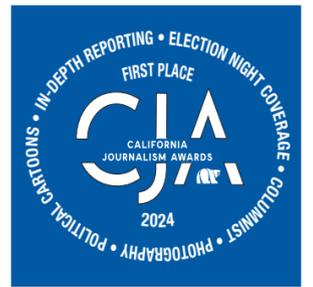


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Marin Independent Journal

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Fairfax neighbors preserve wildlife, preempt housing Bought parcel planned for single-family homes



Paul and Kristen Wilson take a look down the hill from an undeveloped lot near their home on Piper Lane in Fairfax. Neighbors chipped in to buy a one-acre parcel to preserve an endangered species habitat and keep the lot from being developed. PHOTOS BY ALAN DEP — MARIN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL

By Steven Rosenfeld
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Kristen Wilson followed the deer trail past moss-covered trees and spongy underbrush on the steep verdant hillside above Piper Lane in Fairfax.

"We have a really big madrone up here," said Wilson, a forest scientist, approaching the ridge. "That's where the great horned owls have nested in the past and where red tails nest."

"Up here is where it really opens up and where it's buildable," said Paul Wilson, her husband and an electrician, who led the way as the canopy turned to grassland and valley views. "The issue is how would you get a road over here, right?"

The outdoorsy couple, who live below at the end of Piper Lane, were hiking through a 1-acre parcel they and 11 neighbors bought in early December and donated to the Western Alliance for Nature, a Marin nonprofit that holds and conserves wildlife habitat.

The parcel, renamed the Piper Lane Preserve, had been designated by Fairfax as a site for single-family homes. Kristen Wilson said the plan included three houses, three accessory dwelling units and three junior accessory dwelling units.

"We thought we missed the boat because the person who bought the land said they were going to develop it," said Gehry Oatey, who lives next door. "So we just got people together and said, hey,



Gehry Oatey sits in his yard on Piper Lane in Fairfax. Neighbors heard of plans to develop a lot in the area, "so we just got people together and said, 'hey, let's see if we can try to buy it from them.'"

"I was really interested in preserving it because I have recorded spotted owls on the property. It's also quite a beautiful piece of property with deer that frequently migrate up and down the hill and bobcats and coyotes – just to name a few of the wildlife there."

— PAUL WILSON

let's see if we can try to buy it from them." that lies above downtown's western The lot borders the 100-acre wildlife preserve known as the Wall property

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Planners approve 17-story building

200-unit site tallest San Rafael structure

By Richard Halstead
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The San Rafael Planning Commission approved a 17-story, 200-apartment building this week after a reminder from the developer's attorney that it had little choice.

"You're really between a rock and state law," the lawyer, Andrew Junius, told commissioners shortly before the vote Tuesday. "I think it's going to be very hard for you to make any changes to this project."

"We already know that, so we don't need to be told," commissioner Stewart Summers said.

Commissioner Jack Salvemini said, "Sometimes it feels like we rubber-stamp things because it fits within the state and city mandates. As a commission, all we can do is say yes. It doesn't seem like I'm making choices for the residents of San Rafael. It feels like I'm making choices for developers from out of

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Poll: Americans sharply divided on science role

Earth, dispute grows hotter among parties

By Hayley Smith
LOS ANGELES TIMES

LOS ANGELES — As global officials confirm that 2025 was Earth's third-hottest year on record, a new poll shows Americans are sharply divided over the role of science in the United States.

A report published Thursday by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center found that a majority of Americans want the U.S. to be a world leader in science, but Republicans and Democrats disagree on whether it is.

About two-thirds of Democrats, 65%, fear the U.S. is losing ground to other countries when it comes to scientific achievement — a 28-point increase since 2023, the poll found. Republicans have moved in the opposite direction, with far fewer saying the U.S. is losing ground than in the past, 32%, a 12-point decrease in that same time frame.

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Trump shifting ICE toward 'absolute immunity'

By Hamed Aleaziz and Nicholas Nehamas
THE NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — The instructions to Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents explain in clear terms how to defuse dangerous encounters: Use "minimal force" when trying to remove people from cars. Issue commands in "professional," "firm," "courteous" voices.

"First step in arresting an occupant of a vehicle is NOT to reach in and grab him, unless

there are specific circumstances requiring that action," reads one internal ICE document providing legal guidance for uses of force during vehicle stops. It was reviewed by The New York Times, along with other training materials. ICE officials will thoroughly investigate any encounter, but "deadly force" is allowed only when agents believe lives are in danger.

The fatal shooting of Renee Good last week by an ICE agent in Minneapolis — and the quick reaction by Trump administra-

tion officials to declare the agent a hero and Good a villain — has put a new focus on whether federal agents enforcing President Donald Trump's deportation drive have been properly prepared for confrontations on city streets. The response of Trump and his top lieutenants to the killing has also underscored how they have embraced what is supposed to be a last resort under the written standards: using lethal force in self-defense.

Rather than encourage agents to de-escalate combus-

tible encounters, as the agency guidelines emphasize, Trump and his lieutenants have provided tacit approval for more aggressive tactics.

Several weeks before the shooting, a top ICE official told officers to take "decisive action" if threatened. Immediately after, Trump and other administration officials said Good had tried to run the agent over, although a Times video analysis found that she appeared to have turned her vehicle away



Federal agents arrest a protester during an immigration enforcement operation in a Minneapolis neighborhood Monday. DAVID GUTTENFELDER — THE NEW YORK TIMES

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