

EASTWEST

SEPTEMBER 2014
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an anarchist newspaper

ALWAYS FREE
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THE REDEVELOPMENT OF EAST OAKLAND

In the middle of June, the redevelopment of the Seminary-Foothill intersection in East Oakland began. First the trees along Foothill were cut down, reduced to small piles of saw dust. Trucks filled the vacant lot on the corner and workers began repaving the sidewalks along Seminary. All of this is part of the Foothill Seminary Streetscape, a project spearheaded by city council woman Desley Brooks and OCCUR, a low-income housing group that has existed in Oakland since the 1950's. The OCCUR board and staff are predominately black and have fought to develop the intersection for years.

As it currently stands, the area around the intersection is largely abandoned and contains multiple empty storefronts. The laws of capitalism have ensured that Seminary and Foothill have remained in this dilapidated state since the 1980's, a time when East Oakland was being hit hard by the CIA-facilitated cocaine explosion. The impoverished population around Seminary and Foothill could not support or sustain many small businesses along this commercial strip,

and only a select handful of small businesses currently thrive along Foothill. According to the laws of capitalism, only businesses that can sell their food or services at cheap prices can survive in this area.

With the Foothill Seminary Streetscape, Desley Brooks and OCCUR hope to attract investors to an aesthetically appealing urban setting. The sidewalks will be enlarged, street crossings will be redone, AC bus stops will be given benches and shelters, and a small parklet will be created. All of this is in the hope that new businesses will open in the empty lot and new capital will enter the neighborhood. There is no information regarding potential investors, but the City of Oakland refers to the lot as the "Foothill and Seminary Retail Opportunity Site" in their new brochure. At the bottom, this brochure carries the slogan RETAIL IS HAPPENING IN OAKLAND after listing every aspect of this land that is appealing to developers.

Desley Brooks is the only council-member to abstain

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from voting for the West Oakland Specific Plan. It is entirely possible that Desley Brooks actually cares about her district of East Oakland, but it remains to be seen who will capitalize off this development site. It is also entirely possible that existing small businesses will be driven out due to any future development. There is certainly one property owner near this intersection who has never had the interests of the neighborhood close to his heart.

Robert Imhoff is a notorious slumlord famous for his properties in the Tenderloin of San Francisco. In 2000 during the first tech-boom, he was selected by the Media Alliance as number 10 of the 45 worst slumlords in San Francisco and the East Bay. Throughout the 1970's and 1980's, Imhoff purchased dozens of houses and buildings, several of them in the Tenderloin. For example, in 1988 he purchased a 97-unit apartment building at 641 O'Farrell Street and proceeded to let the building fall into disrepair and neglect. A woman burned to death inside the building, dozens of dealers and drug addicts frequented its hallways, and the general poverty of the Tenderloin was maintained underneath its roofs. In hindsight, Imhoff appears to be another one of the slumlords who helped facilitate addiction, crime, and misery in the Tenderloin over the past 30 years.

This is a pattern he repeated in East Oakland when he bought the property at 5932 Foothill Blvd in the 1980's. The building was a beautiful brick building with a view of the Oakland hills and the vast plain of East Oakland. At the beginning of the crack explosion, Imhoff profited off other people's misery and despair through the rents he collected from this building, unconcerned by the violence and ad-



diction in the neighborhood. Throughout the decade, the building slowly accumulated so much water damage and mold that it was emptied of tenants and left abandoned for the next twenty years. It contributed to the general blight of the intersection, unable to be used or renovated by the poor residents of the neighborhood. In total, the property contained three storefronts and five apartments, a valuable

resource that was stolen by a capitalist parasite, already rich from his dozens of SF properties. Given this shady history, Imhoff seems to be intentionally damaging and undermining black communities through conscious neglect.

At the beginning of 2014, a group of squatters gained access to 5932 Foothill, only to discover the extent of the damage inside. While two of the five apartments were relatively habitable, the amount of black mold made it a long-term health hazard for any potential residents. It was offered up to those in need on several occasions, but the mold kept them away, and for good reason. It was too late to salvage any use out of this once great building.

In July of this year, the building was demolished on orders from Imhoff. He had recently transferred ownership of the building over to Foothill Boulevard Plaza LLC. Within a week, the bricks had come down and the entire property was rendered back into a patch of soil. The timing of the demolition is very telling in this situation. Just as the City of Oakland-sponsored beautification campaign for Seminary and Foothill began and the new sidewalks were installed, Imhoff finally demolished his property. While he could have done this at any time in the past, he only chose to do it once the neighborhood started to become attractive to outside development. He now wishes to profit off the neighborhood he helped bring down, biding his time until an investor comes along who will pay him far more than his initial investment.

Imhoff has a history of buying up properties in impoverished communities of color. As was mentioned above, the redevelopment of Seminary and Foothill is a largely black-led effort. While we have no illusions about the redevelopment being anything but a capitalist money-making scheme, the people behind it seem to genuinely care about the neighborhood. Imhoff is a parasite, latching onto the redevelopment at the last moment in order to extract profit off the backs of a community he helped weaken.

Imhoff currently owns a 141-unit apartment complex in Napa and over a fifty units in the Mission District. The rent from these properties alone makes him far wealthier than most people in Oakland will ever dream of becoming. The property at 5932 Foothill is just one of many on his list of assets. It is time to stop Imhoff and the entire capitalist class from profiting off the people. We hope the readers of this article join in the effort to expose Imhoff for what he is and discourage any outside investors from developing on his property. If enough pressure is put on this parasite, he will be forced abandon his schemes. Do not let him get away with this. Together we can drive him out of East Oakland.

GROCERY OUTLET CLOSING TO MAKE WAY FOR CONDOS - UNION JOBS LOST

Grocery Outlet in West Berkeley is one of the few affordable places that people can shop and pick up produce and basic essentials, especially seniors and those on a fixed income. Last year the Grocery Outlet company (started in San Francisco but now located on 4th Street in Berkeley) decided to close the West Berkeley location. This store happens to be one of the few union shops in the chain.

According to the Biz Journal, "The Berkeley space is owned by Read Investments LLC, a real estate firm founded by the same Read family that founded Grocery Outlet and owns real estate that the retailer leases." But the store closure is not happening in a vacuum, it comes at a time when the entire Bay Area is changing and poor and working people are being pushed out to make way for wealthier residents. Across the street from the West Oakland store, Sierra Nevada Brewing company opened up a tap-room beer tasting lounge, and in the adjacent lot and old building was demolished to make way for luxury apartments.

"I heard they want to tear this place down and build up condos," one employee told EastWest in an interview. When asked where the workers will go, he replied, "I have no idea. I'm sure the fact that this is a union store is another reason they want to shut us down. The other stores aren't unionized." This uncertainty for the workers at the store is playing itself out across the Bay Area and the United States. People see their rents jacked up, people with rent control are Ellis Acted out of their homes, their jobs are shut down and moved overseas, and the cost of living continues to climb. Many flee out to Stockton and Antioch, only to find that the same problems of crime and drugs they left behind have been displaced with them exported wholesale from Oakland to the suburbs.

The building that will replace Grocery Outlet will

be a 152-unit apartment building with only 12 low-income units, with the rest set at market prices. The financier of this new development is also Read Investment, LLC. The Read family's plan is simple: fire the union workers, build luxury apartments, make money, and push out the poor.

Having access to healthy food is an issue that affects tens of thousands of people throughout the Bay Area. From Richmond to East Oakland, many people lack real grocery stores in their neighborhoods. Seniors, the disabled and working families often have to leave the areas where

they live and go off into other neighborhoods, often using public transportation. With the West Berkeley Grocery Outlet closing, many people that formerly used that store to get access to food will not have to go somewhere else or go to the new located, in Emeryville. With the coming of even more condos in the

area, the closure of the store will not only mean a lack of access to food, but also the continued process of gentrification in the area.

We also recognize what is happening in Berkeley with Grocery Outlet as a point of possible intervention in the everyday class war in the Bay Area. Workers and customers can link up with each other and begin to organize; holding meetings together to make decisions and plan actions. The luxury apartments being built across the street can be picketed as well as those who own Grocery Outlet and the real estate firms who own the building. Action must take place outside of the union bureaucracy: only workers can decide to take action to halt production, give out free goods to customers, and the public can act in solidarity with workers and against the further gentrification of the neighborhood. If we choose to do something to better our conditions, we need only look around us at those facing similar conditions and begin to get organized.



HARD TIMES ON THE S

On the night of Monday, August 25th, police descended upon St. Andrews Plaza, a small park in West Oakland and home to many in the area that lack housing. Since the US government began pumping crack-cocaine into the United States which hit Oakland hard in the 1980s, along with lack of access to jobs, the “San Pablo Corridor” and the rest of ‘Ghost Town,’ has been awash in drugs and criminal activity. For elites, such activity is not problematic as long as it is contained in a set area and properly managed and does not spill out into affluent areas or, more importantly, lead to people acting out against their conditions. However, with the passing of the West Oakland Specific Plan (WOSP), city developers and capitalists are now hoping to bridge the condos and retail space of Emeryville with the Downtown Oakland core. Unfortunately for them, the countless efforts over the years to “clean up” the plaza have been unsuccessful so far.

Recently, a group called the San Pablo Corridor Coalition has come up with a plan to replace the homeless population with art and sculpture installations. The coalition was formed in 2009 by businesses and property owners in collaboration with the Oakland Police Department. They then “adopted” St. Andrews Plaza in 2010, and the next year they received a grant of \$75,000 to renovate it. Their plan for the plaza was originally approved in the beginning of 2013, and recent updates on their Facebook page suggest the park was to be fenced off for the installations in March of this year— so it is clear they are running very behind schedule. At no point was even the slightest effort made to involve the people living at St. Andrews in these plans and according to one man at the plaza, the meetings that were held, “Never had anyone from here.”

Interestingly enough, this raid comes just weeks

after the city approved the West Oakland Specific Plan, widely criticized as an effort to gentrify the area. One of the four “Opportunity areas” designated by the plan includes the stretch of San Pablo Avenue between downtown Oakland and Emeryville. Along this street, one of the precise targets of development include the block just south of St. Andrews. For the whole block, including the side facing the plaza, the city intends to have townhouses built for the wealthy, with retail stores located at their base. The final draft even mentions the Coalition’s plans for the park, as their “beautification” falls perfectly in line with the gentrification scheme outlined in the WOSP. If the city and its developer cohorts are successful, San Pablo Avenue will become nothing more than another bland shopping district to connect Emeryville to Downtown Oakland.

On August 31st, two days after the West Oakland Specific Plan came into effect, a group of people, including residents of nearby squats, approached St. Andrews Plaza with bags full of food, and pitchers of water and coffee. Simultaneously, a police car pulled up the park and came to a stop. For the next two hours, free beverages and snacks were given out to those who lived there or passed through. The cop’s plan for the afternoon may forever be unknown, but regardless, he drove away just minutes after witnessing the neighborhood solidarity. According to someone living there, the police hadn’t been back to harass them since the raid, which had ended in a single arrest. But it is only a matter of time until that changes now that one more major hurdle has been overcome in the effort to transform

West Oakland into a developers paradise.

Less than a week afterwards, a small group of UC Berkeley students were verbally confronted at St. Andrews



SAN PABLO CORRIDOR

Plaza, while doing research to help envision the development of the park. Since 2011, students from UC Berkeley have been enlisted to help redesign the San Pablo corridor for the West Oakland Specific Plan. Believing themselves to be helping the community, these urban design majors began working with students from McClymonds High School in order to gain legitimacy for the upcoming gentrification and displacement. Now that all the parks and encampments along San Pablo are being liquidated, groups of UC Berkeley students and staff are wandering around with clipboards and collectively envisioning how they will alter the urban landscape. The individual plans for each park or “opportunity site” will be drafted through these on-the-ground inspections and visioning sessions. The input from local teenagers is only meant to mask the fact that UC Berkeley’s Center for Cities and Schools is the driving force behind the redesign of San Pablo. With its well documented history of nuclear research, destruction of sacred indigenous sites, and the stifling of dissent, UC Berkeley is not to be trusted to do anything, especially the development of West Oakland.

On the morning of September 2nd, 2014, seven OPD officers surrounded Bishop Plaza, the small park besides the food stamp office on San Pablo and 21st. The cops quickly pushed all of the majority black homeless people out of the plaza, allowing them only a brief amount of time to gather their belongings. Soon after, a Public Works Agency crew arrived and began disposing of everything left behind in the plaza. This white-clad cleaning crew, guarded by seven armed police officers, did not so much as look as the people they were displacing. By the afternoon of the 2nd, the entire park had been cleansed and wrapped in yellow police tape. An OPD officer guarded the park for the next several days, preventing anyone from resettling in the park.

The notice posted on the walls of the plaza reads as follows: **THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT HAS DEEMED THIS SITE UNINHABITABLE AND ALL PERSONS ARE DIRECTED TO VACATE THIS SITE AND REMOVE ANY PERSONAL BELONGINGS. PUBLIC WORKS AGENCY WILL BE OUT TO CLEAN THIS SITE ON FRIDAY, 9/5/14...**

As you will notice, the date for the eviction is three days after the actual eviction took place. This happened without any protest from the public, as few knew it was happening. In the days that followed, several of the inhabitants of Bishop Plaza set up their tents and shacks in the nearby area. On Friday the 5th, the Public Works Agency erected a chain link fence around the entire plaza.

Around the same time, a homeless camp that had been set up between the I-980 freeway and the BART tracks just north of the 19th St Station was cleared out. All the trees and bushes that provided those living there with some semblance of shelter were razed, and the graffiti that had greeted commuters on BART for years was erased.

While many resent the crime associated with these places, and we certainly do not find it desirable, the displacement and homeless people in plazas and the gentrification of neighborhood will not solve these problems. Instead, they will simply be pushed elsewhere, where it does not interfere with the lifestyle of the wealthy- which is how it ended up at places like St. Andrews in the first place. This entire process is happening throughout Northern California, as more and more people are being pushed into Antioch and Stockton. The eviction of these plazas will not be isolated to select corners either. It will affect every resident struggling to pay their rent or their mortgage as well, and those that aren’t struggling yet soon will. We must support each other against the forces of capitalist development, because it will not solve our problems. We can only do that ourselves.



▶ ACTION AND REPRESSION ◀ REPORTS FROM THE BAY AREA

'Right Sector' from Ukraine Makes Visit to San Francisco: According to anti-fascists in the bay area, Borislav Bereza, of the group, 'Right Sector,' one of the neo-Nazi groups that spearheaded the uprising in the Ukraine in recent months, spoke at an Orthodox church in Downtown SF. Local antifas believe that Right Sector could be attempting to fundraise and to set up local chapters. About 20 people attended and the event was disrupted briefly by a protester.

Vanguard Properties Stop Ellis Act Eviction: Eviction Free San Francisco announced the rescinding of Benito Santiago's Ellis Act Eviction, as well as the evictions of other tenants at 149-151 Duboce. The tenants in the four units there received their Ellis Act eviction notice on December 20, 2013, by Pineapple Boy LLC. As Benito stated, "When I received the Ellis Act notice, I thought we had to be out immediately. I couldn't fathom it. I've been living there for 37 years, and have nowhere else to go. It was then that I realized, all that I could do, was fight back to stay in my home. This is my life." Benito has become a key member of the anti-eviction movement in the bay area. We are happy to hear that this campaign has been successful. It used a variety of tactics including marches, brief occupations of offices, as well as other people breaking windows of offices.

Urban Shield Comes to Oakland: Urban Shield, the annual police technology and training seminar that many decried as part and parcel to the militarization of domestic policing agencies took place during the weekend of September 5th, amid protests which blocked streets in front of the conference. Someone also leaked the various places in which local police would be training and in what scenarios. Buckling under fears of future protests and blowback from the Ferguson rebellion, Oakland Mayor Jean Quan also announced that next year the Urban Shield conference will not take place in Oakland. Wherever it ends up next year,

hopefully people will shut it down.

Activists Chain Themselves to Tracks to Stop Bakken Crude: Several people in Richmond stopped crude by rail of Bakken oil for several hours while risking arrest. The action comes as various groups are also suing Kinder-Morgan for transporting fuel via "bomb trains," which have exploded across North America on tracks. Alex Soto who took part in the protest stated: "People in Richmond are angry that the air district, which is supposed to protect us, instead has put our community at catastrophic risk along with all the up-rail communities."



Fast Food Workers Arrested After Blocking Streets: Burger King workers were arrested after refusing to heed police orders as over 100 people blocked downtown Oakland Streets. Fast food workers were demanding \$15 an hour and the right to form unions.

MUNI Fares Increase Against by \$0.25: Bus fares in San Francisco again climbed by another quarter. This hike comes after wildcat actions by bus drivers in the city. In the past, fare increases have been met by attempts to organize fare strikes. As one rider told the press: "F*** them. I'm on a low income. I'm stretched at \$2 already." Now is the perfect time for the struggles of riders and drivers to come together and fight common enemies.

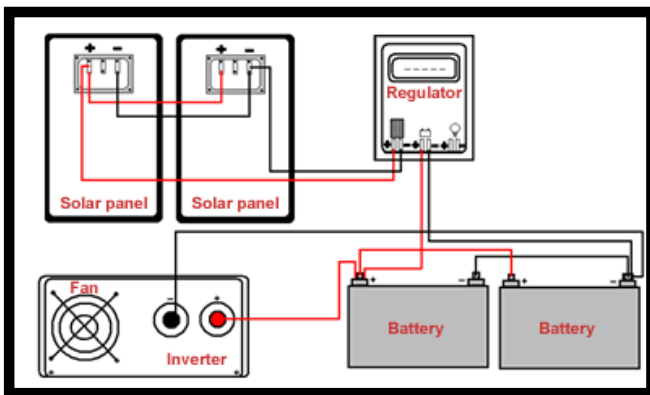
Oakland Ferguson Benefit Raises Funds for Rebels: In Oakland, supporters of the Ferguson rebellion gathered in North Oakland to raise funds for people that have been arrested in clashes with the police after the murder of Mike Brown. Gerald Smith, former member of the Black Panther Party spoke, along with someone that had just returned from Ferguson to participate in ongoing protests. Jacob Crawford from WeCopwatch was also skyped and they put a Ferguson resident on the phone who talked with people at length and took several questions.

SQUATTING IN OAKLAND

--- A PRIMER ---

A squat is a house or building that has been removed from the market. It is free housing expropriated from either a landlord, a real estate company, or a bank. In a squat, no one pays a mortgage or rent and lives for free. There are still costs to living in a squat however. Money is needed to purchase things like locks, windows, doors, tools, and the other equipment needed to turn a neglected building into a liveable space. Beyond this, water and electricity are hard to come by in this capitalist world, unless of course they are bought from PG&E or EBMUD.

Solar panels connected to boat batteries can provide enough electricity to light a building and power a



small refrigerator or stove, but the costs of panels or often quite high. It is illegal to power your house with solar panels in California unless you hook them up to the main electrical grid and buy back your own electricity at a discount. Generating your own electricity is now a revolutionary act, given that the capitalists all want us to be dependent on them. Water is another matter, however.

In the current state of drought, collecting rain water for purification is not a viable option. A water main can be easily turned on by lifting the small concrete slab over the meter and turning the lever 90 degrees clockwise, but this resource will not last very long. EBMUD will notice the water usage and send an employee



to install a padlock on the main, along with a notice that any further tampering will result in a \$150 fine. Given this situation, it is best to fill as many jugs of water as possible before they can lock the valve. The other option is to turn on the water main, pour cement over the meter, and then cement the cover over the hole. But this will buy only so much time, at most a month, and eventually EBMUD will win. Without water a house is extremely uncomfortable to live in and as such, should be purchased if the squat is to last any significant amount of time.

In Oakland, most squats are houses or buildings that are between owners. Usually they are in such terrible conditions that no one wants to buy them. Many squats are foreclosures that are in the process of being sold off by a bank to a speculator or private owner. These are the most precarious squats to inhabit, especially if they are in gentrifying areas where property values are rising. A squat can only



last as long as people are able to defend it from the capitalists and law enforcement, or as long as they are able to exploit legal loopholes.

If you receive a piece of mail at a squat and have the utilities in your name, you are legally a tenant and cannot be evicted by the OPD. Only the Alameda County Sheriff can evict you, and it takes a minimum of a month for a legal eviction process to occur, and even then an eviction does not happen immediately. If you are facing an eviction, it is best to enlist the help of the neighborhood and your entire network of friends in order to hold onto it as long as possible.

If a house or building is taken and there is no threat of eviction, the first step is to make it comfortable for the residents. The primary purpose of a squat is to create free housing where people can have more time to live their lives. But this free time is a privilege and luxury in this capital

ist world, usually reserved for the rich and well-to-do. Few poor people are allowed to experience it, and it is common for people who have lived in precarity and poverty to settle down and get comfortable. This is not something inherently bad, as everyone deserves to live a free life, but this tendency can lead to the degeneration of a squat.

A house or building filled with free apartments is a resource that is highly coveted in the East Bay at this moment, and if a squat appears in an impoverished neighborhood, people outside the squat network will want it. Resentment will grow if the inhabitants of a squat appear to only care about themselves and their own betterment while ignoring those around them. As soon as a squat is secured and established, the inhabitants should begin offering something substantial to those around them. The best resource to give to people in this climate is housing. As soon as the inhabitants of a squat have enough free time, they should open up another house and teach others the skills they have acquired. In this way, the practice of squatting will spread rather than be confined to a select minority.

There have been dozens of squats in Oakland that were connected to radical organizing in some manner or other. Very few have been open centers of organizing, and even fewer were open to the surrounding neighborhood. There have even been a few squats that the neighborhood wanted nothing to do with. Some squats tried to have open parties and shows, but inevitably these events attracted insular networks of people not from the immediate area. The vast majority of all squats in Oakland, not just political ones, are created simply for housing. Those that try to serve a dual purpose, creating both housing and a social hub, face a difficult challenge. Unless the residents happen to be from the neighborhood, any social hub they build will attract outsiders who most likely do not understand the local social geography. As was mentioned above, resentment will inevitably arise from such an imbalance. Rather than fall into this conundrum, it is best to consult the neighborhood before building anything similar to a social hub.

This is all basic advice informed by the last two years in the Oakland political squatting movement. We would like to see the movement expand, for every squatter to have a political consciousness, and for the pitfalls and problems encountered by certain squats to never be repeated. Affordable housing is becoming more scarce each day, just as food prices are set to rise because of the drought. We must put all of our energy into securing autonomy for ourselves and those around us. Housing is the most obvious, and important, place to really begin.



UPCOMING EVENTS

9/10

Disrupt Inequality, Lift Up SF: Protest tech conference in San Francisco and an end to displacement. Tenants and workers join together to demand tech companies do more to fix the housing crisis and the city's rampant inequality. Take the opportunity to interrupt this spectacle of tech-driven gentrification. 5:00pm at Pier 48

9/12

FTP March: Take the streets against police violence, in solidarity with Ferguson. The time has come to draw a line in the sand against the police. After the murder of Jacquerey Calhoun in Oakland last month, Mike Brown in Missouri, and countless others, it is time to show them it will no longer be tolerated. 6:00pm at 14th & Broadway

9/13

Fight Back Concert & Event: Push back against police and business repression in Berkeley. With new students in town, and the acceleration of gentrification all across the region, we must take every step to oppose these forces. 1:00pm at People's Park.

9/14

Solidarity Cafe: Help Marsha, mother of two, get housing with a Sunday brunch. Marsha is currently homeless, while trying to care for two young boys, and is asking the community for a helping hand. Menu will include delicious vegan, gluten-free, and halal options. 10:00am at The Omni, 4799 Shattuck Ave.

9/16

Court Support: Support two people who were arrested for their involvement in defending the Albany Bulb. The Albany Bulb was called home by many over the last several years, and was recently cleared out by the police. The first defendant's hearing is at 9:00am, the second is at 2:00pm. Wiley Manuel Courthouse, Department 107.