



From the President

JEFFREY WRIGHT

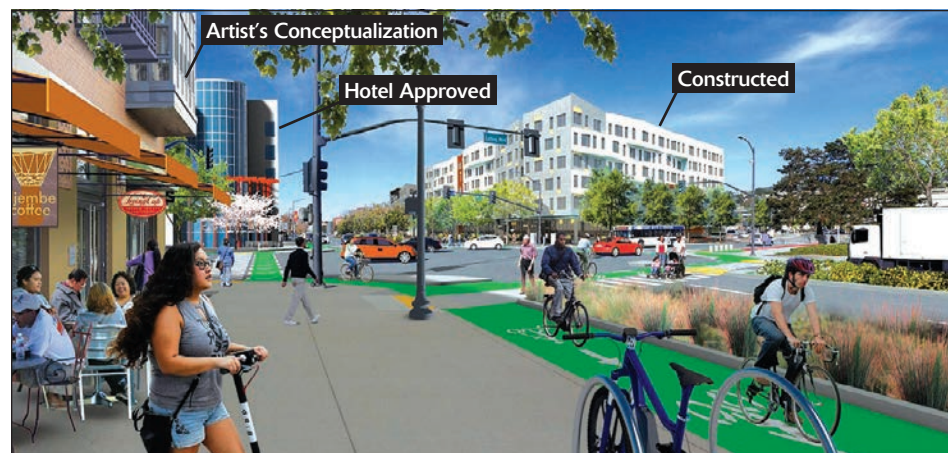
LATELY, THERE has been a lot in the media about the economy, politics, and matters pertaining to health. In this column I have decided to briefly touch upon each of those subjects from the Jeff Wright perspective.

Yes, we are currently in an economy experiencing high inflation translating into increased costs for everything. Monetary policy is being tightened to reign in inflation. Some economists and major corporate leaders are projecting a recession. This is not unfamiliar territory; we have been here before.

I obtained my real estate license in 1979 and the first transaction that I closed was for first time buyers, who purchased a home utilizing an FHA 245 GPM loan program. At that time, the standard FHA interest rate was 10%. The FHA 245 Graduated Payment Mortgage loan program allowed the buyer to start at a lower rate that graduated in stages. It was the government's version of an adjustable-rate loan. By 1981 conventional loan rates were at 18%. When rates eventually

■ See From the President, page 7

A Look at Del Norte Complete Streets Project



Cutting & San Pablo. The vision for the intersection is displayed in the top picture with new crosswalks, lanes for bikers, the Hampton Inn & Suites hotel, and Mayfair Station. The bottom photo shows how the location appears today.

EL CERRITO'S Public Works Department was on hand at the City's July 4th Festival at Cerrito Vista Park to provide information and seek input on the Del Norte Complete Streets project. The City's Public Works Director and City Engineer, Yvettah Ortiz, told gatherers that the project will, "balance the needs of motorists, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists who use the streets near the Del Norte BART station." According to Ms. Ortiz, a key goal of the project is to, "create a complete street that serves users of all ages and abilities."

In 2004, former State Assemblymember and State Senator Loni Hancock shared a vision for San Pablo Avenue, "as a grand boulevard stretching from Oakland to Hercules, with jewels of pedestrian-friendly and family-friendly mixed-use urban and distinctive neighborhoods along the way." El Cerrito built upon and formalized this vision in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan adopted by City Council in 2014. Key goals include encouraging market friendly development; promoting environmental sustainability; and strengthening pedestrian and bicycle connectivity.

Del Norte BART station is within the Uptown area of the Specific Plan. Also located within Uptown is the Mayfair

■ See Del Norte Complete Streets, page 4

IT'S TIME TO VOTE!

BY SCOTT HARRIS

THE EL CERRITO Chamber of Commerce is excited to report that over 700 nominations for local businesses have been received in the inaugural Best of El Cerrito contest! Thank you to the over 600 people who have participated in the contest so far.

Now that the nominees are in, it's time to vote for your favorites in each category. It's easy to vote and



you can find the ballot by visiting elcerritochamber.org/best-of-ec.

If you are a business owner who has been nominated, congratulations! The El Cerrito Chamber wants to help you get out the vote. Please contact us to request a window sign and postcards to hand out to customers.

We also have a digital badge that you can use to send by email blast or social media. We'll provide you with

■ See Vote for the Best of EC, page 4



Past Prez Palaver

JOHN C. STASHIK

SUCCESS! Thank all the sponsors and individual donors for supporting the City of El Cerrito/worldOne July 4th Festival. Generous financial contributions made it possible to resume the popular event. Let's do it again in 2023!

□

Painful. KPIX reporter John Ramos filed a story in June about Richmond's new business license tax, now calculated on gross receipts instead of by number of employees. Hilltop Ford general manager Leon Thomas stated his dealership's tax increased by 7,000 percent! Hilltop Toyota was hit with a 12,000 percent hike. Costco could see their annual tax bill go from \$25,000 to \$775,000.

El Cerrito city officials along with the Economic Development Committee, and this Chamber, should invite over-taxed and under appreciated Richmond businesses to move across the city line and locate here. It's low hanging fruit that can add to El Cerrito's vitality.

The vacant OSH site, slated to become a beautiful, vibrant public storage facility (seriously), would be a perfect location for Hilltop Ford and the firm would save a lot of money moving to El Cerrito. Oh, how I wish our city had more space for new businesses.

To be perfectly clear, the City has no control over the use of private property. That's a good thing, too. As long as applicable zoning rules are followed, a property owner can do what he or she desires.

The Community Development Department does an amazing job promoting El Cerrito even without a dedicated economic development person on staff. No surprise, as everyone in that department loves the city. The best that can be done is get parties together, talk, and be a broker. So maybe somebody can give Leon Thomas a call.

□

Local biz roundup. Denny's just got a makeover, inside and out. The refreshed diner now looks and feels #ElCerritoProud.

The popular Little Hill Lounge, 10753 San Pablo, closed since January, got some major repairs plus a new stage. The liquor inventory is good, so it could open very soon.

Workers needed! The new Super Slice Pizza is ready to open for business except finding employees has proven to be extremely difficult. Want a job? 10180 San Pablo Ave.

The pizza shop isn't the only business seeking help. Olivero Plumbing will hire and train workers for a career in a skilled craft that pays a good wage plus benefits. 510-233-3511. Plumbers are essential!



Construction continues at Banter Wine Bar on San Pablo near Stockton. In fact, the new business could open in September, *except for one big issue*: a hole in the wall caused by an automobile. The property owner, insurance, structural engineer, City building division, and contractors all have to work that major wrinkle out. Some day, Claire Sullivan and Devin Hohler will sip some wine and fondly recall the good times they had opening El Cerrito's first wine bar. Cheers to that ambitious couple.

Tenant improvements are well underway at the new urgent care pet clinic located on Moeser near San Pablo. No guess as to an anticipated opening date but know that this type of business will really be appreciated and used by El Cerritans.



Mr. worldOne, Corey Mason. This dynamo sets up, breaks down, sound checks, emcees, books performers and does everything else related to the production of July 4th entertainment on the big stage, a job he has done for years. His gig begins days ahead of the event. It wouldn't be Fourth of July in El Cerrito without him.



Look who was at the July 4th Festival. Suzanne Iarla (right) was heavily involved with the event when working for the City of El Cerrito. This time, it was just for fun, with City Manager Karen Pinkos.

What about Mayfair? Maybe there will be an answer to that question next month. The commercial space at ground level is being actively marketed.

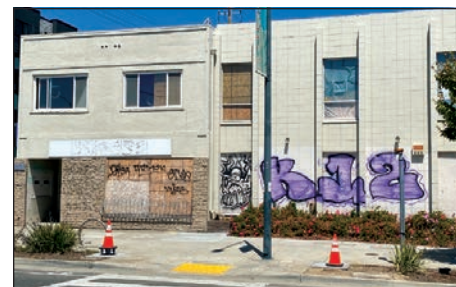
□



They pair well with craft beer.

□

Eat your dessert. Our local "theater block" brewpub, Elevation 66, has added desserts by Monica, a talented local baker, to the menu. Almond Tuile, Galletes Bretonne, Madeleine, to mention just three.



Blight block. From the former Parella building (pictured) to the ex-Button Store property, and on to the one time mortuary (which is a mystery to all), San Pablo Avenue between Eureka and Lincoln is likely El Cerrito's ugliest block. A permit to demolish the Parella building (embarrassingly still with a Chamber of Commerce sign) has been issued. Community Development and the Credence condo owners wanted this eyesore gone yesterday.

■ See Past Prez Palaver, page 3

PAST PREZ PALAVER

■ Continued from page 2

But not so fast! Demolition requires a Caltrans review, as there is encroachment onto San Pablo Avenue (state highway). Creating ADA pedestrian access around the demo site is necessary. Maybe the building will be toast when you read this. Then apartments will grow there.

□

City stuff. El Cerrito will have a new fire chief on or about August 8th. Eric Saylor will assume the top job and Interim Fire Chief José Castrejon will move to a training position. Saylor comes from the city of Sacramento.

The Kensington Police Protection & Community Services District will lease one of the empty Midtown Activity Center buildings adjacent to the El Cerrito public safety building. This win-win deal brings revenue to our City and provides a home for Kensington Police after they vacate their present office for building construction.

Two seats on El Cerrito's city council will be up for grabs in November. Serving on that body is an extremely important job that requires total commitment for a four year term. If you desire to run, talk to City Clerk Holly Charléty very soon. This is a chance to become a politician.

□

Did you pay? Your El Cerrito business license tax was due last month! If payment was overlooked, pay now. Late pay penalties are costly.

Likewise for the Rental Registry. All rental properties need to be registered and anyone in the rental business needs a business license too. Compliance is not optional.

□

Rialto Cinemas Cerrito screens "Kinky Boots" on Tuesday, August 2nd at 7 p.m. The musical is from London's West End, "filmed" live, on stage. Tickets: rialtocinemas.com.

□

Contra Costa Civic Theatre opens their season with Lerner & Loewe's "Camelot" on September 9th. ccct.org.

□

Careers! The City of El Cerrito needs to fill positions in the Finance Department and in Community Outreach. I hear City Hall is a great place to work. Go to governmentjobs.com/careers/elcerrito.

BOX ART

Beautifying City Utility Boxes



El Cerrito artist **Kristen Kong** (in photo) along with **Della Watson** painted the utility boxes at Fairmount and Colusa with images of "The Diverse History of El Cerrito." (Kristen also painted the box at Moeser Lane and Avis Drive.) Utility Box Art is part of the Arts & Culture Commission's Art in Public Places Program funded by a one percent contribution of construction costs from certain development projects in El Cerrito.

BEFORE



DESIGN



MOCKUP



Volunteers are always sought for City advisory boards and commissions. The Arts & Culture Commission is no exception. At present, there are several vacancies on the ACC. For information, contact staff liaison

Alexandra Orologas, Assistant City Manager: aorologas@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.

Visit el-cerrito.org/ACC

COMPLETION (STREET AND SIDEWALK SIDES)



DEL NORTE COMPLETE STREETS

■ Continued from page 1

development, nearing completion of the first 156 of 223 new housing units, and the approved 124-room Hampton Inn & Suites hotel, which will both increase the vibrancy of this area in the immediate future and further advance the City's Specific Plan vision. A 67-unit Mayfair/BRIDGE affordable housing project, just north of the Mayfair Station apartments, will break ground next year. The City's Del Norte Complete Streets project builds upon the momentum of this private development by enhancing the public realm creating a complete community that is more walkable and bikeable, while continuing to serve as a transportation hub.

The Del Norte BART station is a hub serving the greater East Bay, including regional transit agencies such as AC Transit, Soltrans, Golden Gate Transit, and WestCAT, as well as automobile commuters from multiple counties. The Del Norte Complete Streets project will improve access, safety, and circulation for all modes of travel to the BART Station, as well as existing and new housing and businesses in this area. The project adds protected crosswalks, bus boarding platforms, and cycle tracks, which provide a separation between bicyclists and motorists, along San Pablo Avenue, Cutting Boulevard and Eastshore Boulevard.

Estimated Cost & Funding

Total Cost	\$13.25 million
Committed Funding	\$12.57 million
Federal One Bay Area Grant	\$4.84 million
Measure J Transportation for Livable Communities	\$2.31 million
City Transportation Impact Fee & Developer Contributions	\$1.18 million
SB1 Local Streets and Road Program	\$147,000
WCCTAC Subregional Transportation Mitigation Program	\$1.19 million
State Affordable Housing Sustainable Communities Grant	\$2.9 million
Future City Transportation Impact Fees	\$681,000

All improvements will be designed to current accessibility standards and guidelines. Furthermore, the project adds traffic signal upgrades and enhanced striping at San Pablo Avenue's intersections with Cutting Boulevard and Hill Street.

Finally, the project includes pedestrian scale lighting, street trees, and bicycle racks to put the finishing touches on transforming San Pablo Avenue from an auto-dominated thoroughfare to a place that provides a multitude of opportunities for living, commerce, and community life.

One major circulation change is that the project will now allow motorists to travel along Cutting Boulevard east-bound of San Pablo Avenue, while maintaining a dedicated bus lane. This change will help to alleviate local afternoon traffic that currently travels the circuitous route using Cutting Boulevard to San Pablo Avenue and then along Hill Street to destinations east of the BART station.

Consistent with the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, the project maintains on-street parking as much as possible. The City has collaborated with various stakeholders including the regional transit agencies noted above, Caltrans and pedestrian and bicycle organizations to design the improvements.

The project's construction cost is about \$10 million and is funded through City, regional, state, and federal sources. The City anticipates that construction will commence in summer 2023 with completion by fall of 2024.

If you would like more information on the project and the opportunity to provide feedback, including taking a survey, please visit the project's website.

Learn More, Take a Survey

Visit this website:
el-cerrito.org/transformingdelnorte

VOTE FOR THE BEST OF EC



elcerritochamber.org/best-of-ec

■ Continued from page 1

the HTML code to embed the badge and link on your website.

Let's remember that most small businesses are driven more by passion than profit. Owners know that small businesses require hard work for success—especially given the current business climate that encourages big box stores and online shopping.

So let's remind the people of El Cerrito to shop locally and recognize the achievements of our local retailers, professionals, and service providers. I am personally

grateful for the customer service and additional quality that local El Cerrito businesses provide.

If I have questions about hardware repairs, "need" a pastry with my breakfast, want to buy a tasty homemade bagel, or need to get my cracked cell phone screen fixed (oops), I've got great local options.

Winning businesses will enjoy extensive Chamber benefits including both physical and digital logos, certificates, marketing packages, municipal recognition, privileges at an award ceremony, features in the *Byline*, and more!

KARO-ECHO Ham Radio Club Is Ready for Emergencies

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
MARTHA RICHARDS, K6ELO

HOW WILL you communicate with distant friends and relatives in an emergency if the internet and cell phone services are down or overloaded? Fortunately, KARO-ECHO, a local group of amateur “ham” radio operators, is dedicated to providing emergency radio communication services to Kensington and El Cerrito. As ham operators, the club members are licensed by the Federal Communications Commission to transmit on special frequencies that have been set aside for them.



On June 25th KARO-ECHO (Kensington Amateur Radio Operators & El Cerrito Ham Operators) co-hosted a free Field Day demonstration of their equipment and skills at Upper Canyon Trail Park. Field Day is an annual event sponsored by the American Radio Relay League which is designed to give amateur radio operators an opportunity to test their ability to operate outdoors using only portable battery-powered or solar-powered radios and antennas.

KARO-ECHO, in collaboration with EBARC (East Bay Amateur Radio Club), set up five radio stations at Upper Canyon Trail Park and made 187 contacts within six hours — 40 contacts within the Bay Area and 147 from across the U.S. and Canada. Contacts were made by voice, by Morse Code, and by sending emails and other digital messages using radio waves instead of the internet.

There was a “Get on the Air” table where people could make their first

KARO-ECHO Vice President Frans Kuypers, KJ6IUV, explaining digital radio to a Field Day visitor.



EBARC Vice President Katie Carney, KN6APB, helping Xia Horowitz, K2XIA, get on the air.

radio contact under the supervision of a licensed ham, and the club members answered many questions from visitors about how to get a ham license, which handheld radios to use, and how to join a neighborhood Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

For more information, please visit the KARO-ECHO website at: karoecho.net. If you would like KARO-ECHO to do a presentation to your group or if you have any questions related to ham radio or joining the club, please write to info@karoecho.net.



Mayor Gabriel Quinto with KARO-ECHO Board Secretary Tom Fattaruso, KN6BUY.



Celebrating Re-Connection

THANKS TO the efforts of community leaders and dedicated City staff, our Chamber was delighted to participate in our town's sweet 4th of July event this year. After a two-year hiatus (we all know why), it took dedication and perseverance for the event to return.

Thanks to all the vendors (crafts, goodies, rides, food!), community organizations and musicians...it was a smashing day.

We set-up our "info booth" next to the El Cerrito Library Foundation and the El Cerrito Historical Society and enjoyed conversations all day long with neighbors, Chamber members, and others.

City pride was a day long theme, with visitors happily picking up "I ♥ El Cerrito" buttons and learning about our "Best of El Cerrito" program. We are grateful to be a part of this thriving community.



Community Matters

GEORGINA EDWARDS

★ MEMBER NEWS ★

CALL FOR ARTISTS!

Online Entries Only
www.elcerritoart.org/artshow

Early Bird Entries: August 15 • Final Deadline: September 15

Special Category Theme: "Connections"

Cash Prizes: 1st \$100, 2nd \$50, 3rd \$25,
in categories with 12 or more entries + Special & Merchant Awards

Opening Artists' Reception
Friday, September 30, 7-9 pm

Weekend Show Hours:
Saturday, October 1: 11 am-5 pm
Sunday, October 2: 11 am-4 pm

EL CERRITO ART ASSOCIATION



Lobsta

This food truck visits El Cerrito often. But you've got to follow their social media channels to know when and where. The upshot here is that the cuisine is unique and the sandwich rolls are tasty. Real Maine lobster.

News from Community Development

San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Update and Meeting on Wednesday, August 17th

The draft San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan update and Supplemental Environmental Impact Report is available for public review through September 2, 2022. Comments will also be taken during a public meeting on August 17th at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom. Public comments can be submitted by email, mail, or in-person to the El Cerrito's Planning Manager, Sean Moss, at smoss@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us as detailed on the project page at el-cerrito.org/SPASP.

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Housing Element Review Period Runs Through August 29th

The Housing Element is a required component of the El Cerrito General Plan. It contains goals, policies, and programs to address the housing needs of all city residents between the planning period of 2023 to 2031, including accommodating the City's required Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of 1,391 new dwelling units at a variety of income levels.

The Housing Element public draft will be available on the City's website (el-cerrito.org) and members of

the public will have through August 29, 2022, to provide comments.

Public comments can be submitted at the city council meeting on Tuesday, August 16th, at 7 p.m. Please share your ideas and input or learn more by visiting el-cerrito.org/HousingElement2023.

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New El Cerrito Public Library at El Cerrito Plaza BART Workshop

A Zoom meeting on Thursday, August 25th, at 7 p.m. will explore the possibility of a new El Cerrito Public Library at the Plaza BART station. City and library staff will be present and the public is encouraged to attend to ask questions and provide feedback. More information at el-cerrito.org/library.

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Community Development e-News

An e-newsletter is mailed regularly from the Community Development Department. Get on the email list by signing up on the Community Development page at el-cerrito.org.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

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fell to a single digit many Realtors were overjoyed!

There is no need to go into a panic about interest rates, fuel prices, the stock market or anything else. Again, we have experienced all of this before, and this too shall pass. The city of El Cerrito has a Real Property Transfer Tax that generates \$1,200 for every \$100,000 of real estate value transferred. As the real estate market normalizes and prices adjust accordingly, there are revenue implications for the City in the form of less transfer taxes, however, it is a part of the normal budgeting process to make allowances for changes of this nature.

Briefly, regarding politics, if we can all adhere to some simple rules, our society will be much better off. Be humble in victory and gracious in defeat. This has universal application, be that a presidential election or the race for the DA's office. This applies not only to the candidate, but to their supporters as well. Recognize and accept that the outcome on some issues might not swing in our direction.

I serve on three boards and the county planning commission, and this mindset and attitude applies there as well. Civility, professionalism, and proper decorum are always in order. On that note, I would like to give a nod of approval to the El Cerrito city council and our city staff for running El Cerrito in a highly professional and respectable manner.

Once again, we are hearing the alarm bells about COVID-19, and it is now sharing press time with Monkeypox. Let us all do the best that we can to preserve our health. Even with our best efforts sometimes things just happen. I say that as a statement of fact.

Celebrating 29 Years!

Farmers Market

AT EL CERRITO PLAZA

Open Tuesday & Saturday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

SPONSORED BY



El Cerrito
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Linking Business and Community Since 1936

A few weeks ago, I was stricken with excruciating pain down my right leg. Long story short, an MRI revealed two bulging discs at L-4 and L-5 putting pressure on my "nerve root" hence the pain. In the vernacular, it has "slowed my roll."

My fellow business owners, hard work, and dedication to the business has its place but be sure to enjoy each day because things can change quickly. Having nice things and "stuff" is good, but how much stuff do we really need?

I have decided that I am going to make better use of the things that I already have. I was feeling fairly good on Sunday, July 24th, and I decided to barbecue a slab of ribs, a chicken, and some links. I made some potato

salad and homemade barbecue sauce and then plated it on that very lovely wedding gift Pikard China that seldom sees any use these days. Classic cars are coming out of the paint shop, etc., and I intend to drive them with regularity. The saying, "your health is your wealth" is true. Nothing like having an improved perspective!

HELP OUT

Mercy Corps mercy corps.org
World Central Kitchen wck.org



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Pick Up Locations

This newsletter is mailed monthly to Chamber of Commerce members and others. A PDF edition is posted and available on the Chamber website: elcerritochamber.org/byline.

Other distribution points are: El Cerrito City Hall, The Glenn Custom Framing, Mr. Pickle's Sandwich Shop, Doherty's Truck Rental, El Cerrito Public Library, El Cerrito Community Center, The Farmers Market at El Cerrito Plaza, and Elevation 66.

**Best Beer
plus 15%
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CHAMBER MIXER

Wednesday,
Aug. 24th
5:30 p.m.

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