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East Palo Alto Today
 Providing news that is relevant, informative and critical
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 East Palo Alto and Belle Haven Spring 2026 Vol.20 No. 79

Push for safer streets meets mixed reviews



East Palo Alto Mayor Webster Lincoln cuts the ribbon to celebrate the installation of the new roundabout at Pulgas Avenue and Runnymede Street on April 7, 2026. City Council member Mark Dinan stands in the background as county and other representatives join the ribbon cutting Photo by David Rages, II

By David Rages, II

East Palo Alto is trying a new way to slow traffic near school locations - the installation of roundabouts on several city streets. Recently, the city installed a roundabout at Pulgas Avenue and

Runnymede Street and another at Pulgas and Beech Street. A ribbon cutting for the Runnymede roundabout took place this April 7.

The city's roundabouts were completed as part of the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE)

School Travel Fellowship Program, whose purpose is to foster collaboration between cities and their local schools to make it safer for students to walk or bike to school.

Five cities were selected for the program -East Palo

Alto, Redwood City, South San Francisco, San Mateo and Daly City - after they presented work plans for their proposed projects at the 2021-2022 School Travel Fellowship Capstone event, which was held on October 20, 2022 at the San Mateo

County Office Building in Redwood City.

The City of East Palo Alto's website lists the benefits of the roundabouts, stating that the roundabouts force drivers to slow down, reducing the frequency and severity of accidents. continued on page 8

ICE arrests of Asian immigrants quadruple under Trump Administration

By Nicole Chang

Immigration arrests of Asian immigrants have surged since the launch of President Donald Trump's second administration. That's according to a new analysis by the advocacy group Stop AAPI Hate.

The report released found that arrests of Asian immigrants by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in 2025 increased nearly fourfold compared with the previous year.

Using federal government data obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, the group reported that ICE arrested 7,752 immigrants from Asian countries between January and mid-October 2025. During the same period in 2024, ICE recorded 1,998 arrests.

Among those arrested in

2025, 7,069 were detained and 2,631 were ultimately deported.

Sharp rise in arrests of Asian immigrants

Chinese nationals accounted for the largest share of arrests at 26% (about 2,015 people). That was followed by Indian nationals at 25% (about 1,938), Vietnamese nationals at 12% (about 930), and Laotian nationals at 4% (about 310). South Korean nationals accounted for about 4% (roughly 300 people), ranking fifth among Asian countries.

A separate analysis by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center also found a sharp rise in arrests of Asian immigrants. According to the center, ICE arrests involving Asian nationals rose from about 2,000 in 2024 to more than 7,000 in 2025.



The increase comes amid broader immigration enforcement efforts. In the past, enforcement often focused on undocumented immigrants with serious criminal records. More recently, authorities have increasingly targeted cases involving employment visa violations or other immigration status issues. The relatively high number of South Korean arrests, in particular, may also reflect a large immigration enforcement operation in Georgia last year

That operation involved subcontracted workers tied to construction projects for Hyundai Motor Company and LG Energy Solution factories. Hundreds of Korean workers were reportedly detained in the operation.

'Harder for people of color to feel safe here'

The report also found that the enforcement climate is having a significant psychological impact across Asian communities.

In a nationwide survey conducted by Stop AAPI Hate and the NORC at the University of Chicago, 53% of 1,378 Asian and Pacific Islander adults said they or someone in their community had been affected by anti-immigrant policies or sentiment over the past year. "Our

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Move With Heart



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A brisk walk can make your heart more efficient and boost your circulation.

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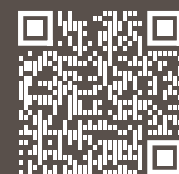
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Newsbriefs



force programs, and proactive policing efforts. Key initiatives include strengthened partnerships with local nonprofits and faith-based organizations, increased neighborhood engagement, and the use of data-driven policing tools.

Once known for high levels of violent crime during the early 1990s, East Palo Alto has steadily worked to transform its public safety landscape. Officials say the latest milestone reflects decades of sustained effort and investment.

City reaches a milestone

The City of East Palo Alto has reached a significant public safety milestone, recording two consecutive years without a homicide in 2025 and 2026, city officials announced this week.

The achievement builds on zero homicides reported in 2023 and signals continued progress in reducing violent crime across the community.

"This achievement belongs to the people of East Palo Alto," said Mayor Webster Lincoln. "It reflects the work of residents, community partners and a police department focused on trust, collaboration and prevention."

City leaders attribute the milestone to what they describe as a "Whole Community" approach — a coordinated strategy that blends community-based violence prevention, expanded youth and work-

Looking ahead, city leaders emphasized that maintaining the progress will require continued focus. Plans include ongoing investments in mental health response services, youth development programs, and prevention strategies aimed at addressing the root causes of violence.

"We are recognizing the presence of peace and the opportunity it creates for our residents and families," Lincoln said.

Officials say the milestone not only marks a moment of reflection, but also sets a foundation for continued community-driven safety efforts in the years to come.

East Palo Alto Council deadlocks on Flock Cameras

The East Palo Alto City Council's attempt to revisit its contract with Flock Safety ended in a stalemate with the council leaving in place the contract that it had ap-

proved with the company in December 2025.

In spite of hearing 30 speakers, 90% of whom argued against Flock, the council did not vote to either expand or end the city's use of Flock cameras.

Instead, the council's failure to pass a new motion at its April 21 meeting means that it upheld the previous contract, which authorizes the city manager to enter into a contract with Flock for up to three years, using one-year increments, as long as spending remains within the approved budget.

After two motions failed to amend the previous contract, the council directed staff to execute a new contract and bring it back to staff after its execution. Council member Romero wanted to have the staff review the contract before it was executed.

Tensions lingered after both council decisions, with residents still charging that the council was not interested in hearing what they wanted or had to say.

Previous council meeting

At its April 7 meeting, a divided East Palo Alto City Council voted 3-2 to remove a scheduled discussion on Flock license plate reader cameras from its agenda, capping a tense exchange over transparency, public trust, and the role of surveillance technology in the community.

The debate revealed sharp disagreements not only about the camera system itself, but also about how the council conducts its business and engages the public on controversial issues.

At the center of the dispute was whether the Flock camera item should be heard at all. Coun-



East Palo Alto residents held up protest signs at the April 7, 2026 East Palo Alto City Council meeting in which councilmembers and residents discussed the use of Flock cameras in the city.

councilmember Ruben Abrica strongly objected to its removal, arguing that splitting or pulling the item violated procedural norms and denied residents the opportunity to hear a full report.

Allowing items to be removed in this way, Abrica warned, risks eroding confidence in the council's process and limiting meaningful public participation.

Councilmember Dinan pushed back, expressing frustration that the issue continues to resurface despite prior direction to the city manager to negotiate a three-year contract related to the Flock system.

"We've already taken action on this," he said, questioning the need to revisit the matter yet again.

But others on the dais argued that the issue warrants renewed scrutiny. Councilmember Carlos Romero pointed to community concerns and emerging information about surveillance and oversight, emphasizing that residents deserve a more thorough and transparent discussion before any

final decisions are made.

That concern took on sharper tone during the debate, as criticism emerged over how the issue has been handled. Abrica accused those who supported the agenda change of disregarding community voices—particularly those of Latino and immigrant residents who have raised concerns about the potential impacts of surveillance technology.

He also criticized what he described as an attempt to shield the issue from public view, calling it disrespectful to the community's right to engage in open dialogue on matters of public safety and civil liberties.

Despite those objections, a roll call vote resulted in a 3-2 decision to remove the Flock camera discussion from the agenda. The majority opted not to take up the item that evening, while two councilmembers voted to proceed with the discussion. Many community members still felt that their views were intentionally not heard.

City, County, State & U.S. Government Meetings & Contacts

East Palo Alto City Council

The East Palo Alto City Council meets the first and third Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm in the Council Chambers, East Palo Alto City Hall, 2415 University Avenue;

(650) 853-3100 or Fax: (650) 853-3115. Website: www.ci.east-paloalto.ca.us

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East Palo Alto Agencies, Boards, Commissions, Committees
Planning Commission
Second and Fourth Monday

Rent Stabilization Board
Second and Fourth Wednesday

Public Works & Transportation Commission
Third Wednesday

Senior Advisory Committee
Meets first Wednesday of the even numbered months from 1:30 p.m.-3:30p.m. - City Hall.

Menlo Park City Council

The Menlo Park City Council holds meetings every Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. at the Chambers located at 801 Laurel Street.

You can subscribe to receive the agendas and minutes by e-mail when they are published. For questions about an agenda, call the city clerk at 650.330.6620.

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Menlo Park Boards, Commissions, Committees

- Arts Commission
- Bicycle Commission
- Environmental Quality Commission
- Finance and Audit Commission
- Housing Commission
- Las Pulgas Committee
- Library Commission
- Parks and Recreation Commission
- Planning Commission
- Transportation Commission

San Mateo County Board of Supervisors Supervisor

Supervisor Lisa Gauthier
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The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors meets in the County of San Mateo Hall of Justice & Records 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063. Meeting at 9 a.m.

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From the Editor's Desk

The responsibility of public officials

When the citizens of a country elect their public officials, what should they expect of them?

Should they expect them to vote their conscience or should they expect them to poll their constituents and then vote according to the way the majority of the people recommend? Or, should they vote according to the way those who have the most money in the community urge them to vote?

Considering that East Palo Alto's residents are not engaged, these are the type of questions that one is left to ask, especially after hearing the East Palo Alto City Council meeting that occurred on April 6, 2026. At that meeting the council voted by a 3 to 2 vote to remove Agenda Item 14.1 regarding the continued use of Flock cameras in the city.

The council decided not to revisit the item which had been decided previously with an agreed upon contract that allowed for the use of Flock cameras to read license plates in East Palo Alto.

A very vocal group of citizens were at April 6 meeting to seek to have the cameras removed, citing data used by other cities that ended their contracts with the company.

What became clear at the meeting was that the council was not going to reconsider its contract with the company, in spite of the very vocal demands from those who wanted the council to do so.

What happened at the meeting raises several issues. What does it take for council members to respond affirmatively to the wishes of their constituents.

This is not the first time that East Palo Alto Council members have listened to the wishes of those who have urged them to take action contrary to the action that they decided to take.

When it comes to major issues that affect all of the city's residents, should council members take a citywide survey before tak-

ing action to make sure that their decisions accurately represent the wishes of their residents?

When public officials are elected, are they given carte blanche power to vote how they want to vote?

Is it simply assumed that they have the best interest of their residents in mind with every vote that they take?

How should elected officials be held accountable for the decisions they've made on their constituents behalf?

Well, the decision to keep Flock cameras in the city and not review the contract

was made with the company was an impactful decision with enormous consequences.

Those who protested the council's decision, now charge that their voices were not heard and they argue that keeping Flock cameras will undermine individual civil rights, with the company's collection and sharing of private information. They also claim that it could potentially lead to wrongful arrests and deportations.

If any of this happens, the company would be blamed for its actions, but would those who voted to keep the cameras also shoulder the blame?

The French historian Alexis de Tocqueville said, "In a democracy, the people get the government they deserve." Grover Cleveland said, "Public office is a public trust." Finally, Abraham Lincoln wrote, "...if you want to test a man's character, give him power."

Those three quotes go to the very heart of the power that we give to our public officials to act on our behalf, in keeping with our wishes.

If they fail to do what they have been entrusted to do by us and if they fail to properly represent us, then we must not fail our duties at the ballot box; namely, to vote them in or to vote them out.

We hold the power and we must remember that we will get the public officials that we deserve. So, we too, must be held accountable.

At some point, the city has to



Photo by David Rages, II

A bus is shown turning near the newly installed mini-roundabout at Pulgas Avenue and Runnymede Street. The mini roundabout bring their pluses and minuses for city traffic. But what do you think? Will they make East Palo Alto's streets safer for traffic? See story about them on page 1 of this issue and log into www.epatoday.org and leave your thoughts under the online story at <https://www.epatoday.org/post/east-palo-alto-s-push-for-safer-streets-meets-mixed-reviews-from-neighbors>

Letters in East Palo Alto Today

Ravneel Chaudhary's opinion piece on page 5 in this issue generated a variety of comments when it was posted on EPA Today's website and featured on the paper's social media pages. Read his article first. Then read some of the comments reprinted below.

From Mayor Webster Lincoln: Ravneel, I read your article and think it misses some important context.

No one was shut out of the meeting—everyone who showed up had the chance to speak during public comment, and many did.

Also, the Flock contract wasn't being decided for the first time. It was already approved back in December 2025 after two separate council meetings, with full public hearings, discussion, and a 3–2 vote. The April item was about revisiting that decision just a few months later.

The council majority made a call not to reopen an issue that had already gone through multiple meetings and a final vote. People can absolutely disagree with that, but it's not accurate to say there was no public input or transparency.

That is why residents showed up,

make a decision and move forward.

Ravneel Chaudhary's response: Saying the city has to "make a decision and move forward" only works if the conditions around that decision have not changed. In this case, they have.

This item was brought back to the Council because of renewed concerns surrounding Flock cameras raised by community members and fellow councilmembers. Since December, those concerns have only been reinforced. Cities like Mountain View have ended their use of Flock contracts following audits and issues related to oversight and data sharing. At the same time, Santa Clara County has taken action to end its use of Flock data and restrict the vendor. The ACLU of San Mateo County also raised concerns ahead of this meeting.

That is not standing still. That is new information that directly impacts the original decision.

Moving forward should not mean ignoring updated facts or shutting down reconsideration when the context has changed. It should mean taking new information seriously and evaluating whether the original decision still holds up.

Or email: epatoday@epatoday.org

and why this issue deserved to be publicly reconsidered.

City Council member Mark Dinan: *To East Palo Alto Today:* There were two Flock items: an informational report and a motion to revisit the Council decision to extend the contract in December. We heard the Flock informational report and there was extensive community comments. We did not want to revisit the decision to extend the Flock contract.

Ravneel Chaudhary's response: For further clarification, members of the public came to speak on Agenda Item 14.1, "Continued Use of Automated License Plate Recognition Systems for Enhanced Public Safety." We were not there to speak on an informational report. We were there specifically to speak on the Flock contract. However, the Council voted to remove the item, effectively eliminating the opportunity for the public to voice their concerns and for the community to see the Council discuss and address those concerns.

Editor's note: To share your thoughts, go to <https://www.epatoday.org/post/east-palo-alto-residents-showed-up-the-city-council-shut-them-out>

Or email: epatoday@epatoday.org

East Palo Alto Today's Policies & Principles

In order to better serve the communities of East Palo Alto and Belle Haven, East Palo Alto Today has made the commitment to operate with high professional standards and to adhere to a strict code of ethical conduct.

The principles and policies stated herein serve as an agreement with our readers, advertisers and all others within

our service area. East Palo Alto Today is dedicated to conscientious journalism.

We maintain this commitment by seeking and reporting the truth, acting with integrity, and serving the public interest. We will report the news thoroughly and accurately and include multiple perspectives without favoring one over the other.

We will hold ourselves accountable to common standards of decency, treating our colleagues, news sources, and the public with respect.

We are committed to maintaining our independence by avoiding partnerships, investments or business relationships that would compromise the integrity of our news reports.

Opinion

The ideas expressed on this page are solely the views of the individual authors who do not represent East Palo Alto Today's board or staff

East Palo Alto residents showed up - the council shut them out

By Ravneel Chaudhary

On Tuesday, April 7, 2026, East Palo Alto residents showed up to City Hall after work ready to speak about the city's contract with Flock Safety. Many came directly from their jobs or rearranged their evening schedules to participate in a decision that directly impacts their privacy, safety, and civil liberties. They came prepared to ask questions and engage in a public process. Instead, in a 3 to 2 vote, Mayor Lincoln and Councilmembers Dinan and Barragan removed the agenda item entirely, blocking any discussion and cutting off residents who came to be heard. What happened that night was not just disappoint-



Ravneel Chaudhary

ing, it undermined the basic expectation that public participation matters in local government.

Even after ACLU of San Mateo County raised concerns ahead of the meeting, the council still removed the item from the agenda, eliminat-

ing any opportunity for public policy discussion or meaningful council deliberation on the Flock contract. While public comment was still allowed, residents were denied the most important part of the process: the ability for the council to openly debate, respond, and consider whether to continue or reconsider the contract in a public forum.

This decision raises serious concerns about transparency and accountability, especially when it comes to surveillance technology. Automated License Plate Reader systems like Flock cameras do more than capture license plates. They collect and store detailed location data on every vehicle that passes by, creating a record of where people go, when they go there, and how

frequently they travel. Based on presentations from the East Palo Alto Police Department, these systems can also capture audio, adding another layer of concern about the scope of surveillance taking place in public spaces.

The implications of this kind of data collection go beyond privacy in the abstract. Continuous tracking of movement can chill First Amendment rights, including the freedom to move through public spaces and associate without being monitored. It also raises Fourth Amendment concerns around warrantless surveillance, especially in light of the Supreme Court's decision in *Carpenter v. United States*, which recognized that prolonged location tracking constitutes a search that generally

requires a warrant.

These concerns are especially urgent in a community like East Palo Alto, where many residents come from immigrant families and have raised serious fears about how location data could be accessed beyond the city. Federal agencies have been able to access California license plate reader data through local sharing systems, raising broader concerns about how this information may be used outside its original public safety purpose. When systems create detailed records of people's movements, the impact is not abstract. It can shape whether residents feel safe driving to work, taking their children

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No Kings protest equals joyous resistance

By Eve Sutton

WE THE PEOPLE have inherited a bold experiment in democracy, now approaching its 250th year. As Benjamin Franklin said, we have a republic, if we can keep it. Our first ex-president,

George Washington, wrote a moving Farewell Address in 1796, insisting that he must return to private life and the American public must have a change in leadership rather than give in to their desire for a king.

<https://www.georgewashington.org/farewell-address.jsp>

Our question today is urgent: How do we convince a dictator that the office of President is not permanent and does not grant unlimited power?

Vigilance

Unlike the long years of war that birthed this nation, separating the United States from England and the rule of a tyrant king, today we have safer, easier ways to defend our rights. First, the very practical measures to shield abuse people from abuse by government agencies: Distributing



Eve Sutton

plastic whistles to warn of an ICE raid. Donating food when

the president halts the flow of cash to EBT cards. Boycotting companies that abuse workers. Attending public rallies and marches. Sending powerful messages to our elected officials.

On March 28, our third #NoKings day, more than 8,000,000 people were counted for the largest single day of protest in our history. Many more, when surveyed, said they participated in some way -- maybe honking their horns as they drove past protestors, maybe watching news reports, live streams and videos of the protests. Awareness of #NoKings

day, #NK3, reached about 78% of the US population.

Events were held around the world, and nations around the world are watching.

On April 12, dictators world wide were stunned by the overthrow of Hungary's authoritarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, who spent 16 years in power.

Admired as the model of an authoritarian ruler, Orbán has drained Hungary's economy to the edge of collapse. Public hospitals are telling patients to

continued on page 8

Reflections on meditation. Would you like to meditate?

By Michael Uhila

There's an interesting story about Prudence Farrow.

While attending a meditation in India during the 1960s, she became so focused on her practice that she famously ignored John Lennon's requests to come outside and socialize. This inspired Lennon to write the song "Dear Prudence" as a plea for her to re-join the group.

Many people wonder who has the time to sit and stare at a wall for five minutes. I have practiced meditation for over a decade, and while I still consider myself a beginner, it has fundamentally changed how I navigate life.



Michael Uhila

Meditation is for everyone. In the spring of 2025, students at Ravenswood Middle School even participated in a meditation program with Anamatangi Polynesian Voices.

As Khandro Rinpoche says, Buddhists don't own the copyright to meditation; it is a tool for all humans.

Slowing down allows the mind to reset, much like a computer. Nina Smiley, PhD, a psychologist and an author, notes that our minds are constantly moving and worrying about deadlines.

Dr. Judson Brewer, an American neuroscientist and psychiatrist, explains that meditation helps us to psychologically "get out of our own way."

It also has physical benefits; Dr. Roizen points out that managing stress through these practices can help combat chronic inflammation, which is tied to various major diseases.

In my own experience, I began meditating before yoga and acupuncture sessions.

Later, I made it a habit to meditate before television productions. It helped me see the big picture, focus on details, and communicate more clearly while directing.

I don't need stress but the irony is I know how to stress. Could meditation be a solid foundation of youth?

"We know that unmanaged stress is one of the greatest causes of aging," says Dr. Roizen.

"It increases your risk of heart disease, stroke, and cancer."

In one 2016 study published in *Translational Psychiatry*, researchers recruited 102 women to spend six days at a retreat where they either just relaxed or did a meditation program.

Compared to blood drawn before the women checked in, blood samples from the end of the retreat showed improvements in biomarkers related to aging in the newly-minted meditators

We all have 24 hours in a day, and we choose how to spend them.

Meditation taught me that not every thought has to be a "soap opera" and that simply enjoying your breath for five minutes is a feasible way to refresh your life.

I can't control you but I can meditate for five minutes, maybe one day I'll see you on a cushion. Would you like to meditate?

East Palo Alto Today

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Lifecycles

Keep hope alive - a community conversation

By Ivan Temes

Streetcode Academy kicked off its 12th year of providing tech education to youth mainly from Black and Brown communities so they can be current with evolving technology.

Founder Olatunde Sobomehin brought together many local luminaries and a highly-experienced group of instructors for the event at University Circle in East Palo Alto.

The upcoming series of free classes will assist participants in going from technology consumers to tech creators, focused on the latest AI education.



Streetcode founder Olatunde Sobomehin stands facing the event's presenters, who included Council member Ruben Abrica, Supervisor Lisa Gauthier, Robert Hoover and Dr. Clayborne Carson among others. - Photos by Ivan Temes

Students will learn about leveraging intelligent automation, prompt-based tools and ethical AI to accelerate coding design and innovation. Bob Hoover, the 94-year-old local icon who was a key figure in the development of

East Palo Alto, covered key historical aspects. Other key speakers included Dr. Clayborne Carson, MLK Jr. Centennial Professor at Stanford and County Supervisor Lisa Gauthier who spoke about Jesse Jackson's involvement with EPA.

The second part of the evening divided the audience into groups to discuss and report on local issues.

Sobomehin then introduced the instructors for the upcoming classes.

They included Professor Adam Banks from Stanford



Dr. Clayborne Carson is showing speaking to an attentive and enthusiastic group of listeners during a table top discussion.

Speaking on "Service above Self" at Rotary



The eight contestants included, left to right: David Oche, Elizabeth Siva, Joshua Wu, Justin Cheng, Eboni Freeman, Noah Siva, Ean Hsiung and Micah Wilkerson- Photos courtesy Elizabeth Jackson

By Deanna Wong

On March 6, 2026, eight Bay Area high school students competed in Rotary District 5170's annual Richard D. King

Youth Speech Contest. Held in East Palo Alto, these eight contestants spoke passionately about "Service Above Self." The students were asked to recite an original speech centered around the Rotary's 4-Way Test, a code of conduct

that asks: 1) Is it the Truth? Is it Fair to all concerned? Will it build Goodwill and Better Friendships? Will it be Beneficial to all concerned?

The Rotary Club of East Palo Alto Bayshore and the

High School.

Many thanks went to the parents and families, speech coaches, assistant speech coaches, Rotary Club members, friends of Rotary, community leaders, donors, in-kind sponsors, and to Elizabeth Jackson and other event organizers who supported the Rotary speech competition and to Eastside College Preparatory School in East Palo Alto for a wonderful venue.

Throughout the evening, the audience heard eight compelling student speeches, enjoyed lovely music, participated in a raffle, met interesting community leaders and had a filling dinner. The contest winner was Ean Hsiung, a junior at Palo Alto



Speech coach Liz Cowie, Elizabeth Jackson, Leif Erickson and Justin Wang pose with the event winner Ean Hsiung.

Bay Area Urban Eagles fly higher and higher

By Henrietta J. Burroughs

The Bay Area Urban Eagles had a successful turnout as the organization celebrated its third anniversary with a special gala on Saturday, March 21 at University Circle in East Palo Alto.

The festive occasion was a semi-formal affair designed to commemorate the organization's community impact and its outreach efforts in inspiring young people to seek careers in aviation.

Attendees were treated to a youth aviation showcase, flight



All of the guests who attended the March 21 Bay Area Urban Eagles event entertained themselves over dinner as they awaited the evening's presentation. - Photo by Art Lim

simulator & STEM exhibits, with industry and community performance by Super Bowl-featured violinist Matthew Major

and acclaimed Harpist Destiny Muhammad.

According to Bay Area Urban Eagles' founder, Michael Meshack, "This special evening honored the impact made in connecting young people to meaningful career pathways in aviation and aerospace, while bringing together community leaders, partners and supporters who share a commitment to expanding access, opportunity and the future of flight."

In speaking of the future, Meshack said that due to increasing interest from youth in the East Bay, Bay Area Urban Eagles recently opened a facility at the Hayward Airport where

Lifecycles

Coach Horacio receives city council recognition

By David Rages II

On a recent evening at City Hall, applause filled the chamber as city leaders, families, and young athletes gathered to celebrate a figure whose impact stretches far beyond the soccer field. With a formal proclamation, the City of East Palo Alto honored Coach Horacio and the Ravenswood Junior Soccer Club for years of service, mentorship, and community-building that have helped shape the lives of hundreds of local youth.

Since 2015, Coach Horacio has been a steady and inspiring presence in East Palo Alto's parks and neighborhoods. But as city officials noted, his contributions extend well beyond coaching.

Whether cutting grass before practice, painting park facilities, or repairing equipment, Horacio has invested his own time and resources to ensure that local spaces remain safe and welcoming for children



Coach Joracio Barrera proudly stands with his Ravenswood Soccer Club team and the East Palo Alto City Council after he received the proclamation presented in his honor at the city council's April 6 evening meeting. Photo courtesy city of East Palo Alto

and families.

That commitment has translated into a thriving program. Under his leadership, the Ravenswood Junior Soccer Club now serves more than 350 young athletes each year, offering opportunities for children as young as four to teens

competing at the under-17 level. What began as a grassroots effort has grown into a respected program whose teams compete with some of the best across the Peninsula and throughout California.

City leaders emphasized that the club's success is about

more than wins and losses. For many participants, it is a pathway to confidence, discipline, and a broader sense of possibility.

"When you know that you can win on the soccer field," one councilmember remarked, "you know that you can win

in the classroom and in every other aspect of life."

A key part of the club's mission has been accessibility. Coach Horacio has worked intentionally to remove financial barriers, keeping the program affordable so that all families—regardless of income—can participate. In a community where opportunities for organized youth sports can be limited, that commitment has made a lasting difference.

The Ravenswood name itself carries deep roots in the community, connecting generations of families across East Palo Alto and neighboring Belle Haven. City officials noted that maintaining that identity reflects a broader commitment to unity and continuity, even as youth sports programs have evolved over time.

For Coach Horacio, however, the recognition was never about personal achievement. Accepting the proclamation, he redirected the spotlight to the young athletes he serves.

In East Palo Alto, fruit trees are helping grow more than just canopy

By Bless Romo

On a recent morning outside a church in East Palo Alto, a small line formed before the doors opened. Families, elders, and young people gathered, some chatting, others quietly curious about what they would take home that day.

Inside, rows of five-gallon fruit trees—citrus, stone fruit, and more—were arranged for distribution. One by one, people stepped forward, selected a tree, and carefully lifted it into their arms.

The gathering was part of a new initiative by the community forestry non-profit Canopy designed to expand both urban tree canopy and community participation in East Palo Alto, where tree coverage remains among the lowest in the region. The effort, supported by a two-year grant, partners with local faith communities to engage residents in urban and community forestry through three primary approaches: fruit tree giveaways, plantings on church grounds, and plantings at congregants' homes.

Since launching, the program has distributed more than 100 fruit trees across seven churches.

In East Palo Alto, tree canopy coverage stands at approximately 13 percent—significantly lower than nearby communities. Just a few miles away, Palo Alto has about 30 percent canopy coverage,



Jean-Paul Renaud

are not simply receiving a tree; they are committing to its care.

That distinction can shape how people experience the program.

At a recent distribution at the East Palo Alto Library, one resident initially hesitated, unsure whether it was possible to take part without having a yard. When she learned that fruit trees could thrive in containers, her understanding shifted.

"I thought this wasn't for me," she said. "But now I see I can still be part of this."

Moments like this point to a broader challenge in urban forestry. Many traditional planting efforts depend on access to land, which can exclude renters or those living in multi-family housing. By contrast, container-friendly fruit trees expand participation to residents who might otherwise be left out.

Faith communities have played a central role in making that connection possible. "The church has always been a place where people come together to care for one another," said Pastor Tyrone McGee of Calvary Temple in East Palo Alto, one of the participating congregations. "This is an extension of that care—caring for creation, caring for our neighborhood, and giving people something they can nurture and take pride in. You can see it bringing people together in real time."

The program also serves another purpose: identifying future opportunities for canopy growth.

At each distribution, participants are asked whether they plan to keep their tree in a pot or eventually plant it in the ground. The responses offer insight into where planting space—and interest—already exist within the community.

Of the 309 fruit trees distributed to date through the broader program, about one-third of participants have indicated they have space and interest in planting a future shade tree.

"One of the biggest challenges in expanding urban canopy is simply knowing where the opportunities are," Renaud said. "What this program does is surface that information in a way that's organic and rooted in relationships. People are telling us, 'Yes, I have space. Yes, I want to be part of this.' That's incredibly powerful."

This kind of information has historically been difficult to gather. Mapping viable planting locations often requires time,

resources, and extensive outreach. In this case, it emerges naturally through participation.

The initiative also reflects a growing recognition that the success of urban trees depends not only on where they are planted, but on who is involved in their care.

"We consistently see that trees live longer when they're planted and cared for by a community," Renaud said. "When it's your tree—or your church's tree—you check on it, you water it, you make sure it survives. That level of care is hard to replicate through more transactional approaches."

That dynamic connects to broader conversations about social connection in American life. In his book *Bowling Alone*, political scientist Robert Putnam documented a long-term decline in civic participation and social capital, noting that fewer people

are not simply receiving a tree; they are committing to its care.

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Congregants of Calvary Temple line up to adopt a fruit tree during the congregations' monthly barbecue fundraiser.

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Push for safer streets

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ity of crashes that may occur and reducing the number of drivers exceeding the speed limit. The website states that they also “reduce the potential for ‘T-bone’ and head-on collisions, ...function like traffic signals and ...are sometimes a better option for a location than a traffic signal at an intersection.”

East Palo Alto Mayor Webster Lincoln makes introductory remarks at the ribbon cutting for the mini roundabout at the intersection of Pulgas Avenue and Runnymede Street on April 7, 2026 in East Palo Alto. Movie-David Rages, II

So, the goal is simple: get drivers to slow down and

make intersections safer. But, some residents who live near the roundabouts, have mixed feelings about how they’re working so far.

One resident, Richard, who lives in the area and gave only his first name, supports the idea. He said anything that slows drivers down is a good thing. He said he hopes the city adds another roundabout at Fordham Street in the future.

Kevin, another resident, saw some benefits. He said that the [new] roundabout is better than a speed bump and he expressed surprise that there wasn’t a stop sign at either intersection.

But other residents were not so sure.

Monisha McCall, questioned why there are no stop signs at the roundabouts and saw more downsides than benefits right now. “People don’t know how to use them,” she said. She also questioned why the city held a ribbon cutting for the project.

Rodney Mason, a member of Law ’em Low Car Club, talked about how the design could be improved. He said there should be a stop sign on, at least, one side of the intersection. He also said the crosswalks are placed too far back—about 10 feet from the corner, which doesn’t work well on narrower streets. In his view, speed bumps could have solved the problem more simply.

Alejandra Juarez, who works at the Little Blue House on the corner of Beech and Pulgas, feels the same way. She said many drivers don’t know how to yield when entering the roundabout. She also said that the changes have reduced parking near the Little Blue House, making it harder for staff and parents to find a spot. Like others, she believes speed bumps may have been a better option.

Joyce Jones was concerned about the size of the roundabouts. She pointed to the one at Beech and Pulgas and said that it feels too large and takes up too much of the street. She thought the circle should be smaller.

Another resident, Ndeya Ber-ryman, agreed. She said the middle island is not needed and that the design reduces available parking in the area.

For now, the community continues to adjust to the city’s traffic roundabouts. Some residents see them as a step toward safer streets. While others feel the design needs changes and drivers need more education so they can use them correctly.

For more information on the roundabouts project visit the website <https://www.city-ofepa.org/publicworks/page/pulgas-avenue-mini-roundabouts>

ICE arrests Asian immigrants

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data shows that Asian and Pacific Islander people are having their lives and futures upended by the recent surge of anti-immigrant policies and sentiment,” said Stephanie Chan, director of data and research at Stop AAPI Hate, in an email statement.

“Half of A/PI adults said that they or an A/PI person in

their community has been affected. This is true for citizens and non-citizens alike.”

Chan said the impact is being felt across many aspects of daily life.

“People are worried their status will be questioned. They’re changing jobs and transferring schools. They’re self-censoring social media

posts and withdrawing from political activism,” she said. “Some A/PI adults have even considered leaving the U.S. altogether, as the Trump administration makes it harder and harder for people of color to feel safe here.”

About 36% of survey respondents said they were concerned their immigration

status or citizenship could be questioned, while 30% reported fears of arrest, detention or deportation. Nearly 28% said they had considered leaving the United States.

Additionally, 45% said they feel less safe living in the country than before, and 39% reported limiting activities such as traveling, visiting

public places or participating on social media.

“The ICE raids, the travel bans, the anti-immigrant rhetoric — it’s all hate and bigotry codified in immigration policy, and the fallout is impacting all A/PI communities,” Chan said.

East Palo Alto residents showed up

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Photo courtesy <https://www.flocksafety.com/products>

or reviewed beyond the local level.

These concerns are not theoretical. In nearby Mountain View, an audit revealed that hundreds of outside agencies, including federal and out-of-state entities, accessed local ALPR data. That discovery led the city to end its Flock program entirely. Similar issues have surfaced across the region, raising ongoing questions about oversight, transparency, and how this data is shared once it leaves local control. California law limits sharing of

this data with outside agencies, yet enforcement actions, including in El Cajon, show that those protections have not always been followed.

Given that context, the concerns raised by residents are grounded in real and documented risks, not speculation. Vice Mayor Abrica and Councilmember Romero both opposed removing the item, warning that doing so would be a disservice to the community members who showed up to participate. Their position reflected a basic principle of

governance: even controversial issues deserve open discussion, especially when the public is asking for accountability.

As someone whose family has experienced gun violence, I understand the urgency of public safety, but that does not justify expanding surveillance through systems like Flock Safety. Surveillance is not the same as safety. Expanding surveillance without transparency or public input does not address the root causes of harm, and it risks eroding trust

between residents and the institutions meant to serve them.

By removing this item, the council avoided a necessary public conversation and deepened concerns about how decisions around surveillance are being made. The next City Council meeting on April 21 will be another opportunity for residents to be heard, and the community is already organizing to ensure that happens.

East Palo Alto residents showed up once. They are not going to stop showing up now.

In East Palo Alto, fruit trees

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engage in shared activities that build trust and connection.

Programs like this one suggest a different model – one where environmental action and social connection develop side by side.

“What we’re seeing here is that trees can be a catalyst,” Renaud added. “They give people a reason to come together, to talk, to share knowl-

edge. And over time, that builds something deeper—community that is connected, resilient, and invested in its own future.”

At the church distributions, that connection is visible in small ways: neighbors comparing trees, asking questions, or returning to check on one another’s progress. Over time, organizers hope these interactions will extend beyond

individual events and contribute to a more sustained network of care.

“It’s not just about planting a tree,” McGee said. “It’s about planting something in people—hope, responsibility, and a sense that we’re in this together.”

In East Palo Alto, where climate impacts such as heat and limited shade are already being felt, expanding tree

canopy remains an important goal. But efforts like this suggest that how that canopy is grown may matter just as much as how much is added.

For now, the image of residents carrying trees out of a church – cradling them carefully, adjusting their grip, making room in a car – offers a glimpse of what that approach looks like in practice.

Each tree represents a small addition to the landscape. But it also represents something less visible: a relationship, a responsibility, and, potentially, a connection between people who might not otherwise have crossed paths.

Joyous Resistance

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bring their own food, and their own toilet paper.

The election was safeguarded by thousands of poll watchers, about 1 in every 200 people from Hungary’s entire population, making sure the vote count was accurate: 80% of the vote went to Orbán’s opponent, Péter Magyar, a former

Orbán loyalist who campaigned against corruption.

On Friday, May 1, we will have a union-led follow-up to #NoKings3. #MayDayStrong will test our nation’s ability to hold a general strike to demonstrate the economic impact of our protest against authoritarian government: #NoWork

#NoSchool #NoShopping

We expect another event on June 14, and some actions July 4, with participation in parades or other events for Independence Day.

Why do Americans join these joyous rallies with music and silly costumes? Because #JoyousResistance is con-

tageous, safe, and effective. Dictators have no good way to fight #PeacefulProtest.

Do the math. How much have YOU lost to fund a war in Iran with no clear purpose and no defined end? It’s more than \$500 as of April 16, and rising quickly.

Check the billions of dollars

here: iran-cost-ticker.com Then divide by the US population: [census.gov/popclock/](https://www.census.gov/popclock/) Ready for #JoyfulResistance ?

Start here: #NoKings #Indivisible #MayDayStrong #Mobilize.us