



Photos by Richard Bangert
Firebrand will open a production facility in Building 9 at 707 West Tower Ave. across from Bladium (left).

Below, Firebrand Artisan Breads' "Whole Wheat Walnut Levain," a sourdough bread made with organic wheat and rye flours and walnuts.

Artisan Bakery to Open on the Point

Richard Bangert

A new artisan bakery with a noble mission is coming to Alameda. Firebrand Artisan Breads of Oakland will be moving most of its production facilities to a renovated warehouse at Alameda Point in the coming months, bringing most of its 90 employees and hiring more.

Customers know this bakery by the taste of its gourmet baked goods and deli selections. Employees know this bakery by the taste of a life-changing opportunity for a good job. The company will employ up to 150 people striving to overcome employment barriers, such as previously being homeless and previously incarcerated.

Firebrand is a wholesale supplier to cafés, restaurants and specialty grocery stores throughout the Bay Area, providing a high-quality line of traditional breads and pastries, baked fresh every day. They also operate a café at their flagship store on Broadway in Oakland.

The new 40,000-square-foot production facility will allow for a seven-

fold increase in production. Outfitting the space with infrastructure is now underway.

"We are expecting production to come online in February or March of 2021, with retail a few months behind that," said Joe Ernst of srmErnst Development Partners that owns the building. "The design of the retail at Building 9 will be flexible and allow for a full café if that is what the location will ultimately support."

Funding for the \$9.5 million expansion was helped by a \$500,000 working capital loan from San Francisco-based Roberts Enterprise Development Fund. It is the only venture philanthropy company in America that invests exclusively in the growth and effectiveness of social enterprises, where the bottom line is social return on investment.

Located at 707 West Tower Avenue, across the street from the Bladium Sports Club, Building 9 underwent a \$24 million renovation



project after the city sold it to srmErnst for \$5.5 million in 2017. The bakery lease means that the building will be fully occupied. Firebrand Artisan Breads will be sharing the building with another tenant, which moved into their specially designed half of the building in 2019.

"We hire from within our community to create a diverse and inclusive workplace," states Firebrand's website. "Do you have a gap in your resume? Are you reentering the workforce? If the answer is yes, we'd love to meet you!" Employees receive a full benefits package.

Contributing writer Richard Bangert posts stories and photos about Alameda Point on his blog *Alameda Point Environmental Report* <https://alamedapointenviro.com>.

Mayor Provides Updates

Marilyn Ezy Ashcraft

In 2020, several serious issues rose to prominence: the COVID-19 pandemic, racial justice and homelessness. They are all urgent, and interrelated. In Alameda we are addressing them simultaneously.

Homelessness is a complex problem we must solve. Officer Pete Larsen's primary goal as Alameda Police Department's Homeless Liaison Officer is to provide resources to help individuals living in encampments or their vehicles find housing, medical treatment and mental health services. Sometimes he helps them reconnect with estranged family members.

He spends time getting to know the individuals he encounters, establishing their trust while learning about the circumstances that led them to live on the street. Larsen joined my Jan. 29 Zoom/Facebook Live Town Hall to discuss addressing homelessness in Alameda (www.youtube.com/cityofalameda).

Larsen works closely with non-profit organizations the city has engaged to help reduce homelessness, including Village of Love which runs the Day Center at Alameda Point. A shuttle operated by Village of Love stops at designated locations around the city to pick up unhoused individuals and bring them to the Day Center. Last year, the Day Center provided services to 130 unhoused residents.

At the Day Center individuals are assigned a case worker who helps

them find housing, employment and job training, as well as medical and mental health care, and substance abuse treatment. Visitors can get something to eat, clean clothes, and the use of telephones, computers and a mailing address.

If you would like to donate clean and useable items to the Day Center — they need blankets, sweaters, durable pants and jackets, T-shirts, socks and personal hygiene products — or learn about volunteer opportunities, please e-mail info@thevillageoflove.com.

Village of Love staff also work with former encampment residents now living in four FEMA trailers at Alameda Point, and individuals and families living in their cars who spend the night at our safe parking venue that provides restroom facilities and overnight security.

More information about Alameda's efforts to address and end homelessness, including our recently launched Homelessness Strategic Plan are available at www.alamedaca.gov/homelessplan.

If you are currently homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, or want to get involved, call the Alameda Homeless Hotline, (510) 522-4663, Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. On weekends and evenings call 2-1-1 for access to countywide resources. We can all be part of the solution to the complex problem of homelessness.

In late January, I attended the U.S. Conference of Mayors virtual

Winter Meetings where President Joe Biden and members of his new administration met with our organization. Mayors across the country expressed frustration with the inadequate and unpredictable supply of COVID-19 vaccines. Biden has committed to ramping up production of vaccines and increasing financial support to our communities to achieve his goal of 100 million vaccinations administered in his first 100 days in office.

On Feb. 1, California learned that it would receive \$1.7 billion in federal funds to support COVID-19 vaccination, testing, contact tracing, containment and mitigation efforts. Alameda County will receive \$54 million of these funds. We will learn more details in the coming days, but this is very good news.

Biden also emphasized that, until vaccinations are more widespread, masks and social distancing are the single best defense we have. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the President's chief medical advisor, reminded us that 50% of COVID-19 transmissions are from people with no symptoms. He urged mayors to explore their constituents to avoid congregate settings, especially indoors and wear masks.

So, take it from Biden and Fauci: Wear your mask and maintain social distance! Take care and stay safe, Alameda! Brighter days are ahead.

Marilyn Ezy Ashcraft is the Mayor of Alameda.

Man Breaks into APD, Police Want More Info

Sun Staff Reports

Alameda Police Department (APD) is investigating how a man was able to enter the APD Administration Building without permission Thursday, Jan. 28.

Alexander Charman, 41, was arrested after he somehow managed to break into the APD building, which was closed to the public, at 2 a.m. He was met by APD officers who arrested him after a brief struggle, according to an APD press release.

The ordeal began on Wednesday, Jan. 27, when Charman attempted to enter the building's front doors at approximately 8:45 p.m. The building was closed to the public due to Alameda County Health Orders. When told the building was closed Charman, believed to be in an agitative state, made threats and demanded to be let inside. APD officers went to the front steps to confront Charman, but he was already gone.

At approximately 10:30 p.m., APD officers were called to the 2500 block of Blanding Avenue for the report of a man wearing police attire and attempting to commit a theft. Based on the description provided to dispatchers, they determined the suspect was probably Charman. Officers searched the area but could not find anyone.

A few hours later, yelling could be heard from inside the APD

Administration Building. Two on-duty patrol sergeants investigated and discovered Charman had somehow made his way into the building. He refused to comply but was ultimately taken into custody following a brief struggle. He was brought to Santa Rita Jail in Dublin for booking. There, they learned Charman was a transient who was wanted in Colorado for an outstanding felony warrant. Charman was charged with second-degree burglary, damage of property, vandalism and not following police instructions for the break-in. He will remain in jail until he is extradited back to Colorado.

APD officials are investigating how Charman was able to enter the building.

"We want to assure the public that it appears this individual acted alone, and there is no threat to our community or city employees," stated the press release. "Maintaining the Police Administration Building security and making sure our community is safe is our focus as this investigation moves forward. We are taking a critical look at our security protocols."

APD conducted an inventory of all departmental firearms, and are confident no firearms were stolen. APD asks if anyone has information about or had contact Charman on Wednesday, Jan. 27, to contact them at (510) 337-8340.

Alleged Thief Arrested

Ekene Ikeme

An Oakland man has been arrested in connection with a string of armed robberies and thefts in Alameda.

Traivonne Howard, 23, was arrested by Oakland police officers in Oakland on Jan. 12.

The Alameda Police Department (APD) began investigating similar armed robberies late last year. They were able to identify seven incidents, between Nov. 29, 2020 and Jan. 8, involving the same suspect. Howard allegedly committed robberies at the Walgreens on the 2300 block of Otis Drive, the Walgreens on the 1900 block of Webster Street and the CVS on the 800 block of Island Drive.

As APD continued their investigation they received help from the Oakland Police Department and the FBI, according to Det. Adam Digiusto of the APD Property Crimes Unit. Police

believe Howard may be responsible for more robberies and thefts in other cities.

Howard was charged with two counts of armed robbery, two counts of grand theft, and three counts of shoplifting. Howard pled not guilty to all these charges at his plea hearing on Jan. 15. He is currently housed at Santa Rita Jail in Dublin on \$210,000 bail.

Howard was currently out on probation for an arrest on March 5, 2018, where he was charged with second-degree burglary, possession of a controlled substance, evading police and leaving the scene of an accident, according to Alameda County Superior Court records. His probation was to end on May 21. He spent 82 days in the Santa Rita Jail for the crime.

Howard will have his preliminary and revocation of bail hearings on Feb. 7 at the East County Hall of Justice in Dublin.

Help City to Reimagine Police Services with Online Survey

Sun Staff Reports

Reimagining police services: Last summer, in response to incidents of racial violence and injustice across the country, including in Alameda, the City Manager convened a steering committee of four African American community members to assist with the formation of subcommittees to explore and make recommendations on five topics proposed by the City Council. The five topics are:

- Unbundling services currently delivered by the police department
- Reviewing police department policies and practices
- Police department accountability and oversight
- Reviewing laws that criminalize survival on the streets
- Systemic and community racism/anti-racism.

More than 250 Alameda residents expressed interest in serving on a subcommittee, and the steering committee selected 50 to participate. Since August the steering committee and subcommittees have met at least weekly and recently finalized their recommendations which the City Council will consider at its March 16 meeting.

It is important to hear from as many residents as possible on this topic. Surveys will soon be mailed to all households. Complete and return your survey by Sunday, Feb. 21. Or complete the online survey at www.alamedaca.gov/policing survey. Residents' input and that of the subcommittees will help the City Council make well informed decisions.

Contact Sun staff at editor@alamedasun.com.

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Date	Rise	Set
Today	7:11	17:35
Feb. 5	7:10	17:36
Feb. 6	7:09	17:38
Feb. 7	7:08	17:39
Feb. 8	7:07	17:40
Feb. 9	7:06	17:41
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Crazy Town

Learn more about Alameda's 19th century insane asylum and its oblique connection to Yosemite National Park on page 10.



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