



COMMON GROUND

Up-to-Date Information on East Palo Alto's Housing and Community Issues

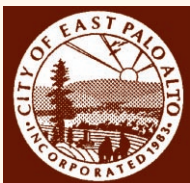
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University Circle

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REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY NEWS

Since 1999, the EPA Redevelopment Agency has been actively engaged in developing the City's taxbase, creating new jobs, adding city services and enhancing the City's image. Let's take a closer look at what's happened:

University Circle Project Area

This project area has been in place since 1989. Beginning in 1999, the former Whiskey Gulch, home to various non-profits, residents, and locally owned businesses, was transformed into an office/hotel complex. All non-profits were successfully relocated within the City and those residents and businesses displaced received relocation benefits. Two office towers are scheduled to open this Fall and will count among their tenants a prominent Bay Area law firm committed to hiring local residents. Beginning in Spring 2002, a 5-star luxury hotel will begin construction and open in 2004. When finished, this project area will pay more than \$3 million in annual property taxes and \$1.5 to \$2 million in general fund revenue to East Palo Alto, representing about 15% of the City's budget.

Gateway Project Area

This project area was established in 1993. It is nearly built out with Phases 1 and 3 nearly complete and Phases 2 and 4 in the planning stages.

Phase 1 consists of a 30-acre retail power center generating more than \$1 million in annual tax revenues (15% of the City's budget) and 450 jobs; 42% of the workers live in EPA. Phase 3 consists of both the University Square and Peninsula Park Apartments. A total of 87 of the 346 new units (25%) have been reserved for lower-income households.

Current in the planning process is Phase 2 which may include a new furniture store, IKEA. IKEA has agreed to provide a mini-

um of \$1 million in annual sales tax revenue to East Palo Alto and anticipates 550 new jobs. A portion of Phase 4 may contain a mixed-use office/retail development with the developer agreeing to set aside below market rate retail space reserved for local retailers, a first in East Palo Alto.



Ravenswood 101 Retail Center

Four Corners/Ravenswood Project Area

This project area has been in place since 1990. Despite the slowdown in the economy, the Agency is moving forward in collaboration with local businesses and owners to establish an assessment district that will fund major infrastructure improvements. The property owners have formed a limited liability corporation (LLC) to serve as a coordinator and catalyst of development in the Ravenswood Business District (RBD). Washingtonia, owner of the 6 acre vacant parcel on the southeast corner of Bay Road and University Avenue, has launched a plan to create a new Town Square with office, retail and a public plaza.

Redevelopment is a creative tool to attract private investment to EPA. In just three years, it has increased the amount of tax increment and sales tax revenues to support the City's roads, sewers, schools and community services. A new bank, California Bank & Trust, will soon open in Spring 2002. With the community working together, a new supermarket should not be far behind.

For more information on Redevelopment in EPA, please call Ricardo Noguera, Redevelopment Division Manager at 650.853.3195.

OPINIONS

QUESTION:

What is the best thing about living in or owning a rent stabilized unit in East Palo Alto?



Brad Ehikian
Owner of Rental Property since 1993

"The management of units that fall under the auspices of the Rent Stabilization Board is more consistent because of the fact that there are standards established as to the living conditions of the units and what determines a justifiable eviction."



Irene Vasquez Rito
6 year resident

"In my opinion, the best thing of all is that I can be happy that they are not going to raise my rent and also I know very nice people."



Walter Zicha
1 year resident

"The Bay Area is expensive and the previous booming economy is now faltering. Rent Stabilization offers basic security for those who may otherwise be ousted by tenants who can pay more. EPA Rent Stabilization offers an affordable option to people like me so we may reside in beautiful N. California."



Merevalesi Moli
20 year resident

"Many residents in East Palo Alto are labor workers and have contributed to this community for many years. The jobs that these residents hold do not pay them enough to afford housing in this City and for this reason Rent Stabilization should be maintained."



Tom Sagehorn
13 year resident

"There is no city in the immediate area that regulates rent levels, and offers "Good Cause" for eviction protection like EPA. Elderly, disabled, and poor low-wage earners need housing too. Few cities do close to what the City does for tenants. God Bless East Palo Alto!"

PUBLIC MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

• The East Palo Alto Council of Tenants (EPACT) is a discussion group that tries to promote community improvement with a special emphasis on affordable housing development and preservation. The organization has played a major role in incorporating the City of East Palo Alto 18 years ago and is a growing group interested in your community issues and concerns. If you are interested in participating in EPACT discussions, you can attend meetings the 2nd Friday of every month, at 7:00 p.m., at 1637 Woodland Avenue, Apt. 6, East Palo Alto. For more information, please call 650.322.9725.

• The Gardens Block Club, an East Palo Alto neighborhood organization, meets from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on the second Saturday of each month. The location is the Open Door COGIC Church on the corner of Pulgas and O'Connor. Meetings have been scheduled ahead for the following dates: December 8, 2001, January 12, 2002, February 9, 2002, and March 9, 2002. For more information, please call 650.323.8160 or 650.269.4841.

• Nugent Square is tentatively scheduled for Planning Commission Design Review Approval on December 17th. The Planning Commission meets on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month. For up-to-date information on City Commission agendas, please call 650.853.3189.

• The Housing Element Update is tentatively scheduled for City Council Adoption on December 18th. The City Council meets on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month. For up-to-date information on City Council agendas, please call 650.853.3100.

OEPA TEAMS UP WITH THE CITY

One East Palo Alto (OEPA) is a multi-year community-driven neighborhood revitalization program dedicated to making East Palo Alto "Informed, Involved, Connected, Secure, and Empowered." OEPA is made possible by a \$6 million grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, in cooperation with the Peninsula Community Foundation (PCF), Stanford Haas Center for Public Service, the Community Development Institute (CDI), and most of all, the residents of East Palo Alto.

OEPA has worked hard in collaboration with the City of EPA to empower residents to take control of their own community. For more than one year, residents and community-based organizations have contributed to the renewal of neighborhoods through participation in working groups. From Economics to Public Safety, and Education to Housing, OEPA Working Groups prepare and implement plans to improve all aspects of life in East Palo Alto.

Here is how you can be heard and get involved:

- Join an OEPA Working Group
- Participate in OEPA Board of Directors meetings
- Participate in OEPA General Membership evenings or Community-building nights

The OEPA Board of Directors meets on the fourth Tuesday of every month at the Boys and Girls Club (Pulgas at O'Connor) from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. At 5:30 p.m., a light dinner is served.

General membership meetings are held four times a year on the fourth Tuesday of January, April, July, and October. Community-building forums are held on the second Tuesday of each month at the Girls Club located at 2400 Ralmar Avenue. The ten OEPA Working Groups meet at least once a month at locations around East Palo Alto.

For exact details, locations, and times, please call 650.327.7802. Spanish translation and childcare are available for all meetings. Transportation is available upon request.

THANK YOU

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GREEN GIFTS

Nationwide last Christmas, almost \$1 billion worth of unwanted gifts ended up in storage or the garbage. The following are some great green gift ideas that will reduce waste:

- Buy gifts that benefit the environment, such as a membership to an environmental organization, gardening items, or products from recycled content products. Also, consider long-lasting "environmental" gifts like a solar battery charger with rechargeable batteries, a compost bin, or a travel mug.
- Reduce packaging, by giving an "experience," such as a massage, dance lessons, gift certificates, a day at the mud-baths, theater, dance and music events, a pass to local museums, and/or a bay cruise.
- Give a gift certificate to the person's favorite clothing store, record store, or restaurant. While you may think this has less thought involved, the receiver will kindly think of you when they are using the certificate to get exactly what they want.
- Give NO gift at all (just a card or a hug).
- To get rid of those "never used holiday gifts" from years past, have a White Elephant Gift Exchange with your friends, family and coworkers.
- Donate your unwanted gifts to thrift stores (call 415.554.RECYcle for a list).
- For more great green ideas, order one of the S.F. Recycling Program's Green Holiday Guides (415.554.3400), check out the National Green Pages great website at www.greenpages.org, or Co-Op America's at www.coopamerica.org. Another info-packed website worth visiting is www.realgoods.com.
- And finally, the best green gift of all - the one size fits all kind of gift: cash!

Call the Recycling Program 24-hour hotline at 415.554.RECYcle for a free copy of the "Have Yourself a Green Holiday Guide," or check out our website at sfrecycle@ci.sf.ca.us. Happy Waste-Free Holidays!

These tips are courtesy of the San Francisco Recycling Program.

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: ELIZABETH JACKSON

Elizabeth Jackson has been a community service worker for 23 years. As a Board Member of the East Palo Alto Community Law Project, she has represented the community on legal assistance needs related to housing. As a community member of the Legal Services Trust Fund Program, Ms. Jackson helped determine qualifications for the funding of California community organizations.

Elizabeth has also been a Tenant Representative on the Rent Stabilization Board for the last seven years. "The Board needs more members," she says. "Sixty percent of the community are tenants, so this is important."



Elizabeth attends nearly every City Council meeting. "A lot of people think the meetings are only about politics," she says. "A lot of issues that affect our lives are decided there, such as housing and public safety. You need to be informed so that you can influence these decisions."

As Chairperson of the One East Palo Alto Housing Committee, Ms. Jackson is leading the effort to get a community tool shed and to develop affordable housing in the Pulgas Avenue panhandle. East Palo Alto residents will be able to borrow tools for home repair or yard work.

A Credit Repair Program is another one of Ms. Jackson's dreams. It's designed to help people with bad credit. "We can't wipe out credit problems," she says, "but we can work with community-based organizations to help people get out of debt."

The soaring market rate of new housing is another one of Ms. Jackson's concerns. She would like to see the percentage of new housing offered at below market rates be increased. Elizabeth shares her knowledge with other tenants, so that they can be informed as they negotiate with developers. "Learn how to make the system work for you," she advises.

CITY STREET SWEEPING

In a continuing effort to enhance the appearance and cleanliness of City streets, BFI has assumed street sweeping activities throughout most of East Palo Alto. In collaboration with BFI, the City's Department of Public Works has added new streets to the existing street sweeping schedule. BFI has mailed every resident the street sweeping schedule brochure. Effective street sweeping depends on you not blocking the streets on your particular street sweeping day. While some streets are sign posted and violators will be ticketed, the City wants to depend on resident cooperation rather than enforcement.

Be aware that parking in violation of street sweeping signs, which display specific days and times, is prohibited. The City's Code Enforcement Division will enforce the street sweeping violators by citing vehicles parked along streets during prohibited times. The cost of these citations is \$20.00.

Please help us in maintaining and improving the appearance of our city streets by adhering to this schedule. Your cooperation is appreciated.

If you have any questions about the street sweeping schedule, please refer to the signs posted along city streets or contact the City of East Palo Alto Public Works Maintenance Division at 650.853.3165.

INTEREST ON SECURITY DEPOSITS

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Rent Stabilization and Good Cause For Eviction Ordinance, the interest earned on residential security deposits shall be returned to the tenant annually. The security deposit includes any payment, fee, deposit, or charge used or to be used for any purpose, including recovering rent defaults, repairing damages caused by the tenant or cleaning. Residents should receive either a rent rebate or a cash payment in December of each year.

In addition, landlords must return the appropriate part of the original security deposit and any interest earned upon a tenant's departure from the premises. A tenant who does not receive the refund and/or accounting may contact the Rent Stabilization Program for assistance at 650.853.3114.

HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

CHRISTMAS TREES

A cut Christmas tree is like a cut flower – neither will last very long without water. A tree purchased from a lot or cut on a tree farm may retain fire resistance if you follow these simple steps:

- Keep the cut end of the trunk in water.
- Check the water stand daily.
- Locate the tree away from heat sources.
- Do not place the tree near a heater outlet, woodstove, or fireplace.
- Put it in the coldest location possible.
- Turn down the room heat at night.

Even a properly cared for cut tree will continue to dry out. Remove the tree immediately after the holidays.

Dispose of the tree by cutting it up into pieces no longer than five feet in length and putting it out with your garbage on your regular collection day for the two weeks following Christmas. Never burn a cut, dried out Christmas tree in your wood-burning stove or fireplace. The tremendous amount of heat released can severely damage even the best stove or fireplace.

LIGHTS

Carefully check all electrical wiring before you install decorations. Check light sets for broken sockets and defective wiring. Use only UL-approved OUTDOOR lights outdoors. Never use indoor lights outside or outdoor lights indoors. Turn off decorative lights when you leave the house or go to bed. Use miniature, low voltage lights on a tree. Standard size lights generate heat, which speeds up drying of the tree.

CANDLES

The use of candles is discouraged, but if they are used:

- Place candles in sturdy, non-flammable holders or containers.
- Keep candles out of the reach of children and where they cannot be accidentally knocked over.
- Extinguish candles before leaving the house or going to bed.

GIFT WRAPPING

Discard your metallic and foil wrapping paper, bows and ribbons in a trash can for collection. Standard wrapping paper however, should be included in your regular

paper recycling container – NEVER throw wrapping paper into a fireplace or wood burning stove. They generate tremendous amounts of heat that can damage fireplaces and wood stoves.

NEW HOMES

Nugent Square is one of the most recent multi-family residential proposals being envisioned for the East Palo Alto community. The project, as proposed, will be located on University Avenue between Weeks and Sacramento Streets, close to public transportation and within walking distance from the City's center.

The development's sponsor, EPA CAN DO, had three objectives in mind when it began to create a housing plan for the 1 acre site. Their first objective is to provide attractive affordable housing along one of the City's major access roads. The second objective is to provide affordable housing for the growing number of households in our community who are unable to afford spiraling market rents, and the last objective is to prevent economic displacement of the City's residents.

As this vision becomes reality, the newly-constructed units will provide 32 affordable multi-family housing units featuring 4 two-bedroom town houses, 11 two-bedroom flats, and 18 three-bedroom flats, a community room, and office space for EPA CAN DO and its Next Step Housing Assistance Center. Affordability being a key component of the sponsor's goal, these multi-family residences will serve households at or below 50% of area median income.

For updates as this development unfolds, please contact Robert Jones, Executive Director of EPA CAN DO, at 650.473.9838.



Nugent Square

MOLD: A GROWING PROBLEM

More and more people who live or work in spaces affected by mold are complaining of health problems. Mold has been known to cause flu-like symptoms as well as asthma, sinus infection, nosebleed, headache, cough and confusion. Reactions to mold are individual. Some people are affected while others have no reaction at all. Statistics show that about ten percent of the population is affected by mold. Those who are at greatest risk are people with fragile immune systems like infants and children, pregnant women, the aged and those whose immune systems have been compromised by other conditions like hepatitis, HIV or AIDS. People who fall into this risk category and residents of dwellings affected by mold that have long-term or severe symptoms should consult with their doctor.

Mold needs two things to grow: moisture and a food source such as wood, paper, dirt or leaves. Moisture can come from: flooding, backed-up sewers, a leaky roof or siding, humidifiers, mud, damp basements, or other leaking problems.

If you can see mold or if there is an earthy or musty smell, you can assume you have a mold problem. Unless the source of moisture is removed and the contaminated area is cleaned up, the problem is likely to re-occur.

To clean small areas of mold, prepare a weak (10%) solution of hot water and ordinary household bleach. Wear gloves and use a stiff brush to scrub away small areas of mold. Then dry the affected area.

If the affected area is large (larger than 12'x18') or the area you cleaned has mold reappearing after a few days, you may not be able to handle the situation yourself. If you rent your home, contact your landlord. If you are a property owner, you may wish to consider having a professional deal with the situation. Please keep in mind that property owners who rent units are obliged to keep properties in good and safe condition. Taking care of leaks and resulting mold are part of this obligation. If leaking and mold conditions are not corrected, they may result in damage to the building as well as damage to tenant's health and property.

To report a suspected code violation, contact the City of East Palo Alto Code Enforcement Division at 650.853.3156.