

# COMMON GROUND

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

5th Issue  
September, 2002



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## STATE OF HOUSING IN EAST PALO ALTO

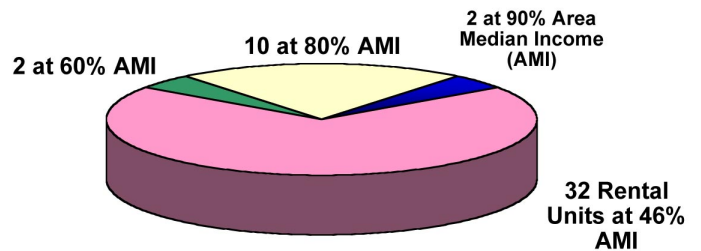
"The state of housing in East Palo Alto is strong and continues to improve, making the City a recognized leader in affordable housing and community development policy." This was the key message of Housing Services Director Lisa Hamburger's August 1st public address celebrating the City's most recent accomplishments towards meeting its Housing Element goals. The speech was attended by members of the City Council, Planning Commission, and Rent Stabilization Board, Housing and Community Development (HCD) staff, and East Palo Alto residents.

Every city in California is required by the State to create a Housing Element – a plan that sets forth how the city will meet the housing needs of its residents. The East Palo Alto Housing Element focuses on increasing the supply of affordable housing in the City while taking steps to ensure that residents are not displaced by new development. Ms. Hamburger summarized the City's accomplishments in the past six months in three key areas: homeownership, increasing affordable housing and preserving our affordable housing stock.

### Homeownership

The City adopted a goal of increasing the rate of homeownership beyond the 2000 level of 43.5%. This goal will be accomplished in part by building new single family homes. But the City hopes the greatest increase will come from existing landlords selling their units to their tenants. To this end the City is working with a consulting group provided through

East Palo Alto - 46 Below Market Rate Units - Approved in 2002



- 46% AMI = \$39,606, Family of 4 Annual Income
- 60% AMI = \$51,660
- 80% AMI = \$68,880
- 90% AMI = \$77,490

the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to create a model to encourage such sales. So far in 2002, seven rental residents have become first-time homeowners and many more are positioning themselves to do so through EPA CAN DO's Next Step Housing Assistance Center.

### Increasing Affordable Housing Supply

The City is aggressively pursuing funding opportunities to increase the supply of housing. So far in 2002, over \$13 million dollars has been secured, including:

- a legal settlement that will create a \$7 million loan fund for future land acquisition;
- a commitment of almost \$6.0 million in 9% tax credits for EPA CAN DO's Nugent Square Project; and,
- five applications totaling \$3.94 million submitted to the state and federal governments for affordable housing acquisition and development funds of which \$200,000 was awarded.

Also, the City Council approved a November ballot measure to dedicate 10% of hotel tax revenue (estimated to be \$200,000 per year) for affordable housing purposes.

## OPINIONS

### QUESTION:

**How will housing and community development issues impact how you vote in the upcoming City Council elections?**



**Lee Hawkins**  
Executive Director,  
East Palo Alto Senior Center  
15-year resident

It's definitely a critical issue. Housing will have a dramatic impact on our senior citizens because we don't have enough housing suitable for them and they will leave our community unless we add more housing stock.



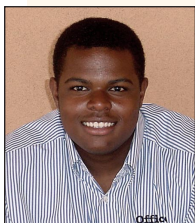
**Zema Peraza**  
18-year Resident

Housing is a high priority for me. It would definitely influence my decision because I really appreciate the benefits of affordable housing



**Ricardo Ortiz**  
EPA Branch Manager of  
California Bank & Trust

As a businessman here it is very important to keep the momentum of economic revitalization to increase the City's tax base, so that we can continue the programs and services offered.



**Zuberi Loud**  
19-year resident

In no way. I don't feel it impacts me because we already own our home. I wouldn't vote for someone solely on housing issues. I do love living here and have no intentions of moving.



**Virginia Goodwin**  
33-year resident

I feel there is not enough affordable housing for our Senior Citizens in East Palo Alto. I would also like to see the market prices drop to a point where young couples just starting out can buy.

In addition to securing funding, the City has created a policy environment that facilitates affordable housing development. So far this year, the City Planning Commission has approved 90 units in six different residential developments – with 46 of those units affordable to households earning 50% to 90% of the area median income. And 90 new rental units were recently completed, including 12 affordable units. Additionally, the rezoning of the Ravenswood Industrial Area/Four Corners will encourage creation of almost 900 units in this redevelopment area. The rezoning is underway and will be completed in May 2003.

### Preserving Affordable Housing Stock

The City is working to preserve the affordable housing stock for those most at risk of displacement. The City's Rent Stabilization Program is strong and effective. The program offers a fair return to landlords while also stabilizing rent increases for tenants. Over 2,700 units are in the program and the City hopes that new landlords will volunteer to participate. In February, East Palo Alto received a City Cultural Diversity Award from the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials, recognizing the Affordable Housing program as a strong example of how cities can improve and promote cultural diversity.

### Affordable Housing "Honor Roll"

East Palo Alto is being recognized as a leader in affordable housing and community development policy. In June, the City was given "Honor Roll" status on the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California's (NPH) Bay Area Housing Crisis Report Card. EPA is one of only seven cities in the nine Bay Area counties recognized for exemplary efforts to encourage affordable housing developments and programs.

These and many other accomplishments, along with the City's future housing plans, are described in the City's Housing Element Status Report. This report is available at the Housing and Community Development offices at 2200 University Avenue. Also look for the Report and the Housing Element on line at [www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us](http://www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us).



## PUBLIC MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A Housing Element Workshop will be held on Monday, October 21st at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall, 2415 University Avenue. New census data will be reviewed and there will be a discussion about the significance of the data for the City's Housing Element.
- EPA CAN DO is looking for participants for "Smart Money," a five-week financial literacy workshop. Topics to be covered will include banking, saving, budgeting, credit and homeownership. For additional information, please contact José Moran at (650) 473-9838.
- Elections are on Tuesday, November 5th and a new City Council will be seated. The Council meets the first and third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, East Palo Alto City Hall, 2415 University Avenue.
- The East Palo Alto Council of Tenants (EPACT) meets the 2nd Friday of every month, at 7:00 p.m. For meeting place or more information, please call 650.322.9725.
- Visit [www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us](http://www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us) for up-to-the-minute announcements about public meetings taking place throughout the City.

## THANK YOU

Many thanks to Kate Bristol, Mary Silverstein, Karla Ossandon, Antoinette Pietras, Diane Sterling, and the Wellington Corporation for their writing and editing and for providing photographs. Thanks also to Rosalba Navarro and Laura Sanchez for Spanish translation. Special kudos to Catherine Fraser of Fraser Advertising for layout and production and to American Business Communications for distribution.

## HOUSING WAIT LIST TO BE UPDATED

The Housing Services Division will be updating the central waiting list for below market rate housing this fall. If you are already on the waiting list this fall you will receive notification about what to do to remain on the list. After October 1st, new applicants can check the City's web page for further information, contact Mary Silverstein at 650.853.3112 or come by 2200 University Avenue.

Once new applications are received they will be reviewed and evaluated. The City Council will be discussing and approving the wait list process. HCD staff is analyzing the following preferences as possible priorities – first-time homebuyer status, homebuyer education certificates, working in East Palo Alto, and community service volunteerism.

## TWO NEW PARKS DEDICATED

Two City parks were dedicated this summer. On August 3rd, the City dedicated the Joel M. Davis Park, located at 1950 Tate Street. The park has been named in honor of Police Officer Joel M. Davis, who was killed in the line of duty in 1988. The dedication ceremony was attended by Officer Davis' friends and family, members of the East Palo Alto Police Department and officers from other jurisdictions, and members of the community.



On July 26th the City dedicated the newly renovated Jack Farrell Park, located at Fordham & Notre Dame Avenue. Thanks to generous contributions from the San Francisco Giants Community Fund and the Good Tidings Foundation, the City has upgraded the baseball field and made many other improvements to the park.

The re-opening ceremony was an opportunity to meet special guest Vida Blue and to honor those who contributed to the park upgrade, including Giants pitcher Jason Schmidt, who contributed to the funding of the renovations and participated in the re-opening event. Also thanked was Gene Tate, president of the East Palo



Alto T-Ball League and Commissioner of East Palo Alto's Junior Giants summer baseball league. Kudos were given to Jay Farr, Maintenance Division Manager, and his team for all their hard work to complete the park improvements.

The City is delighted with the renovations. "Jack Farrell Park is an exceptionally beautiful space," said Meda Okelo, Director of Community Services. The City wants to keep the park in excellent condition and is asking for the community's support. Park users are asked to follow all park rules. Specifically, playing soccer is not allowed on the baseball field. By following these guidelines, we can all ensure that Jack Farrell Park continues to be an invaluable community resource for generations to come.

## WHAT'S IMPORTANT IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING DESIGN?

On August 3rd members of the City Council, Planning Commission, Rent Stabilization Board and City residents toured four housing developments in the South Bay. The tour was organized by staff from the Housing Services Division and Wellington Corporation. Sixteen people attended.

The tour was designed to present a wide range of housing types and to educate participants on the different architectural and design elements that determine whether a project is appropriate and successful. Participants filled out a questionnaire giving their opinion on the design of each

project and the features they would like to see replicated in East Palo Alto projects.

Design elements that were critiqued included the variety of unit types, landscaping, street widths and design, sidewalks, amenities, open space, patios and porches, site and building setbacks, parking, style, building height, roofline, paths and linkages, and building materials.

Four participants identified architectural style, open space, landscaping, and variety of unit types as the most critical elements in determining a development's appropriateness. The project the group liked the most was Whisman Station in Mountain View. This 503 unit project consists of a mixture of single-family detached homes, townhouses and condominiums. The units are arranged around a central, dedicated park. There are pedestrian walkways leading to the units. Participants noted in particular the design of the front porches, the abundance of open space, and the variety of units as very positive features. One respondent commented that "the garages in back of the units make the development feel more safe and makes the front yards more attractive."

Of particular interest to the group was the issue of how many units can reasonably fit on a site and the size of the units. For example, building studios and one-bedroom units allow a developer to create a greater overall number of units than if the development contains units suitable for larger households. Ultimately, the number of total projected occupants may be the same even though the density (the number of units per acre) is different. However, given the current City demographics of 4.2 people per household, there is high demand for three and four bedroom units.



As developers consider building new homes in East Palo Alto they must take



## MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: BARBARA MOUTON

Mrs. Mouton is the founding mayor of East Palo Alto. She served as mayor from 1983 to 1986, and continues to be highly involved in community affairs. She is a board member of the Community Development Institute and One East Palo Alto, where she mainly works on economic development issues. She also serves on the new transition board for the Community Law Center and is highly active with the Boys and Girls Club and the Society of St. Vincent DePaul.

Mrs. Mouton has always viewed housing and community development as critical issues facing the City. One of the major problems she tackled as mayor was the protection of East Palo Alto tenants. She was instrumental in establishing the Rent Stabilization Board in order to ensure that long-time residents not be driven out of the city by rising rents. Yet she also believes the goal of tenant protection must be balanced with a landlord's ability to get a fair return from his or her property. She is very proud of the City's rental stabilization program and views tenant protection as an ongoing need.

A long-time supporter of affordable housing, Mrs. Mouton is concerned that new development in the City is too heavily focused on retail uses and is not creating the affordable housing the city needs. Her message to developers who want to work in East Palo Alto is that they should not just build from a profit angle, with a goal of developing every piece of land to the maximum. She advocates for an ethics of development that values the creation of housing in addition to retail and office space."

Environmental protection of the City's residents has also been a major area of focus for Mrs. Mouton. As mayor, she was instrumental in getting East Palo Alto sites put on the Environmental Protection Agency's superfund list. She continues to be concerned about air and water pollution and its impact on the community.

Mrs. Mouton has been involved in education her whole life. Before becoming mayor she worked as a site administrator at the Nairobi schools. She is concerned

that today the children in East Palo Alto aren't learning enough of the skills they need to succeed in life. She would like to see a greater emphasis in elementary education on basic learning skills, such as phonics. Building the self-esteem of children is also critical. "You can develop skills if you believe in yourself."

As the third president of the National Conference of Black Mayors, Mrs. Mouton had the opportunity to travel all over the world, including to Africa and China. She has visited many places and come home with an even greater appreciation for how unique and wonderful East Palo Alto is as a place to live. It is a very unusual example of a diverse group of people living together. "Different people can live and exist together and do things together for the community good."

## NEW STAFF SERVING EAST PALO ALTANS



In the past few months several new faces have joined the staff of the Housing and Community Development Department and some long-time staff have moved into new positions in Housing, Code Enforcement and the Redevelopment Agency. The City extends a warm welcome to the following individuals:

**Russ Averhart** has worked for the City of East Palo Alto since 1983. This year he moved from working in general city administration to the Redevelopment Agency where he is focusing on economic development. He is staffing the supermarket task force, in addition to focusing on a number of specific redevelopment projects.

**Maria Banico** is the City's new Planning Manager. She came on board March 4,

into account not only the prospective resident's needs, but also what the existing community wants to see added to their neighborhood. While density is often the issue most focused on, because it defines the number of new homes, the quality of life in those new homes is determined by the architectural features discussed above. In the end, a balance must be reached between density and the other elements in order to create homes that are desirable and affordable.

## SMART MONEY PROGRAM HONORS FIRST GRADUATES

On August 17th EPA CAN DO held a graduation ceremony for the first graduates of the "Smart Money" program. Fifteen people completed the five-week course.

"Smart Money" is a financial literacy program designed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) to help low-income families to gain skills and knowledge in the area of personal finance. Course materials for the class are provided by FDIC and include budgeting, banking, loans, savings and investments, credit reports and credit cards, and homeownership.

A new set of classes began on September 7th. East Palo Alto residents who are interested in signing up for future sessions of "Smart Money" should contact José Moran at (650) 473-9838.



2002. Before joining the East Palo Alto staff, she worked in the planning departments of the cities of Oakland, Sunnyvale and Daly City. She has 16 years of experience in municipal government. Maria's main goal in her new job is "to build systems and procedures to make planning a smoother process" in the City.

**Karla Ossandon** took on the role of the Housing and Community Development Department's new Office Manager on July 1st, 2002. She came to this position from the City Manager's office, where she started in 1999. She is enjoying taking on the challenges of her new position and looks forward to working with the public and helping people with their housing needs. As one of only two Spanish speaking staff at HCD, Karla will be instrumental in supporting the City's Rent Stabilization Program.

In July, **Mary Silverstein** became the City's new Housing Specialist. Mary has an M.B.A. from U.C. Berkeley and over 15 years of experience in the fields of real estate and finance. Before joining the City staff, Mary worked for Bank of America for four years. Her passion for the housing field developed in part from residing in an affordable housing project in Alaska, and from her mother, who was the first ever female real estate broker in that state.

**Tapu Soolefai** has been the City's new Code Enforcement Officer since April 1st, 2002. Before moving to Code Enforcement, Tapu was the Office Manager for Housing Services. She has worked for the City for three years. She loves her new job because it gives her the opportunity to get out of the office and help people.

## LEGAL SERVICES IN TRANSITION

Due to funding constraints, the East Palo Alto Community Law Project will be closing its doors on August 31st. A new community-based group, called the Community Law Center in East Palo Alto, is holding ongoing conversations with several organizations to develop a plan to ensure that East Palo Alto tenants can continue to receive free and low-cost legal assistance. Bay Area Legal Aid, La Raza and Legal Aid of San Mateo County are already offering some services in the community and discussions are underway to sustain those services.

Additionally, Stanford University is in the planning stages of creating a Community Law Center. Kathleen Sullivan, Dean of the Stanford Law School, said the purpose of the project will be to enhance the training of future attorneys while providing needed legal services to the community. The project will include a legal clinic supervised by a Stanford Law School faculty member, and will have a community-based advisory council. Housing, including eviction defense and discrimination, will be one of several areas of focus. The site has not yet been identified at the time Common Ground went to press.

Given the many uncertainties about availability of legal resources for tenants, East Palo Alto residents who have legal needs are advised to contact City Hall for the most up-to-date information and referrals to legal services.

## REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

East Palo Alto homeowners and owners of low-income rental property are eligible to apply for low-interest loans through San Mateo County's Rehabilitation Loan Program. Several different loan types are available, including loans for health and safety, code deficiencies, structural support, heating, electrical and emergency repairs including weather damage.

If you are a homeowner occupying your own home, you may apply for a loan of up to \$55,000 at a 3% interest rate for home improvements, such as a new roof or a repaired bathroom. Emergency loans of up to \$10,000 at 3% interest are also available to address immediate health and safety hazards such as heating or electrical problems.

If you are the owner of a rental property with a minimum of 60% low- or very low-income tenants and your property is over ten years old, you can apply for rehabilitation loans at 6% interest. The maximum loan amount is \$75,000 for buildings with four units or less and \$150,000 for five or more units.

Applications for rehabilitation loans are available at the counter at the East Palo Alto Housing and Community Development Department at 2200

University Avenue. Ask for Marly Silversein (650) 853-3112. Additional information can be found on the web at [www.smchsa.org/housing/rehab-index.html](http://www.smchsa.org/housing/rehab-index.html), or by calling Larry Johnson at the San Mateo County Office of Housing at (650) 802-5050.

## REDUCE REUSE RECYCLE



You can easily reduce, reuse and recycle more! It's good for the environment and a California law requiring all cities reduce the amount of garbage going to landfills by 50% (EPA is only at 43%).

Reduce the amount of waste you generate by:

- Buying items with little or no packaging, and
- Buying items in bulk.

Reuse everything you can. Before you buy anything, ask yourself "Can I reuse this?"

- Reusable cups save resources and money, and
- Donate clothing, furniture, and other items to local thrift shops.
- For more ideas on reducing waste, check out [www.RecycleWorks.org](http://www.RecycleWorks.org)

Recycle all the items below:

- Mixed Paper (junk mail, envelopes, magazines, catalogs, cereal boxes, paper bags, etc.),
- Cardboard (flatten and neatly stack, no longer than 3' x 3'),
- Newspaper (all sections can be recycled, even glossy ads),
- Cans and Bottles (glass bottles & jars; steel & aluminum cans; #1 and #2 plastic bottles),
- Yard waste (everything must fit inside the container), and
- Used motor oil (place oil in a one gallon, clear, plastic container and tape lid on securely).

Also, close the recycling loop by buying items that are made from recycled materials.

## RECYCLING, REUSE & CODE ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORY

### Garbage, Recycling and Yard Waste Collection (BFI)

(650) 592-2411

[www.bfipeninsula.com](http://www.bfipeninsula.com)

For change in service, additional or missed service, or new containers

### Recycling Buy Back

(650) 637-1411

Redemption on CRV bottles & cans

### Used Motor Oil Collection (curbside)

(650) 592-2411

[www.bfipeninsula.com](http://www.bfipeninsula.com)

Put in one-gallon, clear, plastic container and tape lid on securely

### Used Motor Oil Drop Off and Oil Filter Drop Off

(650) 325-7826

(800) CLEAN-UP

Tadlock's Auto Supply

Call for additional locations

### Garbage Disposal Sites (Drop Off)

(650) 726-4718

(650) 592-0255

Ox Mountain Landfill

San Carlos Transfer Station

### Code Enforcement Issues

(650) 853-3156

To keep our community clean & safe

### Household Hazardous Waste

(650) 363-4718

Call to schedule a drop off appt.

### County of San Mateo-Recycling Questions; Donations/Thrift Stores; Environmental Programs

1 (888) 442-2666

[www.RecycleWorks.org](http://www.RecycleWorks.org)

(800) CLEAN-UP

Info on recycling, composting, preventing waste, and other environmental programs & tips

For more details on the information above, check out [www.RecycleWorks.org](http://www.RecycleWorks.org) or call 1 (888) 442-2666



# Recycle!

Used Motor Oil

Cans, Bottles & Papers

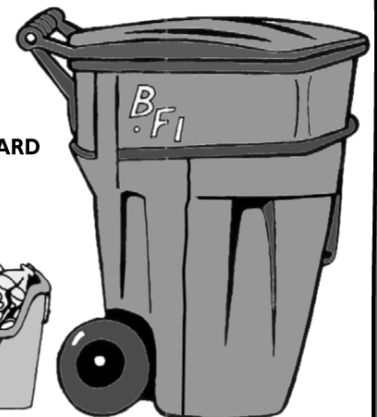
Yard Waste

On the Curb and  
On the Same Day!

USED  
MOTOR OIL



CARDBOARD



- ✓ Put your oil in a clear plastic container and tape or screw on lid.
- ✓ You can recycle up to 5 gallons of oil per week.
- ✓ Oil filters can be recycled at Tadlock's Auto Supply.

**Recycle your oil at the curb or drop it off at:**  
Tadlock's Auto Supply, 2160 University Avenue, (650) 325-7826  
A-1 Auto Supply, 648 Donohue Street, (650) 321-8984



For more information on  
where & how to recycle, call  
**(888) 442-2666.**



The County has a free program to dispose of unwanted paints, cleaners and other household chemicals. Call 650-363-4718 to make an appointment.

Sponsored by: City of East Palo Alto and California Integrated Waste Management Board