

The Boston Globe

Serving our community since 1872

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2023

Landlords hold lease on survival of stores



PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

Jennifer Sowden, owner of Jennifer Lee's Bakery in Boston, waited on Anna Geiger.

Post-pandemic, downtown tenants need rent assistance

By Diti Kohli
GLOBE STAFF

Two downtown locations of Clover tell two very different stories about the state of storefront retail in the heart of Boston right now.

One outpost of the vegetarian fast-casual chain, near South Station, has stayed alive in part because of flexibility from its landlord. Early in the pandem-

ic, Rockhill Management, which owns the building on Federal Street, agreed to switch Clover's rent to a percentage-based model, in which Clover paid a cut of its revenue each month, rather than a traditional flat rate by square foot. And "that restaurant became, even at low volumes, profitable," said Ayr Muir, Clover's founder and former CEO.

Over in the Back Bay, at 565 Boylston Street, the opposite scenario played out. Clover's landlord there refused to negotiate lower monthly payments or a more accommodating schedule. Instead, Muir said, the Community Church of Boston maintained Clover's \$350,000 annual rent, even when sales fell flat.

LEASES, Page A7

American girl among 17 freed hostages

Released two days after 4th birthday; hopes grow for extending Gaza truce

By Vivian Yee, Isabel Kershner, and Aaron Boxerman

NEW YORK TIMES

A third group of Gaza Strip hostages, including a 4-year-old American girl whose parents were killed in the Hamas raids on Israel, was freed Sunday, raising the prospect more captives could be set free and a fragile truce extended.

The 17 hostages released by Hamas, who were seized when the militants raided Israel on Oct. 7, included three Thai citizens, one Russian, and the little girl, Avigail Idan, a dual American-Israeli citizen who was kidnapped from a kibbutz. She marked her 4th birthday in captivity in Gaza on Friday.

"Thank God she's home," President Biden said to reporters in Nantucket, where he spent the Thanksgiving holiday. "I wish I was there to hold her."

Much hinged on the latest release of hostages, who were exchanged for 39 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel on the third day of a four-day truce.

With both Israel and Hamas poised to resume fighting at a moment's notice, a collapse of the agreement might have quickly led to a resumption

HOSTAGES, Page A6



PHOTOS BY MORGAN LIEBERMAN FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Wendy Anderson Sparks' daughter Noel Sparks was one of 12 people shot to death in a Thousand Oaks, Calif., bar in 2018.

LIVING ON AFTER TRAGEDY

For Lewiston, inspiration in a Calif. city's recovery from a mass shooting

By Jess Bidgood
GLOBE STAFF

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — Under a perfectly clear blue sky, a construction worker in a white hard hat used a pickax to loosen a beam from the eaves of a long building, as shiny black pieces of roofing fluttered toward the ground.

Earlier this month, five years to the day after everything had changed, Borderline Bar & Grill was coming down.

On Nov. 7, 2018, the beloved country music bar where people came to dance had become a blood-soaked crime scene, where 12 people were killed af-



A portrait of Noel was placed at an altar created in tribute to her by her parents, Wendy Anderson Sparks and Tony Sparks, in their Simi Valley, Calif., home.

ter a gunman charged inside with a semiautomatic handgun that he eventually turned on himself.

Then, the building stood empty, a place where family members of the dead went sometimes to talk to the bullet holes in the walls, or where a mother of one victim wrote a poem to her fallen child on the bathroom floor.

It is impossible, the owner found, to re-use such a place.

"It's just been falling apart," said a neighbor of the empty building, Dr. Steven Suchman, whose medical practice is next door. He had stepped into the parking lot with three German

THOUSAND OAKS, Page A9

When voters' decisions are challenged

Democracy is tested by new trend, experts say

By Lissandra Villa de Petrzelka

GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — After Ohio voters passed an amendment that enshrined the right to an abortion in their constitution with about 56 percent of the vote earlier this month, some Republican state legislators who opposed it promised to continue the fight.

Four lawmakers signed on to a statement promising to "consider removing jurisdiction from the judiciary over this ambiguous ballot initiative." None of those four Republicans returned a request for comment.

But for election specialists, their response to the voters fit a recent trend of testing democratic norms.

"That is part of a broader pattern of, if you lose within an institutional venue — like you are an anti-abortion activist or politician and you lose that ballot initiative and now there's a pro-choice constitutional amendment— what do you do to keep the fight going?" said Jake Grumbach, an associate professor at UC Berkeley's public policy school. "You move to another political institutional venue, one where you could potentially be more advantaged."

RESIST, Page A7



For the moist part

Monday: Rain early.

High 52-57, low 31-36.

Tuesday: Partly sunny, chilly.

High 40-45, low 25-30.

Sunrise: 6:49. Sunset: 4:14.

Obituaries, **B6**.

Comics and Weather, **D4-5**.

VOL. 304, NO. 150

*

Suggested retail price
\$3.50



Three students of Palestinian descent were shot while visiting Burlington, Vt., on Saturday. Police say they are looking into whether the shooting was a hate crime. **B1.**

More than three dozen members of Congress have announced they will not seek reelection next year, many citing the current dysfunction in the House. **A2.**

Participants at a vigil to mark the 81st anniversary of the Cocoanut Grove fire broke ground for a memorial to those killed. **B1.**

At an increasing number of venues, only debit or credit cards are being accepted, the columnist Sean Murphy writes. However, machines on site will convert cash to debit cards. **D1.**

Aiding state's ruptured public health system

Plan seeks to improve quality of local offices

By Jason Laughlin
GLOBE STAFF

During the worst of the pandemic, Shin-Yi Lao, then Newton's only public health nurse, at times fell into despair as she juggled testing, contact tracing, and data analysis amid a daily flood of new COVID-19 cases.

Almost four years later, the pandemic's extraordinary demands have faded, yet Newton's health department still struggles to keep up with some

basic functions. Those include conducting inspections for pools, housing, and restaurants, said Lao, now the city's director of public health services.

"We're not necessarily always able to meet those requirements in the ways we would like to," she said.

Lao is among the health officials eager to see Massachusetts push forward the State Action for Public Health Excellence, a multi-year plan to fund local public health and boost its quality. Two years ago, the Massachusetts Legislature took an important step when it dedicated \$200 million in pan-

PUBLIC HEALTH, Page A8

PATRIOTS IN FREE FALL



MATTHEW J. LEE/GLOBE STAFF

New England Patriots quarterback Mac Jones was on his knees after throwing an interception to New York Giants linebacker Bobby Okereke (58) at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey on Sunday. The now 2-9 Patriots lost, 10-7. **C1.**