



menlofocus

A newsletter for the community from the City of Menlo Park Summer 2011

City Facilities Going “Green”

The City has incorporated several energy and water efficient features into many of its facilities and parks, thus reducing our carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions. As the City designs and constructs projects, we will continue including these measures to enhance the community.

- **The Arrillaga Family Gymnasium** officially opened its doors in October 2010. The gymnasium incorporates many green features that are energy and water efficient including increased insulation throughout the building, a highly efficient heating and cooling system, a solar hot water system, high-efficiency plumbing features, and a daylight harvesting light system which monitors natural light and adjusts the interior lighting automatically. In addition, the City has applied for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver Certification which recognizes that a building was designed and built to achieve energy savings, water efficiency, CO₂ emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts.
- **The Burgess Recreation Center** is in the process of receiving a facelift which includes increased insulation and new windows throughout the building, high-efficiency plumbing features, water-efficient landscaping with drip irrigation, LED indoor lighting with dimmers and auto-on features, and a new patio to decrease stormwater runoff into the San Francisco Bay.
- **Kelly Park** now has a 108,000 square foot synthetic turf field which was constructed using recycled rubber. During construction, all existing paving material was crushed on-site and used as base materials for the field and track. The park also has new water-efficient plumbing features and water-efficient landscaping.
- **LED Streetlight Retrofits** - This winter the City will replace 445 existing streetlights that use high pressure sodium bulbs with light-emitting diode (LED) fixtures that have a longer useful life and provide increased energy efficiency and lower maintenance costs. The LED lights, which will be mounted on existing streetlight poles/arms, contain no mercury and provide a whiter, brighter light which improves night visibility. The City will also benefit from PG&E rebates, and the project is partially funded by an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant.
- **The Burgess Gymnastics Center** is currently under design with construction to start in April 2011. Design features have not been finalized, but the City anticipates the Center will incorporate green features comparable to the new Arrillaga Family Gymnasium.
- **The City Council Chambers** has new LED lighting and a new highly efficient heating and cooling system.
- **The Belle Haven Pool** has new LED pool lights.





El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan



Specific Plan Guiding Principles

Enhance Public Space

The Specific Plan emphasizes widened sidewalks, plazas and parks, as well as healthier living through walking, biking and social gathering.

Generate Vibrancy

The Specific Plan allows for a mix of retail, residential and office uses that complement and support one another and bring vitality.

Sustain Menlo Park's Village Character

The Specific Plan accommodates development in ways that complement existing character, through detailed design controls and guidelines.

Enhance Connectivity

The Specific Plan includes widened sidewalks, intersection improvements, and grade-separated pedestrian/bicycle crossings of the railroad tracks.

Promote Healthy Living and Sustainability

The Specific Plan recognizes and promotes healthy living and activity by encouraging walking, biking and access to transit, and takes a comprehensive approach to sustainability and carbon emissions reduction.

For more information (including the *Draft Specific Plan itself*) or to sign up for project emails, please visit www.menlopark.org/specificplan or contact Thomas Rogers:
- throgers@menlopark.org
- (650) 330-6722

The long-range planning for Menlo Park's El Camino Real corridor and Downtown is reaching an important stage with the pending release of environmental and fiscal analysis reports and the holding of public comment meetings on the draft plan and the analyses. The City wants to make sure the community's contributions continue!

Get Involved

Read the Draft Plan

Curious about details? Review the draft plan itself on the project web page.

Project Email List

Sign up to get updates when meetings are scheduled and when new information is available.

Contact City Staff with Any Questions

If you have any questions on the draft plan or the upcoming review process, feel free to contact the project planner listed below.

What is a Specific Plan, anyway?

A specific plan is a comprehensive, action-oriented set of rules for a specific geographic area. For Menlo Park, the El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan will set the direction for the heart of the city over the coming decades. It builds on the successful 2007-2008 Vision Plan process, which established twelve overall goals.

How has the community been involved in the process so far?

The plan has included extensive opportunities for input, including: eight citywide mailouts to all local residents and businesses, two community-wide surveys responded to by over 2,000 people, seven workshops, an email list of over 900 people who get updates, stakeholder interviews, two walking tours, regular Chamber of Commerce outreach, tables at all the Downtown Block Parties, and more.



How are concerns from the Farmer's Market and other downtown interests being addressed?

City staff has continued to meet with the Chamber of Commerce's Downtown Group every month, and has also reached out to the Live Oak Lions Club, sponsors of the Sunday Farmer's Market, in order to better understand their concerns and to clear up possible misunderstandings. In addition, city officials conducted one-on-one, informal outreach to downtown businesses to make sure they were aware of the process and the upcoming opportunities to contribute.

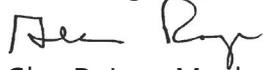
From the City Manager

Welcome to the Summer 2011 issue of the City of Menlo Park's community newsletter – the MenloFocus. Inside this issue we highlight many of the programs and projects we're working on to meet constantly changing community needs. We also highlight some of the changes we've made in the past couple of years to trim our expenses to bring them in line with revenues. For example, more than ten staff positions (including two executive managers) and \$3 million have been cut from the City's expenses in the last two years. These cuts have included impacts to some services that you may have noticed, such as reductions at the Senior Center, the Library and the Onetta Harris Community Center.

We've done all this in response to the continued poor economy although we're more fortunate than some of our neighboring cities in that our healthy fund balance allows us to bring our expenses in line with revenues over a longer time period.

Despite the poor economy and tight budgets, your City staff continue to deliver high quality services and facilities that keep Menlo Park a premier community. According to our latest community survey (see page 10), our residents rank quality of life here among the top-rated communities in the nation. One of the many things our residents rate highly is our parks, recreation programs, and special events. We look forward to seeing you at an activity in the near future as we celebrate what makes Menlo Park so great.

Warm Regards,



Glen Rojas ~ Menlo Park City Manager



The City of Menlo Park offers a free shuttle program with several options:

- Willow Road Area Caltrain Shuttle • Marsh Road Area Caltrain Shuttle • Midday Shuttle • Shopper's Shuttle

The Willow Road Area and Marsh Road Area Caltrain Shuttles provide service to and from the Menlo Park Caltrain station. These peak-hour shuttles provide service to local business parks. Morning service is 6:39 a.m. until 9:45 a.m. Afternoon service is 2:24 p.m. until 6:34 p.m.

The Midday Shuttle provides small bus service to the front door of destinations frequented by Seniors, such as shopping centers, Senior Centers and medical destinations. The bus drops passengers at the front door of their destination instead of requiring passengers to walk from a bus stop. While the Midday service is open to the public, it is tailored to meet the needs of Seniors. The hourly service is provided with two buses on weekdays between 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

The City also operates the Shopper's Shuttle every Wednesday and Saturday beginning at 10 a.m. which carries Seniors from their home to shopping destinations including the Sharon Heights Shopping Center, downtown Menlo Park, the Menlo Park Library and Stanford Shopping Center.

If you would like more information about these services, please call the Transportation Department at 650 330-6770 or log on to the City's website www.menlopark.org

Facebook Design Charrette a Huge Success



Nearly 200 architecture and design professionals from across the state assembled in Menlo Park on Saturday March 5 to participate in a day-long design charrette at the new facebook® headquarters. The event was organized by the City of Menlo Park and the San Mateo Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Facebook® was a co-sponsor.

“Charrette” comes from the French word for “cart.” And was originally used when 19th French Architecture students were challenged with design assignments requiring intense work under very tight and inflexible deadlines. Over the years the term “charrette” has become synonymous with an intense and time constrained design project or community based problem-solving and participatory design activity. Facebook® employees call such an effort a “hackathon.”

Design teams of architects, students, and resource contributors assembled to tackle planning challenges for the Belle Haven and Willow Business Area’s commercial business parks, transit systems, residential areas and the new facebook® property (formerly Sun Microsystems and General Motors properties on Willow Road) along with the adjacent salt pond habitat.

A full presentation of the design charrette results will be made to the City Council at their May 3rd meeting. In the meantime, you can view examples of the design concepts at the City’s Main Library, the Belle Haven Library, and at City Hall beginning March 28th.

Current Year Budget on Track

Although events in the economy are battering the financial health of many communities, the City of Menlo Park began pursuing budget sustainability long ago. Throughout the economic downturn, the City’s strategy has been to preserve services as much as possible in order to stay focused on the eventual recovery. This means that all departments once again made short term reductions in areas such as training, special projects and equipment purchases which help close the budget gap caused by declining revenues. The City has also taken other steps to align revenues with expenses by eliminating ten staff positions, not increasing salaries for non-police personnel, reducing overtime budgets, not awarding bonuses to executive staff and addressing benefit costs by increasing co-pays, charging employees for a share of retirement costs and implementing a “2-tier” retirement system prior to the passage of Measure L. These steps have helped us stay on track, limiting the potential use of the City’s reserves, in the current fiscal year.

City staff are already preparing for development of next year’s budget. At a special meeting in January Council asked staff to prepare next year’s budget with options for contracting out some services and eliminating others. Staff is putting together several proposals that will include pros and cons, costs and benefits and information about impacts to the community if changes to service delivery are made. Council will begin making decisions about potential service changes in April and May. Watch the City’s web for more information.

“Menlo Park is in good overall financial condition with high reserves and sufficient cash to cover all expected requirements for the future,” said City Manager Glen Rojas. “We are continuing our focus on a sustainable budget supporting Menlo Park’s high quality of life.”

New Businesses Attracted to Menlo Park

Despite the halted recovery from the Great Recession, high profile firms have made decisions to locate their businesses in Menlo Park. Pharmaca, BevMo!, and Facebook are three notable examples of widely recognized firms that have opened their doors here or plan to in the coming months.

Pharmaca, an “integrative pharmacy” has had its eye on Menlo Park for several years and patiently waited for a location that suited its merchandising and marketing needs. Such an opportunity presented itself when the former Xanadu Tribal Arts Gallery decided to consolidate its operations in downtown San Francisco. This was just the opportunity that Pharmaca hoped for, with 4,500 square feet of space, access to the building from two sides, and a location on the same side of Santa Cruz Avenue as Trader Joe’s and Draeger’s, which do not offer pharmacy services. Pharmaca opened for business on November 6, 2010.

BevMo! has long wanted an outlet in Menlo Park as well. Four years ago the firm actively sought a sight on Santa Cruz Avenue, which met with strong resistance. Despite its efforts to design a smaller format outlet and to tone down its merchandising impact, the “village” version of its typical storefront was not feasible for our downtown. At the time the firm abandoned its pursuit of a downtown location it stated that a destination facility on the highly trafficked El Camino Real was a better choice for the community and the firm. With 1,600 ClubBev! members locally, it was highly motivated to provide a local outlet for its products and services. BevMo! opened for business at 700 El Camino Real on January 11, 2011. It joins other existing large format retailers at that location, such as Big Five, LensCrafters, and Staples.

Facebook, a new and important addition to the City’s industrial and R&D zoning district, announced its purchase of the former Sun Microsystems’ (and briefly Oracle) campus at Bayfront Expressway and Willow Road. This rapidly growing, global icon of social networking outgrew its Palo Alto headquarters and the City successfully attracted the firm to this well known and regionally accessible headquarters location. 51 media outlets, including 10 television or cable outlets, attended a press conference on February 8th in the City’s Council Chamber for the announcement by Facebook. Facebook plans on remodeling the campus and occupying it in phases. The first phase is scheduled for completion and occupancy in July. At some point in the future, Facebook will be housed in eleven buildings on the corporate campus. It also acquired an adjacent parcel from General Motors, to put in a land bank, should its growth call for further expansion.

Please welcome these new firms to Menlo Park by visiting them and, if their products and services meet your needs, patronize them and help ensure their success here.



Free Landscaping Class - May 21st

Just in time to start a vegetable garden, enroll in our free “Water-Wise Edible Gardening” workshop on May 21st from 9 am to 12 pm in Menlo Park. This water efficient landscaping class provided by the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA) and the City of Menlo Park will teach attendees how to garden in a chemical free and more sustainable manner. Make your garden more environmentally friendly. To register, please contact BAWSCA at (650) 349-3000.

Menlo Park ranks among the best communities nationally

Every two years the City of Menlo Park conducts a community survey to get a better understanding of the opinions of a representative sample of residents about community quality of life, service delivery, and civic participation. Overall, the results allow us to evaluate services, identify areas for improvement and plan for long term success. The survey results confirm that, by far, Menlo Park residents are happy with local government and with the quality of the services we provide. The survey was mailed out to 1200 randomly selected residents in September 2010. Our results are benchmarked against a national database of 500 cities.

Some highlights of the survey include how residents rate different community characteristics; we were above the national benchmark on 17 of 32 different characteristics including: safety, natural environment, recreation opportunities, sense of community and Menlo Park as a place to raise kids. Menlo Park rated similar to the benchmark on 11 characteristics and below the benchmark on four: availability of affordable quality child care, availability of affordable quality housing, employment opportunities and ease of bus travel.

The survey also asked residents to rate government services. Trust in local government was rated similar to the national benchmark, with half of the respondents feeling the City's overall direction is good or excellent. City employees rate well above the benchmark with 80% of residents having an overall impression of good or excellent. Residents rated the City much above the benchmark on the "value of services for taxes paid." The City also rated above benchmark on services to Seniors and Youth.

Twenty six different City services were rated, with 15 rated above benchmark, including: street cleaning, parking, police, parks, recreation programs and facilities, library, and public information. Nine services were rated similar to benchmark, including: street lighting and maintenance, land use / planning / zoning and traffic enforcement. The two services rated below the benchmark included emergency preparedness and economic development.



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Other notable results include a much lower than benchmark rating on "population growth seen as too fast," which means Menlo Park residents are not concerned about population growth as an issue. Residents also rated "much more" than benchmark on "retail growth seen as too slow," which means people want to see more retail growth in the community.

Of 240 benchmark communities, only 3 rated higher in "your neighborhood as a place to live." In fact, a stellar 94% of Menlo Park residents rate overall quality of life excellent or good. Of 305 benchmark communities, only 10 rated higher in "your community as a place to live."

More detail is available on the web page under Items of Interest.

Menlo Park Recreation Facilities Makeover!



Burgess Recreation Center ~ A major renovation of the Burgess Recreation Center began on January 17th. The project included all new windows, doors, HVAC, restrooms, patios, and flooring as well as an addition of 900 square feet and reconfiguration of rooms to accommodate current programs more effectively. The project was completed in late March in time for the spring session. This phenomenal timeframe for completion was achieved by the generous donation of Mr. John Arrillaga and the hard work by Vance Brown and all of their contractors. A re-grand opening will be scheduled in April. Please come by and check out this beautiful “new” facility.



Gymnastics Center ~ The gymnastics program will be relocated to temporary structure on the Burgess Park basketball court in order to support the full gymnastics programming starting in April in time for the spring 2011 session. The old gymnastics center and Burgess gym will be demolished beginning in early April. The new gymnastics center will take 9-12 months to complete. The state-of-art gymnastics center will have full exercise floor, dedicated preschool area, foam pits for higher level gymnastics, more comfortable parent viewing area, multipurpose rooms, and gymnastics equipment for every level of gymnast. This new facility is a collaboration of the City’s Measure T funds and the generosity of the Arrillaga Family.



Kelly Park ~ Kelly Park has undergone a complete remodel including the addition of an artificial turf field with lights, track, basketball court, and two lighted tennis courts. The park will be open to the public in early April. For field reservations, please contact Todd Zeo at (650) 330-2222.

Arrillaga Family Gymnasium ~ The new Arrillaga Family Gymnasium opened in October 2010. All of the existing programs were successful transferred over to the new facility. The new facility, which is twice the size of the previous gym, has quickly filled up with new programs and community rentals. Staff is very excited about fully utilizing this incredible facility and all of the new offerings which will be available to the youth and adult sports community.

Bike to Work Day

Thursday, May 12, marks the Bay Area’s 17th annual Bike to Work Day, a celebration that promotes bicycling as a healthy, inexpensive and fun form of transportation. Join over one hundred thousand other Bay Area bicycle riders in making Bike to Work Day a continued success.

To thank all the participating bicycle riders for their efforts, the City will be hosting “Energizer” stations at the following locations:

- Willow Place bike bridge
- San Mateo bike bridge
- Menlo Park Caltrain station
- Pierce Street bicycle/pedestrian bridge.

The “Energizer” stations will be open from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. Bike bags, various brochures and goodies will be handed out to all bike riders who stop by.

For more information on Bike to Work Day activities and other commuting alternatives in San Mateo County and throughout the Bay Area, please log on to www.commute.org





Police Explorers

The Menlo Park Police Department has a program for the youth of our community called the Menlo Park Police Explorer Program. Any local youth, ages 14-20, is eligible. For those that are accepted, the program provides an introduction to the police department and its functions. This is often a stepping stone for those considering a future in law enforcement.

Although this is a volunteer position, those who apply submit an application and are interviewed as though they are applying for a paid position with the department. They are also required to pass a background and fingerprint check submitted to the Department of Justice. Those that are accepted into the program are then obligated to attend an abbreviated version of a police academy which lasts nine weeks on weekend days.

Currently, the department has eight Explorers. You may have seen them on foot patrol in the downtown area during the holiday season. They also attend larger community events such as the Nativity Carnival, Sunset Magazine, Connoisseur's Marketplace and downtown block parties. You will see them patrolling on foot during these events as well as staffing the police department information booth and assisting with child fingerprinting.

Explorers also participate in national competitions that allow them to experience scenarios simulating what a police officer would encounter in their daily duties. Not only does this provide an advantage for them to understand the dynamics of different types of calls, but also affords the opportunity for interaction with other Explorers from agencies throughout the United States.

If you encounter one of our many Explorers engage them and offer your support. They are to be commended for their adherence to a disciplined program and their loyalty to an honorable profession.

To learn more about becoming an Explorer log on to <http://www.menloparkpolice.org/cadets.html>



Team Sheeper wins bid to continue City aquatics programming



Following an open, competitive selection process that began nearly one year ago, the City Council awarded a contract to provide aquatics programming at all three City of Menlo Park pools to Team Sheeper / Menlo Swim and Sport at the March 1, 2011 meeting. The contract will last for five years with an additional five year extension if Team Sheeper completes capital improvements to any one or all of the pools totaling more than \$200,000 in the first four years of the contract.

Highlights of the new contract include provision of additional peak time lane space (from 4.5 hours per week to 80) to the SOLO competitive youth swim team at a subsidized rental rate; requirements to provide other popular programs such as lap swimming, open / recreation swimming, lessons, aqua fit, Masters and non-competitive youth swimming opportunities. Team Sheeper will be required to meet strict safety standards and allow periodic inspections of operations. The agreement also requires Team Sheeper to be responsible for all repairs and replacement of equipment where the cost is less than \$1500 per item at the Belle Haven Pool and less than \$2500 at the Burgess Pools. The City will be responsible for any item of equipment costing greater than \$1500 per item at the Belle Haven Pool. For repairs and replacement of equipment costing between \$2500 and \$25,000 per item at the Burgess Pools, the City will pay but Team Sheeper will then be charged an amortized amount over the life expectancy of the item and the remaining term of the lease. All items over \$25,000 will be the City's responsibility alone.

The lease also includes a rental payment to the City for use of the Burgess Pools of \$3000 per month. No rent will be charged for the Belle Haven Pool, as the cost of programming there to the City has averaged about \$90,000 per summer season and the City will no longer have to bear these costs. This means the net positive impact to the City's 11-12 budget will be roughly \$126,000.

According to a study of 21 other Peninsula cities' aquatics programs and their costs, Menlo Park is a model for effective programming at a high level of cost recovery. The average tax payer subsidy for these other pools is \$250,000, not including annual maintenance costs. In addition, regular surveys of pool users show a very high level of satisfaction with aquatics programs that is sure to continue under the new contract with Team Sheeper.

For more information on the aquatics programming RFP process, rental rate calculations, the 21 city comparison and more, please see:

<http://www.menlopark.org/departments/com/parks/burgpool.htm>

