



# OMVNA Newsletter

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April 2010

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NEWS

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## Speeding Down the Tracks

High-speed rail (HSR) is coming to Mountain View. You may or may not like the consequences. Following is a summary of some of the key points from

a meeting of the Mountain View City Council HSR subcommittee on April 19.

If you have sentiments regarding the possibilities, let your City Council know—they have to draft a response to the HSR folks very shortly.

First, what happens in Mountain View depends to some extent on what happens with our neighbors. If Palo Alto gets a tunnel for HSR, then it will be impossible to have an elevated system through Mountain View. If the localities are expected to chip in for HSR, then the wealthiest communities may get the most favorable deals (tunnels are the most expensive options). If Mountain View is unable to come up with the funds, we may be stuck with the least expensive and possibly most undesirable option.

Second, some of the alternatives for track locations (tunnel, trench, at-grade, elevated) have significant consequences. An at-grade track at Castro means that Castro would cross the track via an underpass, with the loss of 4-6 blocks of the business district. An elevated track at Shoreline would mean that Shoreline would be lowered to grade level with a signalized intersection with Central (no more overpass). An at-grade or elevated track at Rengstorff would mean an underpass at Rengstorff with the loss of four to six blocks of businesses along Rengstorff. An elevated track at San Antonio would mean a grade level,

*(Continued on page 2)*

## The Public Weighs In on the Prometheus Development

Council chambers were filled to capacity on March 23 as public comment opened for the controversial apartment building project on the Minton's parcel. Mayor Ronit Bryant decided to postpone Council deliberation until April 27 (after this newsletter went to press).

The crowd was evenly split between supporters and opponents of the project. Most arguments were along the lines of those debated at the Environmental Planning Commission on March 10. Supporters argued in favor of higher density and that the proximity to transit would have environmental benefits. Opponents cited issues with increased traffic, inadequate parking, and the complex not fitting in with the character of the neighborhood.

Debra Eaton Schulz spoke on behalf of the property owners, stating that faced with severe competition from big box stores, it was no longer feasible to run Minton's hardware. Schulz said that during the time that the family contemplated what to do, they were approached by several developers who wanted to purchase the property. However, the Prometheus project "allows us to own the land well into the future, which is what my dad always wanted."

Laura Lewis, speaking for residents opposed to the project, felt that granting the change in zoning deprived the city and schools of needed revenue from property tax.

"I'm not asking you to deny any of [the owner's] rights under the current law," said Lewis. "This proposal is asking you to change the law to give them special rights that would benefit one family and one developer."

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Monday, May 17 May Mixer at Savvy Cellar

Join us for our May Mixer at Savvy Cellar Wine Bar and Wine Shop, downtown's newest hot spot! Owners Jennifer Ayer and Brent Harrison are opening their doors just for us on Monday, May 17th, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Enjoy complimentary nibbles and order some wine or beer. The wine bar menu features 25 wines by the glass, all rated 90 points or higher. Enjoy your wine indoors or on the outdoor patio, watching the world pass by on Castro Street.

**750 West Evelyn, at Castro, in the train station.**

## All Aboard for a Wine Adventure

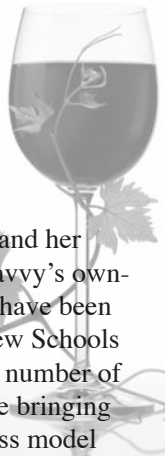
*Hugh J. Donagher, III*

Sommelier Jennifer Ayre and her husband, Brent Harrison, Savvy's owners, are local residents who have been involved with Mountain View Schools and local youth soccer for a number of years. They are excited to be bringing their very successful business model home to Old Mountain View.

Savvy Cellar will occupy the space in the train station at 750 West Evelyn, on the corner of Castro Street, featuring wines that have been rated 90 points or higher, retailing at \$39 or less. The accompanying wine bar allows consumers to try before they buy, or just enjoy a glass of wine or two with friends—indoors or on the 900-square foot outdoor patio.

With 25 wines by the glass, and seven interesting flights available, as well as a light sampling menu of artisan cheeses, made-to-order flatbreads, charcuterie

*(Continued on page 6)*



(Continued from front page)

## Speeding Down the Tracks

signalized intersection of San Antonio with Central (no overpass). A grade-level, four-track system south of Stevens Creek would result in the loss of lanes from Evelyn or Central far into Sunnyvale. An elevated track with a Mountain View station for HSR and Caltrain would stand about 35-40 feet high where the present Caltrain station sits. An elevated track through Mountain View might present very significant noise and vibration issues, with the source of the noise elevated 20-25 feet, and trains running at perhaps 125 mph. If you would like to see some pictures of what HSR might look like, check out the website, <http://www.calhsr.com/about/carrd-presentations/>

**Here are a few simple things on which you could express your opinions to the City Council:**

- Do you want an HSR station in Mountain View?
- Would you prefer HSR in a tunnel, a trench, at grade level or elevated through Mountain View?
- Would you be willing to pay more taxes to pay for a tunnel for HSR through Mountain View?
- Would you be willing to put up with at-grade, signalized intersections of Shoreline and San Antonio with Central Expressway?
- Would you be willing, for HSR, to sacrifice several blocks of the business districts at the intersections of Castro and Rengstorff with Central Expressway?

If you have views on these issues, contact your City Council (Ronit Bryant, Laura Macias and Tom Means are on the HSR subcommittee) and let them know; you can also attend the upcoming public meeting on May 3, 5:30 p.m. at the Senior Center on Escuela to learn more about HSR and express your views.

David Lewis, Community Liaison

**CA|RR|D** Californians Advocating Responsible Rail Design

## The Public Weighs In (Continued from front page)

Bruce Karney, who supported the project, felt that the community owed the property owners a debt of thanks for their years of service. (The Eatons acquired the Minton's property in 1971.)

BMR (Below Market Rate) units also figured prominently in the discussion, given the recent court challenges to BMR requirements. Several residents spoke about the need for BMR units, and the League of Women Voters dropped its support of the project given the change. (Please see article on BMRs, page 5.)

Aaron Grossman spoke on behalf of a group of residents in support of the project, and brought up the argument that the city needed more apartments, especially in the downtown area.

Lewis cited figures that Mountain View already has a higher proportion of rentals versus ownership at 58%, which compares to about 33% rentals for most other cities on the Peninsula.



Sunday, May 9, 2010

### *Mother's Day Mimosa Brunch*

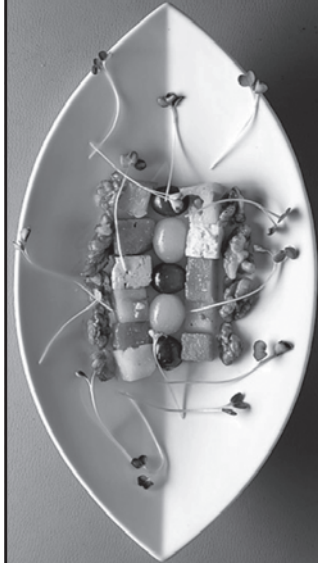
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### Spring Festival at Sakoon April 4 through June 20

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5 - 7pm daily, limit 1 glass per person

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Check in every day for Regional specials.

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Enjoy our creative cocktails and appetizers  
every day 5-7

# Sakoon

357 Castro Street \* 965-2000 \* [sakoonrestaurant.com](http://sakoonrestaurant.com)

# Letter from the Chair

by Laura Lewis



The 2008 California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) Business Plan estimates an average of 18-20 HSR trains per hour by 2030 running at 125 mph during peak hours. Granted this is decades away but the decisions we make today will determine how those trains change the quality of your life down the road.

For those of you that have not been following, the High Speed Rail Authority just recently released their Alternatives Analysis which gave several options for how to grade the Rail throughout the Peninsula. So far City Council has not taken a position on the preferred option and as Mayor Bryant put it is hoping to define a "clear community voice" on the issue.

Meanwhile, five area cities; Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Atherton Burlingame and Belmont, continue to coordinate through a coalition called the Peninsula Cities Consortium and have even hired lobbyists to pursue their preferred grading option-underground which may mean that Mountain View has little choice but to follow suit.

In addition, last week the Palo Alto City Council approved a letter to the CHSRA outlining more than 100 concerns about the controversial high-speed rail line including flawed and "grossly overestimated" ridership figures, inadequate discussion of right-of-way issues, and incomplete analysis of the rail line's impacts on businesses, historic landmarks and air quality in the CHSRA's Environmental Impact Report. There has also been a movement underway to repeal Measure 1A outright due to some of the same concerns expressed in the Palo Alto letter and Menlo Park is even attempting to re-open a lawsuit contending that the CHSRA did not adequately

analyze the impacts of the project before it decided to run high-speed trains along the Caltrain corridor.

I, like 52.7% of people voting in November 2008, did vote for measure 1A. I love the high speed rail systems in Asia and Europe but admittedly when I look at pictures of the options presented by the HSR, they just don't fit the futuristic vision I had of HSR when I cast my yes vote.

So what's a girl to do? Well, for starters attend the City's High Speed Rail Community Meeting (May 3rd, 5:30 at the Mountain View Senior Center). I'd also encourage you to educate yourself. Californians Advocating Responsible Rail Design ([www.calhrs.com](http://www.calhrs.com)) is an educational organization that does not take a position on the HSR.

HSR has the possibility of ending up as either one of the biggest and best infrastructure projects of all time or one of the worst and most costly. The direction it goes may be up to you.

## May 2010

CALENDAR

### High Speed Rail May 3, 5:30 p.m.

**Senior Center, 266 Escuela Avenue**  
Come and educate yourself on the HSR options for Mountain View, and express your opinion.

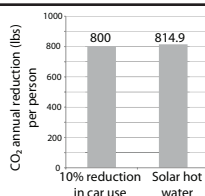
### May Mixer

**Monday, May 17, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**  
**Savvy Cellars, 759 West Evelyn**

Join your neighbors at this just-opened wine bar at the Train Station Building.

### American Cancer Society Relay for Life May 22 & 23, 10 am - 10 am Cuesta Park

Join Mountain View residents for a 24 hour walking event where a team of 10-15 people take turns walking on the track so that there is always one member of the team walking during the 24 hour period. At the Relay we celebrate the lives of those that have beaten cancer, remember those that we lost to cancer and fight back against cancer through fund-raising and education. During the event there will be live bands, dancing, food, games, and other activities, and people will be optionally camping out overnight in the park. Go to [relayforlife.org/mountainviewca](http://relayforlife.org/mountainviewca) or email [jess.c.anders@gmail.com](mailto:jess.c.anders@gmail.com) if you want to participate, but don't have a team to start or join.



### CORRECTION

In the March newsletter, in the article "Throwing Hot Water on the Prometheus Development," by Professor Eugene Cordero, we did not reproduce the results to scale. Using solar hot water reduced the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 814.9 lbs per person, versus 800 lbs through a 10% reduction in auto use. (see revised chart, left)

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## Old Mountain View:

# The Original General Plan “Village” by Anthony Chang

..... OPINION



Every 20 years or so, cities update their vision for what they want their communities to look like over the next 20-30 years. Mountain View has been engaged in this “General Plan update” since summer 2008 and this year our beloved city will put the finishing touches on a blueprint that will guide what our neighborhoods and community look and feel like for years to come. For more info, visit <http://www.mountainview2030.com/>. Here is one OMV resident’s take on where we are:

Of all of the feedback that residents provided during the “community visioning” process of the General Plan update,

the message that rose to the top was that we want to be a “City of Villages”. People want to live in neighborhoods, feel connected and have easy access to amenities. While dealing with the inevitable population growth in MV, our City planners have taken this message to heart; early drafts of the land use map and plan policies have referenced this City of Villages concept. And for good reason—it’s a great idea!

I believe there are two major issues that the City needs to deal with in order to implement this City of Villages concept successfully. First, the City needs to put the right policies and land

use planning in place to make villages possible. And second, the City can take this opportunity to greatly enhance the quality of life of each “village” by increasing the connectivity between neighborhoods.

To make these villages possible, the City need look no farther than our beloved OMV for a blueprint for what this can look and feel like. Where else can residents easily walk to so many amenities—food (restaurants, cafes, MV Market, farmer’s market), retail shops, parks, the library, hospital or bank? I love that I can walk to most everything I need on a daily basis. The City can import many of these elements to other potential “villages”—by creating open and public spaces through parks and community gardens, planning for mixed use buildings or neighborhoods, and concentrating enough housing to feasibly support local businesses.

To create a “city of villages” that connect to and reinforce the benefits of each other, OMV can again serve as an example of the possibilities. Where else can you get around so easily without a car by hopping on bike trails or roads, or accessing Caltrain, light rail or bus lines? I would love to hop on a bike or take a short bus ride to “villages” across the city—like a redeveloped San Antonio “village” with a vibrant paseo or square to walk, enjoy open space, and shop locally. The City can create this connectivity by creating transit hubs along El Camino (with 522 Rapid bus service), near the San Antonio train station, and light rail stations.

If growth is coming to Mountain View—and the research shows that it is—why not use the General Plan to prepare for it and make sure that Mountain View enjoys the benefits that this growth can bring if it’s done right. OMV is already the first and best of Mountain View’s “villages.” Let’s use the General Plan to create our City of Villages.

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# Affordable Housing & New Court Challenges

by Julie Lovins

"Affordable housing" is that requiring no more than 30% of a household's income to be spent on housing-related costs (including rent/mortgage, utilities, HOA or similar fees). Some annual household income vs. monthly "affordable" housing costs are thus: \$150,000, \$3750; \$100,000, \$2500; \$50,000, \$1250.

It is in all our interests to provide housing for Mountain View residents of all income levels. Fairness/diversity/inclusivity is one reason. Another is economic sustainability: many of our small businesses, in particular, depend on relatively unskilled labor, often working unconventional hours, and it is not practical for these workers to commute great distances.

Examples of people who have had problems finding affordable housing in Mountain View are restaurant employees, retail clerks, baristas, gardeners, entry-level teachers and public employees, including young police officers. Do you feel that their living in the community where they work adds to their commitment to the people they serve every day? What about our ability to have adequate professional assistance during a dire public emergency?

"Below Market Rate" housing, which is in effect subsidized by a developer (though not necessarily by other buyers/renters, since developers tend to retain their profit margins and lower

their costs, such as what they'll pay for land), is based on a family's income as a percentage of the Area Median Income, combined with the above 30% criterion. For 2009, Santa Clara County AMI for a family of four was \$106,125. The standard income classification brackets are: 81-120% of AMI, moderate income; 51-80%, low income; 31-50%, very low income; 0-30%, extremely low income. Income from two full-time jobs paying \$10/hour is about \$41,600/year, in the middle of the "very low income" category for a family of four. They can afford \$1040/month in rent plus utilities.

The Mountain View BMR ordinance, enacted in 1999 to put some dent in a daunting number of housing cost problems, has collected 3% of the value of all new residential development (of at least three ownership or five rental units) for use in providing housing, for lower income households, that the market has not produced and never will. Developers have also had the alternative option of providing 10% of their units at various BMR sale or rental levels.

With the help of BMR funding (not City money) we have succeeded in the past 10 years in producing about 120 efficiency apartments at San Antonio Place, most occupied by one person; and we are working toward 51 units for families on Evelyn Avenue, west of Castro. This is a drop in the bucket, especially considering how many apartments in Mountain View

have been torn down for redevelopment to for-sale units, or converted to condos. Newcomers to Mountain View have expressed surprise that we have 56% apartments. Thirty years ago, it was about 67%, again with a very low vacancy rate, because most apartments are intrinsically more affordable, and that's what we need to support our existing jobs.

We all know that many prospective buyers still find themselves priced out of the for-sale market, while we continue to provide our entire "fair share" of houses for people with relatively high incomes. There is some loan assistance available (for first-time home-buyers who can make mortgage payments) from the Housing Trust of Santa Clara County, and coming soon from the City of Mountain View, for City employees.

Recently one court decision clouded the horizon for the collection of fees to finance rental BMR units and another for for-sale BMR units. The City Attorney has decided that for the time being we cannot enforce our BMR ordinance. To surmount the ruling on rental units, the City needs to do a "nexus" study showing the need for such fees. Until that happens, it is in all our interests to encourage private developers of apartments to provide some BMR rentals in their buildings, especially when these buildings are situated close to the jobs that the prospective tenants can or do fill.

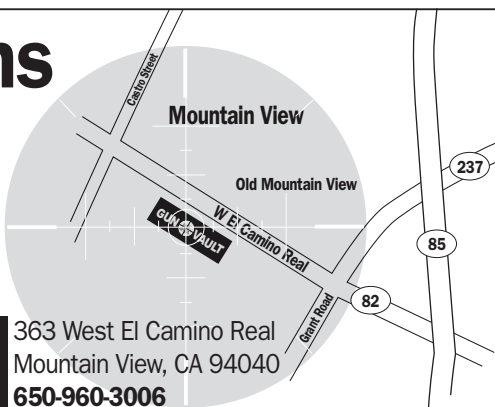
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## High Speed Rail.



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<http://www.calhsr.com/about/carrrd-presentations/>  
<http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/>

# Changing Zoning Laws: At What Cost?

by Carter Coleman

OPINION



(Continued from front page)

## All Aboard for a Wine Adventure



Whether you were for or against the Prometheus project, it's worthwhile to consider the impact of zoning changes on city revenue.

When should the city stick to its zoning guns? What are we giving away, if anything, when we grant zoning favors? The Prometheus project provided an interesting case study.

The developer claimed that they needed a significant change in zoning laws for a viable apartment complex, and that dropping even one apartment from the total would make the project infeasible.

What if the city told developers they had to obey our zoning laws, and let the property owners pick from the best of the proposals within zoning?

A few of us wondered about that question. We looked at property tax revenue from the proposed apartment building versus building homes within current zoning (as the adjacent 4.5-acre parcel will be).

### Apartments versus Homes

It turns out that apartment buildings generate significantly *less* property tax revenue than do homes or condos. Why is this? It's because homes and condos change hands at an incremental and much higher rate than apartment buildings.

We calculate that homes built at current zoning would generate **\$240 million more** in property tax over the term of the lease (or a net present value of \$33 million). The city gets 16% of this.

### A Bird in Hand

Neighbors raised interesting questions about our analysis. One was what I'll call "A bird in hand is worth two in a bush." Basically, neighbors argued that the property owners might not follow their economic interest and develop within zoning laws if we didn't grant them this favor.

However, by following this logic, it would mean that Council would need to approve *every* project requiring zoning changes out of this fear.

### Public Benefit Projects

At the very least, if the value of the zoning favor is known, it could be used to negotiate with the developer on what's called a "public benefit project."

Public benefit projects are a common part of horse trading with developers, and can be projects such as parks, parking garages, or amenities to mitigate negative impacts of the development.

### Impact to Schools

Although city planning doesn't include schools in their planning equation, Council decisions *do* impact school revenues. Why is this? Simply because 43% of property tax goes towards schools. When the City forgoes revenue, so do schools.

### Bottom Line

Somewhat surprisingly, the city does not do this kind of analysis for zoning changes. However, given the amount of revenue the city is forgoing for this one project, it seems reasonable for Council to ask Planning to incorporate financial analysis into decision making as an additional data point. It's not that difficult. Not to do so we think is fiscally irresponsible.

We thank city Planning and Management who reviewed the model, our logic, and assumptions and supplied valuable input.

A link to the model and more explanation can be found in this article on [OMVNA.org](http://OMVNA.org).

*Carter Coleman has an MBA in Finance and Accounting from Purdue, and a degree in Economics from the University of Illinois, Chicago. He has worked as a financial analyst for companies including IBM and Siemens. Carter is also the Treasurer of the OMVNA, but his views do not reflect the views of the Neighborhood Association.*

and more, Savvy Cellar will be an ideal place to pass a few hours with friends. Imagine a lovely summer evening, a table outdoors, a bottle of wine and some cheese with friends while people watching on Castro Street! How very European! Wine bar selections change monthly.

Two wine clubs—reds only, and red and white—feature sommelier-selected wines from California and around the world every month. Club members receive 10% off all purchases, 50% off tastings, and discounts on private event rentals.

Unique to the Mountain View location will be an Organic Wine Sunday special, to coincide with the Farmers Market. Each week will feature two or three specially selected and priced organic wines.

Savvy Cellar in Redwood City is a favorite spot for date night with my partner Brian. We've been members of the wine club there for about a year now and frequently spend a Saturday night or a Sunday afternoon chatting it up with the regulars and the staff. We're very much looking forward to living within "stumbling distance" of the new location—no designated driver required!

Offering a warm and inviting atmosphere with knowledgeable, attentive staff to help you select your wines, Savvy Cellar will be a great place to hang out after work (before or after the train ride!) and a fun pre- or post-dinner stop, complementing our great downtown restaurants.

Savvy Cellar will be open Tuesday through Thursday from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 2 p.m. to 11 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.. While they will be closed on Mondays, they are opening their doors for our Spring Mixer on Monday, May 17th from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Come join us and check out this brand new hot spot in Old Mountain View!



# 3 RESTAURANT PROFILES of Downtown's Newest *by Max Hauser*

## Thaiphoon

185 Castro

(650) 988 1488

[www.thaiphoonrestaurant.com](http://www.thaiphoonrestaurant.com)

Opened November 2009. Styles itself "Pan-Asian," with a strongly Thai menu. Four lunches so far showed impressive kitchen. Service, eager but awkward at first, improved in later visits. Roti (Indian-style flatbread with dipping sauce, \$6.50), in Thaiphoon's phyllo-like version, had spicy coconut-puree sauce so delicious we reserved some for the rice with the main courses. Other appetizers: Vegetarian "lettuce wraps" (\$8) presented kung-pao-like filling to wrap in crisp lettuce. Dark hoisin sauce coated diced crisp vegetables and tofu; very savory, good counterpoint to lettuce. Chicken Satay (\$8.25) arrived nicely cooked, moist and tender, less coconut-oil heaviness than I've often seen, with a mild peanut sauce and crisp cold chopped vegetables. Lunch specials (all around \$9), most with rice (white or brown), were substantial with soup and Thai salad. "Chicken with Thai basil," a spicy stir-fry, was skillfully done with fresh vegetables, bright flavors, the advertised "hot" only moderate by local standards on two different occasions. From diverse noodle offerings, I tried a very sound pad see-ew, the folksy sweet-savory dish with thick soy sauce, broccoli, egg, and optional meats.

## Pho Garden

246 Castro

(650) 968 4183

[www.phogardensf.com](http://www.phogardensf.com)

Opened in January. Pho, the Vietnamese noodle-soup meal-in-a-bowl, is a clear broth with sliced beef or other meaty ingredients, rice noodles, herbs, and side garnishes. For anyone new to it, it's not actually spelled P-H-O, the vowel is a Vietnamese modified O. Thus it's not pronounced "foe;" rather "fur" without the R. Name and dish derive from French *pot au feu*, "pot on the fire," a traditional Sunday dinner dish, adapted in Vietnam to local ingredients. A proper pho broth takes so long to simmer that restaurants often

shortcut it with commercial bouillon bases or MSG, giving only a shadow of what real pho is about. Three visits to the new Pho Garden found a much more genuine *broth* than usual locally, at similar price. I detected bones and vegetables; manager confirmed, proudly claiming the broth simmers seven hours. A "large" pho with garnishes, a substantial meal, barely broke \$8. Pho Garden's service and appearance were disappointing. One appetizer (there's an interesting range) arrived garnished with lettuce leaves, hiding a dirt blob, evidently never rinsed. In my experience Pho Garden has been a good place to try a real pho broth, but that's been its main attraction. Try Pho Ngon, 2500 El Camino "B" at Showers: Not downtown, but another recent restaurant (2009) with fine Phos in our experiences, and also lively non-pho dishes pictured in photographs along the walls.

## Bushido

156 Castro

(650) 386 6821

[www.bushidoizakaya.com](http://www.bushidoizakaya.com)

Opened in March, replacing unsuccessful "3TA," Bushido is styled an "izakaya" restaurant offering casual Japanese small plates and beverages, including full bar. Bushido smokes its own meats, has its own dessert chef, and promptly became a favorite of employees at The Kitchen Table nearby, who first recommended it. Two visits so far tried gyoza (pot stickers) with and without kimchee option (Korean spicy pickled vegetables added to the filling), a pleasant crab-croquette appetizer with dipping sauce, various noodle dishes, a decent bento box, an okonomiyaki (savory vegetable) pancake, and a lemon parfait dessert (courses averaged about \$7). We found the gyoza very fresh, the kimchee variation outstanding on two occasions. Noodle dishes tried include ramen (the Japanese fresh-noodle soups, not the dried imitations). Shoyu (soy-sauce) ramens were simply garnished by ramen-house standards, the broth slow-simmered, subtle, slightly smoky from smoked pork, of which thin slices also garnished the soup. Mabo (Ma Po tofu) ramen had a thickened broth, also smoky; lots of tofu, less spicy than the usual classic Ma

Po tofu of Sichuan. Yakisoba noodle bowl looked interesting, with many garnishes, but the diner found it bland. Okonomiyaki pancake (in the mochi-cheese garnish option), maybe 5 inches across, arrived elaborately finished and sauce-drizzled. I thought the flavor delicate and complex, and that it would make a fine appetizer or snack with drinks. Dessert chef said she favors lighter desserts with fruit. The lemon parfait layered light cake, lemon curd, and a little whipped cream, and disappeared quick. A 4:30-6:00 p.m. Happy-Hour deal with separate bar menu began in mid-April.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### HELP WITH NEWSLETTER

Backup volunteers needed for newsletter duties, available on occasion from 1-5 p.m. on newsletter publication day (Wednesdays), or anytime that evening for several hours (after 5 p.m.), or for an hour or two during the day Thursday or Friday. Some tasks are work-at-home, some require moving around the neighborhood. Training provided. Email [delivery@omvna.org](mailto:delivery@omvna.org). Please include your phone number.

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