

## **THE CENTRAL NEIGHBORHOODS AREA MEETING REPORT**

Responses to Issues Raised at the April 23, 2009  
Council Neighborhood Committee Meeting

Presented below are the City's responses to various issues and concerns raised at the April 23, 2009 Council Neighborhood Committee meeting with the Central Neighborhoods Area. If you have further questions about any of the following responses, please contact the responsible Department at the phone numbers noted below. General questions can be directed to Linda Lauzze, the City's Administrative and Neighborhood Services Manager at (650) 903-6379.

### **CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE – (650) 903-6303**

1. *Is the City planning to change soon the ordinance regarding large trailers parked permanently on driveways in the downtown and around other neighborhoods?*

The city does receive questions regarding trailers and motor homes from time to time. While some cities may prohibit the storage of campers and motor homes in residential areas, the City of Mountain View does not have such an ordinance. Campers, motor homes and trailers should be properly parked to be respectful of neighboring properties and to insure that site distance is not blocked. If the community were interested in enacting an ordinance prohibiting such vehicles in residential neighborhoods, then the council could be asked to consider such an ordinance.

### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT – (650) 903-6306**

1. *Mountain View seems to be moving towards very large houses that take up most of their lots. Since trees tend to reflect heat and asphalt absorbs it, densely paved cities tend to be substantially hotter than greener ones. Does Mountain View plan to become San Jose, or will there be a stop to the associated deforestation of our lovely, green city?*

The City has a Heritage Tree Removal Ordinance that regulates the removal of large trees. Arborist reports are required with any application to remove a large Heritage Tree. The City's Forestry Division of the Community Services Department reviews these arborist reports. If large trees are approved for removal, the City requires replacement(s).

2. *There is a lot of talk about getting a grocery store for downtown, but it always seems out of reach. What is the main reason why it is difficult to make this a reality? Is it primarily size, the cost of rents or lack of interest that is the obstacle?*

The City has been continually trying to recruit a small "boutique" style grocery store with 8,000 to 10,000 square feet. The primary difficulty is that there are very few spaces of the

size that can accommodate a grocery store, associated parking, deliveries, trash etc. Grocery store profit margins are very narrow so rent is another critical factor and finding a downtown location where rents are significantly less than \$2.00/month per square foot is difficult. Some smaller grocery store operators have been interested in a downtown location, but have had difficulty finding a large enough space and affordable rent.

The City did look at a grocery store in the new downtown parking structure at Bryant and California Streets, but made a decision to lease to Long's Drug Store because it was less of a financial risk and generated additional revenue to the City.

The City is once again considering a grocery store on City-owned land on Bryant Street between Mercy and California Streets. The City has issued a Request for Proposals (RFPs) inviting developers to submit proposals to develop a mixed use project, which could include a grocery store on the ground floor and residential units above. It is anticipated that the City Council will select a developer this fall and consider the viability of a grocery store at that time.

- 3. I have concerns about new high density PUDs and apartments where there are older R1 neighborhoods. Parking requirements do not align well with the number of autos that arrive with the new neighbors. Excess autos crowd the older R1 areas. How can we see parking requirements such that older property owners are not over burdened?*

The City has parking standards for new development that are based on parking studies and industry standards for parking demand. Planned Unit Development (PUD) projects go through a public review process and many of them require a Council hearing. Notices of public hearings are sent to property owners within a 300 foot radius of the project, so residents can participate in this project review. Parking is one of the issues that the Council carefully considers when taking action on PUD projects. If you have concerns about adequate parking for a project, you are encouraged to attend these hearings to present your comments to the Council. If there is an existing situation in your neighborhood where there are too many cars parked in the street, there may be methods to alleviate the problem. Please report your concerns to the Traffic Division of the Public Works Department at 650-903-6311.

- 4. There are several proposed housing projects in downtown Mountain View. Has the Council studied the infrastructure needs to accommodate the additional residents? (Water, parking, traffic, etc.)*

The review of adequate infrastructure is a required component of environmental review for new developments based on the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Therefore, each project is reviewed for adequate infrastructure on its own, and cumulatively. If additional infrastructure is required for a project, such as increased water or sewer pipes, the City requires the developer to make these improvements as part of their project.

## 5. *Minton's Site*

Prometheus is proposing 214 rental apartments on the Minton's site. Several public meetings and hearings will be scheduled for the project before the final Council decision later this year. Contact the Community Development Department at 650-903-6306 and ask to be added to the mailing list for the 455 W. Evelyn project.

- *Where is the east boundary of Mintons? How will the development differ from the Front Lane/Minton Lane development? Will the four stories be higher than the three stories of Front Lane/Minton Lane development?*

The Front Lane/Minton Lane project consists of two to three story detached units. The proposed apartment complex will be a different building type and will range from two to four stories. The fourth story is likely to be higher than the three stories on the Front Lane/Minton Lane project.

- *Given that Mountain View has so many rentals, why would we want more apartments (The Prometheus Group's proposal for Mintons)? Also, I have heard this might involve removing the road barrier on Villa/Bush Streets that helps reduce traffic on Villa Street. The Council would not allow that to be removed, would they?*

While the City may have a large number of rentals, the City has seen very few new rental units built over the past five years. The City generally gives developers the option of proposing rental units or for-sale units. The proposal will not affect the Villa/Bush Street "S-Curve" improvements.

- *There has been some discussion about developing the Minton's Lumber yard or Abe Fortas Auto Shop into residential housing. What kind of review is being done to ensure high quality housing consistent with current housing in this neighborhood? What is the height in stories being proposed? Will it be rental or single family townhomes? How can average citizens get involved in the decision?*

The building will be 2 stories tall on Villa Street, transitioning to 4 stories along Evelyn Avenue. Several public meetings and hearings will be scheduled for the project before the final Council decision later this year. If you would like to be notified of the public hearings, please contact the Community Development Department at 650-903-6306 and ask to be added to the mailing list for the 455 W. Evelyn project.

- *Is Minton's closing or moving because they decided to or did the City decide having an apartment complex on the site would be preferable to having a building supply store?*

The property owner has decided to close Minton's and has entered into an agreement with Prometheus to develop a new apartment project on the property. The City Council has not made any decision yet concerning whether to approve or deny the Prometheus application to redevelop the site.

6. *I understand that the City is considering a 30 million dollar subsidy for a hotel near Google. Does the City also provide subsidies for small business owners? If not, why not?*

An investment has been considered for the hotel near Google, however, the City is still developing terms and conditions for a ground lease and it is unclear whether or not the project will move forward. If the City does decide to invest in the hotel, it would be using a combination of revenue sources that would include funds from the Shoreline Community Fund and those generated by the hotel from property and Transit Occupancy Tax. Whenever the City considers this type of investment, the Council looks at the long term return to the City. In this instance, there is the possibility of generating new revenues for the City and offering an amenity that the City lacks, a four diamond hotel with conference facilities. It is estimated that the hotel could generate \$2-\$3 million per year to the City in new revenue.

The City does offer a program for small business owner called the Downtown Façade Improvement program. This is only for businesses located in the downtown and is a grant that reimburses the business owner for improvements they make to the façade of their business. This program is funded through the City's Downtown Redevelopment District.

It is difficult for cities to offer these types of incentive programs since they would be competing with dollars for typical City services such as public safety, parks and recreation, libraries etc. Given some of these constraints, the City's Economic Development program is looking for other ways to support small businesses, possibility using some funds to provide businesses with technical support or help new companies grow.

7. *What is the future development plans on the Pacific Press property on Villa Street?*

The property owner has inquired about building a new office building on the site, in the parking lot near the Shoreline Boulevard overpass, but do not appear to be moving forward at this time. The proposal would retain the existing buildings.

8. *Are there any restriction on using "gray water" (e.g. bath tub and washing machine runoff) to water gardens? In the big drought in the 1970's we did this.*

The City does not regulate this issue for single-family homeowners. Residents can choose to take excess water from their bath tub or washing machine to water the landscaping on their property. There is a possibility that the soap in this water may not be good for the plants or soil.

#### **COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT – (650) 903-6331**

1. *When will the new mini-park on Mariposa Avenue be completed?*

West Dana Park is fully funded (design & construction) in this years 2008-09 Capital Improvement Program. Barring any unforeseen changes, the project will move forward next

fiscal year (2009-10). Below is a tentative design and construction schedule for the park subject to additional staff review and refinement.

Release Design RFP – late August 2009

Award design service contract – October 2009

Park & Recreation Commission and Council approval of park design – April 2010

Council approval of Plans and authorization to advertise – August 2010

Council award of construction contract – October 2010

Dedication – May 2011

2. *Please add a dog fountain to either Fairmont Street Park or Mercy/Bush Streets Park, like the ones at the dog park or the one next to the barbeque area at Cuesta Park.*

Mountain View began working on providing our dogs with water break opportunities when new “doggie friendly” drinking fountains came on the market. These fountains have been installed in the dog park, along portions of Stevens Creek Trail and in several parks. Replacing existing drinking fountains is not an inexpensive proposition and current budget challenges will impact Mountain View’s ability to install them in the short term. New “doggie friendly” fountains will be installed in parks as funding becomes available.

3. *The weather is gorgeous and Eagle Pool has very limited hours. Why is Rengstorff Pool still closed? Or why can’t you open a few lanes at Eagle Pool when swim classes are in session?*

Rengstorff Pool will be open for the summer season beginning June 22, 2009 through September 7, 2009. Over the years some lap swim hours have been added at that location during the summer based on community need. The hours for the summer adult lap swim program at Rengstorff Pool will be Monday-Friday 10:30a.m.-1:00p.m. and weekends from 10:00-11:45a.m. Rengstorff Pool is run seasonally since there is a well attended daily lap swim program offered year round at Eagle Pool. The operation of Rengstorff Pool year round would result in increased utility and staffing costs and would be beyond the capacity of the current budget.

In regards to the opening of a few lanes when swim classes are in session at Eagle Pool. Due to the variety of swim levels taught at the same time, use of the entire pool for the lesson program is necessary. The summer adult lap swim program is offered at Eagle Pool Monday-Friday 11:15am-1:00pm and 6:30-8:30pm. Adult lap swim is also offered in the morning on weekends at Eagle Pool from 9:00-11:45am.

### **POLICE DEPARTMENT – (650) 903-6350**

1. *There was a conversation at my local café about photo recognition of license plates from police cars. Does Mountain View do this? Do we use the data responsibly?*

Two of the MVPD patrol vehicles are equipped with Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPRs). This sophisticated equipment aids the department in the location of reported stolen

vehicles and other wanted vehicles. The equipment “reads” license plates very rapidly as it moves throughout the city. As it reads the plates, it compares them to a regularly updated list of wanted and stolen vehicles maintained by the Department of Justice. If the ALPR recognizes a wanted or stolen vehicle, the equipment notifies the officer who can take the appropriate action. Although officers can still manually query license plates while on patrol, this system is much faster and requires no additional work by the officer. The department always handles the myriad of personal and private data it receives on a daily basis appropriately and according to existing state and federal laws.

2. *On Castro Street do they have officers who watch for people who cross against the red light and no walk signs?*

Our Traffic Unit’s main responsibility is to enforce traffic laws and investigate traffic accidents. These motorcycle officers conduct enforcement throughout the entire city and are often in the downtown area. In addition, all of our patrol officers also enforce traffic laws as a part of their daily duties, including the downtown area. If you have specific traffic complaints or concerns, you can call our Traffic Hotline at 650-903-6146.

### **PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT – (650) 903-6311**

1. *Traffic on Villa Street is a problem, including speeding, reckless driving, squealing tires, etc. Problem has been raised numerous times at several meetings but no improvement. What can be done?*

The City’s Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) was established to help residents work with City staff to address traffic issues, including speeding, on local residential streets. To initiate the NTMP process, submit a petition to Mike Vroman, City Traffic Engineer, or Sayed Fakhry, Senior Traffic Engineer, in the Public Works Department specifying your concern and asking that the NTMP process address the problem on your street.

Please contact Mike Vroman or Sayed Fakhry at (650) 903-6311 to further discuss the NTMP process and to discuss traffic issues in this area.

You can also leave a detailed message on the Police Department’s Traffic Hotline at (650) 903-6146 and enforcement will be provided as resources are available.

2. *I have a several questions on High-speed rail: 1) does it need to go along the existing rail tracks and why not let it follow the highways; 2) does it need to be above ground; and 3) why does the City want Mountain View to be a rail stop?*

In 2006, a Program level Environmental Impact Report was certified that called for the high speed rail route to follow the Caltrain alignment from Gilroy to San Francisco. A freeway alignment was considered and ruled out. The California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) is now conducting a more detailed environmental analysis that will determine

more precisely the track alignments, including whether the trains will travel above grade, at-grade, in a tunnel, in a trench or a combination depending on location. The City Council requested Mountain View be considered for a station as several members thought it would offer the perfect combination of light rail, bus, Caltrain and high speed rail, all at one station, and be a convenience to residents wishing to travel north or south.

For more information, you may access the CHSRA website at [www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov).

- 3. I have a concern regarding traffic on Pettis Avenue between California and Villa Streets. Apartments and businesses have cars zooming down Pettis Avenue to avoid lights. We would like to see speed bumps installed to make this shortcut uninviting.*

As noted above, the City's Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) was established to help residents work with City staff to address traffic issues on local residential streets.

Some Pettis Avenue residents between California and Villa Streets submitted a petition in 2007 and a speed survey was conducted; however, traffic on this section of Pettis Avenue did not meet or exceed the threshold speed as defined by the NTMP. Therefore, traffic-calming measures, including speed humps, could not be considered at the time. Staff will schedule another speed survey this fall to see if conditions have changed. If the data from the new speed survey indicates conditions on this section of Pettis Avenue meet NTMP criteria, a neighborhood meeting of the Pettis Avenue residents will be scheduled to discuss possible traffic-calming measures to lower speeds.

You can contact Mike Vroman or Sayed Fakhry at (650) 903-6311 to further discuss the NTMP process and to discuss traffic issues in this area.

- 4. Has the City already studied possible grade separations at Rengstorff Avenue and Castro Street? If so, what solutions are considered to be feasible and infeasible?*

In 2004, the City completed the Rengstorff Avenue Underpass and Grade Separation Feasibility Study. The study concluded that it is feasible to depress Rengstorff Avenue under the railroad tracks at an estimated project cost of \$45 million. At Council's request, the study did not consider evaluating Rengstorff Avenue to cross overhead similar to the overcrossing of the railroad tracks at Shoreline Boulevard and did not investigate the feasibility of an embankment structure along the railroad right of way.

The earliest study that investigated the feasibility of grade separating Castro Street from the railroad tracks was done in 1967 and it recommended the closure of Castro Street at Evelyn Avenue. With the November 2008 passage of Proposition 1A bond financing of a statewide high speed train system, the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) is now evaluating grade separation alternatives for all at-grade crossings between San Francisco and San Jose including Castro Street and Rengstorff Avenue. In Mountain View the CHSRA will evaluate at-grade, above grade, tunnel and trench alternatives. The CHSRA is expecting to

complete conceptual grade separation alternatives for Castro Street and Rengstorff Avenue and present them to the Council before the end of the year.

5. *Traffic on Villa Street, approaching Castro Street from Bryant Street, tends to back-up (sometime all the way back to Bryant Street, blocking traffic, especially during late lunch hour (1:00 p.m.) after cars leave the parking structure. The problem is cars waiting to make a left turn onto Castro Street, blocking cars wanting to cross Castro Street or make a right turn onto it. Having no parking for 2-4 car lengths would allow cars to get past the stopped cars trying to make a left. I know restaurants don't like losing parking spots, but some friends avoid coming to Mountain View because of this.*

Staff agrees and several years ago painted red curb along eastbound Villa Street from Castro Street to Wild Cherry Lane (the alley) and installed signs on Bryant to inform motorists departing the parking structure that Shoreline Boulevard is an alternative route. However, the loss of parking impacted the adjacent businesses and the red curb was not repainted. Staff will investigate this concern again and determine if any improvements can be made.

6. *The traffic light at Central Expressway and Castro Street/Moffett Boulevard does not have traffic-activated signals for cars coming from Moffett Boulevard or Castro Street. Therefore the light stopping traffic on Central Expressway remains red long after the last cars crossing Central Expressway stop. This causes long delays (especially in the evening) for cars trying to cross Central Expressway or make a left onto Castro Street.*

The traffic signal at Central Expressway and Castro Street/Moffett Boulevard is owned and operated by Santa Clara County and does have detector loops for cars coming from Moffett Boulevard and Castro Street to provide traffic-activated signals for each approach. The long delays for cars trying to cross Central Expressway or make a left turn onto Castro Street are most often caused by Caltrain since these movements must be stopped when arriving and departing trains cross Castro Street. Recently, the detector loops for the Moffett Boulevard approach failed and green time is now provided for this approach each cycle even if no vehicles are present, which adds to the delays. Staff contacted the County and asked them to expedite replacement of these detector loops.

7. *Caltrain's whistles are usually not too loud most of the time. However Southern Pacific freight trains at NIGHT, often are really loud and persistent. They are less sensitive than Caltrain. But occasionally Caltrain's whistles are really loud, tragically after a suicide. I know the sensitivity, but the whistles are overdone – and not effective for someone who wants to walk in front of a train.*

The decibel level and length of the whistle sound are regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) in San Francisco, based on Federal regulations. In response to other complaints, Caltrain has lowered the decibel level and direction of its horns and whistles to the minimum allowed. Freight trains are also regulated by Federal statute. Their whistles and horns may sound louder at night as it is usually quieter at that time. It is also harder for the engineer to see down the track at night. Consequently, they may sound the



horn/whistle longer to alert anyone in the vicinity. Unfortunately, it is not an effective method of preventing suicides, only to alert someone who is unaware of an approaching train.

8. *Any plans to expand recycling services?*

There are no immediate plans to change or increase the recycling services offered to Mountain View residents. Pending funding approval, preparation of a Zero Waste Plan will begin in Summer of 2009. This plan will identify program options to maximize recycling and increase landfill diversion. If you are interested in being involved in the development of this plan, please contact solid waste staff at 650-903-6311.

9. *Does the City know how much recyclables are stolen before the City can collect them? Do they care?*

We have not quantified the loss of recyclables to scavengers; however, we are aware of and do care about the problem. Scavenging is prohibited by Mountain View City Code for a variety of reasons. The act of scavenging creates a public nuisance of noise and litter, and can make residents feel threatened by someone going through their containers. The revenue from recycling is used to help offset the costs of collection and keep utility rates low. If you see someone other than the City or Foothill Disposal employees taking recyclables from garbage or recycling containers, please report it immediately by calling the Mountain View Police Department non-emergency dispatcher at (650) 903-6395.

Please try to note the date and time of the occurrence, a description of the person, and the method of collection (bag, shopping cart, or vehicle with make/model and license number if easily available). If the scavenging occurs on a regular basis, please let the dispatcher know. A police officer will try and be present at that time to warn or cite the scavenger. Do not approach the scavenger on your own.

Please keep reporting scavenging each time it occurs so that the Police can establish a track record of areas that might need special enforcement. Do not be discouraged if your first call was considered a lower priority.

Other tips to help prevent scavenging:

- Set out your containers the morning before trash collection (no later than 7 a.m.)
- Put bottles and cans with California redemption value at the bottom of the cart underneath other recyclables.
- If you must set out your container the night before, keep bottles and cans with redemption value separate and place in the cart the next morning before collection.
- Please do not give permission to fundraisers to remove recyclables or garbage from any container.

10. *Mountain View uses chloramine in its water. Washington D.C. had problems with chloramine causing lead to loosen from old pipes and unsafe levels of lead in drinking water. What monitoring has Mountain View done to make sure our residents don't ingest too much lead, especially in older areas that may well have lead in the pipes?*

The City of Mountain View tests water samples at homes throughout the City to determine lead and copper levels. Tests are conducted every 3 years, and in the last set of tests in 2007 no lead was detected and copper levels were within United States Environmental Protection Agency drinking water standards. The next tests are scheduled for 2010.

If you are concerned about elevated lead levels in your water, you can have your water tested or allow water from your tap to run for 1-2 minutes (if the tap has not been used for several hours) before using the water. Keep a pitcher or small watering can nearby sinks to collect water running from the tap to use for house or garden plants. Please call the Public Services Division at 903-6329 for additional water quality questions or information regarding where you can have your water tested.

11. *There are too many cars parked on the street for the street cleaning to be effective. What can be done to improve the street cleaning on Mariposa Avenue?*

If the City receives complaints regarding the cleanliness of streets, Public Services staff will inspect the area and if warranted will schedule a special street cleaning to remove debris. To perform a special cleaning, the City posts no parking signs in a designated area to allow complete access for street sweepers. Parking restrictions are typically put in place for a three hour period on a weekday morning, with residents being notified of the restrictions approximately two weeks in advance. Please call the Public Services Division at 903-6329 regarding street cleanliness concerns.

12. *I live on Calderon Avenue near El Camino Real and cars are racing down Calderon in order to make it to a green traffic light, which is not safe for people living on Calderon. There also is not enough room to make a right hand turn onto El Camino and cars get too close to people on the sidewalks and almost hit trash cans. Is there something that can be done to improve this situation?*

As noted above, the City's Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) was established to help residents work with City staff to address traffic issues on local residential streets. To initiate the NTMP process, submit a petition to Mike Vroman, City Traffic Engineer, or Sayed Fakhry, Senior Traffic Engineer, in the Public Works Department specifying your concern and asking that the NTMP process address the problem on your street. Please contact Mike Vroman or Sayed Fakhry at (650) 903-6311 to further discuss the NTMP process and to discuss traffic issues in this area.

The shared through/right turn lane on southbound Calderon Avenue at El Camino Real is approximately 12 feet wide and there is also an approximately 5 foot wide shoulder, which

should be more than adequate to make a right turn onto El Camino Real. In addition, motorists who are waiting in the shared lane behind a vehicle(s) going through to Phyllis Avenue may legally use the available portion of the shared lane and the shoulder area to make a right turn; however, it is not legal to encroach onto the sidewalk.

To address speeding or other traffic concerns on Calderon Avenue, you can also leave a detailed message on the Police Department's Traffic Hotline at (650) 903-6146 and enforcement will be provided as resources are available.