



**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**Date: 1/30/2021**

**Time: 10:00 a.m.**

**Regular Meeting Location: Zoom.us/join – ID# 947 1320 5683**

**Special Session ([Zoom.us/join](https://zoom.us/join) – ID# 947 1320 5683)**

**A. Call To Order**

Mayor Combs called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m.

**B. Roll Call**

Present: Combs, Mueller, Nash, Taylor, Wolosin

Absent: None

Staff: City Manager Starla Jerome-Robinson, Interim City Attorney Cara Silver, City Clerk Judi A. Herren

**C. Regular Business**

- C1. Provide direction to City staff on City Council 2021 priorities and work plan ([Staff Report #21-022-CC](#))

[Web form public comment received on item C1.](#)

Mayor Combs provided details on the schedule of the meeting.

City Manager Starla Jerome-Robinson introduced the item.

- Atherton City Councilmember Rick DeGolia spoke in support of a quiet zone along the Caltrain corridor.
- Justin Liu spoke in support of a quiet zone along the Caltrain corridor.
- Maria Amundson spoke in support of a quiet zone along the Caltrain corridor.
- Diana Holiday spoke in support of a quiet zone along the Caltrain corridor.
- Edmond Farrell spoke in support of a quiet zone along the Caltrain corridor.
- Adam Tobin spoke in support of a quiet zone along the Caltrain corridor.
- Adina Levis spoke in support of grade separation.
- Lynne Bramlett spoke in support of analyzing staff time and funding the Menlo Park community center project.
- Karen Grove spoke in support of the housing element.
- Danielle Pickham spoke in support of a quiet zone along the Caltrain corridor.
- Max Palmer spoke in support to alternatives for community policing.
- Kevin Gallagher spoke in support of racial equity and the reallocation of Facebook's policing fund.
- Radu Mihaescu spoke in support of a quiet zone along the Caltrain corridor.
- Marcy Abramowitz spoke in support of a quiet zone along the Caltrain corridor.
- Diane Bailey spoke in support of the climate action plan.

- Katie Behroozi spoke in support of safe routes.
- Amy Lupo spoke in support of banning gas powered leaf blowers.
- Caleb Zurger spoke in support of the reallocation of Facebook's policing fund.
- Susannah Ragab spoke in support of a quiet zone along the Caltrain corridor.
- Kim Novello spoke in support of a healthy Menlo Park, both mentally and physically.
- Chelsea Nguyen spoke in support of additional housing and Downtown parking.
- Martin Mazner spoke in support of a quiet zone along the Caltrain corridor.
- Pam Jones spoke in support of a redistricting commission and retaining demographer.
- Daniel Hom spoke in support for traffic calming measures on Willow Road.
- Peter Edmonds spoke in support of the heritage tree ordinance enforcement and analyzing the city arborist position.
- Jordan Payne spoke in support of the reallocation of Facebook's policing fund.
- Judy Rocchio spoke in support of the Willow Road and Highway 101 interchange tree planting.
- Tom Kabat spoke in support of climate preservation.
- Ezio Alviti spoke in support of a quiet zone along the Caltrain corridor.

The City Council discussed priorities and goals.

The City Council took a recess at 11:29 a.m.

The City Council reconvened at 11:38 a.m.

The City Council discussed and received clarification on the approach to goal and priority setting and work plan.

The City Council took a recess at 12:04 p.m.

The City Council reconvened at 12:38 p.m.

The individual City Councilmembers delivered their top 10 priorities.

The City Council discussed:

- COVID-19 response and recovery
- Strategic versus operational priorities
- Partnering with neighboring jurisdictions
- Quiet zone crossing and Caltrain collaboration
- Gas and electric powered leaf blowers
- Police reform
- Willow Road and Highway 101 enhancements
- Housing element process
- Sidewalks
- Transportation projects (short and long term)
- Valparaiso Avenue safety
- Redistricting
- Climate action plan
- Use of commissions and volunteers
- Community amenities list

The City Council directed staff to research a demographer for redistricting.

**D. Adjournment**

Mayor Combs adjourned the meeting at 3:19 p.m.

Judi A. Herren, City Clerk

These minutes were approved at the City Council meeting of February 23, 2021.

## NOVEL CORONAVIRUS, COVID-19, EMERGENCY ADVISORY NOTICE

On March 19, 2020, the Governor ordered a statewide stay-at-home order calling on all individuals living in the State of California to stay at home or at their place of residence to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Additionally, the Governor has temporarily suspended certain requirements of the Brown Act. For the duration of the shelter in place order, the following public meeting protocols will apply.

Teleconference meeting: All members of the City Council, city staff, applicants, and members of the public will be participating by teleconference. To promote social distancing while allowing essential governmental functions to continue, the Governor has temporarily waived portions of the open meetings act and rules pertaining to teleconference meetings. This meeting is conducted in compliance with the Governor Executive Order N-25-20 issued March 12, 2020, and supplemental Executive Order N-29-20 issued March 17, 2020.

- How to participate in the meeting
  - Submit a written comment online:  
[menlopark.org/publiccommentJanuary30](https://menlopark.org/publiccommentJanuary30)\*
  - Access the meeting real-time online at: [Zoom.us/join](https://Zoom.us/join)  
Special Meeting ID# 947 1320 5683
  - Access the special meeting real-time via telephone at:  
(669) 900-6833 Regular Meeting ID# 947 1320 5683  
Press \*9 to raise hand to speak

\*Written and recorded public comments are accepted up to 1-hour before the meeting start time.

- Watch regular meeting:
  - Cable television subscribers in Menlo Park, East Palo Alto, Atherton, and Palo Alto:  
Channel 26
  - Online:  
[menlopark.org/streaming](https://menlopark.org/streaming)

Subject to Change: Given the current public health emergency and the rapidly evolving federal, state, county and local orders, the format of this meeting may be altered or the meeting may be canceled. You may check on the status of the meeting by visiting the City's website [www.menlopark.org](http://www.menlopark.org). The instructions for logging on to the webinar and/or the access code is subject to change. If you have difficulty accessing the webinar, please check the latest online edition of the posted agenda for updated information ([menlopark.org/agenda](https://menlopark.org/agenda)).

According to City Council policy, all meetings of the City Council are to end by midnight unless there is a super majority vote taken by 11:00 p.m. to extend the meeting and identify the items to be considered after 11:00 p.m.

Agenda item C1  
Patti Fry, Resident

I encourage the Council to set as a priority Improving the balance of housing and jobs in Menlo Park. This should be an overarching goal that encompasses the required Housing Element ("HE") update as well as near-term zoning changes to promote housing and minimize the addition of office workers. Much of such near-term zoning changes could be done within the parameters of the current ConnectMenlo General Plan, thus providing guidance for development while longer term and more complex planning is done through the HE update process.

Specific areas of focus should include potential elimination of Bonus zoning for office anywhere in Menlo Park; recalibration of how office SF is counted (e.g., so office SF replaced by housing or retail permanently reduces "net new" limits of office SF); maximization of zoning for housing (and community serving uses to support new residents), especially along El Camino Real where there is imminent risk of losing community serving businesses and services; potentially resetting of the point at which Bonus level development is triggered for various uses-- all with the goal of improving the balance of housing and jobs in Menlo Park and providing guidance to development. Our town will be subject to immense pressures from outside agencies if the imbalance is not addressed. Note that neither the 500 El Camino Real or 1300 El Camino Real projects maximized the amount of housing that each of those projects could have included, with hundreds fewer units than were possible. The revised Willow Village project maximizes its housing limit, but provides only 20.3 housing units per acre because its 59 acres are located in multiple zoning districts. Attention to the details of zoning within the General Plan is needed.

## Agenda item C1 Lisa Williams, Resident

Dear City Council,

Menlo Park has made meaningful commitments to reducing the causes of climate change via its Climate Action Plan.

As stated in last year's 2020 Planning Meeting the City believes in modeling behavior it wishes its residents to adopt. In my opinion, a meaning example to accomplish this goal, at a relatively low cost is, in 2021 to prioritize a pilot program to approve the purchase and use of commercial electric leaf blowers for use by the City in certain Menlo Park grounds.

It has been scientifically proven that gas leaf blowers are extremely hazardous to our health, quality of life and significantly contribute to air pollution/smog, even though that pollution does contribute large amounts of CO2 .

I was encouraged to hear at the Town of Atherton Council meeting January 20, 2021 that they approved just such a project, to purchase a commercial grade electric leaf blower with multiple batteries for use at Holbrook Palmer Park.

The Atherton Environmental Programs Committee will be evaluating their electric leaf blower based on, ease of use, noise, effectiveness, comparative time per task, battery operating and charge times.

Once this pilot is complete, Atherton will be in an informed position to provide education and outreach in order to transition its residents to a lower impact alternative to gas leaf blowers thus creating positive climate outcomes and, minimizing potential contention.

Please consider prioritizing such a pilot program to kick off a healthier 2021 for Menlo Park.

Lisa Williams  
Menlo Park Resident

## Agenda item C1

Weston Johnson and Laurie Thomas, Resident

We are definitely in favor of the "Quite Zone" living with the crossing literally right outside our door, windows, bedrooms, etc.

Not only does it make work, phone calls, meetings difficult but also sleeping and it definitely has reduced the value of our homes and it will only get worse as they add to the number of trains running.

Please consider our request and give this project high priority.

Thank you for your time.

Weston Johnson and Laurie Thomas



Agenda item C1  
Peri Caylor, Resident

As a resident of the Park Forest community on Stone Pine Lane, where the sound of train horns blaring between 10 pm and 6 am is disruptive to sleep, I respectfully request that Menlo Park consider designating the the Encinal and Glenwood railroad crossings Caltrain "quiet zones" between those hours.

I understand this designation may be considered in the process of building grade separations but hope that it can be undertaken sooner if it can reasonably be accommodated in the budget and in light of issues of critical importance to all Menlo Park residents (e.g. climate change, etc.)

Thank you.



## Agenda item C1 In Lee, Resident

I understand that the City Council may be considering additional Caltrain Quiet Zones.

As a resident of Stone Pine Lane, I fully support Quiet Zones at Encinal and Glenwood Avenues to extend the Quiet Zone at Fair Oaks and the coming one at Watkins. The Train Horn Rule at crossings is an archaic rule that does nothing to increase safety in dense urban areas like Menlo Park. The safety improvements that would need to be put in place to qualify for Quiet Zones would actually improve safety at these crossings and the Quiet Zones would greatly improve quality of life in the neighborhood.

Please make a feasibility study into extending Quiet Zones at Encinal and Glenwood Avenues a priority for 2021.

**Agenda item C1**  
**Pamela Ritchey, Resident**

Please proceed with a ban on polluting gas leaf blowers

## Agenda item C1 Julie Shanson, Resident

Esteemed Council Members:

I believe a community committee and more outreach needs to be done to ensure the new community campus space is welcoming to the people in the neighborhood and ready to be used by those who currently use the Senior Center and Youth center and library.

The Kelly Park Redo has meant that the city rents out the field to soccer and lacrosse teams instead of leaving it available for local residents. The Covid-19 realities mean the the pool at Onetta Harris is filled with regular swimmers, but not those who live nearby.

More outreach and communication is needed to include residents, especially youth and seniors who are a part of existing programs, in the process of the campus building efforts. It would make sense to create a subcommittee of residents for this purpose, or maybe a regular time for comments that is well advertised and interesting.

We need a strategy to help folks who are unhoused in our city, and for some of these people, we need it soon.

Because of the fire this summer, people in the encampment by the Marsh (Ravenswood Triangle) will be removed soon. These people have nowhere to go and are because of various complications like the nature of this SamTrans led project and their own fears and mental health difficulties they are not eligible to receive the services the county could provide.

Please consider an emergency ordinance to direct funds toward this issue. We, as a society, are only as good as the way we treat others less fortunate than ourselves.

Esteemed council members,

In the list of priorities in the Staff Report I did not see attention to fair redistricting. It is almost time to review the new census results and redraw the districts for city council representation. Please be aware that this project is coming.

I am writing to advocate that the appointed citizen redistricting commission has as much political, administrative, and staff power as needed to make the process go smoothly.

Warm regards,

## Agenda item C1 Art Pope, Resident

The City must act to reduce the harmful effects of gas powered leaf blowers. Here's why:

1. Those effects are now thought to include neurological disease [1], as well as lung disease, cardiovascular disease and stress.
2. Existing City regulations are not working.

Leaf blowers must be certified to not exceed 65 db(A) at 50 feet. Yet most lack this certification. E.g., the ECHO PB-580 and 780, two typical models recently seen used in City neighbors, are rated at 70 and 73 db(A).

Leaf blowers are not to be used on "Spare the Air" days. Yet they very frequently are. Operators profess to be unaware of "Spare the Air", holiday and weekend restrictions.

A simple ban on gas powered leaf blowers will be easier to observe and enforce.

3. Neighboring towns have banned gas powered leaf blowers.

Palo Alto has banned them for residential use; Los Gatos, Los Altos and Portola Valley have banned them entirely. Aligning Menlo Park's regulations more closely with those of neighboring towns will reduce operator equipment needs and improve compliance.

This year, let's review and update regulations governing leaf blower use. Our health depends on it.

[1] Emily Underwood, "The polluted brain", Science, Jan. 26, 2017. <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/01/brain-pollution-evidence-builds-dirty-air-causes-alzheimer-s-dementia>

## Agenda item C1 Matt Normington, Resident

Dear Menlo Park City Council Members:

My name is Matt Normington and I am the President of the Marquis Homeowners Association in Menlo Park. I represent the 24 homeowners who live in the recently constructed homes on the corner of Encinal Avenue and Garwood Way at the site of the former Roger Reynolds Nursery. Our residents have lived in this community since the summer of 2019. I have been a resident of downtown Menlo Park since 1991 and am very familiar with Caltrain and the City's ongoing, decades-long grade separation efforts.

I am writing to urge Council to add to the City's 2021 priorities an evaluation of a train quiet zone at the Encinal Avenue grade crossing.

An evaluation of a quiet zone at this location is critical at this time for three reasons:

1. Caltrain's horn blasts throughout the day are disruptive to the residents working from home and school-age children that are distance learning. Historically the daytime horn noise was not a major concern to the homeowners due to the fact that many of our residents were outside the home at work and/or school during the day. Train horn noise has become a significant issue over the past year due to the pandemic as the vast majority of our homeowners and children are now at home working or distance learning during the day. Many companies have publicly stated that post-pandemic they will allow a flexible remote working arrangement which means our residents will continue working from home for the foreseeable future. Although Caltrain has currently reduced service as a result of the pandemic, this issue will only intensify as daytime train frequency increases when Caltrain ramps up its service post pandemic.
2. Atherton currently has a quiet zone established at the Fair Oaks grade crossing. The Town of Atherton will be partnering with Caltrain to establish a second quiet zone at the Watkins grade crossing beginning in the Summer of 2021. By adding a quiet zone at Encinal, trains passing through Menlo Park would not be required to sound its horn for approximately one mile between Fair Oaks and Encinal, thus significantly improving quality of life for all local residents.
3. The Encinal Avenue quiet zone is synergistic with the grade separation project in Menlo Park. All trains would return to grade level at Encinal Avenue regardless of the two different grade separation options currently being studied (i.e., a fully elevated platform or the hybrid alternative "Option C"). Because the Encinal Avenue crossing is not part of the future grade separation, any investment in evaluating and developing a quiet zone at Encinal Avenue would not be duplicative with the City's future grade separation project. For example, any required modification to the Encinal Avenue grade crossing to comply with Federal Railroad Administration quiet zone requirements would remain and not torn out as a result of future grade separation projects at other Menlo Park crossings.

As you evaluate 2021 priorities, please consider studying the establishment of a quiet zone at the Encinal Avenue grade crossing.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued service to our community.

Respectfully,  
Matt Normington  
President, Marquis Homeowner Association

## Agenda item C1 Clinton Gilliland, Resident

I am a resident of Menlo Park, living in the Flood Triangle. I urge you to consider banning gas powered leaf blowers within our city. They do create smog and dust pollution that impacts our health. Particulate matter constantly being blown into the air we breathe while out walking our neighborhood streets or playing in our yards contributes to increased asthma rates and harms those with weakened immunity and allergy conditions.

These machines create very disturbing noise pollution. It is very disturbing while trying to work from home. The constant drone of gas leaf blowers on some days when several nearby yards are have blowers and gas mowers operating drives me crazy.

Besides our auto in the carport is covered by dust from the next door gardener's blower. Also we can't escape them while walking in the neighborhood.

## Agenda item C1 Richard Recht, Resident

I'm an elderly resident of Menlo Park. Leaf blowers are used in the maintenance of our and our neighbors' yards. The current blowers used are gas powered and contribute to global warming. They also contribute to health impact due to poorer air quality and a very irritating noise.

We talked with the people who care for our lawn. They were not totally against electrical blowers. But they considered them less convenient and with a cost involved in switching, so they would not do so unless their competitors also switched.

Please consider helping this come about.

Agenda item C1  
Kevin Wasserstein, Resident

Dear Menlo Park City Council,

I am a resident of Menlo Park, living in Vintage Oaks. I urge you to consider banning gas powered leaf blowers within our city. I request this ban for three reasons:

- 1) Noise Pollution/Quality of Life: it is incredible how disruptive these are to our community. In fact, during these many months of staying at home due to the pandemic, I have noted that NEVER a day goes by without at least one or several incredibly loud blowers going off. Menlo Park is an enviable, beautiful, neighborhood, and these destroy the very fabric of our living space. It's disruptive, beyond just peace of mind--people working from home and children trying to learn online cannot focus with the constant drone of gas leaf blowers.
- 2) Environmental pollution: gas leaf blowers are harmful to the environment. They create smog and dust pollution that impacts our health, including particulate matter that is thrown into the air, affecting the respiratory system. These leaf blowers have been shown to contribute to increased asthma rates and respiratory harm for those with weakened immunities and allergy conditions. These gas leaf blowers also are meaningful contributors of CO<sub>2</sub>, contributing to ongoing greenhouse gas emissions that are eroding our environment.
- 3) Electric leaf blower technology is now effective/efficient. Electric leaf blowers have now become much more powerful and efficient as the battery technology has improved--such that an electric blower can now be efficiently to accomplish the same tasks as gas blowers. A swapout plan, including a bit of creativity and either a city or community-contributed subsidy would easily address any perceived or real concerns of equity issues in requiring landscapers to purchase new equipment.

Thank you for your consideration, and attention to this important matter. Kevin Wasserstein



Agenda item C1  
Gail Blumberg, Resident

I would love to see the Caltrain Quiet Zone that Atherton is planning be extended south into Menlo Park. I have lived near the railroad tracks for the last 20 years, and the noise from train horns has gotten LOUDER and more disruptive over time. It interferes with sleep, and will make working from home difficult when double the number (or more) of trains result from electrification and future plans. Please consider adding this to your work plan for the year, it will make the entire train corridor quieter and more livable for the large number of residents who border the tracks. And there is no downside.

Agenda item C1  
Susan Erhart, Resident

I would like to suggest that one of the city's priorities this year should be updating the community amenities list that was approved in 2016 as part of the ConnectMenlo project. Several items on the current list have been completed (such as the traffic-calming project in Belle Haven) or have been linked to proposed projects (such as the grocery store and pharmacy that are part of the plans for Willow Village).

The update is urgently needed because there are five proposed projects in the M-2 zone that have bonus-level development and thus must provide community amenities. None of the developers has yet identified the amenities they intend to provide, and it's crucial that residents of the affected neighborhoods have this information before the projects reach the final approval stages. The draft Environmental Impact Reports for these projects will be completed before this year is out, and so updating the amenities list in the next few months is crucial.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

## Agenda item C1 Margaret Miller, Resident

There is no question that Menlo Park should prioritize a climate action plan. We have all noticed the changes in our environment and this is just the beginning. We all suffered through horrific fires last year, and as the experts have said, fire season is all year in California at this point. 2020 has been one of the hottest years on record. This will obviously impact all of us exponentially as the years go on.

This is a minor point but worth mentioning. During the pandemic, I have noticed many more people on their bikes. This is a simple thing but helpful for our environment and our health. There are many streets in Menlo Park that I feel very uncomfortable riding a bike on, however, they are the only way to traverse the town. I recommend that you create a very bike safe town. Ideally, bike paths need to be protected from cars and possibly expanded in width. Middlefield and Camino Real are particular problems.

Agenda item C1  
Amy Lupo, Resident

Dear Menlo Park City Council,

I am a resident of Menlo Park, living in the Willows. In this time of climate emergency, I urge you to consider banning gas powered leaf blowers within our city. Although they do not account for a significant amount of CO2 when compared with all the cars on our roads, they do create smog and dust pollution that impacts our health. Particulate matter constantly being blown into the air we breathe while out walking our neighborhood streets or playing in our yards contributes to increased asthma rates and harms those with weakened immunities and allergy conditions.

Moreover, it has become evident during these many months of staying at home due to the pandemic that these machines create very disturbing noise pollution. People working from home and children trying to learn online cannot focus with the constant drone of gas leaf blowers.

Electric leaf blowers have become much more powerful and efficient as battery technology has improved and there is no reason that an electric blower could not be used to accomplish the same tasks that gas blowers now do. While there may be equity issues in requiring landscapers to purchase new equipment, this is not a problem that cannot be solved with some creative thinking.

Sincerely,  
Amy Lupo

## Agenda item C1 Alice Newton, Resident

Thank you for reading this message. I urge banning gas powered leaf blowers by 12/31/21. Other Menlo Park residents will have submitted information detailing the toxic pollution caused by gas powered leaf blowers so I won't reiterate that. I witnessed the power of battery-operated leaf blowers made by Stihl demonstrated at a 2019 gathering of the Bay Area Gardeners Association in Flood Park. The representative from Stihl stated that they have powerful leaf blowers with batteries that are long lasting enabling use on a large property or several properties without a recharge or battery change. Use of batter operated blowers will avoid the pollution from fumes of the gas powered ones, be more economical for gardeners, and avoid the weight of a gas tank on the gardener's back. Also, they are less loud than gas powered machines.

Gas powered leaf blowers are used by neighbors around our house in Menlo Park for several hours every day Monday -Friday and are almost always in use somewhere along streets I drive along.

I HOPE MENLO PARK WILL JOIN OTHER NEARBY TOWNS AND BAN GAS POWERED LEAF BLOWERS STATING A DATE (12/31/21?) BY WHICH IT WILL BE ILLEGAL TO USE THEM WITHIN CITY LIMITS. I suggest that the City initiate a buy-back program coupled with a reduced price available for a battery operated blower, charger, and extra batteries for professional gardeners serving residents of Menlo Park as well as for residents of Menlo Park. Or, perhaps a trade-in program whereby people trade their gas powered blower for a battery powered one of similar power. Such a support program should discourage gardeners from increasing rates due to change of equipment. I also suggest added incentives such as free magnetic signs for gardeners' vehicles stating that they use only battery powered blowers and perhaps a list of gardeners in compliance on the City's website. Banning gas powered leaf blowers will be a significant step toward providing Menlo Park residents with cleaner air and less noise while supporting Menlo Park's goal of reducing greenhouse gas pollution. It will benefit the surrounding communities as well because professional gardeners often serve various areas.

Coupled with the ban and buy-back or trade-in program should be a plan to destroy (recycle the metal) the gas-powered machines so they won't be used in areas without a ban.

After the date of the ban, there will have to be enforcement of such an ordinance, but if the ban and supporting program are effective, need for enforcement will decrease and ultimately become infrequent. Users of gas powered blowers could be issued a warning ticket the first time. Perhaps the name of the employer would need to be listed on the citation if the person using the gas powered blower is an employee using equipment provided by the employer.

City services in Menlo Park should be among the first to switch from gas-powered leaf blowers to battery-powered ones. Perhaps they already have, but if not, they don't have to wait for a ban to do so.

Thank you!

Alice Newton Menlo Park homeowner for 34 years

Agenda item C1  
Ken Sutherland, Resident

I strongly urge the Council to set the planning and implementation of Quiet Zones along the Caltrain corridor, particularly at Encinal and Glenwood, as priority projects this year. With the upcoming expansion of a Quiet Zone in Atherton to Watkins Ave, expansion further South would greatly benefit Menlo Park residents as well as those nearby in Atherton. This is a "win" in so many respects - a proven solution, a well-defined project with a clear endpoint, quality of life improvements and inter-city cooperation. Thank you for your consideration!

## Agenda item C1 Russ Peterson, Resident

Council,

As a 25+ year resident I am in favor of setting up a "Quiet Mile" through Menlo Park. I think this should be one of your priorities for 2021 and beyond. There are numerous jurisdictions that have No-horn or Quiet Zones for commuter rail. Campbell, Southern CA, and even Chicago (with 6 separate commute rail providers) do not blast horns unless their is an imminent safety issue. The advantages are obvious.

Some oppose this action on grounds of increased liability. However, physically making our crossings safer with gates and barriers seems wise and is also a way to reduce liability.

I would also like to highlight that horn noise has increased, yet again. A new neighbor is designing a home and hired a professional sound engineer to analyze noise along the tracks. He recorded 106 db as a high reading. This is more than DOUBLE the sound pressure (logarithmic scale) of 92 db that officials claim is required.

OSHA and NIOSH charts show the expected hearing damage of high levels of noise that we should NOT be subject to. They specify less than 15 to 30 minutes of exposure/day for the higher sound pressures Caltrain emits.

**Agenda item C1**  
**Valerie Ambwani, Resident**

Please address the poor situation of our downturn & reverse decision to not close off parts of Santa Cruz Ave. demand landlords place businesses in their buildings or face fines.



## Agenda item C1 Amar Murugan, Resident

In recent months, there has been a significant increase in the amount of trash and refuse strewn about various parts of the City, including in the downtown area, near the Marsh and Willow exits to 101, near the Caltrain station (particularly trash from the 7-11 and Hawaiian restaurant).

To keep our City environmentally friendly, clean and attractive, I urge the Council to address this issue. Importantly, property owners should be accountable to manage the refuse and trash generated by their buildings and businesses. Violators should be fined or have their operating permits withdrawn if they do not provide adequate waste receptacles or keep their environs free of trash and waste.

Agenda item C1  
Jessica White, Resident

20 years ago Downtown Menlo was a destination for the day to walk around and enjoy the shops and eats. Fast forward to the last few years as I am raising my young boys and we don't enjoy walking downtown anymore. The absence of enticing stores and restaurants aside, the sidewalks and parking lots are iced with a sticking funk. It smells of garbage and if something drops to the ground, there is absolute hesitation to pick it up before knowing how I will clean my hands(and object) immediately after. How can we get our downtown back? What can be done to clean it up and make it more enticing to retailers and restauranteurs who will then bring in all of us locals in the neighborhood needing a place to walk to and enjoy again.

Agenda item C1  
B. Ferguson, Resident

I moved to MP about 5 years ago. I thought it would be a quieter place to retire than San Francisco.

I walk to do most of my chores and it is hard if not impossible to get up and down Crane Street and Oak Grove Street without having to encounter, often rude blowers.

As a person with asthma and migraines which can cause sensitivity to noise - it can be like a nightmare. I often swing at least 20 feet across the street to avoid their dust/dirt clouds. I watch them blowing leaves off of roofs, into other yards, and try disparately to move matter when it is raining.

I have helped women with baby strollers, and blind folks who can't see thru the dust.

Having come from NM which is a quiet place, I find MP to be a noise ghetto. I regret moving here.

Just to top it off, I have had angry leaf blowers throw things at me and curse ragefully. They have grown to hate towns people who try to cover their noses when walking thru their debri.

Someone will get hurt with tempers as they are these days.

Please address this senseless noise, air, people problem in our town. Thank you.

## Agenda item C1

Elizabeth & Marsden Blois, Resident

Council, As 45+ year residents of Menlo Park, we strongly urge the Council to set the planning and implementation of Quiet Zones along the Caltrain corridor, particularly at Encinal and Glenwood (“Quiet Mile”), as priority projects this year. With the upcoming expansion of a Quiet Zone in Atherton to Watkins Ave, expansion further South would greatly benefit Menlo Park residents as well as those nearby in Atherton. It will make the train corridor quieter and more liveable for the many Menlo Park residents who live near the tracks. Our understanding is that this can be done without downside or safety concerns. Thank you for your consideration.

**Agenda item C1**  
**Miriam Blatt, Resident**

Please allocate \$ to hire social workers to be available 24-7 to go along with every police call. It that needs to happen by reducing police budget, please do that.

## Agenda item C1 Dixie B, Resident

Dear Menlo Park City Council,

Thank you for hearing the opinions and asks of myself and other citizens. As a member of the Silicon Valley Democratic Socialists of America chapter, I am writing to you with the support of my chapter to urge you to civilianize police traffic and wellness check responsibilities in Menlo Park. In more detail, this would entail using funds currently funneled into the police department for those responsibilities instead into city departments or offices that would appropriately oversee these two areas, putting traffic patrol in the hands of unarmed city employees similar to BerkDOT in Berkeley, CA, and sending mental health professionals employed by the city in the place of police officers for wellness checks not posing any threat of violence. I understand that a new pilot program from the county is sending mental health professionals WITH police officers on wellness checks, but I oppose this effort because an officer is still responding and presenting a threat of violence or physical restraint to the person being checked on. These scenarios much too frequently result in the murder of non-violent citizens by police. I also learned recently in a listening session with the interim police chief in Menlo Park that the traffic division has recently been downsized from its own department into a subsection of the patrol department due to budgetary issues. Civilianization of traffic duties offers an opportunity to further save precious city funds for the upcoming fiscal year.

One another note, I support defunding and dissolving the 'Facebook unit', or Beat 4, of the Menlo Park Police Department. As I have reminded you many times, it is unethical for a city to receive funds, even indirectly, from a private company and to then provide public service officers for the protection of the property and belongings of that company. I know that you all know it, and Mayor Combs himself has stated in the past that it would not be hard to defund the unit. Facebook needs to provide its own private security, and this conflict of interest must end to keep citizens of Menlo park and especially of neighboring East Palo Alto safe from cases of mistaken identity, intimidation, profiling, and use of force.

Thank you for considering my comments. I look forward to sharing more of my thoughts in the future and speaking more closely with you.

## Agenda item C1 Jessica Taylor, Resident

I'm writing to express my support for a proposed Quiet Zone exploration for Encinal and Glenwood Avenues. We live right along the Caltrain tracks and the frequent train horn sound pollution has negatively impacted our family's quality of life. We have difficulty sleeping, opening our windows in the summer, and enjoying our yard.

We understand Atherton's recently instilled a Fair Oaks Quiet Zone and made a deal with Caltrain to build the quad gates necessary to establish a Quiet Zone on Watkins starting next year.

Shouldn't we afford a similar arrangement to the citizens of Menlo Park? I can't tell you how much this would benefit our family and many others in close proximity!

Agenda item C1  
Michele Calos, Resident

In the past, I heard about a plan to build a crossing of the train tracks near Willow Road that would connect the Willows neighborhood to the rest of Menlo Park. Is this project still under consideration?

I would like to advocate for it! I am a bicyclist and pedestrian and would like to be able to access the commercial area of Menlo Park without having to cross the tracks at Ravenswood, which is busy and out of my way. A bike and pedestrian crossing, either level or going under or over the tracks, would be a great feature to better connect the parts of our town, now separated by the train tracks.

The bike and pedestrian crossing would also encourage people to walk or bike to downtown, rather than using cars.



Agenda item C1  
Pam D. Jones, Resident

Mayor Combs, Vice Mayor Nash, Councilpersons Mueller Wolosin and Taylor,  
And Staff,

On February 24th, Thrive Alliance will be sponsoring an update and best practices on redistricting presentation by the Asian American Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus (AAAJ-ALC). The AAAJ-ALC has been working on voting rights and many other social justice issues since 1972.

I am requesting “Redistricting Commission and Retaining Demographer” be agendized in March. Calendaring in March will allow ample time to engage and educate residents. This also allows the council members and staff to receive additional information on the nuances of redistricting in order for us to make the best choices for Menlo Park.

Thank-you for serving the residents of Menlo Park.  
Stay well,  
Pam. D. Jones

## Agenda item C1 Joshua Gossett, Resident

Dear Mayor Combs and Councilmembers,

I am the president of the Felton Gables Homeowners Association, and am writing on behalf of our neighborhood of 115 homes. We are wholeheartedly in favor of extending Atherton's planned Quiet Zone at Watkins Ave south into Menlo Park, and strongly encourage Council to prioritize the scoping and pursuit of Quiet Zones spanning as many crossings as feasible. The establishment of a Quiet Mile connecting Atherton to Menlo Park makes sense for two primary reasons:

Noise levels are going from bad to worse. With the exception of these Pandemic months, train noise has worsened over the years as train frequency increased. Caltrain's projected schedule will bring even more trains per hour, running day and night, turning nuisance noise into an enduring backdrop to everyday life. While many residents would like to continue working from home, the prospect of near-constant horn blasts would likely prove a deterrent, putting more cars on the road. Blaring horns get in the way of outdoor living, and enjoying open windows and fresh air. They even permeate double paned glass and thick insulation. For our neighborhood and others within earshot of the tracks — not just those who are adjacent -- an extended Quiet Zone would be a game changer.

This project is do-able. Scoping work is relatively straight-forward, quad gates are not complex or outrageously expensive, and as Atherton is demonstrating, engineering and construction work can be fairly quick. A Quiet Mile could be implemented next year. Encinal is presently slated for quad gates as part of the City's Grade Separation project; however, Grade Separation is still many years down the road. We see little reason for the community to wait, perhaps a decade or more, to implement a plan that has already been decided, especially when we can leverage Atherton's efforts for more far reaching benefit.

Expanding Atherton's Quiet Zones to create a Quiet Mile into Menlo Park is the rare project that would deliver a profound benefit to a great many residents at a reasonable cost in a short timeframe. My neighbors and I thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Dr. Joshua Gossett, DNP, MBA, RN, FACHE  
Cell: [REDACTED]

Agenda item C1  
Kathy Switky, Resident

Dear Councilmembers,

I am writing to request that the Council prioritize the project to provide emergency water for the some the residents and businesses served by Menlo Park Municipal Water.

The lower zone of this service area, east of El Camino, does not have ANY emergency water supply. City staff estimates that if earthquake damage or other emergency interrupts the supply of water from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's (SFPUC) Hetch Hetchy system, some 3,000 residents and businesses could be without water for 20-30 days.

A decades-old plan to install underground water tanks never went anywhere, and in 2013 the Council finally abandoned that plan and voted to instead install wells to provide backup water supplies.

This project has moved forward extremely slowly, as Public Works staff has been diverted to other projects. The first well project has begun, but is still not online.

We have all become more aware in the past year of the importance of planning for emergencies. I urge the Council to prioritize the Emergency Water Supply Wells project to protect those of us in the Menlo Park Municipal Water District.

Thank you for your consideration.

## Agenda item C1 Radu Mihaescu, Resident

As an 11 year resident of Menlo Park, having lived in three different homes, all within 100 yards of the rail, I cannot emphasize enough how much of a quality of life improvement it would be to not have the trains blaring their horns in the middle of the night.

We've had guests who could not sleep at our house and moved to a hotel, we've spent thousands of dollars on upgrading our windows to get higher noise insulation, and our sleep quality is still severely impacted by these trains, even with custom fit earplugs. As much as we love Menlo Park and the convenience of living downtown, this is the largest single factor leading us to consider moving away, especially with a baby on the way.

We strongly urge the city to consider acquiring the 4-way gates that would allow for the quiet zones (or any other device/measure that would allow Caltrain to stop blowing their horns), for all the rail crossings within its jurisdiction.

## Agenda item C1 Scott Barnum, Resident

I am a member of the Park Forest neighborhood. I would like to strongly encourage the City Council to pursue making the CalTrans corridor from the Menlo Park train station to the former Atherton train station a quiet zone... or as much as possible of that segment to be a quiet zone for:

1. all trains at all times (best case)
2. all trains early in morning/late at night (at minimum)

Given the safety work that CalTrans has set up at all crossings in this corridor, there is no longer the need for the trains to blow their horns at every intersection. As trains also no longer stop at Atherton station, there is no longer the need to provide warning as it comes into or passes by that station. Importantly, as a precedent for Menlo Park, Atherton has secured a quiet zone for its residents along a portion of the corridor, even though there are multiple crossings.

While I fully appreciate that there are more pressing needs for the City, please make this at least one of the priorities for 2021. It may be "low hanging fruit" that the Council could more easily and quickly accomplish.

Thank you for the consideration.

## Agenda item C1 Gail Sredanovic

I urge the strongest possible plan to reduce emissions .

New buildings should be all electric.

Solar should be required on all new buildings.

And I urge discussing a way to encourage/support all churches and schools to have solar over their parking lots.

## Agenda item C1 Susan Bryan, Resident

I would like to see us do what we can on a local level to stop climate change. I don't have specific suggestions except that I would like us to continue building and supporting bike paths all over the city. I am also fine with reducing speed city-wide to 25 mph. I am an older driver and often feel pressured to go over the speed limit by younger drivers who are in a break-neck hurry to get somewhere.

Policing: I have seen Menlo Park police de-escalate confrontations due to road rage. I want us to honor them for that and increase alternatives to police for people to call for help with domestic violence or mental health problems. I'd like the police to help us rethink when we need people showing up with guns and when its better not to have people showing up with guns. Right now, they are on-call for everything. I wonder which calls they would prefer diverted to a social services officer? They need to be asked.

I would like to see police visit the Boys & Girls Club in east Menlo Park. I would like to see police visit places of worship all over our community for services and stay for "coffee hour" to meet people and be known by them as individuals.

Agenda item C1  
Carrie Snyder, Resident

I absolutely propose a Quiet Zone for Encinal and Glenwood Avenues. Train horns are LOUD, incessant, anxiety-causing and very disruptive to our lives - sleep, work and home and community life. It is very difficult to live in close proximity to constant train horns and alarm gates. A quiet zone would make a significant and immediate favorable impact on the lives of the many, many people in Menlo Park who live near and around the train, something that is all the more important as current construction brings many more people into our community who will also live near the train. Ending train noise on Glenwood Avenue and Encinal is a VERY BIG deal and will make a VERY BIG positive difference in increasing the quality of life in our neighborhoods and making Menlo Park a very desirable place to live and spend time!



## Agenda item C1 Amy Mushlin, Resident

Please consider quiet zones for the Glenwood and Encinal train crossings. These would have an immediate and powerful impact on the quality of life for many of us living within earshot. Extensive national research shows they are at least as safe if not safer and Atherton has had great success with them. Train engineers today lean on the horns, blasting them the whole way through town at all hours. Once electrification and train volumes increase the situation will get worse. So many city challenges are hard but this one is easy- there is no downside and such huge upside for many of us. If you're lucky enough to be able to afford a home away from the train count your blessings, but also please support this initiative for those of us who aren't.

## Agenda item C1

C.J. Jameson, Resident

- Compost should be mandated for all residential complexes
- More sand in Jack Lyle Park's sandbox please!
- Some wood fires in the neighborhood are really really bad-smelling, and some people don't observe spare-the-air
- Disallow gas leaf blowers on all days, at all times
- The City of Menlo Park should stop taking "Gifts" from Facebook. We have become too dependent on those and it keeps us unable to run a balanced city budget on our own two feet.

Agenda item C1  
Adam Tobin, Resident

I strongly encourage the City Council to take up and support the issue of creating a Quiet Zone for Encinal and Glenwood Avenue rail crossings. Trains do not simply honk their horns at the crossings; they blare them nonstop the length between the two, considerably reducing quality of life for those of us on Mills Ct and Mills St. With the planned increase in number of trains due to electrification, the noise will be relentless. Atherton has successfully implemented Quiet Zones on crossings just North of Menlo Park. This is something that can be done to vastly increase the wellbeing of your constituents.

## Agenda item C1 Ezio Alviti, Resident

I urge to City Council to implement a citywide quiet zone by placing four-quadrant gates at Ravenswood Ave., Oak Grove Ave., Glenwood Ave., and Encinal Avenue. I live near the Glenwood Ave., Crossing but the train horns can be heard when they are sounded at any of the crossings. This is especially true with regard to Freight trains. Please note that it will likely be several years before grade separation will be done at Ravenswood Ave. and Oak Grove Avenue. Let's improve our quality of life as soon as possible.

Agenda item C1  
Ilana Morady, Resident

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We are writing to voice support for establishing a Caltrain Quiet Zone in Menlo Park. We live in the Marquis townhome community on Encinal Ave. Our home is literally 20 steps away from the tracks. Unfortunately we are unable to keep windows open because of the noise from the trains. The horns are particularly troublesome. Even with the windows closed, we are disrupted by the horns. Some train operators seem to have little regard for the experience of residents and hold down the horn for extended lengths. We understand that the horns are a safety measure, however it's one that seems to add little to no value given the seemingly minuscule risk of someone or something being unintentionally hit by the train. People can hear, see, and feel the train when there's no horn. A quieter train would add much-needed peace to the community. We would love to one day sit on our balcony and have a conversation without needing to pause for the train. Thank you for your consideration.

## Agenda item C1 Teresa Beltramo, Resident

Members of the City Council,

Please support the shops and restaurants in Menlo by making the downtown more attractive and accessible.

The parklet program has been a big success. The latest parklet, by Roma, is wonderful. Kudos to the city, chamber of commerce, and restaurants for moving in this direction. Please continue to do so.

The closing of Santa Cruz Ave. to cars was well-intentioned, but clearly not something that should be continued. The closures dangerously force traffic through parking lots, deprive us of valuable parking, and create the eyesore of barriers and temporary tents. Only Left Bank has truly needed the extra outdoor seating, but that can be addressed by allowing them to add parklet on Doyle St.

Menlo Park businesses and customers need the city focus on the basics:

- Cleanliness and Attractiveness
- Landscaping
- Lighting
- Safety
- Accessibility
- Parking

Those are the things our downtown businesses need to thrive.

Thank you,

Teresa Beltramo  
Teresa's Antiques

  
Menlo Park

Agenda item C1  
Susannah Ragab, Resident

Hi,

As a long time resident of Menlo Park (renter and now homeowner) I strongly support the City working with Caltrain and other rail participants (particularly late night cargo trains) to implement quiet hours. We love the City of Menlo Park. At some point we considered moving, partly because of the trains, but we learned to survive with ear plugs because the City has so many wonderful things to offer. However, the noise level of the trains passing through over the years has grown past a mere annoyance - sometimes ear plugs don't even help. Both my husband and I are soon to be first-time parents and while we know that some sleepless nights lay ahead of us, it would be nice to know that the cries of our two-legged creature will be the only thing keeping us up. We understand that "Quiet Hours" have been implemented in the City of Atherton with success and we very much hope that the City of Menlo Park will make doing the same a priority for its residents in the coming year.

## Agenda item C1 Timothy Gernitis, Resident

Council members,

My family lives in Allied Arts and I'm writing because of the neighborhood discussion I see building over encouraging electric yard blowers.

Even with all that the town is facing this year, gas blowers are a problem, with substantial short and long-term costs, that are worth considering now. This is also a potential area where regulation could help both residents and local workers - gardeners. It's not Covid or housing, but it could be a great (reasonably) quick win for the town with lasting effects.

The problems are:

1) Gardeners using gas blowers are directly exposed to days of breathing chemicals that are known to have long-term negative health effects like heart and lung disease and cancer. (Two-stroke engines produce incomplete combustion, meaning dramatically more carbon monoxide and other byproducts than say a car engine.) Gardeners are also spending days exposed to unhealthy noise levels known to lead to permanent hearing loss (only sometimes mitigated by hearing protection). That said, most gardeners still own existing gas blowers, so there's a replacement cost in moving to electric. And, more importantly, they still largely perceive that gas blowers are more powerful so they can do a lawn in a shorter time - meaning more houses and more revenue throughout the day. (Actually, top electric leaf blowers are now equal to the power - blowing force - of the mid range professional gas blowers most gardeners use.)

2) For residents, this is a health and quality of life issue. Noise is the bigger, inescapable, issue. Mid-range gas yard blowers commonly in use emit a dramatically higher volume of sound than current code allows (sound levels approximately comparable to a plane taking off v. code levels comparable to an air conditioner or dishwasher). New research is uncovering the broad negative health impacts of uncontrolled, variable high and low frequency noise including hypertension, stress, and sleep disruption. And the noise from blowers, particularly the low frequency noise, can travel across many yards and through home walls and still be above healthy levels. Residents are less exposed to concentrated chemicals than gardeners, but more local hydrocarbons are still not good. These noise and chemical pollution concerns are the same reasons we have state law around idling trucks. (Electric leaf blowers don't fix the problem of blower dust, but that's not a reason for inaction on the health impacts of noise and chemical pollution.)

We're at a particularly interesting time to act now. Previously, the people paying for these services have been largely away from home while they were performed, leaving children, older adults, and service workers to absorb the externalities. But, we may have a unique window to address this. Many professionals are now working from home and feeling the impacts as concentration and conference calls are interrupted. They may now have a higher willingness to pay the fair cost for electric yard blowing services (funding gardener's new electric equipment).

Because the pollution and noise costs of "my" gas yard blowing are mostly borne by my six (or 20) closest neighbors, it's still unlikely that the market will take care of this itself anytime soon. But, as part of our shared progress towards becoming the green, healthy, (and now work-from-home productive) town we'd like to be, this is a great year for the council to examine the changes Palo Alto and Stanford have made to electric blowers and consider our own solution.

Current code (8.07 from 1999) was a reasonable attempt to mitigate the noise problem by setting a sound limit in a time before electric leaf blowers were powerful and economical. But now - 20 years later - with new technology, our town's evolving social standards, and more people in neighborhoods during the day, it's time to take another look at this.

I appreciate the council's consideration.

Your neighbor,  
Tim



## Agenda item C1 Ming Tsai, Resident

Council,

We love Menlo Park for many of its offerings, but regretted moving to the city after underestimating how train horns are impacting our lives on top of the pandemic, particularly my wife and our 2 young kids. We are writing to urge the city to kindly consider acquiring quad-gates, at all applicable intersections (e.g. Encinal, Glenwood and others), for enabling quiet zones as one of the priorities in 2021. Caltrain accident reports/statistics in Atherton's quiet zone have shown quad-gates more effective in providing safety while without horn sounds, improving life quality drastically for all nearby.

If possible, we should advise Caltrain to look at how train horns were eradicated in many other countries with similar road/train settings as ours. Combining video cameras (installed on train tracks and intersections, with night vision enabled), radar scanner (similar to those on auto-pilot cars) and train location/gps/speed information, horn sounds are not needed nearly all times. The cost-benefit analysis will shock many at how cheap, effective and life-changing these solutions are, which should be of great interest to many nearby cities.



## Agenda item C1 Shenshen Liang, Resident

I'm hoping that we can establish quiet zones for Caltrain on all the four crossings at Menlo Park: Encinal Ave, Glenwood Ave, Oak Grove Ave and Ranvenswood Ave. The grade separation will take years to achieve after reaching an agreement, while the quiet zone is much easier and faster to implement. Atherton's Fair Oaks Quiet Zone is a good example. The cost of establishing quiet zones is also much lower than grade separation as well. It will improve the residents' living conditions tremendously and reduce noise pollution a lot.

It would be great if we can consider this option and implement it sooner than later. Thank you very much.

## Agenda item C1 Liang Dai, Resident

I do believe establishing a Quiet Zone is a high priority for the city and the neighborhood. As a resident living close to Caltrain track, my wife and I have been suffering a lot from the blaring Caltrain horn. Compared with other Caltrain grade separation plan, Quiet Zone would be the cheapest way to both solve the public safety and noise pollution issues. I hope City Council seriously consider the option of Quiet Zone for Encinal, Glenwood, Oak Grove, and Ravenswood.

## Agenda item C1 Russell Dember, Resident

There is too much commercial development happening in Menlo Park and the Bay Area in general. The obvious result of this is the housing shortage, the growing homeless population, the clogged up roads, electrical power shortages and the water supply being at a critically low level. The current mentality in Menlo Park and the State Government in Sacramento of "Up-Zoning" the existing residential neighborhoods to accommodate higher density development is sacrificing the quality of life of the current residents for the quantity of profits for the commercial property owners and developers. The solution is to "Down-Zone" the commercial areas for lower densities of offices and re-zone commercial areas for residential development.

## Agenda item C1 Zerubbabel Campbell

I hope this finds you well,

What are we doing for our homeless?

February 11 Caltrans and the City of Menlo Park is proposing a cleanup at the Marsh Encampment due to hazardous living conditions. All homeless living in the area will be evacuated permanently February 10.

In order to receive services, our homeless would have to accept an assessment to enter "the system of record" and be on a list for housing. The county is scheduled to purchased housing to come online in late February or early March. Unfortunately, we have a homeless population that will be affected due to our current circumstances.

I wish to elevate the issue of homeless in our Community. What is our assessment to enter "the system of humanity" concerning housing for the homeless.

It would be a great service to our Community to participate in housing for the homeless.

I could site many statistics about the benefits for housing the homeless: economy, crime rates, social, environmental, etc. But most important a return to autonomy to the individual.

Be Well,

Zerubbabel S. Campbell  
Pastor Menlo Park Community Church of God in Christ

## Agenda item C1 Residents

Hello members, we are residents of Marquis community in Menlo Park on Encinal Ave. It would be really helpful if quiet zones are established near our neighborhood area / community. Please take this into consideration and please establish quiet zone. Thank you

**Agenda item C1**  
**Linh Dan Do, Resident**

Keep the 2030 Menlo Park Climate Action Plan a high priority! Track & report how we are doing vs. the plan - where are we doing well, and where are we falling short? What plans can we put in place to ensure we meet our goals? Thank you.



## Agenda item C1

Daniel and Alice Hom, Residents

Re: C1. Provide direction to City staff on City Council 2021 priorities and work plan

Dear City Council.

As a longtime resident on Menlo Park, I urge you to include safety on Willow Road as a priority. I understand that the approved TMP includes some aspects of improvements at Coleman and Middlefield. However, none of those listed items addresses traffic-calming measures. Moreover, there is no clear implementation schedule.

Prior to the pandemic, there were constant road rage and rear end accidents reported between Middlefield and Gilbert. My wife and I personally witnessed and reported these events to the Council and MP staff/departments. The community is worried that once the pandemic is under control and business and schools reopen fully, the safety issues will reappear. Speeding vehicles and unsafe driving habits has come back. For these reasons, I ask the Willow Road improvements become a priority and added to the work plan.

If the City can include “Newly identified projects Middle Avenue traffic calming project (Ref #22.)”, then why can’t “Willow Road traffic calming” be added also. I understand Middle Avenue has many projects linked and it has been in planning for a while. However, the issues on Willow Road were a problem much longer. Please see that countermeasures are advanced sooner than later.

Regards,

Daniel and Alice Hom

## Agenda item C1 Dana Hendrickson, Resident

Downtown Menlo Park, like other central retail districts across the country, continues to suffer from the year-long COVID-19 pandemic. Empty storefronts, large job losses and plummeting sales testify to the severity of the economic damage, and most remaining businesses are still struggling to survive. Fortunately, there are now encouraging signs that both the healthcare and economic crises have bottomed out, and business owners in downtown Menlo Park can expect a rebound of sorts in the next few months. That's good news for our entire community.

However, what an actual economic recovery will mean for Downtown Menlo Park worries me. The current downturn will have lasting effects and reinvigorating downtown will not simply happen on its own. Many residents were unhappy with the state of downtown before COVID-19 and even a full recovery would disappoint them. Main street does lack an appealing mix of small retail businesses, more than a dozen vacant storefronts mar Santa Cruz Avenue and streets are poorly maintained and often dirty. However, Downtown Menlo Park also has many strong points including convenient access to dozens of service-related businesses, e.g., restaurants, salons, and home furnishing retailers; above average income households in Menlo Park and Atherton, and 500 new apartments now under construction nearby on El Camino.

So how likely is it that downtown will become a more appealing place to shop, eat or simply visit IF there is no concerted effort by residents and the city government, something that has been lacking for decades. The City's Specific Plan (2012) is full of good ideas for civic investments, ones collectively identified by residents. But no significant ones have been undertaken during the past eight years. Is this because no one feels they own its implementation?

Here are the goals for downtown included in the Menlo Park Vision Plan. It is safe to say that very little progress has actually been made.

- Maintain a village character unique to Menlo Park.
- Protect and enhance pedestrian amenities on Santa Cruz Avenue.
- Expand shopping, dining and neighborhood services to ensure a vibrant downtown.
- Provide plaza and park space

Reinvigorating downtown will require a much more refined and pragmatic vision, civic and private investments, a well led economic development program, and extensive community engagement. I personally would like an attractive place to run errands, dine, stroll, and attend regular special events with family and friends. I already visit downtown 3-4 times a week, mostly to run quick errands. The following are the kinds of "attractions" that would expand and increase my usage.

1. Special mid-week evenings on Santa Cruz from spring through fall, at least two a month. For example, wine tastings, dessert tastings, beer tastings, appetizer tastings, etc. Feature downtown businesses.
2. A farmer's market midweek, spring thru fall.
3. Art exhibits and working artists and artisans inside otherwise vacant storefronts.
4. A place where small food vendors like those at the farmer's market can showcase their products downtown at other times during the week.
5. Specialty food shops like the ones in the Ferry Building in San Francisco. (the first floor of the "Flegel's" Building would be a great location)
6. The current conditions of downtown streets and sidewalks are disgraceful. Repairs, on-going maintenance and regular cleaning are required.
7. Safe place(s) to store bikes, electric bikes, and scooters are needed – facilities that offer greater security than bike locks, as these are easily defeated.
8. A microbrewery that served craft beer and wines from wineries in our area.
9. Satellite parking area on private property near downtown and a free shuttle service on weekdays between 11:00 am and 3:00 PM. At least 25 parking permit holders assigned to it so more plaza spaces are available for short term parking.
10. Series of summer plays in Fremont Park – weekend picnics; restaurants offer boxed meals

I would also believe the entire length of Santa Cruz Avenue to vehicle traffic between University and El Camino should be open to all traffic EXCEPT the popular street dining areas in the block between Doyle and Curtis. This experiment draws many people to downtown, and though a few retailers oppose this closure, the City Council should acknowledge the significant value that this unique area contributes to the vitality of downtown and our community.

11. An attractive landscaped plaza in front of Walgreen's and Starbucks and next to the current dining areas.
12. Add stop signs at every intersection on Santa Cruz and include signs that remind motorists that bicyclists have the right of way.

So what would be YOUR top three priorities for improving downtown in 2021?

**Agenda item C1**  
**Anush Ramodiya, Resident**

Any work that is planned for reducing the Caltrain Noise levels will be highly appreciated. More than the noise from the train itself its the noise of train horns and the warning alarms of the crossing gates opening and closing.

## Agenda item C1 Carole Grace, Resident

Please work with ABAG to find places for new housing which don't involve construction in undeveloped open spaces. We don't need more offices or more jobs, we need more housing for those who already are here.

Do we have a plan to evacuate people in the event of wildfire?

Please improve storm drainage in West Menlo Park neighborhoods by installing storm swales. Large, long lasting puddles form at Garland and Garland Place after any storm.

Middle Avenue needs sidewalks on both sides of the street.

Garbage pickup near downtown is not frequent enough, so cans are often overflowing- especially on Alma at Oak Grove.

Impact fees from construction should be enough to cover the costs of repaving roads damaged by construction trucks- and this should include the damage caused to parking strips which those heavy trucks park on. Then those impact fees should be used to do the repaving.

I hope the City realizes that every time a new home construction project is approved and one of the original ranch homes is destroyed, the city is promoting housing inequality and doing little to nothing to improve energy efficiency. Larger homes take much more energy to heat and cool, even with the improved insulation.

Please consider requiring new builds to include ADU's- at least that has the option of increasing housing stock for lower income people if owners are willing to rent out the ADU.

## Agenda item C1 Resident

I would like to see the city council prioritize alternative programs to historical policing activities, such as civilian traffic enforcement and mental health calls to be responded to by trained professionals without law enforcement personnel.

## Agenda item C1 Edmond Farrell, Resident

As a Menlo Park resident who lives near a Caltrain crossing on Encinal Avenue, I and my family and neighbors urge the City Council to make Caltrain noise reduction a priority. Atherton has apparently had success and Menlo Park should push hard for the same results. In the new work and school from home environment, my family has found the noise from Caltrain when nearing the crossing very disruptive and at times unbearable.

While we and our 3 children try to work or attend school on-line or by telephone, the train is so loud that we cannot hear or speak dozens of times a day. The train noise is so loud that it eliminates the use and enjoyment of our outdoor space. Even if we go back to offices and in-person schooling, the change brought about by the pandemic will continue to lead to more use of our home during the day for remote work and school.

The solution proposed to add additional arms or guards to the railroad crossing to eliminate the ability to go around the barriers would be the best solution for several reasons;

First, it is inherently safer. I grew up in a town where 8 high school age kids died in an accident when their van drove around the barriers and was hit by a train. The town in NY has spent millions building crossings since then where cars can go under the railroad tracks using bridges. In other intersections they have eliminated the ability to go around the barriers. Adding tow more arms or barriers at each crossing is an inexpensive safety measure that could save lives.

Second, fixing the crossings and allowing Caltrain to reduce its unbearably loud horns near intersections will greatly improve the quality of live for hundreds of Menlo Park residents who live near Caltrain tracks and especially near Caltrain crossings.