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## Connecting Palo Alto Moves Full Steam Ahead



It's full steam ahead for the Rail Committee as they work with Council, the Planning and Transportation Commission, and the public to find grade separation solutions along the four Caltrain crossings in Palo Alto. Time is of the essence as we don't want to miss out on any of the \$700 million Measure B funds that will be divided among eight crossings in Santa Clara County. With that in mind, Council adopted the following rail items on Sept. 11:

- Revised Community Engagement Plan
- Problem Statement to define the project's purpose
- Objectives used to develop project alternatives
- Evaluation criteria used to analyze alternatives



Community input is critical to this process, and I would encourage you to attend the second [Connecting Palo Alto](#) community workshop on Saturday, Sept. 16 from 10 a.m.- 2 p.m. in the Art Center Auditorium, 1313 Newell Road. We'll work to finalize a statement about the problem we are looking to solve, and brainstorm ideas about issues and alternatives unique to each crossing. The Palo Alto

Avenue Caltrain Station is already the busiest Caltrain station between San Francisco and San Jose, and planned electrification of Caltrain is expected to bring more train service to Palo Alto in 2021. The Rail Committee is also expanding its role in engaging the community so check out future schedules and agendas [here](#).

## Revitalizing Affordable Housing

The grand re-opening for the Colorado Park Apartments renovation took place on Aug. 17. Originally constructed in 1972, the City joined with its longstanding partner, the [Palo Alto Housing Corporation](#), to provide part of the \$31.9 million loan for renovation of the 60-unit affordable housing complex. Much of the improvement project included sustainable and eco-friendly upgrades such as solar panels, energy efficient appliances, water-saving fixtures, and drought-resistant landscape areas. Two play structures were also added and an outdoor exercise equipment area.



Photo credit: Nikki Ritcher Photography

The renovation of the Colorado Park Apartments follows the grand opening of [Mayfield Place](#) earlier this summer - a mixed-use, affordable housing apartment building that is the result of a partnership between the City and Stanford University. It provides 70 units of affordable housing with the ground floor housed by the nonprofit Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

## Affordable Housing Bills

A few weeks ago, I sent a letter on behalf of the City to State Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de Leon and Speaker Anthony Rendon echoing the League of California Cities' position on two affordable housing bills headed to the floor of the state senate. The letter urged the support of SB 540 (Roth) and opposition to SB 35 (Wiener). State



Senator Richard Roth's bill (SB 540) would streamline the affordable housing process while still preserving local control for environmental and public review, while State Senator Scott Wiener's bill (SB 35) would instead bypass the California Environmental Quality Act and allow housing development without any parking or public input. SB 540 would balance these needs while still addressing the affordable housing shortage. You can read the entire letter [here](#), plus see how the City tracks multiple bills on both the state and federal level on our Intergovernmental Affairs page [here](#).

## Setting Flexible Office Cap



On Sept. 5, Council unanimously approved the extension of the interim 50,000 square foot cap on office space development for another seven months. This will give staff time to work out the specifics of a permanent ordinance that limits office development downtown, and on California Avenue and El Camino Real to a

total of no more than an average of 50,000 square feet per year. It will also be on a first come first serve basis. This is the most stringent limit on office development in the Bay Area, while also providing a flexible and fair cap that will moderate the pace of growth in our community.

## Newest Sister City Redefines Partnership



Heidelberg, Germany is Palo Alto's newest Sister City, signaling a new partnership focused on innovation, shared learning and best practices. The official designation as a Sister City follows the Council's 2013 Smart City Partnership Agreement that collaborated on sustainability and



technology within local government. Later this month, City Manager Jim Keene and I will travel to Heidelberg to participate in a formal signing ceremony to mark the new affiliation. Our business will also take us to Sister City Enschede, the Netherlands and Linköping, Sweden. Over the years, the City's partnership with [Neighbors Abroad](#) has also led to sister city relations with Palo, Philippines; Oaxaca, Mexico, Albi, France and Tsuchiura, Japan.

## Pedal to Bike Palo Alto



Come explore bike-friendly routes and find bicycling resources as Bike Palo Alto returns for an 8th year on Sunday, Oct. 1 from 1-3 p.m.

The free event starts at El Carmelo Elementary (Bryant Street & Loma Verde Avenue), where you can choose among three marked routes with shorter and longer options – or ride them all! Get maps, route and safety guidance, helmet fitting, a pre-ride bike check and giveaways too.

Bike Palo Alto encourages bike safety and also serves as a kickoff for [Walk & Roll](#) events in Palo Alto schools the first week of October. It's 100 percent volunteer run, so if you

would like to help, email Robert Neff for more information at: [bpa2017@neffs.net](mailto:bpa2017@neffs.net)

## Rappelling to End Homelessness



Spiderman sightings were rampant on Sept. 8-9 in San Jose as nearly 100 people and four South Bay mayors (myself included) climbed to new heights and attempted heroics by scaling 16 floors or 236 feet down the Adobe headquarters for a

rappel-a-thon fundraiser to help end homelessness. Called the [Downtown Drop Down](#), this first ever rappel-a-thon benefited the non-profit [Downtown Streets Team](#), which operates in several Bay Area cities including Palo Alto.

The program helps transition homeless volunteers into employment by giving them work experience and a pathway to self-sufficiency. It was an exhilarating way to support a good cause. To learn more about the program and see how you can help, click [here](#).



*H. Greg Scharff*

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