



CITY OF  
**PALO  
ALTO**

## City Council Staff Report

**From: City Manager**

**Report Type: INFORMATION REPORTS**

**Lead Department: City Manager**

**Meeting Date: August 14, 2023**

Report #:2307-1790

### **TITLE**

City Council Recess Report

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Informational report only.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This memorandum provides an overview of notable city activities through the month of July. As noted, progress continued on several Council priorities as well as general city operations. A full list of Citywide updates is listed by department under the Analysis section of this informational report.

Here are a few highlights:

- A cross department team focused on transitioning financial reporting from FY 2022-2023 to the new Fiscal Year, which started on July 1, 2023. Staff anticipates publishing the FY 2023-2024 budgets in August.
- The Trusted Response Urgent Support Team for North County added outreach workers (to promote the program), case managers (to follow-up with clients and better connect them to services) and are focused on providing mental health first aid trainings in the community.
- Hiring, recruitment and promotions continue to be a top priority for all departments.
- An in-house crew supported Foothills Roadside Vegetation Clearance/Fire Prevention over the span of three weeks and over 2,300 work hours, clearing a total of 20 miles of road. Work locations included Los Trancos Road, Arastradero Road, and Page Mill Road.
- On July 3, the City released the Request for Proposals for consultant services to study different street alternatives, configurations, and activations for Cal Ave. and Ramona St. With proposals due in early August, staff plans to present a contract with a preferred vendor to the City Council this fall.
- Palo Alto Fire Department (PAFD) and Santa Clara County Fire Department (SCCFD) firefighters began staffing Fire Station 8 in the Palo Alto Nature Preserve. Summer 2023 is the third fire season that PAFD and SCCFD staffed Fire Station 8 since a Tri-Party Fire Agreement for Foothills Fire Station staffing was executed.

- The City received notification from the California State Transportation Authority (CalSTA) that the Churchill Avenue Grade Crossing was chosen for \$23.7 million of funding towards final design. Staff is coordinating with Santa Clara Valley Transportation Agency (VTA), Joint Peninsula Board (JPB/Caltrain), and granting agencies on the next steps for award of the funding.
- The Police Department coordinated with several departments to install six of the twenty Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) cameras approved by Council and anticipate installing the remainder of the cameras in the coming weeks.
- Capital improvement projects continue to be on time and on budget, including the Public Safety Building, Regional Water Quality Control Plant (RWQCP) projects including the 12kV Electrical Loop Rehabilitation, Primary Sedimentation Tank Rehabilitation, and Secondary Treatment Upgrades, and Boulware Park, and the Palo Alto History Museum Roth Building construction have begun.
- The Grid Modernization and Electrification study is in progress and on track for completion this fall.
- The 11% voluntary water use reduction request implemented by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) and State of California's emergency drought regulations expired in June. As a result, Palo Alto lifted the 2-day per week watering restriction. Several State water waste restrictions continue to be in effect and staff is working on community outreach.

## **BACKGROUND**

The following informational report provides a brief update on activities accomplished during the City Council's July recess. The updates are organized by department. While this report is not an exhaustive list of staff activities, it seeks to inform the City Council and the broader community about items completed since the last City Council meeting of the fiscal year or recent efforts underway.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Administrative Services Department**

#### *End of Fiscal Year and New Fiscal Year Activities*

The Administrative Services Department (ASD) has been focusing on transitioning to the next fiscal year. In partnership with the Information Technology (IT) Department, ASD staff completed the transition in the financial system. Both departments have been working closely to increase automation of this transition and due to these efforts, the team completed the transition error free and ahead of schedule.

ASD's annual inventory of both warehouses, the Municipal Services Center and Regional Water Quality Control Plant (RWQCP), were completed with no discrepancies. This process requires physically counting inventory of close to 5,000 stocked parts, totaling approximately \$7 million.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is working on publishing the FY 2024 Adopted Operating and Capital Budget books, along with the FY 2024 Municipal Fees, targeting an August release date.

Working with the IT Department and the Human Resources Department, staff continued implementation for employee contract terms for payroll processing, effective July 1, 2023.

### *Recruitments*

ASD continues work to fill key department vacancies, aiming new employees to start by fall 2023. These positions include two analyst positions in OMB, two Contract Administrator positions in Purchasing, one administrative support position, and positions in Revenue Collections and Payroll as part of ASD's succession planning efforts.

### *eProcurement Implementation Update + Other Process Efficiencies*

The Purchasing Division continues implementing the new eProcurement system from OpenGov after first going live in June. Since going live, 11 solicitations were started. Streamlining enhancements in the new system include consolidated direct messaging with vendors, integrated solicitation intake processing, and agreement development. In addition, the processes for soliciting request for proposals (RFP) and invitation to bids (IFB) are being centralized, consolidating several individual steps into one. The new system can be reached [here](#). Staff also implemented two new tools that automated a manual step to change the fiscal year of purchase orders and one that allowed for mass updating of purchase requisitions, resulting in process efficiencies.

### *Business Tax Implementation Update*

Staff continues implementing the City's Business Tax. The City partnered with MuniServices, who also supports collection and administration of the Business Registry Certificate (BRC) Program and Business Improvement District (BID), to create a one stop platform for the BRC, Business Tax, and BID. To assist business owners with the implementation of the tax, new online resources are now available, including a Resource Guide, a Business Tax Calculator, and FAQ's. Visit [www.cityofpaloalto.org/businessstax](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/businessstax) for these new tools and to gain news and updates.

### *Update on the Roth Building Construction*

On July 1, 2023, the Palo Alto Museum and partners held a groundbreaking ceremony for the Palo Alto Museum project at the Roth Building located at 300 Homer Avenue. The County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors notified the City that they approved a \$182,448 grant to restore and repair the Roth Building windows. Regular meetings between Museum staff and the City Construction Liaison Team started in July to discuss construction progress and significant project developments. The City deposited 20% (\$2 million) of its contribution in the account held jointly by the Museum and the City as required in the tenant work letter. The fully executed license agreement for a construction laydown area (extending into the southern portion of Heritage Park, between the Roth Building and the Woodmark condominium project at 325 Channing Avenue) is pending.

### *CalPERS Update*

Staff anticipates transmitting the June 30, 2022, CalPERS valuations for the City's pension plans to the Finance Committee in October. CalPERS completes valuations using member data two years in arrears and issues annual reporting each August. As of July 2023, CalPERS provided the following preliminary investment returns as compared to a 6.8% target:

- -6.1% for the period ending June 30, 2022 (impact in FY 2025)

- 5.8% for the period ending June 30, 2023 (impact in FY 2026)

Consistent with past practice, staff will incorporate these results in financial planning, including the Long Range Financial Forecast (LRFF) and annual budget development. Additionally, staff continues to use a lower discount rate than the 6.8% used by CalPERS to calculate the employer's normal cost ("pay-go" cost) and transmit the difference as an additional contribution to the City's Pension Trust. As part of the FY 2023 Adopted Budget, the City Council approved lowering this discount rate from 6.2% to 5.3% over two years; 5.8% in FY 2023 and 5.3% in FY 2024.

CalPERS preliminary investment returns for the period ending June 30, 2023, were announced on July 19, 2023.<sup>i</sup>

## **City Manager's Office**

### *Trusted Response Urgent Support Team (TRUST)*

The \$2M federal earmark is being used to augment the North County TRUST program. This includes adding outreach workers (to promote the program), case managers (to follow-up with clients and better connect them to services) and providing mental health first aid trainings in the community. Recent outreach activities included attending the City's Municipal Services Center Open House in July. They are reaching out to neighborhood businesses, community organizations, and attending events to spread the word about TRUST and offer mental health first aid trainings. The earmark originally came with a spending deadline of September 2023. Recently, the program received a 1-year extension through September 2024.

### *Annual Community Survey*

Per City Council direction, staff is conducting the Community Survey annually through a third party. Survey goals include gaining insight into residents' perspectives about the community, including local amenities, services, public trust, resident engagement, and unmet service needs. This year, the survey will be conducted in late summer to hopefully increase survey participation. The survey will be offered in English, Spanish and Chinese. Survey results will be presented to the City Council in the fall.

### *Point-In-Time (PIT) Count*

In mid-July, the County released city-specific data from the January 2023 point-in-time (PIT) count of people experiencing homelessness. The PIT count provides a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness, as counted by volunteers, on a particular day. The City of Palo Alto count of people experiencing homelessness decreased 25% from 274 in 2022 to 206 in 2023. The 206 people counted included 187 unsheltered and 19 sheltered individuals. More people in Palo Alto experiencing homelessness were unsheltered (91%) than countywide (75%). Besides the snapshot of the PIT count, there is data from every time a service provider interacts with someone experiencing homelessness. Since this time last year, service providers received 162 first-time housing assistance requests from Palo Alto and 75 Palo Alto households were placed in housing.<sup>ii</sup>

## *Communications*

Staff is working to reactivate the City Hall lobby screen by mid- August. Curated information will be displayed on a rotating basis that shares upcoming events, community engagement opportunities, City resources and services, and more. This will be a pilot program as staff continues to evaluate technology limitations, and the staff resources needed to manage this effort longer-term.

Staff provided an Uplift Local update at a Midtown Chamber of Commerce mixer in late July sharing details on the Uplift Local initiative history and future planning. In preparation for the holiday season, staff has set up a local portal to receive local business promotions. Due by September 1, holiday promotions will be shared via City communications channels to encourage the community to shop and eat local this holiday season. Businesses can submit holiday promotion information [here](#).

Other communications shared during the Council recess can be found in the Stakeholder Engagement section of this report.

## **Community Services Department**

### *Art Center*

The Palo Alto Art Center experienced record summer camp registrations this year, welcoming thousands of children and youth for programs, and this year continued the youth ceramics apprenticeship program with great success. This summer nine paid interns joined the team to support programs, providing them with hand-on experience and professional development throughout the summer. The summer exhibition *EARTH* is on view through August 19 and concludes the Art Center's year-long *Climate Connections* series. *EARTH* features a collaborative program with Canopy showcasing the connections between trees, art, and environmental stewardship. Thanks to funding provided by the California Cultural and Historical Endowment, the Art Center is working to produce Social and Emotional Learning Toolkits, available in Spanish/English and Spanish/Simplified Chinese, complete with materials to low-income seniors and families in Palo Alto and schoolchildren in our programs from East Palo Alto. Activities in the Toolkits were developed by Art Therapist, Anh Tran, LMFT, ATR. The Art Center hosted the Association of Clay and Glass Artists Palo Alto Clay and Glass Festival on July 15 and 16, drawing more than 10,000 attendees.

### *Cubberley Artist Studio Program*

During the summer, the Cubberley Artist Studio Program (CASP) artists were busy offering free programming in collaboration with Palo Alto City Library.

- Adrienne Defendi offered a Cyanotype workshop in the Secret Garden at the Children's Library. Participants used special paper and liquid, along with the sun, and items found in nature, and created beautiful images.
- Nasim Moghadam hosted a Self-Expressive Photo Collage Workshop at the Rinconada Library, with participants ranging from ages 2 to 70.

- May and Mik Gaspay offered a paper weaving workshop for youth at the Mitchell Park Library. Participants got the chance to try out traditional weaving patterns from the Philippines and were able to create designs woven with paper.
- Ala Mohseni hosted two workshops at the Mitchell Park Library where he taught participants how to make a documentary with their cell phones and how to capture and edit videos, along with special effects tips and tricks.
- Brittany Bradley did a demonstration of Wet Plate Collodion for teens and adults at the Rinconada Library in her unique traveling darkroom.

### *Children's Theatre*

Palo Alto Children's Theatre opened its annual outdoor Summer Hot Dog Series with a sold-out production of Snow White in June, and continued with a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Marlo Thomas and Friends' Free to Be ... You and Me. This summer, in addition to ongoing Sensory and Spectrum Friendly performances, the theatre added additional accessibility options, including ASL interpreted performances, and "read-along" options for families who benefit from having the text visible on a mobile device or tablet. In August, the Children's Theatre will host a Day Camp for participants with special needs, in collaboration with the Magical Bridge Foundation. Plus, the Children's Theatre is participating in its 5<sup>th</sup> annual collaboration with Stanford University Engineering Department's Compression Forum, with this summer's research project focused on the ethics of collaboration with artificial intelligence in arts and sciences.

### *Open Space*

Open Space Rangers provided support to Public Works and Fire Department staff to clear brush and vegetation along Arastradero Road, Los Trancos Road, and Page Mill Road to reduce fire risk in the Foothills. Rangers closely monitored Open Space preserves on July 4 for visitors and preventing the use of illegal fireworks. Open Space and the Office of Emergency Services staff submitted a grant application for eucalyptus tree removal in Foothills Nature Preserve, Pearson-Arastradero Preserve, and Esther Clark Park.

### *Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo*

The Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo (JMZ) was selected to receive a 2023 John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts LEAD Community Asset Award for its exemplar achievement in improving accessibility in a Museum and Zoo. The JMZ welcomed 26,513 guests in June and July, and the total number of active memberships exceeded 5,000 households for the first time in July. Zoo programs have been popular all summer especially flamingo feedings and the weekday afternoon program "Meet Luna the Sloth." The camp session served 834 campers this summer with 10 types of camps offered throughout Palo Alto including the JMZ, Stern Community Center, the Lucy Evens Baylands Nature Center, the Lou Henry Hoover Girl Scout House, and the Foothills Nature Preserve Visitor Center.

## *Parks*

Parks staff continued to maintain neighborhood parks, athletic fields, and courts. Staff have been working with the City's Zero Waste team to bring all parks into compliance with the Recycling and Disposal Ordinance, which requires all facilities to provide all three waste services – garbage, recycling, and compost. New 3-sort waste stations were installed at Seale Park.

## *Public Art*

Public Art wrapped up a successful mural event in June and began conversations with the Public Art Commission about growing and expanding murals Citywide. Staff is preparing for the protection of the Victor Arnautoff frescoes at the Roth building during demolition and is installing protection barriers in early August. Staff completed four additional maintenance projects at the Water Quality Control Plant, University Avenue, the Baylands Golf Links course, and at the Art Center. Staff held a public meeting with the artist for the upcoming artwork at Fire Station 4 in July and has been working with artists for Boulware Park on the artwork's conceptual design. Artist in Residence Kirti Bassendine continued holding workshops with residents of Buena Vista Park, Alta Housing, and Avenidas as part of her community outreach and research. Her engagement with the community will culminate in a temporary artwork on King Plaza near the end of the year. Final preparations are underway for Code:ART to take place downtown October 12-14.

## *Recreation*

The Recreation Department offered a variety of sports camps, recreation camps, and Special Interest Camps. Most of the camps are doing well with enrollment at historic high levels with 1,700 enrolled campers. The most popular camps are Baking and Cooking as well as Coding and STEM camps. LEGO and Academic camps also continue to be popular.

The Green Energy Engineering camp had a fun visit from the Saratoga High Robotics team. The team presented their newest hand-built robot, which they recently competed with at Nationals in Texas. It was great for the campers to see the next step in real world robotics and what they can look forward to in High School.

In addition to camps, the Recreation team hosted the annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July Summer Festival, and brought back the Chili Cook-Off for the first time since the pandemic. The event included live music, games, inflatables, food trucks, and chili tasting. Family Fun Movie Nights, Friday evenings continue through August at Mitchell Park.

## **Fire Department**

### *Fire Station 8 Staffing*

The Palo Alto Fire Department (PAFD) and the Santa Clara County Fire Department (SCCFD) firefighters began staffing Fire Station 8 in the Palo Alto Nature Preserve. Summer 2023 is the third fire season that PAFD and SCCFD staffed Fire Station 8 since the Tri-Party Fire Agreement for Foothills Fire Station staffing was executed. Firefighters staff Fire Station 8 every day between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., and crews

are available to respond to emergencies in Palo Alto, Los Altos Hills, and surrounding open spaces. This staffing rotation will continue until the weather conditions lower the wildfire risk, typically in November.

#### *Preparing for Wildfire*

On July 6, PAFD, Palo Alto Office of Emergency Services, and the Santa Clara County Fire Safe Council held a Fire Safety Presentation at the Palo Alto Hills Golf and Country Club for residents living in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). This presentation included best practices to protect families and homes from wildfire. Residents learned about defensible space, home hardening, and having and creating an evacuation plan.

#### *Hiring and Recruitment*

There are ten recruits in the South Bay Regional Fire Academy who will graduate on August 11 at Mitchell Park Community Center. This graduating class has three women joining the PAFD. After graduation, the new firefighters will spend another three weeks in Palo Alto Fire's internal academy.

### **Human Resources Department**

Human Resources (HR) staff continue to focus on employee recruitment and filling workforce vacancies. In June and July, 67 new hires were onboarded and/or will start in August. This includes the annual hiring process HR completes in partnership with the Community Services and Library Departments to onboard 54 hourly new hires, leading summer camps or working in the City's libraries. In addition, there were 18 promotions.

A new program recently announced by the City Manager is a result of the longstanding relationship and deep connection between the City and Palo Alto Unified School District. PAUSD is offering City employees the opportunity to enroll their children into PAUSD schools that have openings. This new program will help deepen employee commitment to the Palo Alto community and strengthen the City's ability to attract and retain its employees. The children of nine City employees from Community Services, Fire, Police and Public Works were accepted and placed for the 23-24 school year.

As HR continues to support a Positive Work Environment, an enhancement to the City Employee Assistance Program through Concern will offer 5 sessions per wellness topic in a 12-month period starting this fiscal year. These wellness topics include eldercare concerns, financial and legal consultations, mental health resources, guided mindfulness, identify theft response, and parenting skill-building.

### **Library Department**

The annual Summer Reading Program was changed in 2023, including a renaming to Summer Reading for a Cause (SRFC), to keep in line with its altruistic mission to donate to a local organization in lieu of various prizes to participants. This summer's theme was "Share Your Story," and the Library challenged participants to read 20,000 books, so that the Library (through the Friends of the Palo Alto Library) could donate \$2,500 to Foundation for a College Education. This local organization provides mentoring and tutoring for first-generation, low-income students of color, in order to increase their attendance and graduation from a four-year college or university.



During the summer reading program, in-person and virtual events were held at all five library locations. Events featured youth performers, author events, and arts and craft workshops led by several Cubberley Artist Studio Program artists.

The Library also attended outreach events, including visits to Channing House to demonstrate virtual services, and the City's Open House event on July 15. The Library gave out prizes, shared service and event information, and provided crafts for nearly 300 visitors who stopped by.

The Library continues to hold groundbreaking digital literacy programs in the Reboot Room at Mitchell Park Library's Ventura Technology Learning Center. This includes two recent AI Storytelling workshops where participants learned to use AI to generate video stories, written by AI, read by AI, and illustrated by AI. The stories can be viewed on the [Reboot Room's YouTube channel](#). In late July, a group of technology educators from Korea visited to learn about our techniques for enhancing digital literacy in the community.

Meanwhile, the Library also conducted e-Help outreach services such as monthly visits to Channing House where librarians provide personalized assistance with library eBook and digital collections apps. Library staff also worked closely with HR staff to develop a skills development program for City employees, featuring learning platform access through Upskill.

### **Office of Emergency Services**

Office of Emergency (OES) staff conducted the annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July Safety Watch in partnership with numerous agencies (CAL FIRE, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, San Mateo County agencies, Santa Clara County agencies, etc.).

OES continued to host the City's Foothills Fire Emergency Management working group, with members from the Fire Department, Utilities, Public Works, and the Community Services Department. This group facilitated efforts to remove hazardous fuels from evacuation routes and other key sites in our Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

OES also conducted training and exercise sessions for the Emergency Services Volunteer (ESV) program, community members, and organizations. General public safety education topics range from earthquake preparedness to active shooter (violence) training.

Other actions:

- Initiated requisitions for two vacant positions: OES Coordinator position approved in the FY2023 budget, and a part time administrative specialist.
- Supported City efforts to complete FEMA Public Assistance applications for reimbursement of City expenditures and damages from the January-March storms.
- Completed the City's participation in the Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan led by Santa Clara County Office of Emergency Management.

- Facilitated a training seminar for the new Boronda Lake/Foothills Nature Preserve Dam Emergency Action Plan.
- Prepared and submitted a Hazard Mitigation Grant sub-application to the State for Eucalyptus removal.

## **Office of Transportation**

### *Car Free Streets*

On July 3, the City released the [Request for Proposals for consultant services](#) to study different street alternatives, configurations, and activations for Cal Ave. and Ramona St. With proposals due in August 2023, staff plans to present a contract with a preferred vendor to the City Council in fall 2023. The study is anticipated to take nine months to a year to complete and will include a robust community engagement plan.

The City implemented four demonstration projects in response to feedback received from the public and stakeholders, including:

- Flexible Community Spaces: free public gathering places
- New barriers: replacing the orange water-filled barriers
- [Public art](#): ground plane and building murals
- Pedestrian and vehicular signage: directing people to nearby destinations and parking areas

### *Churchill Avenue Enhanced Bikeways Project*

Staff has been working to finalize the design of Churchill Avenue Enhanced Bikeway Project. Legal descriptions and plat maps (property line maps) were developed for the easements that require approval from PAUSD, which are expected to be approved at the school board meeting in August.

### *Churchill Avenue/Alma Street Intersection and Railroad Crossing Safety Improvements*

Staff completed the final design for the Caltrain rail crossing and intersection traffic signal improvements. A construction contract for portions of this project within the City's right-of-way was awarded and will be managed by Public Works staff. Portions of the project that fall within the Caltrain right-of-way will be managed by the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board.

### *Embarcadero Road Improvement Project (Alma Street to Emerson Avenue)*

Staff has been working on the design to improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities on Embarcadero Road between Alma Street and Emerson Street. Improvements include sidewalk realignment, high-visibility crosswalks, signing and striping, pedestrian lighting, landscaping, and traffic calming elements. Staff procured consultant services for repackaging the reduced scope of the project. Draft Final plans are under review.

### *Palo Alto Link*

The Palo Alto Link service has continued to have strong ridership and is providing around 1,000 passenger trips per week. One of the EV fleet vehicles and staff attended the MSC Open House. From March 7 through July 31, Palo Alto Link completed 18,225 rides.

### *Parking Updates*

Staff has been improving the parking permit order process. College Terrace Residential Preferential Parking permit renewal sales began online on August 1, with permits expiring at the end of August. Crescent Park No Overnight Parking permit renewal sales begin September 4, with current permits expiring at the end of September. California Avenue Parking District permit sales were fully transitioned to the Duncan Solutions permit portal in the second quarter of 2023. Duncan Solutions manages nine parking programs in Palo Alto and sold approximately 10,000 permits in FY23.

After several months of collecting feedback from the business community, staff recommended reducing off-street daily parking permit fees from \$25 to \$8 in City parking garages and surface lots, due to ongoing changes in visitor trends and employees reducing their commute because of hybrid work models. The \$8 daily permits became active and available for purchase on July 1.

### *Quiet Zones*

Staff is working on Request for Proposals for professional services to conduct a comprehensive quiet zone study at three crossings: Churchill Avenue, Meadow Drive, and Charleston Road. This study will evaluate the feasibility of implementing a quiet zone in compliance with Federal Railroad Administration regulations and determining the safety measures to compensate for the absence of train horn sounding. Additionally, staff is working to procure the consultant services to proceed on next steps to develop final design and assist in seeking permits for implementation of Quiet zone at Palo Alto Avenue.

### *Rail Grade Separation Project Grants*

In June, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced that they selected the Palo Alto Grade Separation Projects at Churchill Avenue, Meadow Drive, and Charleston Road and allocated \$6 million towards the costs of completing the Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Phase. Additionally, in early July, the City received notification from the California State Transportation Authority (CalSTA) that the Churchill Avenue Grade Crossing was chosen for \$23.7 million of funding towards the final design phase. Staff is coordinating with Santa Clara Valley Transportation Agency (VTA), Joint Peninsula Board (JPB/Caltrain), and granting agencies on the next steps for award of the funding.

### *Safe Routes to School*

Staff continued to explore materials to pilot Zero Waste Bike Rodeos and coordinated with PAUSD staff regarding data collection and education programming.

### *Traffic Signal Operations*

Staff have continuously worked to improve traffic signal operations throughout the City as well as regularly monitoring and adjusting to changing traffic conditions. Staff is developing the scope and

procurement for an update of the central operations system and intelligent transportation systems (ITS) to incorporate current standards and technologies.

Staff have been reviewing development projects and traffic control plans, responding to Palo Alto 311 items, fulfilling bicycle Parking requests, monitoring Palo Alto Link service, and providing continued support for cross-departmental initiatives, including the Sustainability and Climate Action Plan, the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan, and Uplift Local Parklet Guidelines.

## **Planning and Development Department**

### *Boards and Commissions Continued to Meet*

In July, Planning and Development Services continued to support commission and board meetings and hearings. The Historic Resources Board held a Friday evening retreat, a first for the HRB, to discuss: the 2023 Historic Reconnaissance Survey, existing inventory and potential for a future survey of properties 50 -75 years old, and a pilot Mills Act program and outreach. Planning and Transportation Commission held two hearings on the Sobrato project at the former Bayside Cannery site, and one hearing of a proposed planned community amendment at the corner of Middlefield and Ellsworth.

### *Santa Clara County's Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for its Housing Element and Stanford Community Plan*

Staff submitted a comment letter on the Santa Clara County's EIR for its Housing Element and Stanford Community Plan on July 24.<sup>iii</sup>

### *Proposed Priority Development Area*

Planning and Development Services and Office of Transportation collaborated to define a new priority development area boundary at and around the San Antonio Corridor and an application was submitted to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority/Association of Bay Area Governments. Staff will present a resolution to City Council in September 2023 and may revise or reject the application based on Council input.

### *Policy Development*

Staff have scheduled and will hold an informational presentation and discussion with the Policy & Services Committee regarding the Seismic Hazards Identification program. In 2017, Council directed staff to update the Seismic Hazards identification program based on an extensive Seismic Risk Assessment Study. With the adoption of the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget, the City Council, staff supported funding to launch this project and staff will be presenting an update on this effort at the Policy & Services Committee meeting set for August 8.

### *Hiring*

The Department continues to recruit and fill vacant positions—including newly approved positions in the FY 2024 budget. In the past month, four vacant positions were filled: Senior Planner (Data), Senior Management Analyst, Building Inspector, and Plan Check Engineer. The recruitment focus is now on the long-range planning team, which has four vacant positions, including a housing planner.

## **Police Department**

### *Making Community Connections*

The Police Department (PD) held its third “Breaking with the Law” event of 2023 on July 12 at the Pop Tea Bar in Midtown. This local café was specifically chosen for its popularity in the afternoon with families and teens, with the intention to reach a different segment of the community than standard coffee-drinking adults. Planning for the next Breaking with the Law event is underway for early fall.

On Tuesday, August 1, PD hosted two concurrent National Night Out events at Johnson Park and Bol Park. Staff attended to talk with the community and showcase various aspects of the Department and all aspects of public safety services offered. At both locations, there were games, emergency vehicles on display (including police cars, vehicles from the Fire Department and Office of Emergency Services, as well as animal control and park ranger trucks) and public safety personnel. Consistent with last year, teams of PD personnel also visited resident-hosted block parties throughout town.

### *Recruiting and Hiring*

Recruiting and hiring continued to be a focus to fill existing officer, dispatcher, and administrative vacancies. Over the summer, the Court Liaison Officer position was filled, closing out the final vacancy in the Records Unit. Once all the Records new hires have been trained, the PD will expand its hours of operation to better serve the public and increase the frequency of our Press Log distribution. PD also hired two entry level police officers, with an additional lateral police officer in the hiring process to join the Department soon. Additionally, the PD hired three dispatchers, one of which is a lateral from a regional dispatching center.

### *Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) – Flock Safety*

Over the last few months, the PD coordinated with Public Works, Caltrans, and Flock Safety on planning, engineering, and installing the twenty fixed ALPR cameras approved by Council. Staff received training on the new ALPR system to ensure policy compliance and department expectations for its use. Six of the cameras are installed, with the remainder expected to be installed in the coming weeks. These cameras have already led to the identification of criminal activity associated with regional theft crews and other prolific property crime trends in Palo Alto and the Bay Area.

## **Public Works Services Department**

### *Foothills Roadside Vegetation Clearance/Fire Prevention*

For a second consecutive year, efforts to contract for roadside vegetation clearing work were unsuccessful as no bids were received in response to the City’s solicitation. As a result, the work became a major summer effort for an in-house crew of 13 Public Works, Public Services Division staff and 2 Community Services, Open Space Division staff. Fire mitigation work involved clearing dry grass, weeds, and brush 10-15 feet from the edge of the road or to a fence line and removing dead trees/branches for 10-15 feet of vertical clearance. Over the span of 3 weeks and over 2,300 work hours, the crew cleared a

total of 20 miles of road. Work locations included Los Trancos Road, Arastradero Road, and Page Mill Road.

#### *Capital Improvement Program Projects Progress*

Significant progress continued on the Public Safety Building project including fire sprinkler and electrical installation work for the photovoltaic system on the 350 Sherman Avenue garage, installation of overhead electrical and mechanical work, and removal of exterior scaffolding. The project is close to 90% complete and staff anticipates beginning the move-in phase this fall, with 3-4 months of installation of furniture and critical communications and information systems, and a phased relocation of Police Department, Fire Department, and Office of Emergency Services groups. The new facility is expected to become fully operational in early 2024. As is typical with large, complex capital projects, staff is working through bringing the project to completion, including following the contractual dispute resolution process for claims received in relation to work completed by the general contractor and sub-contractors. Additionally, progress was made on initiation construction contracts for capital projects that were approved by Council in June 2023, including contracts signed and executed, notices to proceed issued, and pre-construction meetings held. Two of the more notable projects are the Downtown Parking Guidance System project, which began design work under its design-build contract, and the Boulware Park Improvements project, which is expected to begin construction in mid-August. Staff is working to plan a groundbreaking event for the Boulware Park Improvements project. The Palo Alto History Museum had a groundbreaking ceremony in late-June and held a pre-construction meeting with staff from the City, museum, and contractor. Construction is anticipated to start in early August.

Progress also continued on important Regional Water Quality Control Plant (RWQCP) projects that are under construction, including the 12kV Electrical Loop Rehabilitation, Primary Sedimentation Tank Rehabilitation, and Secondary Treatment Upgrades projects.

#### *Unleaded Fuel at Palo Alto Airport*

The fuel farm improvements required to provide unleaded aviation fuel at the Airport are nearly complete. The Airport contractor is waiting on the delivery of final parts for piping to bring the tank into operation by September. The fuel provider has been communicating with the supplier of the unleaded fuel, and the supplier is prepared to deliver the fuel once the tank is ready. Palo Alto Airport Association is aware of the most updated timeline.

#### *Regional Purification Facility*

Staff continued to work with Valley Water on several agreements in support of the future Regional Purification Facility. These agreements include a land lease for the old Los Altos Treatment Plant, a separate land lease for a portion of the Regional Water Quality Control Plant (RWQCP) site for siting the required pump station, and an Operations and Maintenance Agreement. In addition, staff has been coordinating with Valley Water and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board on permitting for reverse osmosis concentrate discharge through the RWQCP's existing outfall.

### *Stormwater Program*

The Stormwater Compliance team has been working to comply with the new, more stringent Bay Area Stormwater Permit that became effective in July. The new permit requires constructing more green stormwater infrastructure and additional trash control projects, controlling sources of mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from older industrial and commercial areas in the City, and other projects. The Fats, Oil and Grease Compliance team filled their Investigator position after a long vacancy and is working to revamp their program to align with industry best practices and better protect the City's sanitary sewer system.

### **Utilities Department**

#### *Sustainability and Climate Action Plan Progress*

Staff continue to move forward with the updated Sustainability and Climate Action Plan implementation, including the heat pump water heater pilot program. The program requires evaluating issues related to grid impacts and permitting. The first neighborhood grid modernization project is in progress and staff are preparing resources for residents in those areas who are interested in electrifying other appliances beyond water heaters. Staff anticipate bringing a recommendation to Council on joining the Statewide GoGreen Financing program in September for consideration. Staff also continue progress on other key priorities such as completing the Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment and beginning work on the Sea Level Rise Adaptation Plan. Staff are also implementing the updated tree ordinance and working to complete the OneWater Plan.

#### *Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP) Update*

Progress continues implementing Council direction proceeding with the Fiber Rebuild project and Phase 1 of the Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP) project. The Utilities Advisory Commission (UAC) will discuss the Palo Alto Fiber project and areas of deployment at their September 6 meeting. Staff anticipate a Council update and consideration of next steps in the fall.

#### *Fiber Optics and Grid Modernization*

The Citywide engineering design for the electric grid modernization project is underway. The grid modernization project will overlap with the Fiber Expansion Plan in engineering make-ready work and construction as aligning the projects will help minimize costs and community disruptions. However, depending on how closely the grid modernization project and fiber projects are aligned, there may be significant milestone and timeline impacts to the Fiber Expansion Plan. The City must conduct a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis to evaluate the potential impacts of the project on various environmental factors and identify whether those impacts can be mitigated. In addition, the City needs to coordinate an agreement with AT&T for sharing space on utility poles to install new fiber optics attachments, while remaining in compliance with California Public Utilities Commission General Order 95 (GO 95) requirements for overhead electric line construction for electric utility service and worker safety.

### *Update on Engineering and Operations Projects*

Electric Engineering continues to underground utilities in the Foothills to reduce fire risk. The section of overhead line in the Arastradero Preserve between Arastradero and Page Mill Road intersection and Foothills Park will be transferred to the new underground line by August 1, 2023. The Grid Modernization and Electrification study is in progress and on track for completion this fall. Advanced planning is occurring for expected rotation outage blocks in late summer due to systemwide shortages caused by the lack of reliable energy sources when renewable resources such as solar and wind become unavailable.

Water-Gas-Wastewater (WGW) Engineering and Operations continued working with a contractor for the Sanitary Sewer Replacement Project 31 (SSR 31), which started on July 31. Planning for public outreach in advance of construction is underway. The City received bids for the Water Main Replacement Project 29 (WMR 29) and began the process of awarding the construction contract.

Staff prepared and submitted a Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization (NGDISM) federal grant application for approximately \$16.5 million in funding to complete three priority gas projects.

### *Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Update*

The City deployed about 1,600 electric, gas, and water Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meters. The City has nearly completed the system integration amongst the AMI network, meter data management, customer billing information, outage management, and geographic information systems. Utilities is conducting parallel billing of two-meter routes to validate the accuracy of the meter read and billing in the customer billing system before full deployment. AMI full deployment for residential customers is tentatively scheduled to begin in mid-September 2023. Depending on availability of meters and equipment, staff will complete residential AMI deployment by the end of 2024. Due to supply chain issues, the estimated rollout timeline of electric commercial AMI meters is mid-2024 through mid-2025.

### *Outage Management System (OMS)*

The new Outage Management System (OMS) will substantially improve the City's ability to notify customers and mobilize resources in response to electric outages and emergencies, and is expected to go live in September 2023. The new system will alert customers via text, voice, or email of an electrical outage. The system also provides management and staff with additional details on outage events and updates as the status of an outage situation changes. Once the OMS is live, customers with a mobile number will be initially subscribed to the texting service and can opt-out at any time.

### *Changes to Watering Restrictions*

The 11% voluntary water use reduction request implemented by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) and State of California's emergency drought regulations expired in June. As a result, Palo Alto lifted the 2-day per week watering restriction. The State left some water waste restrictions in place including no washing hardscapes, no watering within 48 hours of a rain event, and a ban on the use of drinking water to irrigate decorative grass at commercial, industrial, and institutional



sites. Staff are focusing outreach on making conservation a way of life, reminding the community about Palo Alto's permanent water use restrictions, and spreading awareness of the suite of rebates and educational workshops available to help residents and businesses conserve water.

### *Water Quality Report*

Each year, in late June or early July, the Utilities Department publishes an annual Consumer Confidence Report on water quality conditions for the previous year. The 2022 report update is available in [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [Chinese](#) online at [cityofpaloalto.org/WaterResources](http://cityofpaloalto.org/WaterResources) and in print upon request by contacting [UtilitiesCommunications@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:UtilitiesCommunications@cityofpaloalto.org) or (650) 329-2479.

### **FISCAL/RESOURCEIMPACT**

This report is informational only and items will be brought before the City Council independently, should they need additional fiscal or policy considerations.

### **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

During recess, the City Manager's Office Communications Office drafted and/or coordinated important updates to keep the community aware of—and encourage engagement in—City Initiatives.

Staff collaborated with several departments to update website pages and online resources. A [new permit portal](#) consolidates planning and development permits available in one, easy to use location. The [Teen Services web page](#) now shares cross-departmental opportunities for teens to get involved and find relevant resources. The City's [heat pump water heater program page](#) was updated to share community details about the City's program offering free, expert help with permits, installation, and rebates worth thousands of dollars to upgrade to a heat pump water heater. Zero Waste launched [Zero Waste Living](#) with a new online portal sharing waste reduction tips [heat pump water heater program page](#) was updated to share community details about the City's program offering free, expert help with permits, installation, and rebates worth thousands of dollars to upgrade to a heat pump water heater.

Website Statistics for the 2nd Quarter include:

- 763,231 total CityofPaloAlto.org pageviews
- Top web page visits include [Utilities Department](#) (14,836), [Foothills Nature Preserve](#) (14,177), Children's Theatre (10,392), [Palo Alto Art Center](#) (9,369), and [Registration for Activities and Classes](#) (8,702) (9,369), and [Registration for Activities and Classes](#) (8,702) (8,702)

Other communications shared during the Council recess include:

- [Existing & Expanded Renter Protections, Plus Changes Being Considered](#)Existing & Expanded Renter Protections, Plus Changes Being Considered
- [Summer Family Fun in Palo Alto](#)Summer Family Fun in Palo Alto

- [Connecting to Palo Alto Fiber's Future](#)Connecting to Palo Alto Fiber's Future
- [Celebrate the Arts in Palo Alto](#)Celebrate the Arts in Palo Alto
- [Race and Equity Updates July 2023](#)Race and Equity Updates July 2023
- [Be Prepared & Fire Safe This Season](#)Be Prepared & Fire Safe This Season
- [Newell Road Bridge Replacement Project Status Update](#)Newell Road Bridge Replacement Project Status Update
- [Exploring the Best Summer Activities in Palo Alto: A Local Guide](#)Exploring the Best Summer Activities in Palo Alto: A Local Guide

## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This report is for informational purposes only with no action required by the Council, and therefore it is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

## ATTACHMENTS

None

## APPROVED BY:

Ed Shikada, City Manager

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<sup>i</sup> CalPERS preliminary investment returns for the period ending June 30, 2023.

[https://www.calpers.ca.gov/page/newsroom/calpers-news/2023/calpers-preliminary-investment-return-fiscal-year-2022-23?utm\\_source=esubscriptions&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=CalPERS-News](https://www.calpers.ca.gov/page/newsroom/calpers-news/2023/calpers-preliminary-investment-return-fiscal-year-2022-23?utm_source=esubscriptions&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=CalPERS-News)

<sup>ii</sup> Santa Clara County Point In Time Count 2023: <https://osh.sccgov.org/continuum-care/reports-and-publications/santa-clara-county-homeless-census-and-survey-reports>

<sup>iii</sup> City Comment Letter for the Santa Clara County EIR-Housing Element and Stanford Community Plan <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/planning-amp-development-services/palo-alto-draft-eir-comments-ssc-hescp-update-072423.pdf>