

menlofocus

A newsletter for the community from the City of Menlo Park

Fall 2008

A word from the City Manager

Welcome to **menlofocus**, the City of Menlo Park's new community newsletter.

menlofocus is designed to keep you informed about City services, upcoming events, activities, and policy decisions. The newsletter is just one of many tools we are using to meet one of the City Council's top goals for 2008-2009, which says:

Create meaningful opportunities for community members to have a voice in City decision-making and engage in dialog with each other in order to help City Council and staff understand community values, needs and concerns and develop policies, programs and services that are responsive to them.

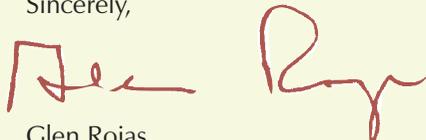
This first newsletter contains articles addressing topics residents indicated are important through a series of interviews and data we collect from our web site, through our Direct Connect system (see story, page 3).

Other stories in this issue include: an update on the El Camino Real / Downtown Vision Plan; good news from the Police Department about added staffing capability; answers to common questions about Heritage trees and street paving; and information you need to prepare for the coming storm season.

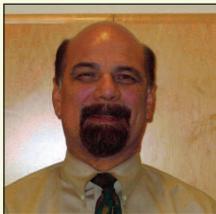
If you have ideas for future stories, please let our editor, community engagement manager Cherise Brandell, know at cebrandell@menlopark.org or call 650.330.6618.

We hope to publish **menlofocus** three times per year, so we're also looking for your feedback on how we can improve to better meet your needs—please contact Cherise if you have suggestions.

Sincerely,



Glen Rojas
Menlo Park City Manager



Full staffing allows Police Department to expand services



For the first time in three years, the Menlo Park Police Department is almost fully staffed, allowing the PD to fill specialty positions that had been allocated to basic patrol to cover urgent daily needs. According to Chief Bruce Goitia, "we've recently filled a number of vacant positions for police officers that have allowed us to add back our traffic unit and our narcotics enforcement team, which includes our gang unit. In addition, we're once again fully staffed in our investigations team and are looking forward to re-staffing our code division as well."

Traffic Unit will reduce accidents

The traffic unit, which you may have seen around town on their Harley-Davidson motorcycles, includes two full-time officers and a sergeant dedicated to one of the community's

highest safety priorities – traffic enforcement – including addressing speeding and stop sign violations. "The use of motorcycles for the traffic unit enhances visibility – people know they're there for traffic and they are a distinct advantage in congested areas," said Chief Goitia. "Plus, kids love the motorcycles almost as much as they love the K-9 units." The unit has been primarily focused on school zones throughout the fall, helping drivers develop good habits that will pay off all year long.

The traffic unit is specifically focused on reducing accidents, especially in areas with high traffic density. "Effective traffic enforcement educates people, makes them slow down and reinforces good driving habits," said the Chief.

Red Light cameras also reduce crashes

Additionally, the City recently added two red light cameras to its accident prevention tool kit, as red light violations cause the most serious injury to vehicle occupants and red light camera programs have been shown to be effective at reducing dangerous collisions at high-volume intersections. The plan to add the cameras actually started when Police staffing was too low to have a traffic unit.

Two intersections with significant accident rates are currently covered by cameras (Willow Road and Bayfront Expressway; and Ravenswood and El Camino Real) with three more to be added over the next several months. Vehicles crossing the limit line after the light has turned red are detected automatically and the camera system records the images. After a Menlo Park Police Department employee reviews the images and video, a citation is mailed out to the registered owner of the vehicle.

For more information about the red light enforcement program or other Police Services, see the City's web page at www.menlopark.org or call 650-630-6327.

Get a phone call when emergencies are occurring!

Did you know the City has an emergency telephone notification system allowing us to simultaneously send thousands of personalized messages about floods, water main breaks, road closures, earthquakes and other natural disasters? The system can send voice messages to home phones, work phones, and cell phones. Text messages can be sent to cell phones, PDAs, and other text-based devices. Messages can also be sent to TTY/DD receiving devices for the hearing impaired.

Residents and businesses can register with the system in our secure database. Please visit the City of Menlo Park's website at www.menlopark.org, click on the "Emergencies" Quicklink on the main page, and then click on the "City of Menlo Park's Emergency Notification System-Sign up Now" link to register.

If you don't have computer access, call Carolina Gaskin at the Menlo Park Police Department at 650-330-6327. Please leave a message with your name and a call back number.

Get the latest breaking news emailed right to you!

Are you signed up as an email subscriber to the City's regular updates? You can get regular updates about news releases, community meetings or information about meetings you are interested in by visiting the City's web site at www.menlopark.org and signing up for our subscription service. Just follow the link under the Latest News Releases banner under the Police Press Releases banner or under the Upcoming Community Meetings banner to select the groups you are interested in following. You'll get a notification whenever a new item is posted!



Community shapes vision for Downtown and EL Camino Real



A long-term vision for El Camino Real and Downtown Menlo Park is emerging, thanks to the input and hard work of hundreds of Menlo Park residents, property owners and others who care about the future of our community.

The Vision Plan process began in late 2007 and has included numerous opportunities for input, including special events, community workshops, surveys, walking tours and interviews. The goal of the process so far was to identify a clear vision for the future of El Camino Real and Downtown Menlo Park. That vision, accepted by the Menlo Park City Council on July 15, includes twelve broad goals:

1. *Maintain a village character unique to Menlo Park.*
2. *Provide greater east-west, town-wide connectivity.*
3. *Improve circulation and streetscape conditions on El Camino Real.*
4. *Ensure that El Camino Real development is sensitive to and compatible with adjacent neighborhoods.*
5. *Revitalize underutilized parcels and buildings.*
6. *Activate the train station area.*
7. *Protect and enhance pedestrian amenities on Santa Cruz Avenue.*
8. *Expand shopping, dining and neighborhood services to ensure a vibrant downtown.*
9. *Provide residential opportunities in the Vision Plan Area.*
10. *Provide plaza and park spaces.*
11. *Provide an integrated, safe and well-designed pedestrian and bicycle network.*
12. *Develop parking strategies and facilities that meet the commercial and residential needs of the community.*

With this broad and inspirational vision in place, we are ready to take the next step which will answer detailed questions about the vision plan elements, such as:

- What are the impacts?
- What are the benefits?
- Are the proposed vision plan elements financially feasible?

Answers to these and other questions will help refine the vision into something that can be implemented through ordinance and policy changes.

We hope you will continue to engage with us as we refine the vision into a plan we can all support. For more information or to stay informed on specific engagement opportunities for the next phase, visit the project page for the Vision Plan regularly, at: www.menlopark.org/projects/comdev_ecrdowntown.htm. Or, call Thomas Rogers at 650.330.6722.

Library small business collection – your personal assistant

Knowledge is power, time is money.

Small business owners know the value of time and the power of knowledge. In a networked, online world, why would anyone spend time coming to a library to get their answers when the Internet is just a click away?

Information, information, information.

Librarians are all about connecting people with information. The rise of the Internet as an information source has brought with it an increase in information overload. Ever sift through page after page of search results? How do you know the web site you are looking at is reputable, current and comprehensive? We can cut through the information overload and show you how to search, where to search, and what to search. Librarians have vetted and organized information from the web. You spend more time finding, less time searching.

Large corporations have their own researchers –the library can be your research assistant.

Our small business collection includes hundreds of books, dozens of training DVDs, and thousands of articles tailored to the needs of small business owners. We have powerful research databases that are available to you 24/7 from home or work. If you are interested in sales prospecting or marketing, a job search or employee management, market research or the demographics of your customer base, finance, funding or taxes, we can help. If we can't answer your question, we can refer you to business experts who can. All you need to get started is your library card.

Free free free free.

Did I mention that we're free?
See us on the web, call us, or stop by. We'd be happy to help.

Nick Szegda is the small business collection librarian at the Menlo Park Library

Contact him at szegda@plsinfo.org, or call the reference desk at 650-330-2520.

See the library's collection at <http://menloparklibrary.org>



Increase Recycling - Reduce Your Garbage Bill!



Garbage service fees are based on the number and size of garbage cans. The more you recycle, the less garbage you pay for! Most households need only one garbage can. To change your garbage service level, call the Menlo Park Finance Department at 330-6640.

The following items can be recycled in your curbside recycling bins:

Bottles and Cans Bin:

- Plastic bottles and dairy tubs
- Glass bottles and jars
- Aluminum and metal cans

Mixed Paper Bin

- ALL paper (except if touched by food; no towels or tissues)
- Cardboard, including boxes, cartons

Need More Bins?

Request additional bins from Allied Waste's customer service at 592-2411 or email info@alliedwastesanmateocounty.com. No charge.

Corrugated Cardboard

Please flatten boxes and set next to recycling containers (maximum size 3 ft x 3 ft).

Batteries and Cell Phones

Place household batteries and cell phones (wrapped in paper) in a sealed bag on top of paper bin.

Yard Trimmings Cart

- Leaves, grass, prunings
- Branches and tree limbs (less than 2 inches in diameter and less than 4 feet long)
- Untreated, unpainted lumber
- Containers should not exceed 60 pounds in weight
- Extra Yard Trimmings Material:
 - Request an additional cart (\$2 per month or \$60 purchase from Allied Waste)
 - Bundles must be tied with rope or string (plastic or metal may not be used to bundle). Each bundle may not exceed 50 pounds and be no longer than 4 feet. Maximum of 12 bundles per customer.

Questions? Requests? Contact Allied Waste at 592-2411 or email info@alliedwastesanmateocounty.com.

Where to Donate or Recycle Items Locally

RecycleWorks, the San Mateo County Recycling Hotline and website, can help you find local places to donate usable items or to recycle unusual items. Contact RecycleWorks at 1-888-442-2666 or search their database online at www.RecycleWorks.org.

- 11/14 Compost giveaway
- 11/15 Electronics dropoff



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
RECYCLEWORKS

Menlo Park FAQ's ...some frequently asked questions you might like to know...

Why do I need a permit to remove or prune my own tree?

The City has regulations preserving healthy heritage trees whenever possible. The goal is to ensure a significant number of large, healthy trees over the long term. The regulations require a permit to remove or heavily prune trees of heritage size, defined as any tree having a trunk with a diameter of 15 inches or more, measured at 54 inches above natural grade; or, any oak tree native to California, with a diameter of 10 inches or more; or, any tree or group of trees designated by the City Council. You can prune up to one fourth of the canopy or roots of a heritage tree without a permit. For more information: www.menlopark.org/departments/pln/htree/htree.htm. Or call Dianne Dryer at 330-6740.

Sometimes streets get paved that don't look like they need it — how do you choose which street to pave?



Many of the streets we resurface each year may not appear to be in bad condition, but are considered in greater need of a particular treatment in order to reduce the overall on-going street paving cost. A common preventative maintenance application called "slurry seal" reduces the need for total reconstruction at a greater cost later. This prioritization method is required in order for us to qualify for state funding.

For more information about specific street projects, contact Larry Johmann, Senior Engineer, at 330-6740.

Why does it pay to shop in Menlo Park?

That's easy!

A portion of the sales tax you pay on items you purchase in the City of Menlo Park returns to the City to help balance the budget. Retail sales to the City are like revenues to a business. Sales tax dollars from your purchases provide vital services and other good things we love about our town; things like the library, our parks, recreational activities, police protection, and more! Good things happen when you shop, dine, buy gasoline, or make any other incidental purchase from a local merchant whose business is in Menlo Park.



*So, Shop Menlo Park and get more for your money!
And remember, parking restrictions in the downtown
are relaxed from Monday, December 15, through Friday,
January 2, to make your holiday shopping more
convenient.*

Community survey tells us what's on your mind

Starting in late October, 1200 randomly selected Menlo Park households received a 35-question mail – back community survey designed to help City Council and staff understand how residents feel about quality of life in Menlo Park, the quality of City services and other data designed to help the City make better decisions. "The community survey helps reach out and gather a broader level of input from our residents to determine how city services are received," said City Manager Glen Rojas. "The best measure of government performance is community satisfaction, and this survey will tell us where we are on a number of measures."

The survey is conducted through a contract with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and their research arm, National Research Center, which conducts over 200 similar surveys across the country each year, permitting Menlo Park to compare with other communities of similar size. The survey will collect demographic and geographic location data from respondents, so the City can understand the differences in responses from a variety of demographic groups and neighborhoods.

A final report of the survey results will be available after January 1, and will be used by Council and staff at the Council's annual planning and goal setting session.

To participate in an on-line version of the community survey, go to the City's Web site at www.menlopark.org and click on the community survey link. For more information about the survey, contact Cherise Brandell, Community Engagement Manager, at 650.330.6618.

Access City Services 24/7

Did you know that you can access City services seven days a week, 24 hours a day? Just go to the City's web site at www.menlopark.org and click on Menlo Park Direct Connect under the Public Involvement banner near the top of the page.

The system will step you easily through the process for asking your question, leaving a request for service or a comment. It's as easy as 1-2-3:

1. Choose a category and subcategory that matches the subject of your inquiry or comment.
2. Create an account so you can track the status and any responses online, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
3. Write and submit your comment or question.

You'll get an immediate response back that we received your information. You'll get a response back on the process of resolving your concern or addressing your question within five (5) business days.

City investment portfolio remains stable through financial market turbulence

Although recent events in the financial markets have battered many municipal portfolios, the City of Menlo Park's investments appear to be surviving the market ups and downs relatively unscathed. For example, Menlo Park has no participation in the San Mateo County Investment Pool which was negatively impacted by the recent bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers.

Finance Director Carol Augustine says the City's portfolio is invested in assets that, despite the market turmoil, are all still in good shape. "The City's holdings in Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (roughly 16% of the City's \$104 million portfolio) consist of senior debt securities only – instruments whose triple-A rating were recently affirmed, so we are fairly confident our investments will remain stable."

The Menlo Park City Council recently approved an Investment Policy which allows for investments in U.S. Treasury notes, U.S. Instrumentality, and other conservative holdings. Much of the portfolio, (over 40%) is held by the Local Agency Investment Fund (LAIF), a state-wide investment pool that provides liquidity for over 2,500 state and local agencies and follows an investment policy similar to that of the City.

"The City is in very good overall financial condition with a strong balance sheet, sufficient cash and other assets to cover all expected requirements for the foreseeable future," said City Manager Glen Rojas. "We will continue regular monitoring of our investments, given the current unpredictability of the market."

Interested persons may contact the City's Finance Director, Carol Augustine at (650) 330-6643 for more information.

MP is preparing for winter storms and you should, too



City of Menlo Park staff are preparing for winter by:

- ❖ Checking construction sites to prevent soil erosion into the storm drain system and creek
- ❖ Checking the San Francisquito Creek to remove debris
- ❖ Clearing street storm drains
- ❖ Clearing leaves from major street gutters
- ❖ Replenishing needed emergency supplies and equipment

You can also prepare by:

- ❖ Making sure your rain gutters, downspouts, and splash blocks are all in good working order
- ❖ Replacing furnace filters to keep your heating system efficient
- ❖ Adding insulation stripping to windows or doors
- ❖ Sweeping up the curb and gutter area in front of your home
- ❖ Preparing or refreshing your home-based emergency kit (drinking water, first aid kit, no-cook canned goods, hand can opener, radio, flashlight, and extra batteries)
- ❖ Making sure your autos have proper anti-freeze levels
- ❖ When driving, leave more distance for safe breaking and make extra effort to see school children, pedestrians, and autos

For more information, visit the State of California's Office of Emergency Services website: www.oes.ca.gov



SANDBAG LOCATIONS (Open only during rainy season)

1. Civic Center - Alma Street and Burgess Drive
2. Central Menlo Park - Pope Street and Laurel Avenue

Check the City's web site at www.menlopark.org for real time creek monitoring during times of heavy rain! Click on "creek monitoring" on the Quick Links banner for another link to the Palo Alto live creek cam and monitoring station data.



Breakfast with Santa

Saturday, December 6th, 2008
8:00-11:00 a.m.

Burgess Recreation Center
700 Alma St.
Children \$3, Adults \$5

Enjoy the pancake feast, visit with Santa, and write a letter to Santa.
Bring Your Camera!

Sponsored by the
City of Menlo Park Community Services,
Menlo Park Fire District, and
Menlo Park Rotary



City of Menlo Park Frequently Called Numbers

Police Non-Emergency	330-6300
City General Number	330-6600
Library	330-2500
Recreation	330-2200
Business Development	330-6615
Business Licenses	330-6642
Building (Permits / Inspections)	330-6704
Maintenance	330-6780
Maintenance nights /weekends	330-6300

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Email: cebrandell@menlopark.org
Telephone: 650.330.6618
Design & layout: Graffik Dezine (650) 493-4383



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