



menlofocus

A newsletter for the community from the City of Menlo Park

Fall 2009

A word from the City Manager

Welcome to the Fall 2009 issue of our City newsletter-MenloFocus. This issue highlights stories about many of the activities we're



undertaking to continue addressing community concerns and improving our city services. We hope you have seen an increase in opportunities for residents to interact with both City Council members and staff – we recently held a Council Study Session in the Belle Haven neighborhood on housing; several very well attended meetings have been held over the last few months to gather community input on a future plan for the downtown and El Camino Real (see story, this page); and City staff participated in both downtown block parties this summer to continue getting to know you and your needs. We also held a community meeting to hear concerns about employee compensation prior to beginning contract negotiations with our two non-safety bargaining units.

Menlo Park has a great history of community engagement and we are pleased to be building upon that as we work on several important community projects in the next few months – traffic planning in the Willows area, parking in the downtown, sidewalk and safe routes to school projects in several locations and the development of the next fiscal year's budget which begins next spring.

As always, we welcome your ongoing input and comments about everything we do – please feel free to share your comments through our web site, www.menlopark.org. Use the link that says Menlo Park Direct Connect.

Glen Rojas
Menlo Park City Manager

Plan for Downtown and El Camino Real takes shape



Over 130 community members gathered together on September 17 to review and discuss the “emerging plan” for Menlo Park’s Downtown and El Camino Real corridor. At the workshop, participants heard an overview of the plan and then interacted with other attendees, taking a closer look at drawings, charts, graphs and other visual tools representing the different ideas gathered from previous community input sessions. Workshop attendees then offered detailed written comments and also had the opportunity to share individual remarks at a forum-style report out at the close of the meeting. The workshop comments are currently being used to refine and improve the emerging plan.

The emerging plan features ideas for changes that would help the City achieve a comprehensive vision for the downtown area, including the vacant auto dealerships along El Camino Real. The foundation of the emerging plan is the Vision Plan, which was created through its own extensive community planning process in 2007 and 2008. The emerging plan includes ideas such as development of more public spaces downtown, for example - a flexible parking / festival space for the Farmers Market or converting Chestnut to a pedestrian walkway or “paseo”. Other ideas include widening sidewalks along Santa Cruz, installing “bulb outs” on El Camino to improve walkability for pedestrians, allowing some appropriately-designed taller buildings on El Camino



Real and in the downtown, replacing some of the surface parking with parking structures and adding “pocket parks” into the downtown.

The City Council reviewed the emerging plan at a meeting on October 13. The next step will be to prepare a detailed draft Specific Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Fiscal Impact Analysis, which will detail the implications of the proposed plan and be available in Spring 2010. Final approval of the Specific Plan and EIR is expected in October 2010. According to the City’s Community Development Director, Arlinda Heineck, the final approval of the Specific Plan and EIR will allow new development to occur in accordance with the plan. “We’ve had great community participation so far,” Ms. Heineck said. “There will be continuing opportunities for people to be involved as the Specific Plan and EIR process moves forward this winter and spring. We appreciate all the great input and are very excited to see the community’s plan for El Camino Real and Downtown take shape.”

To review the emerging plan and process so far, including a video of the September 17 workshop, go to the City’s web site at www.menlopark.org under City Project Pages / Community Development Projects / El Camino Real – Downtown Specific Plan.



Menlofocus is one year old!

Help us make the next year work for you by taking our quick (5 question) Readers Survey. Enter the link below, or follow the quick link on the City’s home page at www.menlopark.org.

www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=tjitwzl5sSeLXbgrnv7Smw_3d_3d

For a paper copy, call 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 three business days.

Federal Stimulus provides for Menlo Street Resurfacing



In June 2009, the City of Menlo Park received \$635,000 from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Stimulus Package) to apply toward repaving and improving Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility along federal aid roadways within the City. Construction began in early September on portions of Monte Rosa Drive, Live Oak Avenue and Haven Avenue. New curb ramps have been installed, and will be followed by resurfacing the streets with a rubberized asphalt concrete that incorporates recycled tires. Construction is scheduled to be complete by the end of October. For more information, contact the Engineering Division at 650-330-6744.

Budget Correction

In our last issue of Menlofocus, we reported that the City Council had approved a balanced budget for this fiscal year. In early October, however, we discovered we had failed to include certain personnel costs, resulting in an additional \$320,000 expense in the General Fund (the General Fund supports most City services with "general" tax dollars). Rather than the \$50,000 surplus for the fund, the adopted budget now reflects a net \$270,000 deficit.

According to City Manager Glen Rojas, "Even though this is disappointing, our confidence in the budgeting process is extremely high. We will continue refining our budget review to prevent it from happening again."

Although we consider this a serious issue, the discovery of the error relatively early in the fiscal year allows us to take action immediately to identify cost savings in the General Fund's \$38 million budget to offset this omission. And more importantly, as mentioned in the previous Menlofocus, we continue working on a comprehensive and long term review of services and costs, called 2010 and Beyond, in order to move us toward more sustainable budgets in the long term where resources and expected service levels are aligned.

Menlo-Atherton Performing Arts Center



The much-anticipated performing arts center on the Menlo-Atherton High School campus is now completed and grand opening festivities took place on the second weekend in October.

The City of Menlo Park collaborated with the Sequoia Union High School District on the funding for the building. The partnership provided the City an alternative to rebuilding the Burgess Theater and allowed a larger building to be constructed. The Performing Arts Center has been designed to create a gathering place for the Menlo Park and Atherton communities as well as M-A students.

The building design was inspired by the beauty of the historical grove of Valley Oak trees on campus and includes a 492-seat theater, lobby, box office, rehearsal and practice rooms, and stagecraft workshop for production of scenery and props. The theater boasts a professional-caliber fly tower for raising and lowering scenery; an orchestra lift to convert the stage for various types of productions or to extend the seating capacity; an orchestra pit accommodating up to 80 musicians; a robust lighting system with two catwalks for optimal control; state-of-the-art acoustics; and a professional, sound-proof control booth.

The City of Menlo Park will be scheduling various city programs in the theater throughout the year. The Library and Community Services departments have been the first to put plans into place with an evening with author Barbara Kingsolver on November 18 at 7pm among the first city programs to be held in the facility. For more information on this event, call Nick at 650-330-6520.

San Francisco Chronicle features Menlo Park "Street Date"



In the spring of 2009, the National Association of Business Economics (NABE) reported that "economists see light at end of recession in '09." While the economic recovery period is slow, the Consumer Confidence Index is gradually rising driven by a significant improvement in the short-term outlook. Consumer spending patterns suggest that we've not only reached the bottom, but that trends are demonstrating a change in positive purchasing behavior.

On September 10, 2009, Stephanie Wright Hession of the San Francisco Chronicle featured Menlo Park's charming downtown in the "Street Date" article. The "Street Date" perspective features six locations where local residents and visitors alike spend time reading, enjoying a cup of java, fine and rare cigars, fine art, historic Caltrain Station and Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce, and a place to picnic or play sports all within a short and pleasant walk. In addition, the article provides information on where to park, how to get to downtown, and things to know about Kepler's Books.

The fact that the San Francisco Chronicle highlighted downtown Menlo Park out of 100 Bay Area cities illustrates that Menlo Park is not impervious to the current economic conditions, but that the community is overcoming challenges of the recession. Last quarter, Business Development reported that over 21 businesses within the city's extended downtown district either opened or expanded since the beginning of 2009. Since then, several additional businesses have opened their doors or are coming soon, including: Look, Pink & Harmony, Ristorante Mataro, Aly Grace, Miyo Yogurt, and Cook's Seafood Restaurant. These new businesses, coupled with a renewed sense of consumer spending, will not only enhance our core of downtown businesses, but also result in increased tax revenues for the City and potential employment opportunities for local residents.

For more information about business development in Menlo Park, call David or Alex at 650-330-6600.

Charming Changes in the Children's Room at the Menlo Park Library



Cindy and Lauren Anderson enjoying a "Fancy Nancy" book in the Children's Room.

The Children's Room at the Library will be remodeled soon, thanks to the efforts of the Menlo Park Library Foundation. The goal of the project is to make better use of existing space and will include light construction and new furniture, fixtures, and equipment.

Plans feature a new study area, complete with computers and internet access for children. Additionally, expansion of the beginning reader section will include early literacy computer stations for younger children. The picture book area will shift to the west side of the room and fun upholstered step seating will be installed below the windows providing more room for storytimes and author visits.

More improvements include fresh, new paint and carpet to brighten things up a bit, a new Children's reference desk to make reference requests more user-friendly and a self-check machine to ease the check out process.

Another big change involves the creation of a special Teen Area in the main room of the library. We will move books, music and movies for teens from the Children's Room, where they currently reside, to the new area in the main room. This move will enable us to continue to grow the Teen collection and provide comfortable seating for teens.

Library staff thank the community for the tremendous support of this project which was largely funded by donations. If you would like updates about future library events, then please add your address to our email blast at www.menloparklibrary.org

New gymnasium construction starting soon



The newest addition to the Menlo Park Civic Center campus should break ground soon along Alma Street. On July 21st, 2009, the City of Menlo Park City Council certified the Environmental Impact Report and approved the architectural control which allows the project to

continue progressing toward reality. Hoover Associates, the project architect, is currently finalizing construction documents and obtaining building permits for the project. The new gym will be LEED silver certified, with green building features such as solar panels, low flow water fixtures and clerestory windows in the design.

The new gymnasium will house two full size basketball courts with overlapping volleyball, badminton, and youth basketball courts. Construction is slated to be complete in late spring 2010. The Community Services Department is very excited about the opening of the new facility. It will not only enhance the City's recreational programming, but will be a great example of the City's commitment to reducing our impact on climate change.

City Shuttle Service will get you there

The City of Menlo Park offers commuters, residents and visitors easy, convenient transportation options. Services are FREE and available to all. The schedules for all the services are posted on the City's website at www.menlopark.org- click on Getting Around. If you would like to speak with the Transportation Systems Management coordinator, Debbie Helming, regarding your transportation needs or to request a copy of a schedule, please call 650 330-6770.

For Commuters and Residents:

The City of Menlo Park operates two peak hour commuter shuttles between the Menlo Park Caltrain station and the business parks along Marsh and Willow Roads. The shuttles meet 12 northbound and southbound trains, including baby bullets.



For Residents and Visitors:

The **Midday Shuttle** service is a free community service route. It operates on an hourly schedule Monday-Friday, 9:30 a.m. -3:30 p.m. The shuttle is a 20-passenger bus with two spaces available for wheelchairs. The shuttle stops at a number of key stops and is also a flag-down service for the convenience of passengers.

Key stops include:

- Downtown Menlo Park
- Menlo Park Library
- Menlo Park Senior Center
- Menlo Park Medical Clinic
- Stanford Medical Center
- Caltrain Station
- Belle Haven Library
- Safeway
- Stanford Mall
- Little House

The shuttle is a popular service, particularly for seniors. The shuttle picks up riders at most senior residences in the downtown area, including:

- Glenwood Inn
- Crane Place
- Partridge/Kennedy

For Residents:

Every Wednesday, the **Shopper's Shuttle** picks up passengers from their homes and takes them to Sharon Heights Shopping Center, Downtown Menlo Park and Stanford Shopping Center.

The shuttle is a 20-passenger vehicle with a lift to accommodate passengers with wheelchairs and walkers.

Change clocks and smoke detector batteries

CHANGE YOUR CLOCK



CHANGE YOUR BATTERY

Daylight Savings Time ends on Sunday, November 1, and all clocks should be turned back one hour.

The time change is the perfect reminder to also replace the batteries in the smoke detectors in your home to make sure they are in working order.

Students spruce up the Belle Haven Family Center



Students from the Menlo Park community school project at Belle Haven school gathered together to spruce up the school's Family Center in time for the start of classes this year. Sixth, seventh and eighth graders from the K-8 school planted flowers and spread gravel donated by the Palo Alto University Rotary Club. According to Belle Haven Community School Director Alejandro Vilchez, the project is proof that students at the school are living their motto for the year "Say it, own it, live it." "Things are really coming together for us this year, thanks to the participation of our parents and students early on," said Mr. Vilchez. "This really sets the tone for the rest of they year and we are looking forward to great success."

The Community School is a City program designed to improve educational performance for children and parenting skills for their families in the Belle Haven neighborhood. For more information contact Alejandro at arvilchez@menlopark.org or 650.330.2274.

Your house can contribute to climate change

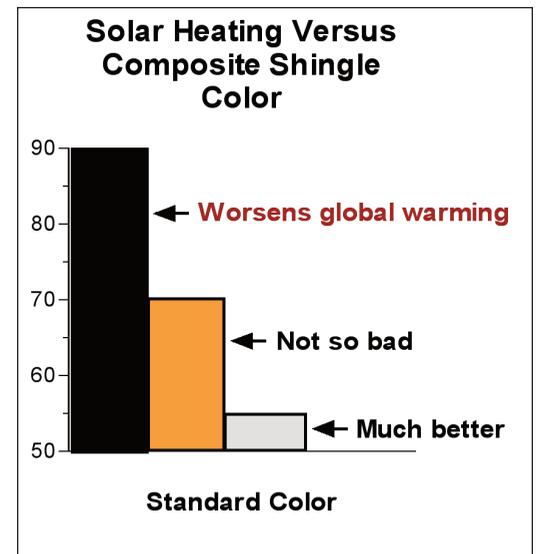
According to the City's Environmental Quality Commission, we can do more to reduce climate change by simply reducing solar heating produced by structures and pavement than by conserving energy alone – but please, still do that!

For example, see graph

Up to 10 times a home's internal energy can be lost and absorbed by infrared-loving greenhouse gasses on sunny days, just due to roofing color choices!

Avoid converting sunlight to infrared (heat) by choosing reflective roofing and paving. Trees and green plantings always help too.

For more information about the City's Environmental Quality Commission, contact Regina Wheeler at 650-330-6763.



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.

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