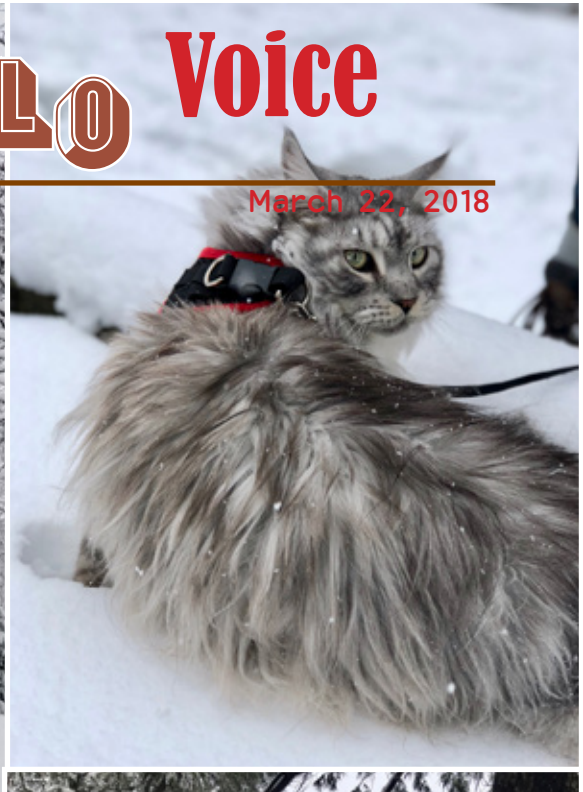
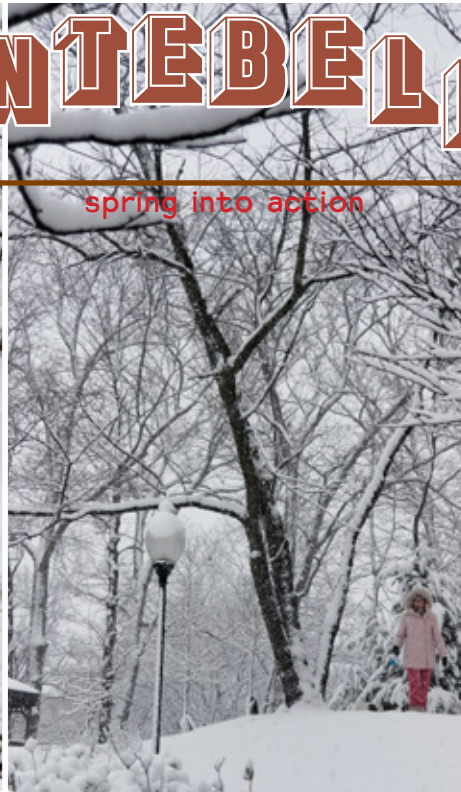


# The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

spring into action

March 22, 2018



## Mekonnen Wega is no longer Montebello's bus driver

By *Mikhailina Karina*

On March 13, Mekonnen Wega, the smiling face behind the wheel of our shuttle bus, was apparently relieved of his Montebello duties by the bus company that provides the service to Montebello. According to dozens of bus riders, Mekonnen was universally beloved for his friendly demeanor (in spite of the 5:30 a.m. first pick-up) and careful driving on busy roads.

The circumstances about this change are not clear and several regular bus riders organized a petition protesting Mekonnen's reported dismissal. Copies of the petition were left on the tables in all four lobbies; 370 residents signed the petitions that were mailed to Arm Transportation, the contractor that employed Mekonnen. When reached by phone by a Montebello resident, a company representative, without providing any specifics, confirmed that Mekonnen would not be driving for Montebello again.

Montebello's General Manager, George Gardner, emailed *The Voice* the following statement:

"There seems to be considerable misinformation about the status of Mekonnen Wega's employment status. We are advised by his employer that due to his imminent departure from his service at Montebello, while he returned to his home country, his employer elected to assign him to work at the company's maintenance facility to enable the assignment to MB of the driver who is replacing him. To the best of my knowledge, Mekonnen remains employed with his employer. Having said that, I would note that it is up to the bus contractor to make the call on who he

assigns to us and as long as the new individual performs up to management's expectations, it would be inappropriate and unethical for us to get involved in what is clearly the contractor's decision from a personnel management standpoint. We will notify the bus company

that Mekonnen was very popular with our riders and we would welcome him back if he should again be assigned driving duties. I appreciate the opportunity to provide clarification of this situation."

To help Mekonnen find another job in the future, he will have 32 glowing references from his grateful Montebello passengers. 🙏



Photo by *Kim Santos*

*The Montebello Voice wants to hear from you: musings, travels, announcements, photos, book reviews, commentary, memoirs, essays, analysis, poems, suggestions, club news, recipes, and free ads*

*A twice-monthly publication for the residents, by the residents*

## Stuffed animal drive

By *Sophie and Sarah Myers*

We are collecting new or gently loved stuffed animals of all sizes for Gleaning For The World's Teddy Bear Brigade. <https://gftw.org/current-projects/teddybearbrigade/>

Gleaning for the World is a charity based in Concord, Va. It was rated the number one most efficient large U.S. charity by *Forbes*. They donate stuffed animals to children (and adults) who are traumatized by disaster or illness nationally and internationally. Most charities do not accept gently used stuffed toys, but Gleaning has volunteers who wash them and make sure they find a new loving family.

If you are ready to part with gently loved stuffed animals in your home, please drop them off at our unit (2-615) through Sunday evening, March 25. We will be driving to Concord over Easter Break and dropping them off at their headquarters.

If you need assistance, send us an e-mail at [montebello\\_cycles@icloud.com](mailto:montebello_cycles@icloud.com), and we'll pick them up from your unit. Our goal is to fill our van with stuffed animals. Thanks! 🙏

**The MONTEBELLO Voice**  
 an independent gazette  
 Alexandria, Virginia

*This publication accepts no funding or oversight from advertisers, residents, or the Montebello Condominium Unit Owners Association. All opinions are encouraged and reflect the diversity of views in the community. All articles and photographs come from Montebello residents. To receive or contribute to this email-only gazette, contact [montebellovoice@cox.net](mailto:montebellovoice@cox.net) or visit on the web at [www.montebellovoice.com](http://www.montebellovoice.com).*

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## The uncertain future of history

By Donald and Karen Barnes

With today's Internet, people have access to the contents of thousands of libraries around the world. Never has so much data been available to so many people, so easily, at so little cost. Some people have suggested that this unprecedented access to so much digital information will lead inexorably to the elevation of True Truth and the elimination of Fake Truth. However, all that glitters at the dawning of this golden age may not be what it appears to be.

At a recent meeting at George Washington University's Elliot School of International Affairs, Dr. Glenn Tiffert, Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution, presented data showing that Chinese academic research papers published in high-end Chinese journals in the period of 1954-58 are not accurately captured and presented in today's digital versions of those journals. He went on to show that the gaps in the coverage are not random, but are the result of deliberate attempts to erase opinions that were critical of the Chinese Communist Party at that time. By using such surreptitiously expunged sources, the unwitting researcher of today (Chinese and foreign) can get the impression that the experts at that time were more uniformly Party-friendly than was actually the case. These erasures in the record have been done under the radar, unbeknownst to the authors or to the broader user community.

Therefore, to present this truncated and edited digital version of history as being the whole history is a deliberate misrepresentation of history, one that seeks to limit and de-legitimize discordant views today.

As more research sources go digital and as editing technology progresses, this sort of intentional manipulation of

digital history is more easily done and increasingly difficult to detect.

Evidence of the perniciousness of this manipulating of the historical record is provided by the 2017 example of Cambridge University Press, which was on its way to eliminating a subset of articles from its journals at the behest of the Chinese government because the articles were critical of China (the Party). Cambridge University Press only reversed its

*As a result of a change of administrations, many agencies in Washington have systematically eliminated, reduced, and suppressed public access to information about climate change research. These changes were instituted by just a few clicks of a mouse, rather than by burning thousands of books and magazines, as might have been the case generations ago.*

position after the academic community outside of China became aware of the situation and raised a ruckus. Also, a few weeks ago in late February, Apple acceded to Chinese demands that the tech giant store its Chinese clients' data on servers in China. Critics warn that this arrangement could somehow give Chinese authorities access to the data for nefarious purposes, including tampering with the data.

To test that point, Dr. Tiffert explored the online archives of the mainline Chinese newspaper, *China Daily*, that are available from two different services: one, whose servers are in China, and the other, whose servers are outside of China. Searches of the two separate archives stored by the two different services generated different content and numbers of articles. This is disquieting since these services are market-driven, and the owners might accede to Chinese government demands without notifying authors or users of changes or limitations imposed by those services.

But why should ordinary Americans, like readers of this gazette, care about such attempts in China to re-write his-

tory? The answer is because related brazen behavior is on-going here in the United States. Specifically, during my 20+ year career as a scientist at the EPA [Donald], a considerable amount of research and analysis was done to document and characterize the changes that some have labeled "climate change." Nearly all of this information was made freely available on the Internet for researchers and ordinary citizens around the world.

However, as a result of a change of administrations, many agencies in Washington have systematically eliminated, reduced, and suppressed public access to information about climate change research. These changes were instituted by just a few clicks

of a mouse, rather than by burning thousands of books and magazines, as might have been the case generations ago.

So as you contemplate the future and think about learning from the past, remember that these days the future of history is uncertain, and history can be what you make it. 📖



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# Nowruz, the Persian New Year, celebrates spring

By Azita Mashayekhi

*Spring Equinox, March 20, 2018, 12:15 p.m. and 28 seconds EST*

International Nowruz (pronounced no-rooz) Day was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/64/253 of 2010, at the initiative of several countries that share this holiday (Afghanistan, Albania, Azerbaijan, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan).

Just before the transition to the new year, families typically gather around the “haft-seen” and wait for the exact moment of the Spring Equinox.

As someone raised in Iran, the idea of “spring cleaning” is the basis of a national holiday dating back millennia. Every year, millions of Iranians – both at home and abroad, from various religions – celebrate the Persian New Year, or Nowruz, to mark the transition from winter to spring, and to celebrate the beauty of a new season of life.

In the days leading up to the actual day, families also set aside a space for a “haft-seen,” or a collection of items starting with the Persian letter ‘S,’ each of which has a symbolic meaning. While many add their own variations to the haft-seen, there are seven things that are always included:

🌀 **Sabzeh** Some kind of sprout or grass that will continue to grow in the weeks leading up to the holiday, for rebirth and renewal

🌀 **Senjed** Dried fruit, ideally a sweet fruit from a lotus tree, for love

🌀 **Sib** Apples, for beauty and health

🌀 **Seer** Garlic, for medicine

🌀 **Samanu** A brown wheat pudding, for wealth and fertility

🌀 **Serkeh** Vinegar, for the patience and wisdom

🌀 **Sekkeh** Gold coins for prosperity

🌀 **Sumac** A Persian spice made from crushed sour red berries, for the sunrise of a new day

The additional items of the “haft-seen” vary by family, and make each altar personal and unique. While these

seven items are the foundation of a haft-seen, the tradition has evolved to the point where several other symbolic objects are often included:

🌀 Colored eggs, for fertility

🌀 Candles, symbolizing divine light

🌀 Goldfish, for new life

🌀 A mirror, to reflect the light of wisdom and creation

🌀 Rosewater, to purify and sweeten

🌀 An orange floating in a bowl of water, to represent the earth floating in the space

🌀 Some traditional confectioneries

🌀 A book of poetry by Hafiz, the 14th-century Iranian poet or the Koran, holy book of Islam, to represent spirituality

Last, but not least, Nowruz is not fully experienced without the fragrance of hyacinths at the table.

Once the day of Nowruz arrives, it kicks off a 13-day celebration of dinners, family visits, and reflections on the year ahead. On the 13th day you take the sabzeh that’s been growing in the haft-seen to whatever natural body of running water you can find and let it float away, to release the old and usher in the New Year. 🍷



*Photos by Azita Mashayekhi*

# The return of the Community Center Master Plan

By *Mikhailina Karina*

After more than four years of hibernation, the Community Center Master Plan has sprung back to life.

The original proposal was submitted by Kerns Group Architects in December 2013 to the then-General Manager Manju Gulati and included proposals for the center's interior and exterior renovations. So far, the only accomplishment is the fitness center, which opened two years ago.

Next on the docket is the center's interior spaces: association offices, café, community rooms, hair salon, convenience store, and recreation areas.

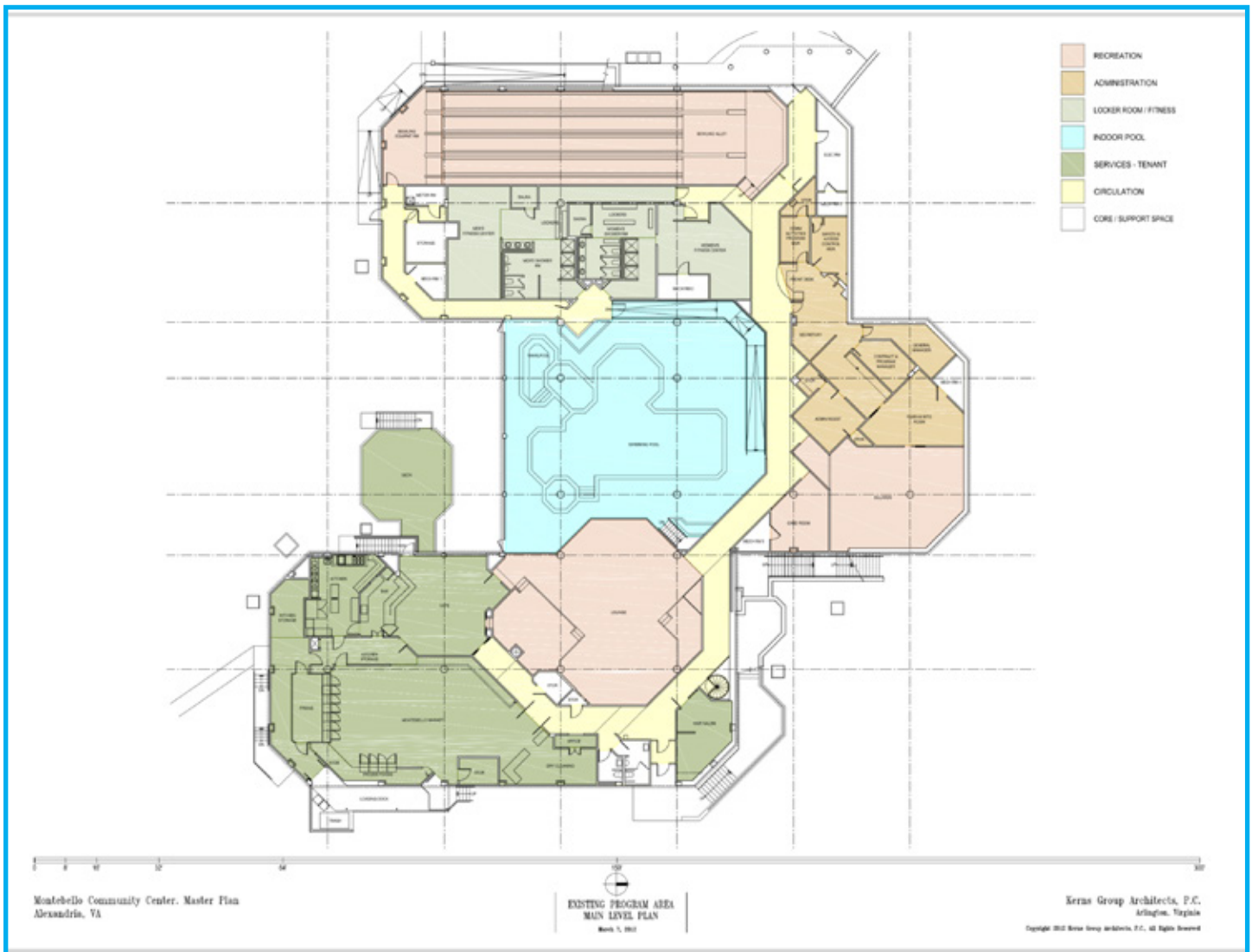
Last month the board of directors appointed an ad hoc committee to look at Kerns' 2013 proposal and to solicit residents' feedback through two 30-second surveys, open committee meetings, and a special Cup of Joe.

Working on a tight time line, the board plans to review draft design guidelines at an April 15 town hall meeting and approve the final design guidelines at its regular meeting two days later.

Last Saturday, about 80 people attended the Cup of Joe that featured behind-the-scenes tours of staff offices and displays of the 2013 proposals.

Jon Kandel presented a photography slide show of the current state of the center's spaces (pages 7-11). Since most residents did not get to see it, he shared the images with *The Voice*.

Some of the upper-level space re-configuration proposals include improving office space for association staff, a larger conference room, using the space in front of locker rooms for billiards, moving the salon and adding a spa, remodeling and expanding the kitchen, and expanding the café. 🏠



*The Community Center main level (as it is today) schematic from the 2013 plan*



*The proposed reconfiguration of the Community Center main level from the 2013 plan*

## County approves major developments to Richmond Highway

According to the Fairfax County website, “on March 20 the Board of Supervisors approved a sweeping new land-use plan that supports walking, biking and a bus rapid transit system on Richmond Highway.

Called [Embark Richmond Highway](#),

the update to the 7.5-mile corridor’s land-use plan is the first step needed to build a future bus rapid transit, or BRT, system. The future bus rapid transit system will run primarily in the median from the Huntington Metro Station to Fort

Belvoir. Eventually it will extend to the county border at the Occoquan River. Buses are expected to run every six to 10 minutes between the nine BRT stations planned along the corridor.

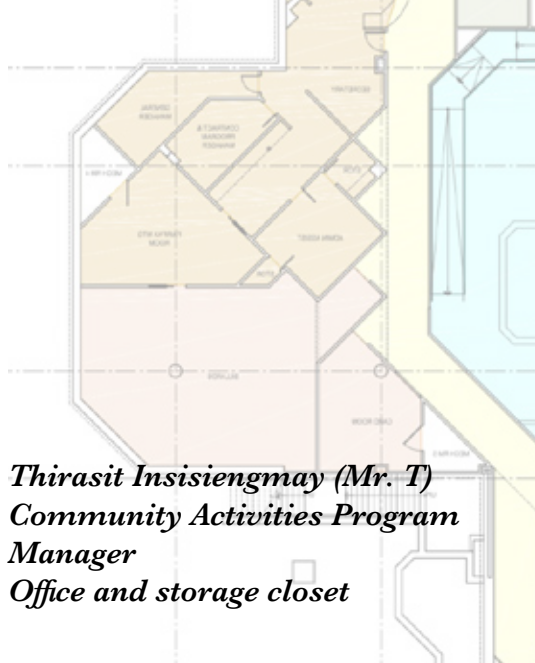
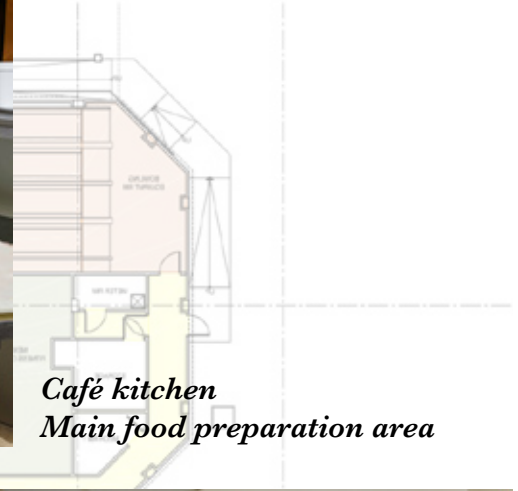
The revised land-use plan also supports two future Metro stations along the highway, extending the rail system’s Yellow Line to Hybla Valley.”

For more details about the proposal, click on the [Embark Richmond Highway](#) link. 📄

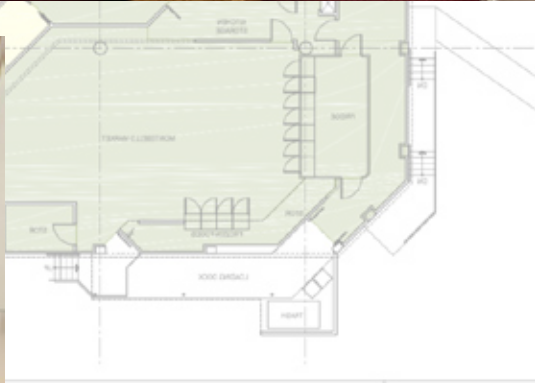




Café kitchen  
Main food preparation area



Thirasit Insisiengmay (Mr. T)  
Community Activities Program  
Manager  
Office and storage closet



Earl Roberts  
Safety and Access Control manager  
Office and key storage

*Luis Vasquez  
Resident Coordinator  
Desk and new resident initiation  
space*



*Stephanie Sheffield  
Office Manager  
Office and storage area*

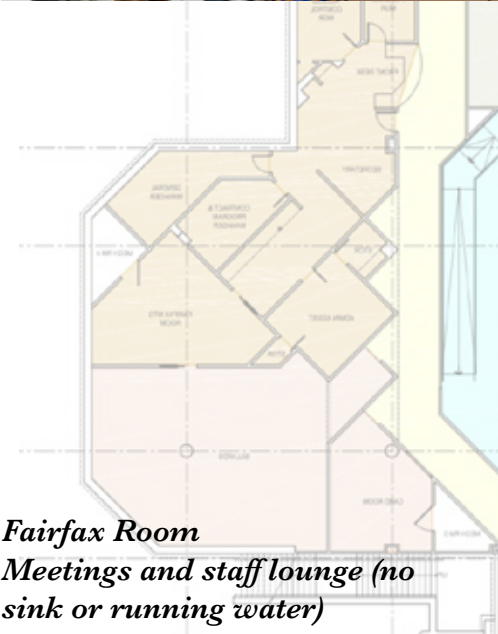
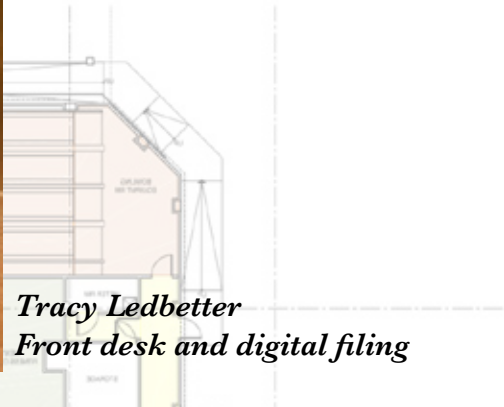
*Theresa Travatello  
Communications and Special  
Events Coordinator  
Alcove space and communal  
copier*



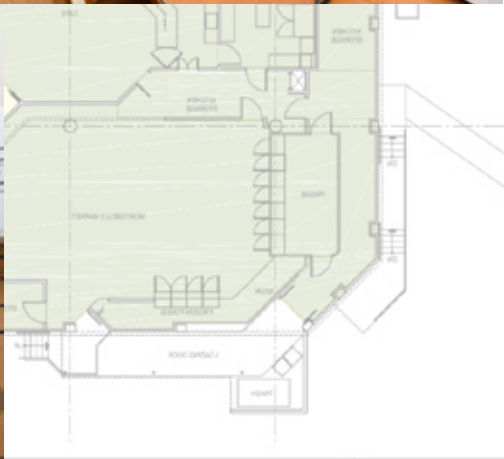




Tracy Ledbetter  
Front desk and digital filing



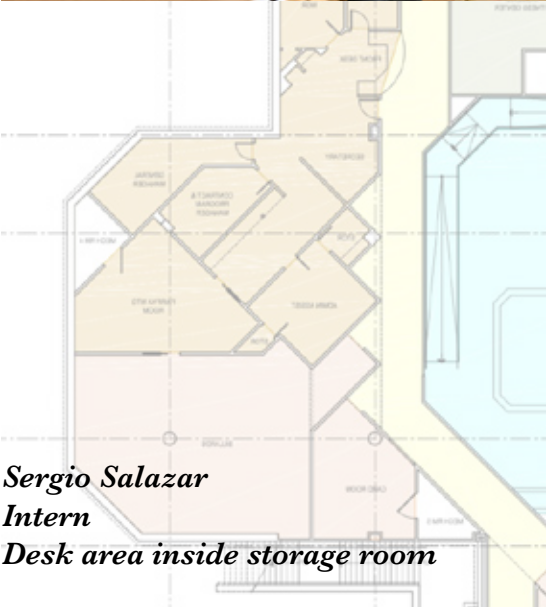
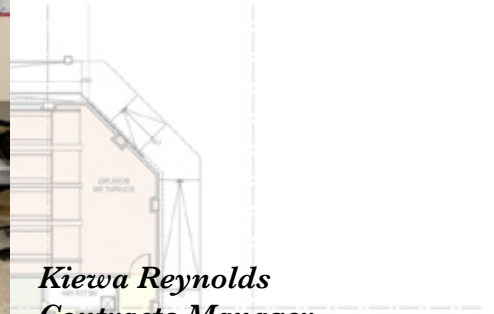
Fairfax Room  
Meetings and staff lounge (no sink or running water)



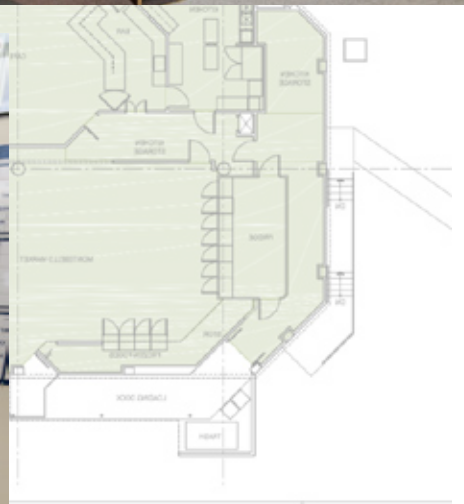
Storage room next to space in front of locker rooms, also used for staff offices



*Kiewa Reynolds  
Contracts Manager  
Desk area inside storage room*



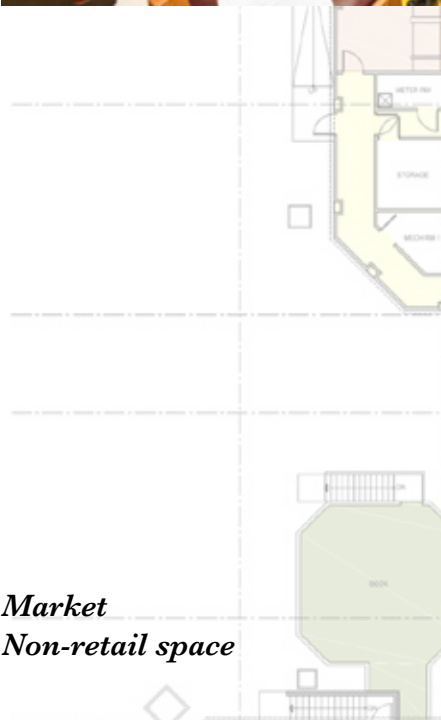
*Sergio Salazar  
Intern  
Desk area inside storage room*



*Paul Avong  
Chief Engineer  
Office with tool storage*



Peter Ng  
Facilities Program Manager  
Office with no meeting space



Market  
Non-retail space



Lower level space

# WE'LL ALWAYS HAVE PARIS. SORTA.



By *Mikhailina Karina*

**W**hat is your dream home? Take a few moments to think of a place, either real or imagined, where you felt truly at home. Was it an urban townhouse or a country villa? Was it minimalist and modern with open spaces or cozy traditional with overstuffed furniture? Secluded and serene or full of people and hustle & bustle?

The way we decorate our homes reflects our personalities, aspirations, and of course, budgets. Have you ever walked into the same Montebello model and noticed how different people interpreted the same space? I live in a G model and love seeing how my neighbors with an identical layout arrange living room furniture, paint walls, and create office nooks. It seems that the only limitation is one's creativity. And budget.

One of my home fantasies is an old Parisian apartment. I've never actually been inside an old Parisian apartment, but have imagined them from walking around Parisian neighborhoods, watching movies, and looking at photos. My perfect apartment has 10-foot ceilings, tall vertical windows that overlook quiet streets and rooftops, hardwood



*Internet photographs of dreamy Parisian apartments that inspired our ceiling project*

floors, contemporary colorful furniture, a wall of books, a modern kitchen, and eclectic artwork. Our Montebello home satisfies many of these requirements with Ikea furniture and kitchen, a wall of books, and walls filled with art. But there is one architectural element that clinches the Parisian fantasy for me: ornate plasterwork on the walls and ceiling. My perfect apartment is a marriage of 19<sup>th</sup> century grandeur with 21<sup>st</sup> century simplicity. From what I've seen in numerous photos, these seem-

ingly opposite aesthetics are actually complementary. Unfortunately, our plain 8-foot walls and dingy popcorn ceiling were ruining my decorating dreams – until I found an inexpensive way to bring a touch of Paris to Montebello with some inexpensive cosmetic changes.

I've always hated popcorn ceiling. While I understand why builders used it for fast coverage over rough concrete, the texture of this large swath of space reminded me of millions of little



## My Parisian fantasy at Montebello

zits sprouting above me. Not a pretty visual. Several of my neighbors have preemptively removed popcorn ceiling before moving in and it's made a huge difference in the home's elegance. We removed the popcorn from the kitchen during a renovation and quickly learned why it would be a terrible idea for the rest of the unit – the scraping, the dust, the smoothing, and the painting were not trivial projects.

So I kept searching for products to cover up the popcorn and came upon Decorative Ceiling Tiles that sold Styrofoam tiles that attached directly to popcorn ceiling. It sounded almost too good to be true, so for \$11 I ordered three sample tiles. These 20x20 inch tiles looked like pretty tops of take-out boxes, but they were practically weightless, and the website said they could be painted. Whenever I showed them to my friends, they humored me with gentle support (while probably thinking I was nuts to be sticking takeout boxes to the ceiling). Yet I persisted and kept dreaming. My husband, accustomed to my cockamamie ideas that start purely in my head but usually work out in real life, supported this quest and cautiously agreed to transform '80s era popcorn ceiling into Parisian chic. It helps that he is French and I was appealing to his innate sense of style and cultural pride.

In addition to covering the popcorn,

I wanted to add crown moulding to our bare walls. I've always liked how it accented the room with a simple frame. But I didn't want a simple frame – I was going 19<sup>th</sup> century with elaborate plasterwork. After scrolling through hundreds of crown moulding models on Home Depot's website, I settled on Elena Millwork's Attica design with an elegant pattern. Because it's made of lightweight polyurethane, this crown moulding could be attached with nail glue. Instantly, the rooms became more polished with the addition of a pretty border.

I chose the Virginian pattern because I like the clean lines with inward curving corners. I like how the pattern gives just a hint of texture and volume without looking busy. This simple design creates a counterbalance to the intricate crown moulding motif. When I opened the box of 170 tiles, I was pleased to find them already painted an ultra-white satin, which made them resemble plaster, not takeout boxes. With generous dollops of water-based ceiling adhesive, they easily grabbed onto the popcorn surface. While one person spread the adhesive onto the tile, another person on a step ladder did the attaching. Our plan was to cover living room, dining room, and the two hallways. We hired a handyman who was experienced in crown mouldings and had the necessary tools and skills to figure out the tiling.

Once the first tiles went up, I immediately noticed how much lighter the room became by reflecting the natural light from the window. It was a sharp contrast to the darker popcorn side that seemed to suck in the light and made the room gloomier. Because of the tiles' gently reflective surface, the embossed feature creates lighter and darker patterns. Walking into our home immediately draws the eye upward to the unexpected ceiling feature, the rooms' fifth wall, that adds an unexpected finishing touch.

Has my dream of living in a Parisian apartment finally come true? Sorta. Truth be told, I'd rather not live in Paris, but in a smaller and quieter French city, such as Avignon or Toulouse. But at this point, it's all about optical delusions, *mes amis*.

You're welcome to come over to see how the project turned out. Just email me at *The Voice*. If you know where I live, knock on the door at a decent hour. 🍷

### PROJECT DETAILS AND SUPPLIES

- ☞ Ekena Millwork 3-5/8 x 3-7/8 x 94-1/2 in. polyurethane Attica crown moulding ordered online from Home Depot; matching corners are available only at Lowe's
  - ☞ Decorative Ceiling Tiles [www.decorativeceilingtiles.net](http://www.decorativeceilingtiles.net)
  - ☞ AcrylPro Ceramic Tile Adhesive
  - ☞ Liquid nails
  - ☞ Caulking gun with joint compound
  - ☞ Compound miter saw
  - ☞ Utility knife
  - ☞ Putty knife
- Project difficulty: intermediate



## CALL FOR ENTRIES

Group exhibition in the Café

May 12 – June 29, 2018

**!DANCE!**

## MOVEMENT EXPRESSED IN ART

Art in Montebello (AiM) invites residents to submit images for a summer café exhibition on the theme DANCE! Interpret dance broadly: ballroom, ballet, folk, jazzercise, costumes, shoes, venues, abstracts, and anything else that suggests expressive movement with rhythm, athleticism, or music. Both experienced exhibitors **AND "newbies"** are encouraged! Any medium is acceptable (painting, photography, fiber, metal, glass, ceramic, jewelry, or wood) provided it can be hung safely on the cafe wall using the hanging system there.

Submission deadline is April 30, 2018. Send jpegs of 1 to 3 images you would like us to consider to this email address: [jeannetift@gmail.com](mailto:jeannetift@gmail.com). Attach the jpegs to your email message. **Include this information in your message: full name, telephone number, building/unit number, title(s) of your work(s), medium, approximate exhibition size.**

Selection criteria will include quality of technique and finish, as well as suitability of subject for the café audience. The quantity and size of works accepted depends on how many submissions we receive.

Layout meeting will be scheduled in the café at 8:30 a.m. on May 5<sup>th</sup>, when final selections and arrangement are collaboratively decided. Curators will inform you before then of your work that they would like in the show so that you'll have time to finish preparation, framing, etc. and bring exhibition-ready works to the layout meeting.

**Curators:** Jeanne Tiftt [jeannetift@gmail.com](mailto:jeannetift@gmail.com) or 703-342-7025

Nancy Vogt [jan12354@aol.com](mailto:jan12354@aol.com) or 202-696-0350

**NOTE:** Exhibits are hung on the Saturday morning usually 8:00 am to 10:30 a.m. Opening receptions for each exhibit are usually that Saturday afternoon from 4 to 6 p.m. Takedown is usually the Friday after 9 p.m. when the café stops serving, or, early Saturday before 8:00am. Every exhibitor is expected to help with this!

**If you have questions regarding the proposal submission process, you may contact AiM Co-Chairs Harriet Duval (phone: 703-329-1342; [hazidugal@gmail.com](mailto:hazidugal@gmail.com)) or Dian McDonald (phone: 703-922-2742; [dianjanelle@yahoo.com](mailto:dianjanelle@yahoo.com))**

# st. patrick's celebration



# st. patrick's celebration







*A remembrance of astronaut Sally Ride, featuring Mary Ann Jung, actress and Smithsonian scholar. This Montebello Speaker Series presentation was sponsored by the Activities Committee.*

*Photo by Dian McDonald*



*Photos by Mary Tjeedsma*

## YOGA CAN BE FUN

HATHA YOGA FOR ALL LEVELS  
TUESDAY EVENINGS @ 7 PM ~ PARTY ROOM 1



- ❖ SMILE
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**Chess Game Night with Chess Club**

*All Levels & All Ages!  
All Welcome!  
Beginners to Grandmasters!  
Play! Share! Learn! Practice!*

**4<sup>th</sup> Thursday, Each Month  
(generally\*)  
C.C. Card Room  
7:00pm to 9:30pm (latest)**

Bring your own Chess Set if you like! – And, if you're brand new to Chess, but you'd like to check out our Chess Club while playing a relatively "quiet" or "cerebral" game that *doesn't* "compete" with the ancient game of Chess from a noise perspective, you may bring such a game and hang out with us! (Examples of Games that partner well with Chess: Scrabble, Checkers, Othello, etc.)

Contact Lisa J. Stedge at [lisa@stedge.com](mailto:lisa@stedge.com) and/or Nick Nickerson at [fnixson@gmail.com](mailto:fnixson@gmail.com) for more information.  
\*(e.g., most holidays and holiday periods are excluded.)

Make your move and stop by to see a joust!  
The Queen doesn't even mind tardiness!

The Montebello Voice

17

March 22, 2018

## coming attractions

**Dream Landscapes**  
**Real People**

New work by  
Jeanne Tift  
Montebello Cafe  
February 24-April 6, 2018

opening reception February 24, 4pm-6pm  
cash bar & nibbles

**AiM**

**Musical Hoedown**

Live  
Music by  
Eddie Pocky  
& Brint  
Hannay

**Saturday, March 24**  
**7 to 10 PM**  
**Community Center**

Country-Themed Menu  
for \$15

Call for Reservations  
703-329-4868

Sponsored by the Activities Committee

**Wednesday, MARCH 28, 2018**  
**Montebello CLASSIC MOVIE NIGHT**  
*On the Big Screen in the Community Center at 7pm*

**Romance!  
Drama!  
and even  
a little  
Music!**

Handsome Ronald,  
and beautiful  
showgirl Greer  
find each other in  
wartime England.

Nominated for  
seven Academy  
Awards, including  
best picture, best  
director, best  
actor.

With a brief introduction and back-story on this 1942 movie by Pamela Copley,  
in this, the seventh of our regular Classic Movies  
Contact [PoonGruber@aol.com](mailto:PoonGruber@aol.com) for more details.

**FREE** old-time Movie Night refreshments, popcorn, and confectionary!

**MONTEBELLO FILM SOCIETY** and **AiM**

**Invite you to our film & discussion**

**THE MONTEBELLO**

**THE REAL DIRT ON FARMER JOHN**  
THURSDAY MARCH 29 7:30 P.M. PARTY ROOM 2

**ALL THE FARMY'S A STAGE...**

The Real Dirt on Farmer John is a dramatic documentary with two parallel story lines. There's the autobiography of third-generation farmer John Peterson, and his personal transformation that unfolds once he leaves the farm to attend a liberal arts college during the societal eruptions of the 1970s. In parallel, the film also delivers insights into the plight and redemption of family farms and the people who remain devoted to the American agricultural landscape.

John Peterson is compelling and engaging as he upends the image of a Midwestern American farmer with artful imagination and spiritual courage. He is the writer and narrator of his own story.

Marsha Weiner will introduce the film and lead the post-movie discussion. (If you have children, grandchildren or other young people in your life who are interested in sustainable agriculture, they may find this film highly engaging)

**final glance**



*Photos by Dian McDonald*