



The City of Los Altos

Communiqué

Volume 24 Number 2

Fall 2008

Los Altos Police Department launches on-line crime alerting and mapping service

The Los Altos Police Department and CrimeReports.com have announced a new on-line crime alerting mapping service that provides easy to read incident crime maps and automated alerts to the citizens of Los Altos. The service, located at <http://www.crimereports.com> or directly from the City of Los Altos web site <http://www.ci.los-altos.ca.us/police/index.html> provides neighborhood crime data in near real-time and is available now.

The CrimeReports service is free and allows citizens to receive automatic daily, weekly or monthly email alerts if/when crimes occur near their home, office, or local school. Citizens can also view reported crime activity on an easy to use map for location within the Los Altos Police Department boundaries. Crime incident data is updated nightly and includes incident type, date, location, distance from citizen's address, event identification/case number, brief crime incident description and disposition of the case/call for service.

City of Los Altos Community Center Master Plan Update

The City of Los Altos is working on creating a master plan for a new Community Center. Pursuing the Community Center Master Plan is an opportunity to better configure the 18 acres of land making up the Civic Center and to improve the interconnectivity between uses. A new community center would provide for the enhancement of programs and services; improve the connection to downtown and incorporate a greater variety of uses such as open space, community gathering spaces and sports fields.

Planning for the new Community Center Master Plan is in progress. The City has now completed a Needs Assessment and on August 8, 2008, held a charrette at Grant Park to gather the community's input on potential scenarios for the Community Center. Approximately 75 members of the community participated throughout the day. The next steps will be to produce three scenarios that will incorporate both the City's needs and feedback gathered from the charrette event.

The Master Plan and redevelopment of the existing Civic Center will create a Community Center that all of Los Altos can be proud of. The project sets the tone of Los Altos for years to come and is a plan for our future. For more information about the Master Plan project, please visit www.losaltoscommunitycenter.org or call Heidi Koo at (650) 947-2640 or heidi.koo@ci.los-altos.ca.us

The Los Altos Police Department will not publish certain types of crimes in order to protect the victims involved. These crimes include rape, sexual assault, crimes against children, domestic violence and calls that are medical in nature.

"CrimeReports.com will be helpful to those members of our community who want to stay informed about public safety issues in their neighborhoods and empower citizens to work with the police department to address crime issues in the City of Los Altos," said Chief Tuck Younis.

For more information, please contact Elizabeth Vargas, Police Services Manager, (650) 947-2822.

Police Ask for Your Help During the Festival of Lights Parade

The 2008 holiday season is right around the corner. Each year the Festival of Lights Parade in downtown Los Altos is the kickoff event for the local holiday season. This parade has become a local tradition, drawing viewers from throughout the region. This year, the parade is scheduled for Sunday November 30.

In recent years the urgency for families to get “just the right spot” to experience this spectacular event has created unintended consequences. We all want to let our families experience the joy and excitement that this parade offers. We also need to remember that those efforts can cause others frustration. In particular, the growing tendency for families to set up “camps” and reserve sidewalk positions for the annual parade, days ahead of the parade, is creating a public nuisance. Excited parade attendees have been observed reserving areas of sidewalk with camping chairs, blankets, benches and also using masking tape to mark their viewing spots, sometimes completely blocking free access to the sidewalks. Tape and chairs on the sidewalk can serve as a tripping or slip hazard for unsuspecting pedestrians.

When chairs and other items present a hazard on the sidewalks, the Police Department dispatches officers to walk the streets and sidewalks and dismantle these camps, diverting these valuable resources from proactive crime suppression. In an effort to address this phenomenon, **the Police Department is asking parade attendees to refrain the practice of “reserving” viewing spots until noon on the day of the parade.**

There should be plenty of room for everyone to enjoy the parade as it moves through the downtown area, without having to reserve spots days in advance. Your holiday parade experience will be more enjoyable, knowing that you have done your part to help enhance the Los Altos holiday “village” experience for everyone in attendance.

Keep wildlife from moving in with you!



Environmental changes and continued urban growth in many areas of Santa Clara County have caused an unwanted interaction between homeowners and wildlife. Most wildlife, while fascinating in their natural environment, can cause considerable damage when they decide to move into your home. In addition to damaging insulation when they use it for nesting material and destroying gardens, wildlife is capable of injuring domestic pets and transmitting disease. Since most wildlife is protected by state law, preventing their entrance into your home is easier and safer than removing them.

What You Can Do To Protect Your Home & Pets

First inspect the exterior of your home. Damaged ventilation screens and the areas where roofs overlap are the most common way for wildlife to enter your home. If you find any damage or openings, place a piece of wadded up paper in the open area. The following day, check to see if the paper has been disturbed. If the paper has not been moved, make all necessary repairs that day. If the paper has been moved, it is important not to make repairs, as you may trap the animal in your attic or under your home. Contact the Santa Clara County Vector Control District to arrange for an inspection and possible removal of the animal.

Wildlife will often move in under decks. If the sides of your deck are open, it is important to close off that access. Before closing off the entire deck, leave an opening approximately 4” wide and place a piece of wadded paper in that opening. If the paper is undisturbed the following day, finish sealing off the deck that same day. If the paper is disturbed, contact the Santa Clara County Vector Control District.

The Department of Fish and Game prohibits the release or relocation of any animal, wild or domestic, into the wild without written permission.

If you have a doggie door, keep it locked at night. Feed your pets only what they can eat at one feeding. Remove all unfinished food dishes. Do not leave pet food outside your house.

For additional information, please contact Santa Clara Vector Control District at 1-800-675-115 or visit their website @www.sccvector.org.

City Almanac*

October, 2008

- 2 Planning Commission 7:30 p.m.
- 6 Youth Commission 7:00 p.m..
- 7 Library Commission 5:30 p.m.
- 8 Parks, Arts & Rec Comm. 7:00 p.m.
- 13 Environmental Comm 7:00 p.m.
- 14 City Council 7:00 p.m. **
- 16 Planning Commission 7:30 p.m.
- 22 Traffic Commission 7:00 p.m.
- 27 Historical Commission 7:00 p.m.
- 28 City Council 7:00 p.m. **

November

- 3 Youth Commission 7:00 p.m.
- 4 Library Commission 5:30 p.m.
- 6 Planning Commission 7:30 p.m.
- 10 Environmental Comm. 7:00 p.m.
- 11 **Veterans' Day City offices closed**
- 12 City Council 7:00 p.m. **
- 12 Parks, Arts & Rec Comm. 7:00 p.m.
- 20 Planning Commission 7:30 p.m.
- 24 Historical Commission 7:00 p.m.
- 25 City Council 7:00 p.m. **
- 26 Traffic Commission 7:00 p.m.
- 27-28 **Thanksgiving - City offices closed**

December

- 1 Youth Commission 7:00 p.m.
- 2 Library Commission 5:30 p.m.
- 4 Planning Commission 7:30 p.m.
- 8 Environmental Comm. 7:00 p.m.
- 9 City Council 7:00 p.m. **
- 10 Parks, Arts & Rec Comm. 7:00 p.m.
- 14 Planning Commission 7:30 p.m.
- 22 Historical Commission 7:00 p.m.
- 24 Traffic Commission 7:00 p.m.
- 25 **Happy holiday! City offices closed**

January, 2009

- 1 **New Year's day - City Offices Closed**
- 5 Youth Commission 7:00 p.m.
- 6 Library Commission 5:30 p.m.
- 12 Environmental Comm. 7:00 p.m.
- 13 City Council 7:00 p.m. **
- 14 Parks, Arts & Rec Comm. 7:00 p.m.
- 15 Planning Commission 7:30 p.m.
- 19 **M. L. King holiday-City offices closed**
- 26 Historical Commission 7:00 p.m.
- 27 City Council 7:00 p.m. **
- 28 Traffic Commission 7:00 p.m.

*This information could change. To verify, please call 650 947-2700.

** Information available on Channel 26 and at the libraries the Saturday prior to each Tuesday meeting and on the City's web site: www.ci.los-altos.ca.us/CouncilAgenda/Minutes

Property Tax Bills and Sewer Charges

Santa Clara County recently mailed out property tax bills for tax year 2008-09. As in the past, tax bills include a line item for City of Los Altos Sewer Service Charges. This year, for the first time, the amount of the Sewer Service Charge for a home or other property is based upon the actual water use of that property. In past years, parcels were charged a flat-rate based upon land use.

When implementing the new billing plan, the City attempted to correct errors before the bills were mailed. However, it is always a good idea for property owners to check their property tax bills carefully to ensure that all line items are correct. To double-check a sewer service charge, you will need the water bills for January, February and March of 2007 as these were the "wet season" months upon which 2008-09 Sewer Service Charges were based. The city uses "wet season" months because during the wet season relatively less water is used for irrigation. Just add up water use from the three bills, annualize the result by multiplying it by four, and multiply that estimate of sewer use by the Sewer Service Charge rate of \$3.03 per sewer unit. The result should match the line item on your property tax bill. The average Sewer Service Charge for 2008-09 for a single family home was \$445. Sewer Service Charges for next year's tax bill, July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010 will be based on water usage during the three "wet season" months of 2008.

If, due to a leak, unusual landscaping needs, or some other circumstance, you do not believe that the sewer use estimation method used by the City accurately reflects sewer use on your property, you may be able to apply to the city for an adjustment of your 2008-09 Sewer Service Charge. Appeal forms, as well as the city's policy governing appeals, are available online at www.ci.los-altos.ca.us or at City Hall. Appeals of 2008-09 Charges must be filed by December 1, 2008.

Take the time to have your voice heard. The Civic Soapbox reply form is on the back page. Feel free to make any comments or suggestions. Clip the form and fold it in half. Be sure the address side (below) is on the outside. The U. S. Postal Service prefers it secured at the bottom with a small piece of tape. **Fold here**

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All fifteen cities in Santa Clara County are partnering with the Registrar of Voters Vote by Mail Project. Any mail ballot issued from Santa Clara County can be deposited in the official ballot box located in the City Hall lobby. Please make sure you fill out the back of the envelope and sign it before dropping it into the ballot box.

Ballots returned to City Hall must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Election Day, November 4, 2008.

You may also return your ballot to any polling place or to the Registrar's Headquarters by 8:00 p.m. when the polls officially close.

Voting is easy!

Step right up—express yourself

Civic Soapbox

Comments: _____

Please call VEGA, Volunteers Enriching Government Action, 650/947-2608 for available volunteer jobs.

Statement of Purpose
 To communicate Los Altos City services, programs and activities of concern and interest to and involving residents and businesses within the City of Los Altos. To provide greater awareness of opportunities and encourage further civic participation.

The Communiqué is published three times a year.

City Council:
 Val Carpenter, Mayor
 Megan Satterlee, Mayor Pro Tem
 Lou Becker
 David Casas
 Ronald D. Packard

City Manager: Doug Schmitz
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