after that, Borsuk said months-long talks with a San Francisco furniture dealer didn't lead to a lease either.

"It's been six to eight months of tire-kickers," said Borsuk in an interview. In April, he received a letter of intent from a large group with an "interesting concept," which Borsuk declined to elaborate on.

The 6,000 square-foot building can be had for

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\$2.25 a square-foot, or \$13,500 a month, plus payment of the building's property taxes, building insurance and the cost of any needed maintenance or repairs during the lease [<http://www.loopnet.com/Listing/17191481/4881-Telegraph-Ave-Oakland-CA/>].

For a year, Temescal residents have hotly debated what kind of business should move in. For a while, some pushed for Bev Mo! The mammoth retail beverage chain, owned by TowerBrook Capital Partners, a New York- and London-based private equity firm, was reportedly interested in setting up shop here.

Borsuk said he approached BevMo! himself, after hearing of the retail giant's frustrated attempt to set up shop on Piedmont Avenue. He manages another family-owned property there, at 4814 Piedmont, across from the Piedmont Theater.

BevMo! supporters included Temescal resident Don Lowrey, a member of the Temescal Telegraph Business Investment District's board. His supportive TN&V article appeared last September in response to another, critical of the proposal, written by Suzanne L'Heureux, also a Temescal resident.

Many joined L'Heureux in opposing BevMo! Last year, more than 500 people indicated support for a just-say-no petition to the Oakland Planning Commission that John Gatewood—a Temescal resident and founder of neighborhood organization Urbanists for a Livable Temescal Rockridge Area—organized via Change.org.

On Mojospot.com and on Temescal-Neighbors, a local email list, other suggestions have ranged from another bank or credit union to a Rockridge-style Market Hall, a beer garden or brew pub, bowling alley, independent

bookstore, gym or skate park, or a grocery store—even a cannabis outlet.

"There's some interesting ideas on Spot.mojo," said Borsuk, who enjoys visiting the former bank building to meet prospective tenants. "The benefit is I get to observe the neighborhood and talk to people; it's kind of my own Spot.mojo."

Lowrey says that the BID has talked with Borsuk about putting up security cameras to discourage graffiti vandals. "It's an important neighborhood building, but it's looking pretty terrible at the moment," said Lowrey.

Borsuk confirmed the discussion, but said it's been six months since he heard from the BID about the cameras. He suggested neighbors could help by watching his building, and others, and reporting taggers, either

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Soundwall Study Petition Falls Short

The City of Oakland's year-long petition process to determine the expenditure of \$1.4 million of Caldecott Settlement Agreement funds has come to a close, and the results indicate there is not sufficient support to continue with the studies. The process was developed to ensure that studying two soundwall segments along State Route 24 between approximately Broadway and Telegraph Avenue had strong and widespread community support in the affected area. At multiple RCPC Town Hall meetings, Rockridge News articles and email communications beginning in fall 2012, the petition process was presented to the community, including the following key points:

- The process is modeled on other City processes, such as those used by neighborhoods requesting speed bumps and parking regulation changes.
- The City developed the petitions, including names & addresses of eligible property owners.
- Soundwall study proponents would collect signatures.
- Signature gatherers had one full year to collect signatures.
- If 2/3s of eligible property owners signed the petition, then the studies would move forward; if not, the funding allocated to these studies would be used for other priority projects on the Caldecott project list.

The City mailed a courtesy letter to all 481 identified eligible property

owners on March 12, 2013, apprising them of the petition process. The petition was subsequently posted on the Fourth Bore Coalition website. In the intervening year, advocates of the soundwall studies wrote their own letters to property owners eligible to sign the petition, emailed and phoned them, and used old-fashioned door-to-door neighborhood visits to collect the needed signatures.

One year later, on March 12, 2014, the City received petitions containing 300 signatures or 62%, 21 short of the 321 needed to indicate 2/3s support. Because an insufficient number of signatures was submitted,

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Bites Off Broadway Returns for 4th Year

Voted by the East Bay Express as “Best Low Key Food Truck Gathering,” your neighborhood yummy pod is back, starting Friday May 9 through October 10 for year four! This year Bites Off Broadway will again bring the vibe of a neighborhood block party and picnic to the front lawn of Studio One, at 465 45th St. between Lawton and Broadway. You can enjoy a rotation of around 15 food trucks, including many favorites from previous years such as Go Streatery, Tina Tamale, Doc’s of the Bay, Fist of Flour, Annakoot (Breads of India), Sunrise Deli, Nora’s Spanish Cuisine, Roderick’s BBQ, Frozen Khusterd, Sanguchon and Skylite Snowballs. Favorite Sassafras Seagrass is having some truck engine issues at press time, but hopefully they will be back as well.

Newcomers Kenny’s Heart & Soul, NoNoBurger (veggie burgers and fries), Curbside Creamery (from the Temescal Alley), Beulahs Beans (coffee and pastries) and Roko’s Ice Cream Tacos are itching for you to try their flavors as part of our Temescal food frenzy.

Every week we will have a hula hooper, live music, and some family movies at dusk outside, sponsored by Studio One. The biggest night of the year is the annual Circus Bella performance on July 18th; the Oakland Civic Orchestra plays a pops concert July 25th. Kehilla Community Synagogue sponsors the Pop-up Shabbat at 6:30 on the 2nd Friday of each month.

A big thanks to Studio One managers and staff who have welcomed us every year and truly been collaborative partners. ♦

—Karen Hester, owner,
Bites Off Broadway,
blogger at Loakal.com

OakTechRep Presents “American Night”

In May 2014, OakTechRep, Oakland Tech’s award-winning student theater company, will perform “American Night: The Ballad of Juan Jose,” featuring over seventy-five characters who represent the dark, not-quite-what-they-teach-in-school side of American History, as they appear in Juan Jose’s dreams, the night before he takes his U.S. citizenship test.

This is the work’s very first student production, by special permission of playwright Richard Montoya of Culture Clash, after sold-out runs at Yale Rep and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and locally at Cal Shakes last year. Engaging with this work has required the student actors to delve into U.S. history, politics and sociology to understand the play and their roles within it. Humor, music and movement enrich this complex story. With the exception of the lead role of Juan Jose, each student actor plays a minimum of three different characters in this production, often switching from one side of the political spectrum to another in a matter of minutes. In his time-traveling dream, Juan Jose crosses paths with well-known figures including Benjamin Franklin, Joan Baez, and Ralph Lazo, a Mexican Irish American Angeleno teen who accompanied his friends to the World War II Japanese internment camp at Manzanar and Viola Pettus, an African American Texas nurse who ministered to anyone in need during the 1918 Spanish influenza epidemic. In between these very real characters, some fantastical ones appear.

As students prepare to perform this play, they look forward to a visit from playwright Richard Montoya himself. The students have already spent an

afternoon working with Dena Martinez, who played Juan Jose’s wife, Lydia, in both the Cal Shakes and Denver Center productions. Ms. Martinez coached the students on their characters, and especially the challenge of switching from one character to another, and understanding a role that might not represent just one person, but the essence of an era. She also helped the students understand the structure of the play, as characters appear and disappear according to Juan Jose’s frame of mind.

The OakTechRep production of American Night will also be documented on film. Jessa Moreno, director of OakTech Rep, intends that this film be shared widely as a catalyst for other student productions, as well as fuel an intelligent conversation around the complexities of our shared American story, specifically in regards to the long history of immigration. She is also honored to share “the brilliant work our company does with the world!”

American Night will perform May 1st -3rd, 2014, with three evening performances at 7 pm and one Saturday matinee at 2 pm in the Oakland Tech Auditorium, 310 42nd Street, Oakland. General admission tickets are \$10.00 at the door; \$8.00 for OUSD staff and students. The play is directed by Jessa Berkner Moreno with Technical Direction and Production Design by Casey Fern and Choreography by Ena Dallas. For more information, contact Ms. Jessa Moreno at jessabrie@gmail.com. ♦

—Carol Delton,
Oakland Tech parent volunteer

TEMESCAL COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Fraze Frustration

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to the BID or to the police. "If you see something, say something," said Borsuk. "Show taggers this isn't their private property."

Meanwhile, Borsuk's plan to open up an attendant-run 26-slot paid parking area behind the former bank building is moving forward. It was approved April 3 by the Oakland Planning Department, said Mike Rivera, a case planner there. Thirteen other spaces will be reserved for the building's eventual tenant.

The mini parking lot may help "activate" the location, said Borsuk, as well as provide what he called a needed "urban amenity." Borsuk said he'd been approached by several neighborhood businesses interested in having more parking in the area, including Bank of the West, which has no parking of its own.

For Borsuk, who also manages another family-owned and graffiti-adorned building at 26th and Telegraph, such "intense" management, that includes painting over graffiti, is part of the job. "If you want to be in the commercial real estate business, this comes with the territory," he said. ♦

—Tom Levy. Levy is a writer and photographer who lives on Dover Street.

GOT AN ITEM FOR THE CALENDAR? E-mail: temescalnewsandviews@gmail.com

Every Sunday, 9 am - 1 pm. Temescal Farmers' Market, 5300 Claremont Ave., DMV parking lot. WIC coupons accepted.

Sundays, 9 am. Keep Temescal Clean & Beautiful meets to pick up trash and clean graffiti. 43rd & Shafter. Rain cancels. Gloves, bags and litter pick-up tools are provided. Call Tim Anderson at 698-2393 or AndersTim@gmail.com. More info at <http://www.facebook.com/KeepTemescalClean>.

Every Mon - Fri, 9 am - 3 pm. The North Oakland Senior Center is open for members of the community. The annual \$12 membership entitles seniors 55 and older to qualify for discounts on activities and trips. Come enjoy arts and crafts, health insurance counseling, exercise and dance, trips and tours and classes at 5714 MLK Jr. Way, 597-5085.

Every Monday, 7 pm. East Bay Toastmasters meets at 4130 Telegraph Avenue; enter through the parking lot on 41st St. For more information contact Bill at 510-922-8414.

Every Tuesday, 2 pm - 7 pm. Phat Beets Farmers Market at Children's Hospital, 744 52nd St., between MLK Way and Dover.

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3 - 6 pm. The East Bay Children's Book Project, which gives books free of charge to professionals who work with children in need, is open at the Mosswood Recreation Center, 3612 Webster St. Info: 408-READ or www.ebcbp.org.

Wednesdays, 10:30 am. Preschool story time. Temescal Branch Library, 5205 Telegraph Ave., 597-5049.

Saturdays, 10 am - 3 pm. North Oakland Farmer's Market in the Santa Fe neighborhood at 5715 Market St., in the historic Arlington Medical Center "Doc Watson Clinic" parking lot. Sponsored by Phat Beets. <http://www.phatbeetsproduce.org>.

Thursday, May 1, 6pm-8pm: The City of Oakland is sponsoring a public Open House to discuss a redesign of Telegraph Avenue. Humanist Hall, 390 27th Street at Broadway. Food trucks will be serving food. For more information visit the project website at www.oaklandnet.com/TelegraphAvenue.

Saturday May 3, 11 am - 1 pm. First Saturday playdates at Emerson Elementary School. Come to the kindergarten playground on Shafter to meet neighborhood families, play together. Repeats June 7. Learn more about Emerson Elementary at <http://www.emersonschool.net/>.

Saturday, May 3, 10 am - 12:30 pm. Community Office Hours with Oakland City Council member Dan Kalb, Old Brooklyn Bagels, 6000 College Ave. To sign up for Dan's District One newsletter, go to: <http://www.dankalb.net/contactdan>.

Friday May 9, 6 pm. Poetry Saloon (drunk on poetry!) We gather the second Friday of the month with a casual potluck at 6 pm, reading at 7:30 pm. Bring a couple of poems of yours and someone else's, or 2-3 pages of prose, or come just to enjoy. Dessert, coffee and tea are provided. Hosts are Kayla Sussell and Jayne McPherson. 472 44th Street between Telegraph and Webster. Contact Clive Matson at 510-654-6495 with any questions. Repeats June 13.

Saturday May 17 Ride for a Reason is an annual fundraising bike ride from Oakland to Sacramento to advocate for public education and raise essential funds for school enrichment programs. Six students from Oakland International are participating in the ride this year! The goal is to raise \$120,000 to be split evenly between parent-teacher organizations at six Oakland public schools: Brewer Middle, Emerson Elementary, Claremont Middle, Oakland International High, Oakland Technical High, and Westlake Middle. To learn more, volunteer or pledge your support go to: <http://rideforareason.dojiggy.com>.

Soundwall *continued from page 2*

they have not been verified.

After the petition process concluded, some signature-gatherers raised questions about the process.

The City is evaluating the comments.

Once this evaluation is complete, the City will update the community using the project email list and postings on the Fourth Bore Coalition website (www.fourthbore.org). For

more information, contact Victoria Eisen at victoria@eisenletunic.com or 510/525-0220. ♦

—Victoria Eisen, Oakland Caldecott project coordinator