



**IT'S  
BACK**

**Ukiah**

**High: 64 Low: 43**

**Santa Rosa**

**High: 64 Low: 45**

**Lakeport**

**High: 64 Low: 45**

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# The Press

## DEMOCRAT

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FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 2006 • SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA

Santa Rosa's diverse southwest neighborhood provides an insight into social, political, economic changes in the county

# DEFINING ROSELAND



Photos by JOHN BURGESS / The Press Democrat

**AS THE DAY FADES:** After remodeling, Antojitos La Texanita restaurant adds vibrant colors and a bustling clientele to Sebastopol Avenue in Roseland on Wednesday night

## ROSELAND JOURNAL



### EDITOR'S NOTE

*Roseland, Santa Rosa's low-income, high-minority urban neighborhood, reflects the social and political change transforming our nation. For the next few months, The Press Democrat will focus on this neighborhood of 14,000 residents to report stories illuminating the larger cultural forces playing out there.*

By **JEREMY HAY**  
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

**Y**ou want to know about Roseland?" asks the young man in a crumpled white tank top, his black hair messy from a day packing bottles in a Windsor winery.

He stands where he grew up, on a long driveway marked by worn ranch-house apartments, speed bumps and three palm trees.

"I can tell you about Roseland, I can tell you the real Roseland." His name is Johan Rendon, he's 21, and he says that although his name makes it hard to believe, he's Mexican.

"Roseland is Santa Rosa's ghetto," he says. He points, with an encompassing gesture, across what not 100 years ago was all poultry farms, vegetable plots and prune orchards. His gesture is toward Sebastopol Road, Roseland's northern border and the street that defines this neighborhood and signals Sonoma County's changing social and economic tapestry.

People in Roseland describe their neighborhood in many ways. Ghetto. Barrio. Part Santa Rosa, part Sonoma County, and so neither here nor there. A neighborhood of immigrant strivers. Little Mexico.

Yet just a few days and nights spent walking and talking in Roseland are enough to know that none of these descriptions is complete.



**FOCAL POINT** The apartment complexes of Roseland become the meeting places for families and friends. From left, Alejandra Chavez, 13, Adelaida Zaragoza, 14, Amparo Tinoco, 5, and Dania Garza share Regeton music from Puerto Rico on their CD players.

In Roseland, rival gang graffiti rubs shoulders with a beautifully manicured garden with an orange tree; gunshots ring out and farmworkers sing karaoke late into the night. In Roseland, a trumpet-playing retired professor works on his sports car and a Mexican woman with scant education opens a restaurant and makes herself proud.

In Roseland, around almost every

corner, is another Roseland. And everywhere is found the social stew of strains and comforts, tensions and aspirations that are at play in one of the region's most ethnically diverse and often-troubled neighborhoods.

### INSIDE

The people who make up Santa Rosa's Roseland neighborhood / **A10, A11**

For journals, photo galleries and ongoing reports, visit [go.pressdemocrat.com/roseland](http://go.pressdemocrat.com/roseland)

# ROSELAND JOURNAL



JOHN BURGESS / The Press Democrat  
After a hard day at work, Maria Pacheco picks up her son, Angel, 4, from the Head Start program in Roseland on Tuesday.

## THE PACHECOS

# 'I see that it's a struggle every day'

It is very late on a Saturday night and not a parking space is open in Joyeria Angelica's Sebastopol Road lot, where the La Texanita taco truck that opens daily at 5 p.m. is doing brisk business.

The rain has paused and La Texanita patrons sit at tables beneath a yellow canopy, clustered in the parking lot. The talk is loud, mostly in Spanish, enriched with laughter.

"It's a Hispanic neighborhood," says Ricardo Pacheco, who is wearing a stylish black blazer and is accompanied by his wife and son. Maria Pacheco speaks to him in English, he answers in Spanish, and 4-year-old Angel tells his mother, in English, that he is ready for bed.

Roseland, bounded by Hearn Avenue to the south, Highway 101 to the east and the area around Stony Point Road to the west, has about 13,600 residents, 48 percent of whom are Latino and 38 percent of whom are 17 or younger.

And here is Sebastopol Road, a thoroughfare accentuated by exhaust fumes, bicycles and baby strollers. And by Mexican markets and restaurants and the Spanish-language signs of tax preparers and cobblers. Vendors peddle chicharrones and elotes.

All this has sprouted alongside traditional American delis and breakfast joints, a Cambodian-owned donut shop serving Chinese food, an African-American barbershop, auto parts shops, convenience stores and Laundromats.

"It almost looks like Tijuana, Mexico," says Pacheco, a 38-year-old con-

struction worker and a native of Michoacán de Ocampo. "And I feel like I'm home."

Nearby is Kai Luk and a friend, ordering tacos.

"I live up in Fountaingrove, but I kick it here because I grew up here and I miss my friends," said Luk, 18, an Elsie Allen High School graduate. "I prefer this neighborhood."

When his family moved up the hill five years ago, he said, the neighbors made them take down an antenna they'd mounted on the roof. "I guess they thought we were bringing the ghetto," he said.

Ricardo, Maria and Angel Pacheco head for home a few blocks east on Grandberg Court, to a rented house they plan to buy. That would put them among the 40 percent of people in Roseland who are homeowners.

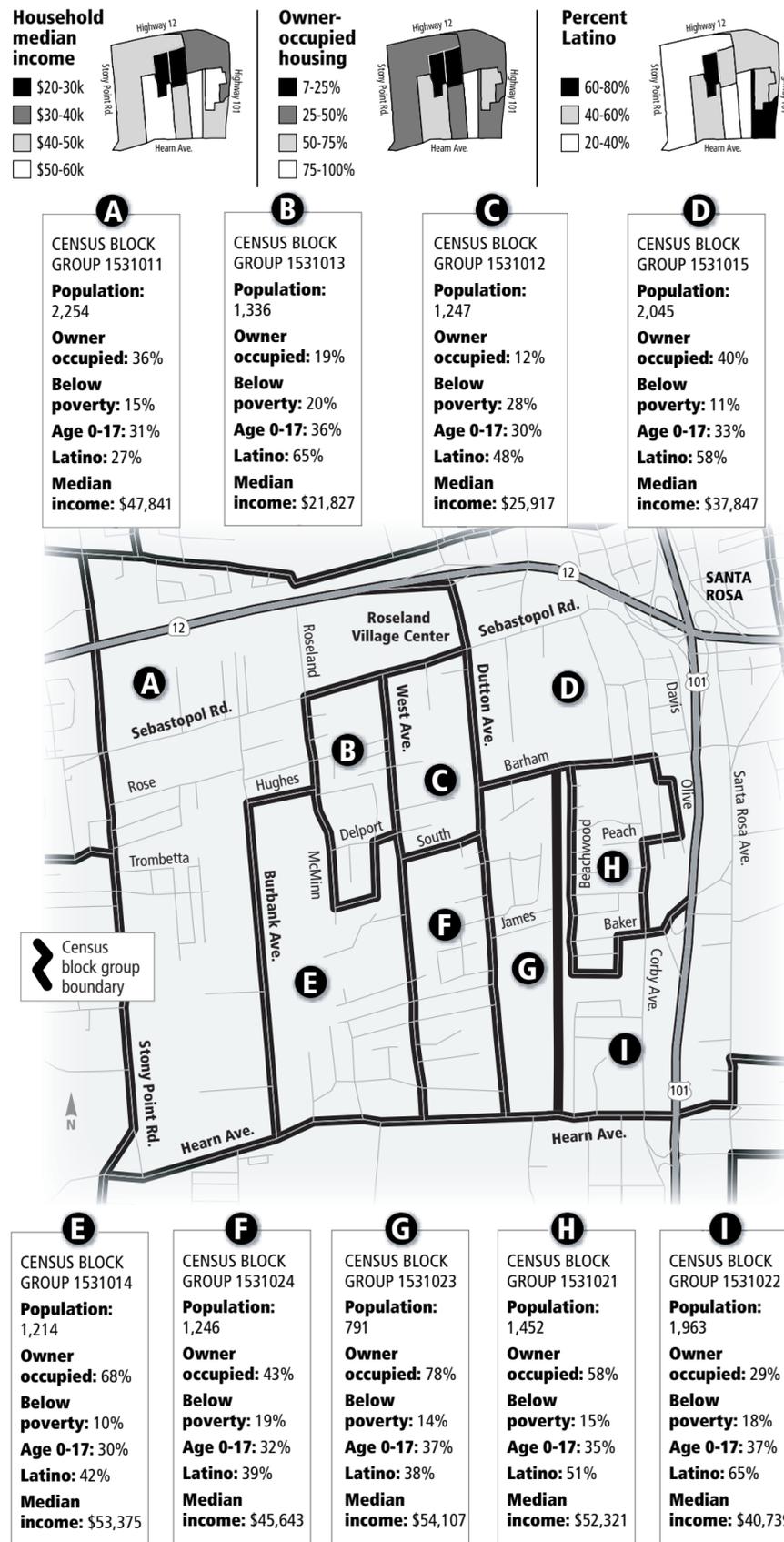
Maria Pacheco, 36, was born in Healdsburg, raised by Mexican grandparents who followed the crops from Oregon to Sebastopol. Today, she is a loan coordinator and drives a cream-white new Chrysler with Sutter West Mortgage signs on its doors.

Every morning she takes Angel to the Head Start program at Sheppard Accelerated Elementary School on West Avenue.

"I see that it's a struggle every day," she says. "When I'm driving my fancy car, I see them, the mothers walking their kids to school in the rain and I see that orgullo — the pride that they have, getting their kids their education. I feel that strive in them."

## A snapshot of Roseland

The heart of Santa Rosa's Roseland neighborhood is an area southwest of Highways 101 and 12 stretching west to Stony Point Road and south to Hearn Avenue. Here is a look at the nine census block groups that make up Roseland from the 2000 census:



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Press Democrat research by Teresa Meikle

DENNIS BOLT / The Press Democrat

## JOHAN RENDON

# 'This is all I know'

Johan Rendon, on his long driveway of speed bumps and palm trees and worn ranch-house apartments, lives just a few blocks north along Dutton Avenue from the Beards.

"This is all I know, basically — Roseland," he says.

He points in the general direction of the schools he attended: "I went to Elsie Allen, right there, I went to Cook Middle School, right there, I went to Sheppard, right there."

Twenty-one years he's been here and one day, says Rendon, he will move. "When I get older, when I have more money."

Until then, he takes Roseland in stride.

"When you're a kid you got to worry, it's more about gangs and stuff, when you get older it's really not that bad. Actually, it's pretty nice."

"When you get older, you know, a lot of stuff that scared you doesn't scare you any more. That's what I think about Roseland."

## THE BEARDS

# 'Hard working and close-knit'

The Beards raised three sons in their 1920s Craftsman-style home on Dutton Avenue. Mary Beard teaches piano in the front room. Philip Beard, before he retired, used to bicycle to Sonoma State University, where he was a modern languages professor.

Their mortgage was from the Exchange Bank branch at Dutton Avenue and Sebastopol Road. And they chose Roseland for a reason, Beard says: "When we first moved in, we were attracted to the fact that it was a working-class neighborhood and that our kids weren't going to grow up just surrounded by lily-white faces all the time."

This many years on, he finds that their close Santa Rosa friendships are on the city's more upscale east side. But in Roseland's burgeoning Latino population, he says, he still sees something he finds uncommon and admirable — families that

are "hard working and close-knit."

"I think they have a lot to teach us in ways of being that are healthier than the kind of atomized ways that Anglo society around here has grown up," he says.

"If you look at the typical Latino family around here, you get a lot more participation on the part of the kids in the continuing larger-scale family stuff that includes their parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles. It's a family reality that is richer."

These days Beard, 63, plays the trumpet a lot and putters with his Alfa Romeo. He shops at nearby Ray's Food Center, meets friends at Sam's For Play Cafe on Sebastopol Road and frequents Pepe's Mexican Restaurant, a short walk west of the cafe.

The Beards' home is in the county, unlike about one-third of

Roseland that Santa Rosa, after 40 years of resistance from the neighborhood's residents, annexed in 1997.

"As long as we've lived here, which has been since 1971, Roseland has kind of seemed like the verge," Beard says, "the limbo area between the city and the county, and what goes on here is still strongly affected by that position."

"This sort of neither here nor there attitude about the place has led people to not really have much of a sense of identity with Roseland. You don't see a lot in the way of community initiatives, Roseland initiatives that people really get behind."

Some of that, Beard suggests, also is because of the number of poor people in Roseland.

Sixteen percent of Roseland residents, or 2,169 people, live below the federal poverty line, which for a family of four is

\$20,000 annual household income. The median household income in the neighborhood is a bit above \$40,000.

"They lack education, but more importantly, they lack the time and the will to get involved in civic affairs," Beard says. "If you're poor or close to being poor, you have to spend a lot of your time working just to make ends meet."

One of the Beards' sons has moved back to Santa Rosa. The idea that one day, perhaps, his grandchildren will grow up in the Dutton Avenue home is a happy one, Beard says.

"And if that's the case, I sure want my grandkids to have a neighborhood that they can feel good in and that they don't feel threatened by."

Stories by Jeremy Hay. News researcher Teresa Meikle contributed to these reports.

## ABOUT ROSELAND JOURNAL

By focusing on the Roseland neighborhood of Santa Rosa, The Press Democrat newsroom staff, led by reporters Jeremy Hay and Martin Espinoza and photographers John Burgess and Kent Porter, intends to shed light on some of the most interesting — and most vexing — social challenges of our time. The stories will be told in our news pages and also on our Web site, [pressdemocrat.com](http://pressdemocrat.com), in the form of personal journals, reader participation and photo displays.

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## ROSELAND JOURNAL



Menelli Renteria, right, adds hot sauce to her bag of chicharrones from cart vendor Javier Gonzalez along West Avenue in Roseland on Tuesday.

JOHN BURGESS / The Press Democrat

## ALMA MENDEZ

## ‘It’s like a little Mexico’

After a major remodel, La Texanita, now painted in bright yellows and oranges that practically glow in the Roseland night, is open for business on Sebastopol Road. But Alma Mendez is still planning the grand re-opening of the restaurant she started last year with her sister and brother-in-law. Once the flat-screen TVs and some decorations are installed, the celebration really will start.

A Jalisco native who favors hip jeans and a beret, she has lived in the United States for 15 years and in Santa Rosa since 2001. She lives on the Roseland side of Hearn Avenue with her girlfriend. Her sister, two brothers and a cousin also call the neighborhood home.

“It’s like a little Mexico,” she says.

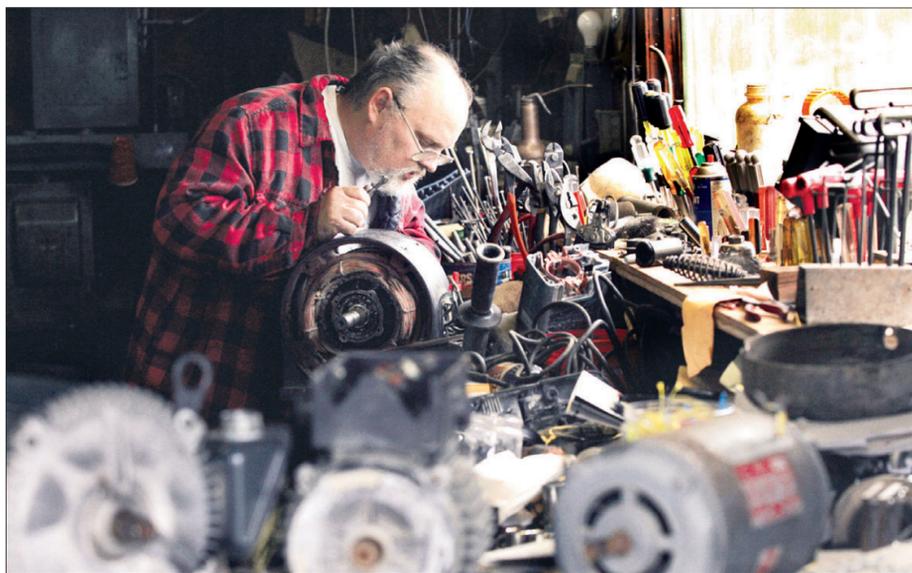
But Roseland is far more than that for Mendez, who left school in seventh grade to emigrate, first to Avenal, a Kings County town of which half the population are Avenal State Prison inmates, then San Jose, where she worked in inventory at an OfficeMax.

In Roseland, her neighbors are American, Mexican and . . . “Mongolian — I think they are from Mongolia, I’m not sure. Sometimes I don’t know the difference. They always get together, I think they are nice.”

In Roseland, she launched two taco truck businesses. Last May, together with her sister and brother-in-law, she helped buy a taqueria and turn it into La Texanita. She is there nearly every day and has surprised herself.

“I’ve been getting proud of myself,” she says. “I mean, with no experience doing something that I never thought that I would do, it’s so exciting for me.”

“There’s no reason for me to leave Roseland.”



Ray Moody is a long-time owner of a repair shop on South Avenue, but he lives in Rohnert Park.

JOHN BURGESS / The Press Democrat

## MOODY’S ELECTRIC MOTOR SHOP

## ‘It’s gotten to be more gang-oriented’

Moody’s Electric Motor Shop. It is in a barn built of 2-by-4 beams and aluminum sheet walls, located in a field on South Avenue. Although the property is zoned for commercial purposes, it’s a place that makes one believe that not so long ago Roseland was country.

“When I walked in that door, I was 17 years old,” says Ray Moody, 49 now, bespectacled and the shop’s sole proprietor since his father died 16 years ago. He’ll talk electric motors for hours if you want. The shop smells of grease and metal; engines, tools, tool boxes and coils of copper wire seem to climb to the ceiling.

“It’s not really Roseland as much as it was,” Moody says. He grew up off Sebastopol Road, west of Stony Point Road, near Lawrence Cook Middle School. That’s Roseland, too, he says. The Moodys raised, butchered and ate their own cattle. Now Ray Moody lives in Rohnert Park and says he wouldn’t live in Roseland.

“It’s gotten to be more gang-oriented,” he says.

“It’s gotten to be a lot more Mexican than in the past. That’s what I think brought in the gangs.”

He has an apprentice, Moody says, who came to him five years ago as a troubled teenager, the first guy he’s found who has what it takes to carry on the electric motor trade.

Josh Wheeler, 23, is the apprentice, part Potawatomi Indian, an Elsie Allen High graduate. For 15 years, he has lived a few blocks from the shop where he found a vocation he loves.

“It’s not a place I enjoy living, especially around Cinco de Mayo,” says Wheeler, referring to what since 2003 has become an annual rite of turmoil and violence on Sebastopol Road. Last year, an informal Cinco de Mayo street celebration collapsed into mayhem with stone-throwers and gang members facing off with police in riot gear.

“I’m interested in moving just about anywhere else,” he says.

There are upsides to the neighborhood, he and Moody agree. “Great Mexican food.”

## GLORIANA LUCAS

## Neighborhood ‘de-gressing’

Down a street in south Roseland, Gloriana Lucas, 27, a 1997 Ursuline High School graduate, comes home to her parents’ house. The San Francisco State University graduate came back home to live while studying marketing at San Francisco’s Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising.

She grew up here, too, and Roseland is not progressing, Lucas says. “It’s de-gressing. I think this is probably the best street in this area, as far as neighborhood goes — people talking to each other and keeping their houses up.”

She is specific about what troubles her. “I just think there’s probably too many, I shouldn’t say this because I’m Hispanic, but a lot of the Mexicans are moving into the neighborhood and they don’t seem to be as educated as other people I associate with, in other neighborhoods.”

Lucas, who is Salvadoran-American, says the influx of Mexican immigrants, which pushed the Sonoma County Latino population from about 41,000 in 1990 to 95,000 in 2004, has led to gang violence that worries her.

“I wouldn’t feel comfortable raising my child in this environment,” she says.

## KIMMIE GIANNINI

## ‘It’s families, that’s what it is’

Kimmie Giannini remembers when Roseland Village Shopping Center, built in the 1950s by Hugh Coddling, was thriving. Giannini, 42, grew up on Leo Drive. She has an ear-piercing whistle, runs Moondogs’ Place, a Sebastopol Road bar, and calls her patrons “Baby.”

Midnight has come and gone at Moondogs’ Place, where a man in work boots sings karaoke Elvis Presley beneath a colored strobe. A heavy American Indian woman dances with a tall black man. Eighties pop hits alternate with Mexican ballads. A young Latino talks and talks and finally talks an older blond woman into a dance. Giannini goes out to smoke and talk.

“Roseland is just life, a place to live,” she says. “I see more poverty here. But I love it — the different people. I guess they do say there’s a lot more Latinos here, but there’s everybody here. It’s families, that’s what it is. But if you don’t live here, you don’t see it, you don’t see the love.”

## STEVE CUEVAS

## ‘A lot of good people here’

Sunday afternoon, and the rain has returned. Halfway down West Avenue toward Hearn, barrel-chested Steve Cuevas is under a carport cleaning out his Mustang. He moved from South Park, across the highway, a few years back.

“I tell you what,” he says. “People think it’s all gang members here and low-lives, but it ain’t like that. There’s a lot of good people here; it’s a good place to live.”

Cuevas is 41, and his many tattoos include an inch-high “Norteno” on his neck — a striking marker of his former gang life. His past: Street and prison gangs, and a drug addiction. His present: Life as a respected outreach worker at the Southwest Community Health Center, about a mile from the \$1,050-a-month apartment he shares with his wife and two sons.

The thing about Roseland residents, he says, is

“they want their own identity. They want their own grocery store — how long’s that been empty now?”

“That” is the former Albertsons supermarket on Sebastopol Road that closed in 2003, leaving a boarded-up emptiness in the Roseland Village Shopping Center. It is an open wound of blight in a neighborhood that for years has struggled economically. Continental Lanes bowling alley shut its doors last week, leaving behind a dollar store, a Goodwill, a few shops, a barbershop and a school that offers construction skills to teenagers unsuccessful in traditional schools.

Now the shopping center is the focus of the latest in a long line of revitalization plans for Roseland. This time, a public plaza, apartments, a cultural center and an international marketplace are being discussed.