



menlofocus

A newsletter for the community from the City of Menlo Park ~ Winter/Spring 2013

City responding to court order to update housing plan

This year, three housing advocacy groups threatened litigation against the City of Menlo Park, citing the City's failure to comply in a timely fashion with state-mandated Housing Element Update requirements. The City negotiated a settlement with the advocacy groups filing the lawsuit. According to the lawsuit settlement, the City must create an updated Housing Element by March 2013 or face serious consequences, which could include a moratorium on the issuance of non-residential building permits (for all new commercial development) and the loss of state transportation funds to build and maintain City streets. These sanctions could result in a negative impact to our daily commutes and our local economy.

The State of California requires that every city make its regional fair share of land available for residential development. By state law, cities must identify how and where its housing needs will be met by completing what's known as a Housing Element. A Housing Element is a housing plan, which is a chapter of the City's General Plan, and it is an opportunity for Menlo Park to figure out how to address the City's housing needs today and in the future.

Since the City's previous Housing Element was adopted in 1992, there is much that needs to be done to address past unmet needs and to provide for future housing opportunities. The Preliminary Draft Housing Element contains a variety of programs to meet our local needs while addressing our regional responsibilities.

Community Involvement

So far, the process for the Housing Element update has included:

- **Information** on the City's website; City-wide mailings; a Housing Element newsletter and FAQ materials; community workshops; press releases; information to people signing up on the Housing Element list-serve; and more.
- **Two Community Workshops** were held to provide information, answer questions and solicit feedback on housing needs in Menlo Park, factors to consider in evaluating potential sites for housing and to identify policy ideas.

Article continued on the following pages.



Housing Plan *(continued)*

- **Interviews** with major property owners, school districts, representatives of various interest groups, affordable housing providers and others to identify possible housing opportunities and actions the City might pursue to address housing needs.
- **Housing Element Steering Committee**, comprised of representatives of the Housing Commission, Planning Commission and City Council, has conducted five meetings to review materials and provide direction for the Preliminary Draft Housing Element. All meetings included opportunities for community members to ask questions and provide comments.

Overall Approach to Menlo Park's Housing Strategies

The City is taking a measured approach, within the requirements of the State:

- **Recognize that land is limited** and use remaining available land efficiently.
- **Focus on housing affordability and special needs** (housing for seniors, workforce housing, housing for persons with disabilities, shelter for the homeless) and avoid inefficient use of land on more low density, market rate single family homes.
- **Provide a variety of housing choices** distributing affordable housing throughout the community; locate new housing near transit and services; and assure new housing fits with the character of Menlo Park.

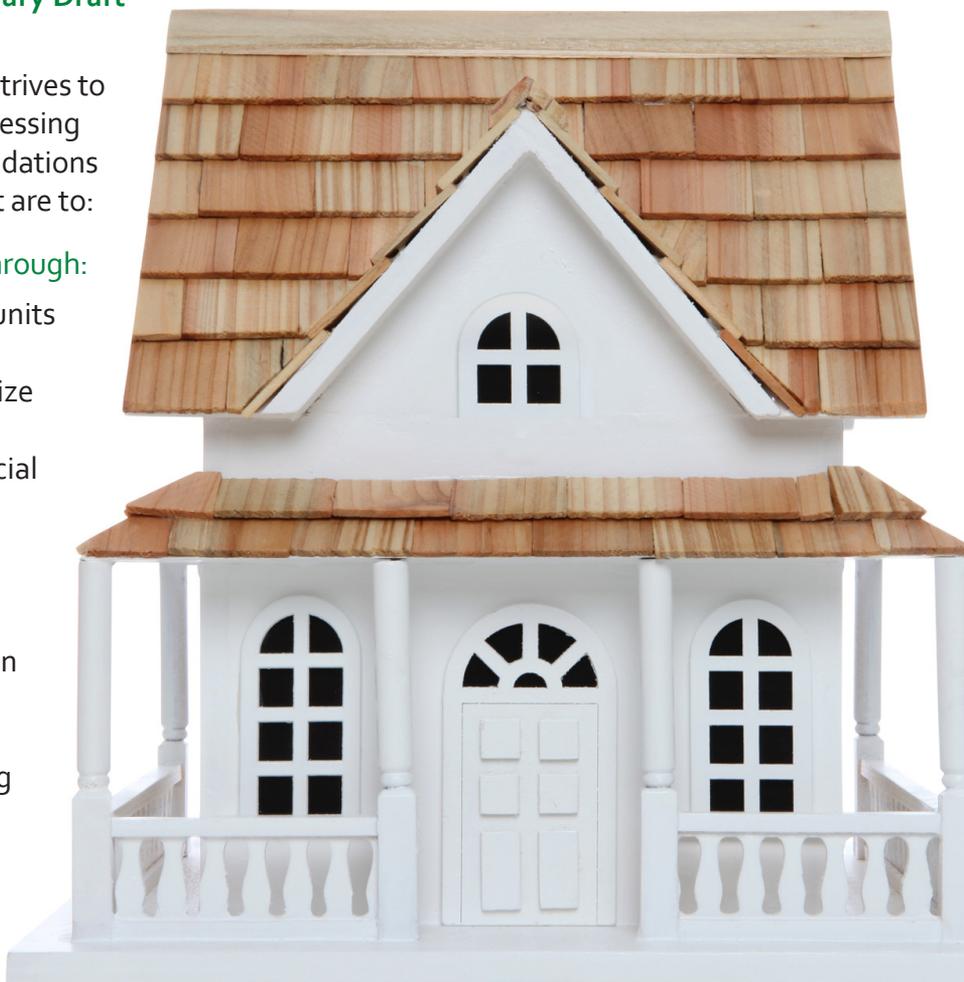
Key Recommendations in the Preliminary Draft Housing Element

The Preliminary Draft Housing Element strives to include the approaches above while addressing the City's responsibilities. Key recommendations in the Preliminary Draft Housing Element are to:

Provide a variety of new housing types through:

- More opportunities for new second units ("granny" units)
- Create an amnesty program to legalize existing illegal second units
- Allow a mix of housing and commercial uses in some locations
- Continue existing zoning for market rate housing
- Implement the recently adopted El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan
- Provide infill housing around Downtown
- Rezone sites for multi-family housing at higher densities
- Create incentives for affordable housing

Article continued on the following page.



This chart shows the larger sites being considered for rezoning that will move into the next step in the Housing Element process, which will include an environmental impact assessment. Additional “infill sites” around the downtown are also included. A complete copy of the Preliminary Draft of the Housing Element can be found at the City’s website under @Home.

POTENTIAL	HOUSING SITES		
	ADDRESS	STREET	SITE NAME
	1200	Willow Road	1200 Block Mid-Peninsula’s Gateway
	1300	Willow Road	1300 Block Mid-Peninsula’s Gateway
		Hamilton Avenue	Hamilton Avenue East
		Willow Road	Veteran’s Affairs Clinic
	555	Willow Road	555 Willow
	300 Block	Ravenswood Avenue	Corpus Christi
	3600 Block	Haven Avenue	Haven Avenue
	401-445	Burgess Drive	401-445 Burgess Drive
	8	Homewood Place	8 Homewood Place
	300 Block	Middlefield Road	St. Patrick’s Seminary
	125-135	Willow Road	125-135 Willow Road
	2111-2121	Sand Hill Road	Hewlett Foundation
		Sand Hill Road	I-280 and Sand Hill
3875	Bohannon Drive	Main Post Office	

Get paid to transform your lawn into a water efficient landscape!

Menlo Park Municipal Water District customers looking to convert their water-thirsty lawn into a water-efficient landscape can now participate in the “Lawn Be Gone” rebate program. Residential customers are eligible for a rebate of up to \$500, while multi-family and commercial customers are eligible for a rebate of up to \$3,000. A minimum of 200 sq. ft. of front lawn must be converted. Lawn areas must be in healthy condition and must be irrigated by a working sprinkler system.

Participation Steps:

- 1) Visit www.bawsca.org for full program terms and conditions and to fill out an application.
- 2) The City of Menlo Park Environmental staff will contact you to schedule a pre-conversion site inspection. Please note that you MUST receive a pre-conversion site inspection to participate in the program. Lawns that have already been converted without a pre-inspection will not be eligible for the rebate program.
- 3) Once you receive a “Notice to Proceed” to convert your lawn, you will have 90 days to complete your conversion project.
- 4) After your project is completed, the City of Menlo Park will conduct a post conversion inspection and collect receipts for materials and labor. After you receive approval of a successful lawn conversion, you will receive your rebate check!

For more information, please contact the City of Menlo Park Environmental Program at (650) 330-6740 or email recycle@menlopark.org.

Community Visioning Process to begin in Belle Haven in January

Recently, the Belle Haven neighborhood has seen major changes in land use with City Council and voter approval of the Menlo Gateway project and the move of Facebook – including 3000 employees to the former Sun Microsystems Campus. Facebook is also interested in developing a second site for an additional 2,000 employees. Additionally, the State of California's dissolution of redevelopment agencies has greatly impacted Menlo Park's ability to continue providing the previous level of service to the neighborhood – over \$3 million annually in services was funded through the city's RDA and allowed a higher annual allocation of funds per resident (\$1666 v. \$1176). In order to preserve Police services in the area, the City's Housing Division was eliminated and other cost cutting has occurred. A recently completed community snapshot of the neighborhood also shows that Belle Haven is much less affluent than the City of Menlo Park as a whole, with stark inequalities in major demographic indicators such as population, housing, education, and employment. City budgets are projected to remain tight into the future, so the timing appears right to make sure City funds are spent on the services that have the highest priorities for the people in Belle Haven through a community visioning process.

In order to determine whether there was interest in partnering with the City on a community vision process, City staff conducted informal community conversations in the neighborhood during the summer of 2012. The conversations revealed support for a process as well as a number of themes:

- 1. Bridge east and west Menlo Park** - Residents of Belle Haven would like to see more effective communication and collaboration between east and west Menlo Park. The Belle Haven neighborhood feels divided and residents believe more should be done to bring the whole Menlo Park community together.
- 2. Education** – One of the consistent themes in these initial conversations was a strong value for education. Families in Belle Haven value quality education experiences for their children and would like to see the quality of educational opportunities for Belle Haven be comparable with the rest of Menlo Park.
- 3. Neighborhood Investment** - The appearance of the Belle Haven neighborhood was a concern, with a number of public areas that are underdeveloped and abandoned.
- 4. Gentrification** - There is a fear of gentrification of the neighborhood as more residents are being pushed out due to higher home prices and the increasing cost of living.
- 5. Resiliency** - The Belle Haven neighborhood is a resilient community with a strong sense of family and caring for young people even though it is more difficult to be a parent here.
- 6. Fragmented** – Interviewees felt there are a number of residents and groups in the neighborhood with talents and resources, but many are working in silos and do not collaborate with one another very well.
- 7. Trust and Safety** – As the neighborhood is diverse, it will be important to acknowledge and consider differences and make sure that participants have a comfortable and safe venue to participate.

Using this information, the City is currently looking for a qualified firm to facilitate the process, which is expected to begin in January. Watch the City's website for more information or contact Derek Schweigart at dmschweigart@menlopark.org.

SURVEY

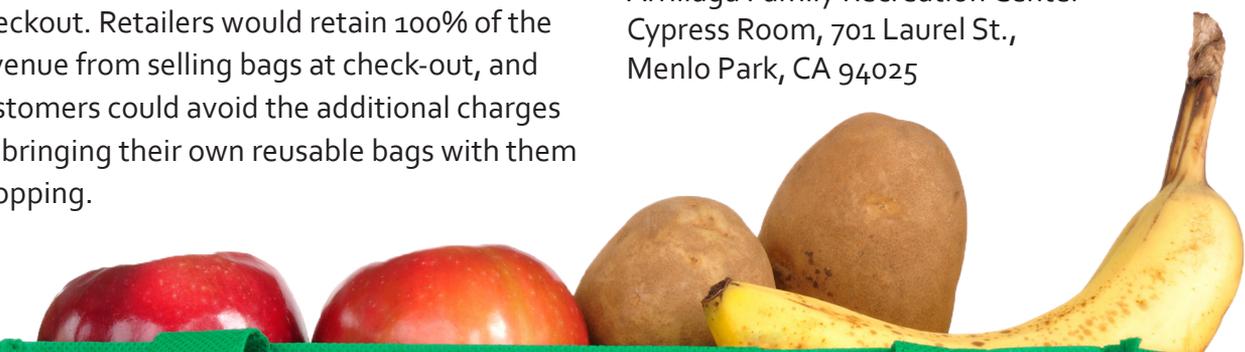
Take the City's Bi-annual Citizen Survey and let us know what you think about Menlo Park and city services. The survey is similar to one used in over 500 communities across the country and allows us to compare with other cities. Go to the City's webpage at www.menlopark.org and click on the green box that says Citizen Survey under Our City description.

The City of Menlo Park is considering a reusable bag ordinance

Twenty four cities in San Mateo and Santa Clara County, including Menlo Park, are considering adopting San Mateo County's proposed Reusable Bag Ordinance. The ordinance would prohibit disposable plastic carry-out bags at all retail establishments and mandate a minimum charge of ten cents for every recycled paper bag or reusable bag provided by the retailer at checkout. Retailers would retain 100% of the revenue from selling bags at check-out, and customers could avoid the additional charges by bringing their own reusable bags with them shopping.

The ordinance will be presented to Menlo Park City Council in January 2013 for their vote. If adopted by Menlo Park City Council, the ordinance will likely take effect on April 22, 2013 – Earth Day.

Menlo Park Informative Meeting
provide information, gather feedback
Wednesday | December 12, 2012 | 6:30PM
Arrillaga Family Recreation Center
Cypress Room, 701 Laurel St.,
Menlo Park, CA 94025



For more information, please visit the Environmental Programs page at www.menlopark.org, email recycle@menlopark.org, or call (650) 330-6740.

brian henry

City Arborist and steward of our urban forest

Even though the dominate feature of Menlo Park's logo is a sprawling oak and the city is on the list of America's best treed cities, many people know little about the arborist who is responsible for the care of our thousands of trees. His passion for the environment has motivated him to raise money to preserve natural resources and to educate himself about caring for the gift of nature.

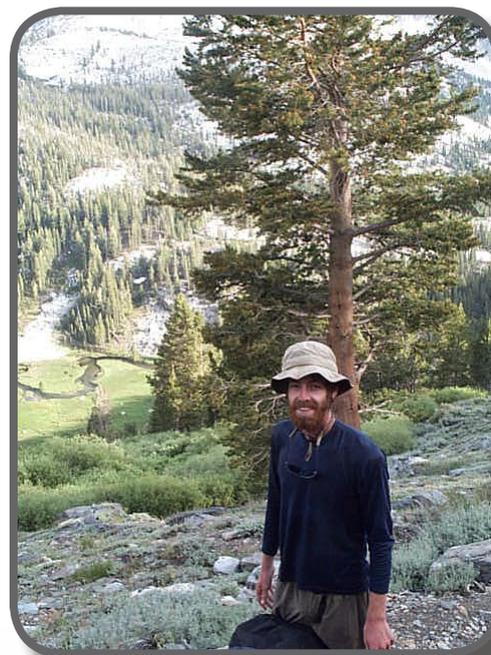
Brian Henry recently became Menlo Park's arborist. Prior to this, he completed an unusual undertaking - when he and a high school friend heard about an opportunity to purchase land in the Brazilian rainforest to preserve it, they set out on a 2,600-mile journey on foot from Mexico to Canada to raise the funds.

Over the course of five months, they followed the Pacific Crest Trail that winds through the Mojave Desert, the Sierra Nevada Mountains, Yosemite, around Lake Tahoe up to Crater Lake, and through the Cascade Mountain Range and on into Canada. "We both had just graduated from college, neither of us had jobs, and we wanted to raise some money for the rainforest project," he said. Companies as well as individuals sponsored their walk. "We bought 150 acres to expand the borders of an existing preserve," he said. "Raising money added more value to the trip. There was inspiration to finish it because there was a good cause behind it," Henry said.

Fortunately for Henry, his job incorporates his love of nature. As the city's only certified arborist, Henry is kept busy caring for more than 25,000 trees. "Menlo Park has more trees than people," he said. "So, as the only arborist, I have a lot to do." Henry analyses the environment in which the trees are growing and determines what trees should be planted and where, based on the space limitations. "I plant new trees as well as maintain what is already here."

Henry's practical, boots-on-the ground experience augments his formal education. He holds a bachelors degree in earth science, and has masters degrees in both forestry and landscape design. He also holds the highest level of certification from the International Society of Arboriculture.

With the unique diversity of trees in Menlo Park, Brian is excited about helping to preserve the vibrant community of trees that is part of Menlo Park's great natural resource. And he is glad he doesn't have to hike 2600 miles to do it!



5 Ways to green your holiday season

While the holidays can be the most spirited time of the year, it can also be the most wasteful. With all the holiday planning, buying, and travelling it can be easy to forget how our activities affect the environment. By following these simple tips this season, you'll not only reduce your environmental impact, but you'll be promoting a more sustainable way of life!

1. Borrow From Nature

Borrow items from nature to decorate your table and return them when you're done. Dried leaves or smooth stones make beautiful place cards, and a pinecone lying on its side creates the perfect stand or centerpiece for your holiday feast.

2. Get Energy-Efficient Lighting

Lower your electricity bill even more by using energy-efficient light-emitting diodes (LED) lights for outdoors and for your holiday tree. Not only are they durable and cool to the touch, they also pull almost 90 percent less power and are several hundred times brighter than traditional lights.

3. Turn Down Your Thermostat

Turn down your thermostat a few notches before your guests arrive. As more and more guests arrive, the room's temperature will rise to a comfortable level. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends heating your home to 70 degrees during the day and 62 degrees at night.

4. Buy A Real Holiday Tree Instead Of A Fake One

Real trees generate oxygen, take in carbon, provide habitat for critters, and can be replanted (in some cases) or recycled into compost and mulch. Meanwhile, fake trees contain polyvinyl chloride (PVC) which produces cancer causing agents during manufacturing and disposal. In terms of resource use, greenhouse gas emissions, and human health impact, a consulting firm in Montreal found that a fake tree would have to be used for more than 20 years to show equal benefits to getting one fresh cut tree.

5. Make One Of A Kind Gift Wrap

To cut down on the waste of wrapping paper, try using materials such as paper grocery bags flipped inside out and decorated with soy ink stamps or the comic page of a newspaper for kids. Other great wrapping materials include old maps, sheet music and magazine ads.



MENLO PARK MIDDAY SHUTTLE

Funded by



FREE Shuttle Service



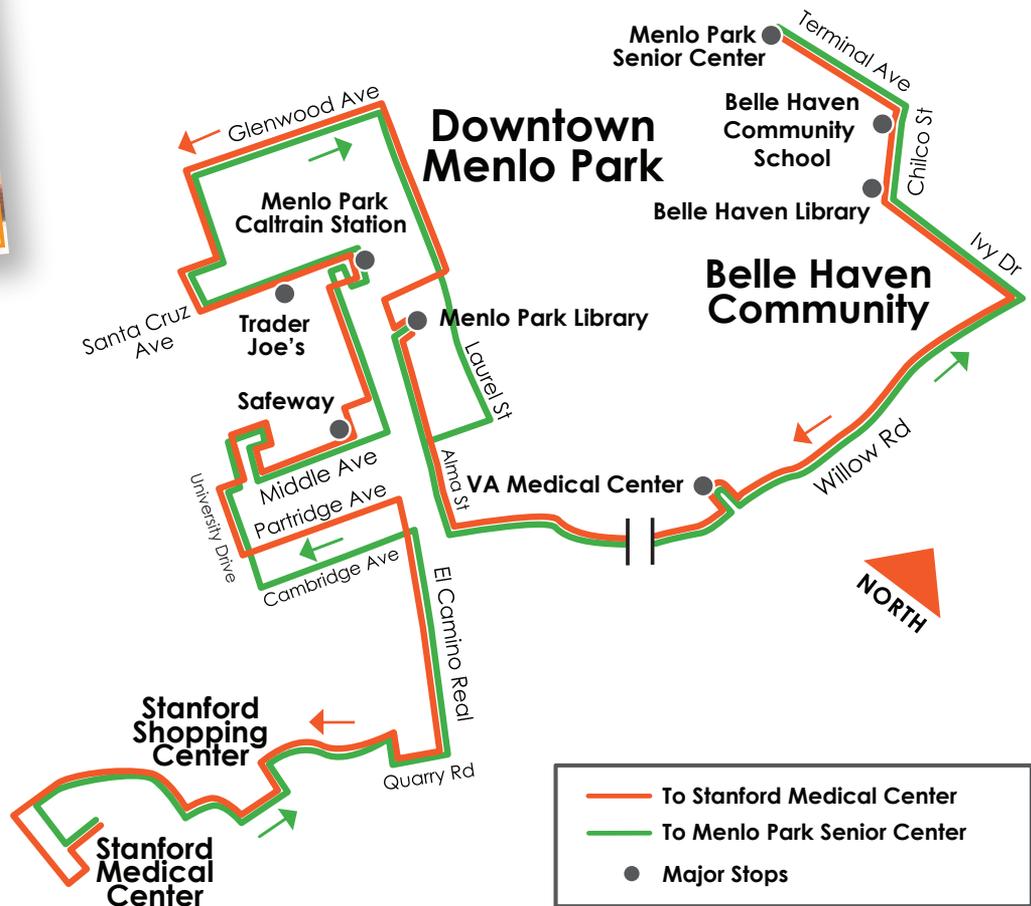
The City of Menlo Park would like to invite you to ride the Menlo Park Midday Shuttle. It's a safe, reliable, and convenient way to travel — and best of all, it's FREE!

Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., the Shuttle transports residents to destinations throughout Menlo Park, including Menlo Park Library, Belle Haven Library, Menlo Park Senior Center, downtown Menlo Park, Caltrain, Menlo Medical Clinic, Safeway, Little House, Stanford Shopping Center, and Stanford Medical Center.

The Shuttle is a 20-passenger bus that can accommodate up to two wheelchairs. It conveniently stops at all SamTrans and Menlo Park stops, and is also a flag down service, which means that the bus will stop for anyone who flags it down so long as it is safe to do so. Our drivers are friendly and looking forward to seeing you on the Shuttle!

Catch a FREE ride to:

- Downtown Menlo Park
- Menlo Park Library
- Caltrain Station
- Safeway
- Trader Joe's
- Stanford Shopping Center
- Stanford Medical Center



For more information or to see if the Menlo Park Midday Shuttle travels in your area, contact us at:

(650) 330-6770
shuttleprogram@menlopark.org

menlopark.org