

COMMON GROUND

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

7th Edition, Winter 2003/2004

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- **East Palo Alto Celebrates 20 Years!!!**
- **Opinions**
- **East Palo Alto 20th Anniversary Film Festival**
- **Rent Stabilization Report Card**
- **Lender's Fair**
- **Mr. Richard (Ricardo) B. Reyes**
- **Thank you!**
- **Return of the Security Deposit**
- **New Move-Out Law**
- **Lottery Results**
- **Central Wait List Introduction**

EAST PALO ALTO CELEBRATES 20 YEARS!!!

How did we get here?

After a long, hard fought battle, the City of East Palo Alto was officially incorporated just twenty years ago. It all came to fruition from a single measure put on the June 1983 ballot. You may find it hard to believe, yet incorporation of our City was approved by a mere 15 votes: 1,782 to 1,767. East Palo Alto officially became a city on July 1, 1983.

Legal challenges ensued, over 300 absentee ballots were allegedly cast illegally. The County Superior Court invalidated eight of the 300 votes – five for and three against incorporation –

however the measure still passed by 13 votes. An appeal was filed, and the courts tossed out some 100 absentee ballots. The Ballots were unanimously reinstated after yet another appeal, this time before the State Supreme Court. That decision was appealed and denied review by the U.S. Supreme Court, ending all further legal challenges. Yes, a long, hard fought battle indeed!

All said, the first five years represented a continuous struggle by the city to legitimize its incorporation. The second five

OPINIONS

QUESTION:

Now that IKEA is part of the community of East Palo Alto, do you think it will attract developers to build more housing here and will it affect the City's housing stock?



Jose (did not want to say his last name)
2.5 years of years
being an EPA resident

Traffic will be heavy but it will attract more people to become residents of East Palo Alto. I believe it will attract more companies, and that in return will bring more jobs.



Lawrence King of OICW
Many years being
an EPA resident

I think it will have a big impact in bringing new companies, increasing business, and attracting homeowners to come to East Palo Alto. I also believe that it will have a positive effect on both the present as well as the future. In addition I truly believe that IKEA isn't a fad, I really think that it's a long term company. Allowing it to last over time...even in East Palo Alto.



Lorraine Holmes
47 years being an
EPA resident

I believe that change is not good or bad, but it is needed to grow. I think that having IKEA in our neighborhood will be a good thing because it allows for more people to have jobs and be close to home so that means more family time. I think that it would also encourage more companies to come to East Palo Alto, allowing for more homeowners to come here.



Holly
2.5 years being an
EPA resident

I think that it might attract more home developers however they might shy away because of the traffic issues. IKEA seems to be making East Palo Alto a nicer place.

years found the new city challenged with which direction it needed to take to combat crime, repair and replacement of streets balanced against providing the services that citizens need and expect. To do this, the City began a process of redevelopment which manifested into such things as newly constructed housing, office towers and new businesses. Even though political forces remain somewhat divided at times, here we are 20 years later! The name was never changed to Nairobi, as was attempted at one time, and the soaring population remains incredibly diverse and multi-cultural.

It is safe to say that a lot has been accomplished in the past two decades to make life better for our residents. Crime has decreased, affordable housing and employment opportunities have increased. There has been a true commitment to, and a focus on, economic development. As a result of these efforts, our beloved city of East Palo Alto may be closer than ever to realizing its potential with commercial development and an idyllic community.

Celebrating Who We Are

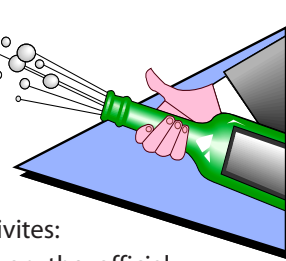
"It has been a challenging but rewarding twenty years," noted the city's illustrious first mayor, Ms Barbara Mouton. "Most of us were very confident that we would sur-

vive this long journey, however there were indeed moments in the last twenty years that our confidence was sapped to dangerous levels".

"Despite the challenges, this is our time!" added Ms Patricia Foster, the City's former mayor. "We deserve to celebrate ourselves"

On that note, and using the theme "East Palo Alto Celebrates East Palo Alto," a committee was formed and selected the following community activities:

- A ceremonial event on the official day of incorporation, Tuesday July 1st. This event was dedicated to former council members, staff and the particular individuals who were involved with the incorporation movement.
- A showing of select videos and films made during the first twenty years of the City's history. Film/Video includes the award winning "Dreams of a City" as well as other lesser known but informative films and videos that have been shot by individuals and organizations over the years.
- A two-day festival at the Bell Street Park with entertainment, food and information



EAST PALO ALTO 20TH ANNIVERSARY FILM FESTIVAL

An incredible assembly of films that looked at both the challenges and successes of East Palo Alto, and at aspects of life that define a community were shown. These films explored the cultures, youth and efforts in areas of economic development, housing, public health and education. People had the opportunity to meet the activists who worked so hard to make East Palo Alto into a city and to hear the voices of the youth who inherit the future.

The Festival looked at where we have come from and where we hope to go. Some very surprising things are found in these 26 films. They ranged from local efforts to nationally broadcast PBS documentaries to an award-winning dramatic feature. The Festival programs present a wide range of films, from the truly artistic to those primarily of historical value. Especially of interest are the films made within the City by youth and adult filmmakers. Great thanks and respect go out to Executive Producer Meda Okelo, who also serves as the Director of Community Services, in association with FreedomArts who made the effort to put this film festival together.

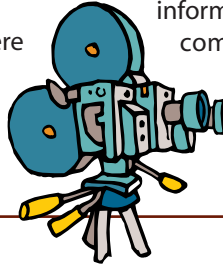
Mayor Patricia Foster made a heartfelt welcome to the community for the City's 20th Anniversary celebration. Here are some excerpts from that speech: *This Festival represents for us a significant point in a long journey towards self-determination and prosperity for all. The journey has not been without challenges, but there is no better testimony of this community's resilience than the fact that we have overcome most of them. This is a celebration of resilience, our diversity, and of the individuals who gave of themselves to make it possible for us to be where we are presently as a community.*

What a celebration it was. With the theme "East Palo Alto Celebrates East Palo Alto," the Festival was designed to celebrate the cultural richness as well as the resourcefulness of its residents. Sixteen bands performed over the two-day period. Youth dance, singing and performance groups were also performing throughout the two days.

Food booths representing a wide range of culinary tastes were featured at the Festival. Indian, Mexican, Greek, Filipino, Vietnamese, Louisianan, and Texan were just some of the foods available for everyone's enjoyment.

A "kid land" with entertainment for children was sponsored by the Children's Day Committee. Dubbed as a little haven for children with face painting, clowns, jumpers, free food and a variety of children's games.

In addition there were many arts and crafts booths, information about local agencies and their services, local companies showing their wares, demonstration booths from local stores and information on the various city departments.



RENT STABILIZATION REPORT CARD

Fiscal Year 2003/2004 Annual Registration Cycle;

Property owners with 4 or more rental units are required to register and pay fees.

However, any and all individuals renting in the City are required to follow Section 13 of the Ordinance (Just Cause Eviction) and Single Family Homes with post-1996 tenancies are exempt from paying fees.

Single-Family Homes with post 1996 tenancies are exempt from paying fees.

Fees set at \$96.00



Annual General Adjustment: 2.2%

Total number of paid units: 2583

Total amount collected: \$247,968

Total number of unregistered units: 5

Single Family Homes exempt: 29

LENDER'S FAIR

The Lender's Fair in May was attended by nearly 110 people, some from as far as San Jose. A variety of financial institutions were well represented and spoke of a range of topic areas such as: how to refinance an existing loan, how to buy a home, how to choose a real estate agent and the advantages of direct lenders and mortgage brokers. ABAG provided information about a new "lease purchase program". In addition, a HUD representative discussed fair housing issues and HUD's role in stopping discrimination. A title officer went over the issues of title insurance. Several real estate agents answered questions about the home buying process that can truly be daunting to the first time home purchaser. Several mortgage brokers were in attendance, as well as a lending institution which specializes in reverse mortgages for seniors on fixed incomes.

A group of local residents, real estate agents/brokers, lenders and EPA CAN DO staff had numerous meetings to plan this successful event.

MR. RICHARD (RICARDO) B. REYES

Remembering the life of an unforgettable man!

Mr. Richard (Ricardo) B. Reyes, a long-time community member, recently passed away. We would like to remember a man who made great strides when he served as Chair of EPA Rent Stabilization Board.

This man was an advocate of taking existing multifamily housing complexes, such as apartment buildings, and develop a program whereby the residents could become true homeowners. In an environment where this is difficult to achieve, his vision was an excellent way to provide affordable housing in the community.

The current Chair of the EPACT Education Fund, William Webster, remembers the man who spurred many to become activists, "I feel there are probably thousands of low income residents who resided in EPA at one time on the way to living their version of the American Dream. They have Ricardo Reyes to thank for giving them the foothold in and for providing them with a roof over their heads"

At a time when EPA was a hotbed of crime, Mr. Reyes, a former professional boxer, had the courage to protect his properties and became a symbol of how a neighborhood can stand up against drug dealers and take their neighborhoods back. "Just Us" was founded during that time and Reyes was a pioneer in taking the first major step toward reclaiming his community from criminals.

He was a true American, promoting citizenship to the new ethnic majority and encouraging them to become active in the community.

This was a man who truly made a difference in East Palo Alto. Ricardo Reyes will be missed.



THANK YOU!

Thank you to all of the fine people who contributed to this newsletter: Karla Ossandon, Ebonie Johnson, Antoinette Pietras from the City, Robert Jones from EPA CAN DO, William Webster for information, and Laura Sanchez, translation. Catherine Fraser, Junnie Ortega and Ryan Yee from the Bernard Hodes Group; Color Copy Printing, National Mailing.

RETURN OF THE SECURITY DEPOSIT

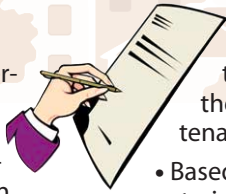
Once a tenant vacates his or her unit, the landlord has 21 days to return the deposit, along with an itemized list of any deductions made. A tenant wishing to dispute the deductions should write the landlord a letter requesting the amount to which s/he believes s/he is entitled, and if the response is not satisfactory, the tenant may file a small claims court action. A tenant may be awarded statutory damages equal to twice the security deposit if the landlord's retention of all or part of the deposit was in bad faith.

NEW MOVE-OUT LAW

Walk-through Inspection

(CA Civil Code 1950.5)

- Once either party has given a termination notice, the landlord must notify the tenant of his or her right to request and be present at a walk-through inspection.
- The purpose of the walk-through is for the landlord to identify, in person and in writing, deficiencies for which s/he may make deductions from the tenant's deposit if not remedied before the tenant moves out.
- If an inspection is requested, it should be scheduled at a mutually agreeable time, no earlier than 2 weeks prior to the tenancy's termination.
- Once a proposed date is chosen, the landlord must give at least 48 hours prior written notice of the date and time of the inspection. The 48 hours prior notice must be given if the time is mutually agreed upon, or if no mutually agreeable time can be found but the tenant still wants an inspection; it may be disregarded if both parties sign a written waiver.



- Unless the tenant previously withdrew her/his request, the landlord must proceed with the inspection whether or not the tenant is present.

- Based on the inspection, the landlord must give the tenant, if present, or leave in the unit, an itemized statement specifying repairs or cleaning that are proposed to be the basis of any deductions from the security deposit. The statement must include the text of subdivisions (d) and (b) (1)- (4) of Civil Code Section 1950.5. The tenant then has the opportunity during the period from the initial inspection until the termination of the tenancy to remedy the identified deficiencies.

- A landlord may use the deposit for any itemized deficiencies that the tenant did not cure, as long as those deductions are authorized under the Civil Code, and for any such deficiency that occurs between the inspection and the termination of the tenancy or that was not identified during the inspection because of the presence of a tenant's possessions.

CENTRAL WAIT LIST INTRODUCTION

When the City of East Palo Alto adopted ordinance 247, Below Market Rate (BMR), staff decided that the best and most fair method to rent or sell those homes to families in need was through a lottery. To make this lottery a reality, the City contracted with EPA CAN DO, the local non-profit community development organization.

The lottery process is designed so that all people who filled out and returned a completed application would receive a Lottery number. The application required individuals to provide the following information:

- work history
- rental history
- recent tax returns
- two most recent pay stubs
- a credit report or a money order for \$20 to obtain a credit report
- a prequalification letter from any bank or mortgage company

Finally, as a condition of being included in the lottery for homebuyers, the applicant had to attend a First Time Home Buyers Program conducted by EPA CAN DO. This counseling program educates first time homebuyers about the effect of credit history in obtaining a loan, how to get a loan, plus the rights and responsibilities of borrowing to purchase a home.

After all completed applications are received, EPA CAN DO processes the applications and counts the total preference points (e.g., community service, EPA resident) for each household then puts tags with the applicants name in a "fishbowl" ready for a random drawing. The number of nametags for each household equal the number of preference points the household has. Once all names are picked a ranking list is put together. The household with the highest number goes to the top of the list and the household with the smallest number goes on the bottom of the list.

Note: Those who have applied may call EPA CAN DO (650) 473-9838 to ask for your Lottery number.

LOTTERY RESULTS

The first Lottery took place July 17, 2003 with a total of 155 applications received. Of those, only 108 were eligible to participate. Due to the lack of qualified applicants for the homes that were being made available for purchase, the list was reopened with a deadline to submit complete applications by September 5, 2003. The lottery for the applications received on or before September 5 took place on October 2, 2003. Of the 112 applications received only 80 were eligible to participate in the Lottery. Most families were found ineligible due to incomplete information, even after they were given an additional week past the deadline to provide missing documentation.

Lottery Success

Four lottery applicants chosen from the July lottery have received their keys to a beautiful home in the Shorebreeze development, located at 1200 Beech Street. The next homes coming up for applicants on the purchasing list are located at 756 Runnymede in the Rose Garden development.

More First Time Buyer Homes

The following BMR units are approved or under construction with protected purchase dates in 2005.

Homes for Sale

1464 West Bayshore 6
 1200 Beech Street 4
 841 Donohoe 1
 756 Runnymede 6
 872 Runnymede 1
 1010 Runnymede 2
 1060 Weeks Street 6
 1160 Weeks Street 12

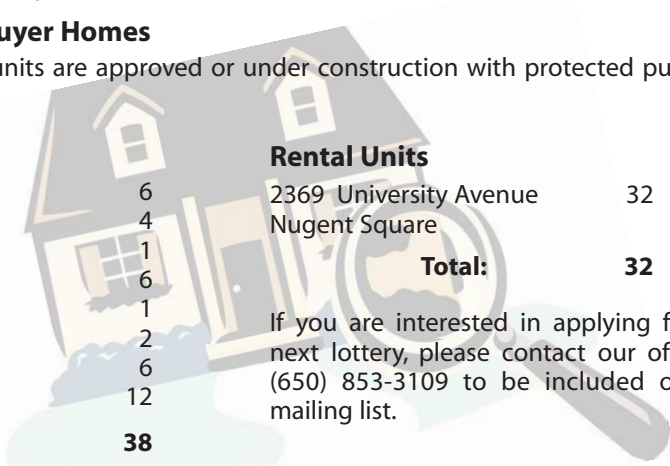
Total: 38

Rental Units

2369 University Avenue 32
 Nugent Square

Total: 32

If you are interested in applying for the next lottery, please contact our office at (650) 853-3109 to be included on our mailing list.





MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: STEWART HYLAND



Born and raised in Oakland, California. The son of Louisiana Baptist, and related to members of the Black Panthers, Stewart Hyland certainly brought many

life experiences to One East Palo Alto (OEPA). In fact, since joining OEPA as a Program Coordinator in 2001, he has introduced his personal sensibilities into the East Palo Alto landscape.

Today, he serves as Program Director for OEPA's Resident Engagement and Safe Signature Programs, and is charged with improving the health and prosperity of local neighborhoods. His contributions through OEPA, however, only tell part of the story. Mr. Hyland is a congregational leader with Peninsula Interfaith Action, which trains its church membership to evoke political change locally. He is also a board member with EPA Can Do, a local, non-profit developer. With such a community focus, his views on the housing and human concerns of East Palo Alto are quite telling.

"One of the great lessons I bring with me from Oakland, is we can all live together when we realize how much more alike we are and really take the time to share differences."

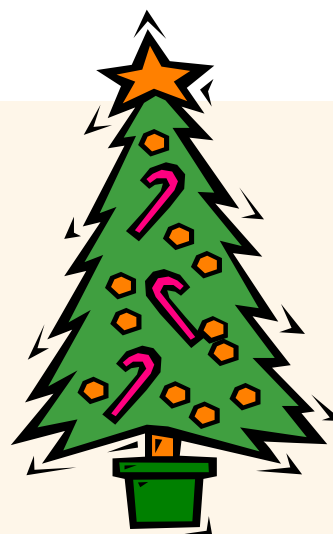
Case in point, "my youngest would say, we live in 'da G' — meaning the Gardens. Most of my neighbors really appreciate their homes and are friendly towards each other. But we have major concerns with dangerous drivers, youth with too much time on their hands and drug dealing. Overcrowded living conditions are sometimes misunderstood as 'traditional' — but, many neighbors have made the connection to low paying wages and shady landlords who will take rent for substandard housing."

That is why it is important for all residents to play an active role in the health of their city. "Last year, I worked to elect new school board members. Going door to door, I found many residents up-to-date with current issues and ready to make tough choices based on the bottom line of what would be best for our children. Good education across the primary and high school level, would help us keep our young men off the streets."

But that is only the beginning. Mr. Hyland points to state legislation that has significantly impacted the residents of East Palo Alto. "Proposition 13 and fiscal land use have influenced the direction local government has chosen over the last ten years. Building a tax base to help provide more services for our residents is only part of the answer. Non-profits and city government need to strengthen their relationship so that necessary services for residents are more strategically distributed and not duplicated."

Enter One East Palo Alto. "By 2010, our Signature Programs will hopefully show diminished current issues and changed to meet new challenges. And in time, we will have a board of new and seasoned residents to share values and experiences. We'll look to host annual cultural celebrations. Our youth will excel in academic, artistic and athletic pursuits. And a self-sufficient One East Palo Alto will bring positive change to our city, turning us into the model community."

Happy Holidays!





MENLO PARK FIRE DISTRICT PRESENTS

C.E.R.T. COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

In partnership with

Atherton Police Department
East Palo Alto Police Department
Menlo Park Police Department

FREE CLASSES FOR THE COMMUNITY TO LEARN BASIC EMERGENCY SKILLS



WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY TO BE BETTER PREPARED FOLLOWING A LOCAL EMERGENCY

In times of a local emergency, the Fire District and Police Department will be busy trying to meet the needs of the entire community. People who depend on emergency support services may become vulnerable in emergency situations.

The goal of the program is to help the residents of Menlo Park Fire District to be self sufficient in a major disaster situation.

CERT training promotes a partnering effort between emergency services and the people they serve. CERT members

are then included into the emergency response resources for their area.

If a catastrophic event overwhelms or delays the community's first responders, CERT members can assist others by applying the basic response and organizational skills that they have learned during training. These skills can help save and sustain lives following a disaster until help arrives. CERT skills can also apply to daily emergencies.

This is a 15 hour comprehensive training program with each class session lasting approximately 2 1/2 hours.

After completion of all 6 classes CERT member will receive:

- Certificates
- I.D. cards
- Personal safety equipment
- CERT t-shirt



If you are interested in enrolling in these classes or want more information:

- Send your name, address and phone number to:
Menlo Park Fire District
Attention: CERT
300 Middlefield Road
Menlo Park CA 94025
- E-mail
cert@menlofire.org
- 650-688-8415

C.E.R.T. COURSE OUTLINE

- Class 1 Earthquake awareness and preparedness
- Class 2 Basic disaster skills
- Class 3 Medical
- Class 4 Light search and rescue
- Class 5 Team Organization
- Class 6 Hands on training

