

Letters to the editor

Opinion by Ian Kallen

It is true that there are a number of multi-residential housing projects in downtown Lafayette. City Manager Srivatsa's observation that Lafayette needs "The Terraces" is not disingenuous. The project, which includes affordable units, is based upon California state law mandating up-zoning for most zoning classifications. City Manager Srivatsa does not "kowtow" to anyone, but she does obey the law, City ordinances and City policies.

The assault on Lafayette comes from Sacramento via laws and bills, including AB 68, AB 1485, SB 13, SB 330, SB 9, SB 10, and many, many others. Lafayette fights tooth and nail for our rights and local control of our own zoning policies. Mayor Candell and City Council Member Burks, especially, as well as Council Members Gerringer, Anduri and Dawson, work to mitigate or eliminate these state zoning mandates. This fight is part of their jobs as Council Members, and they

do it well with support and help from our City staff and other regional organizations.

Population growth in Lafayette remained flat from the 1980s until about 2015. Since 2015 we have welcomed about 2,500 new citizens. Our city officials do not measure success by population growth. Rather, they measure it by the successful, downtown retail and dining opportunities, the distinguished architecture of buildings such as the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, the Veterans Memorial Building, and the Town Center projects. They measure success by the excellent condition of our roads and drains, the pleasant ambience of our public spaces and public art, the involvement of our volunteer citizen commissions/committees, our Community Center and recreational facilities, and the fiscal health of the City. The list goes on.

I, for one, commend our City officials and our City staff for their dedication, hard work and commitment

to the betterment of life in Lafayette as they navigate new state laws.

Erling Horn
Lafayette

San Pablo Creek 'Oversight'

The City of Orinda is the federal floodplain manager for San Pablo Creek in downtown Orinda. As such, the City is responsible for ensuring adequate flood protection for our downtown businesses and residents. Unfortunately, the City depends on protection from a creek channel that unraveled nearly as soon as it was built in 1958. If you don't believe me, look at the huge slabs of broken concrete in the creek behind Vintage House. Once built for protection against a 50-year flood event, the system now offers protection against, at best, a 25-year event. Flooding of the downtown in the vicinity of Safeway is inevitable.

The good news is that the Downtown Precise Plan process secured consultants to explore improvement of

flood protection for the Village, while also examining restoration options that would establish public amenities, such as a restored and publicly accessible creek and creek-side trail. The bad news is that a vocal minority of Orindans who oppose creek restoration seem to have persuaded some members of the City Council to waver on flood protection and a restored San Pablo Creek.

At the March 16 meeting, the public was made to wait until 12:15 a.m. to hear two council members speak in opposition of a simple staff-recommended contract amendment which would enable the City's consultant to perform the necessary hydraulic analysis and creek survey for flood control and creek restoration. Shouldn't the council lead floodplain management and creek

restoration?

We should not wait for private developers to drive our plans for a restored downtown and creek. Instead, our elected council members, aided by the Planning Department, need to provide the vision for a flood-safe, restored downtown area. The consultant's amendment would lay the foundation for these projects.

This matter may come before the City again. If so, I urge the community to tell the Council you support responsible floodplain management and downtown creek restoration. These projects aim to improve both flood risk reduction and conditions for wildlife and recreation. Importantly, they are essential to a revitalized Downtown.

Bob Stoops
Friends of Orinda Creeks

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Brothers Public Kitchen opens in Theatre Square



Photos Sora O'Doherty

Co-owner Blair Bagneschi mixes cocktails at Brothers Public Kitchen, formerly Piccolo Napoli in Theatre Square.

By Sora O'Doherty

Two brothers from Contra Costa County with a lot of bar and restaurant experience who purchased Piccolo Napoli restaurant in Theatre Square have remodeled and reopened the restaurant under the name Brothers Public Kitchen. The restaurant features Italian food, including pizzas and pastas, as well as dinner entrees.

Blair Bagneschi worked most recently as a bartender in Concord and has worked at the Walnut Creek Yacht Club, Va de Vi, and Pizza Antica. Jason Bagneschi previously worked at a number of restaurants, including Wayfare Tavern, Quince, Cotonga, and Chow. Both brothers are graduates of De La Salle High School. Blair graduated from Northern Arizona University with a degree in Hotel Restaurant Management, and Jason obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Utah.

The brothers are concentrating on family meals, some featuring Bagneschi family favorites. The restaurant has a full liquor permit, and the sale of the business was contingent on it being transferred to the new owners. The brothers consider themselves fortunate to have the license; the

transfer process was huge, they say, and took many months. There is nothing really the same about the restaurant as it is now when compared to Piccolo Napoli. The space has been completely remodeled from top to bottom, all of the recipes are different from the old menu, and, according to Blair, they have introduced a craft cocktail program that is unique to Orinda.

Blair explained that they make pasta fresh every day as well as fresh sauces. One dish, linguine and clams, features black pasta made with squid ink. Their menu also includes some dried pastas.

Jason said that Piccolo Napoli was previously limited to just pizza and pasta. The Bagneschis will continue to sell pizza, but it will be Neapolitan-style, 12-13 inches in diameter, and the dough will be made fresh every day. They want to focus on regional specific pastas. "Our family comes from Tuscany, our mother is from Lamarche, more northern Italian." Rather than just generic, they want to be specific to a region and to showcase family cooking, including some personal family recipes.

The menu reflects "a couple of Italian-American kids who grew up in California." Their goal is to be as local as possible, sourcing

ingredients from about a 100-mile radius. They would like a lot of menus to showcase one farm or one particular person, but right now, COVID-19 has made it hard for them to do what they want to do. Eventually they hope to champion small farmers, dairies, etc.

For the brothers, the beauty of Italian food is that it is hyper-locality-based, region to region, town to town. "Everyone will tell you how they do it and how it should be done," Jason says. Their philosophy is that if ingredients are the freshest and most local, they will taste great and shine through. What's in season? What is at the farmers' market? That will inform their menus.

Jason and Blair both live in Concord, first generation Italian on their father's side, third on their mother's side. Their great grandfather lived in Collinsville, on the Delta, about an hour from Orinda. Their grandmother grew up there and their grandfather was a fisherman.

Brothers Public Kitchen is located at 2 Theatre Square in Orinda, and is open for dinner currently, Tuesdays through Sundays. Dining inside is allowed to 25% capacity, as well as takeout and curbside pickup. Happy Hour is 3 to 5 p.m. with a special menu and dinner service starts at 5 p.m.



Diners enjoy dinner al fresco at Brothers Public Kitchen in Theatre Square.

When I say "good,"
you say "neighbor."

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