

# Local

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## Ocean Avenue making waves in Ingleside

Tide of new stores, housing, dining reshape Ingleside corridor



Image 1 out of 12

Lea Suzuki/The Chronicle

*Whole Foods is opening a new store on Ingleside's bustling Ocean Avenue on top of a housing development.*

By **Marisa Lagos**

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Sometimes, a little investment can make a world of difference.

It certainly has on Ocean Avenue in the Ingleside district, a thoroughfare that locals say has been overlooked for too long. Now, in the past few years - after more than decade of prodding and planning by neighbors - a new grocery store has opened, on top of a housing development.

Storefronts and streetscapes have been remade, and a new sit-down restaurant opened, all with the help of the city. Dozens of more housing units are planned, and longtime residents say it's changing their neighborhood - for the better.

"I never thought I would appreciate being able to walk somewhere to buy groceries this much ... but I tell people it's the best Whole Foods in the U.S.," said Dan Weaver, executive director of the community benefit district that residents and businesses voted to create three years ago and has worked with city officials to attract businesses to the area.



### ***Long process***

"People notice - I see people in Whole Foods that I have never seen before. The community we've created is larger than just Ocean Avenue - people come from all over the west part of the city now."

It's been a long process for residents such as Weaver, who has lived in the area since the late 1970s.

While Whole Foods, which opened last year, has made one of the biggest impacts, there have been steady changes over the past decade.

He ticks off a list of accomplishments: planting new trees and burying unsightly wires more than decade ago and then widening sidewalks. Then the Planning Department started the Better

Neighborhoods project, which helped the neighborhood think about what it wanted and led to the creation of the community benefit group's predecessor in 2004.

Other neighborhood amenities include a community garden planted in 2009, when the new Ingleside Library opened, and the recent opening of Champa Gardens, a Thai and Laotian restaurant whose owners already run a restaurant of the same name in Oakland.

But there's still more that needs to be done, including adding and naming a public plaza at Ocean and Phelan avenues next to Muni's Phelan Loop Bus Terminal. The mayor's office has also budgeted \$100,000 for business facade improvements this fiscal year, and other city money is being used to plant trees and other greenery along the avenue.

Ocean Avenue, which connects Highway 280 to the east with 19th Avenue to the west, is a natural place for students to hang out given its proximity to City College of San Francisco and easy access from San Francisco State University.

For years, though, there was just one coffee shop in the area, said Crezia Tano, a senior project manager at the mayor's office of economic and workforce development who has worked to attract businesses such as the Thai restaurant.

### ***'Now it's a place'***

"It was a place people drove through on their way to the Sunset District, but now it's a place people are saying, 'I should go have dinner or get my nails done,' " she said.

Hossam Kaddoura, owner of that once-lone coffee shop, Java on Ocean, said his customers are still the same, but the improvements have breathed life into the entire area. He's been on Ocean Avenue for 15 years.

"You can see there are a lot of different people, and there are more people on the street," he said. "There's a lot of excitement, a lot of things happening over the last year."

The owner of Champa Gardens - next door to Kaddoura's cafe - agrees. Phouc Nguyen, whom Tano persuaded to move into the area, said he's been excited to see families with kids and people who work in the area packing his restaurant since they opened last month.

"It's beat all my expectations - what I thought would take six months has taken a couple of weeks," he said.

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