



# PRESSRELEASE

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## For Immediate Release

Date: January 3, 2019  
Contact: Harold Schapelhouman, Fire Chief  
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## **Fire District prepares to expand Essential Emergency services to East Palo Alto and Menlo Park**

### **SAVE THE DATE:**

**The Menlo Park Fire Protection District will be holding two truly historic and landmark ground breaking dedication ceremonies on Monday, January 7, 2019.**

#### **The first event is in the City of East Palo Alto:**

1.30 pm – Fire Station Two located at 2290 University Avenue  
Dedication of our new Tillered Aerial Ladder Truck Company – Truck 2

#### **The second event is in Menlo Park (Belle Haven):**

3 pm – Fire Station Seventy-seven located 1467 Chilco Street  
Dedication of our new Light Rescue – Rescue Squad 77

#### **Why are these events significant and important?**

The eastern side of the Fire District (from Highway 101 to the Bay) includes the majority of the City of East Palo Alto and City of Menlo Park's Belle Haven residential neighborhoods, M2 commercial and industrial areas.

These areas are experiencing incredible and unprecedented transformation in population growth, zoning changes that include increased building heights and floor area ratio's or density based upon a regional economic and employment boom that has resulted in increased call volume and significant traffic congestion which can challenge and decay current acceptable emergency response and readiness times.

In order to maintain and improve readiness, emergency response times and technical rescue capabilities in these areas, the Fire District has been working for several decades to add, replace and upgrade essential emergency services such as personnel staffing, the number of response units, our capabilities and Fire Stations in order to adequately support a critical and “effective fire force” for this area of the greater benefit to the community and entire Fire District.

### **Historical Timeline:**

- 1995 – The Fire District negotiates a 55 year land lease with the City of Menlo Park to add a seventh Fire Station in the Belle Haven and M2 areas of Menlo Park. Emergency response to these areas had historically come from Fire Station 1, located at 300 Middlefield Road near Willow Road.
- 1997 - Fire Station 77 is opened at 1467 Chilco Street. It is one of two Fire District Stations now located on the East side of Highway 101. It is staffed by three personnel operating a Type 1 (Heavy) Fire Engine.
- 2004 – A Citygate District wide Standards of Cover (SOC) Study identifies that a single ladder truck located at Fire Station 1 may not be adequate for covering the entire Fire District going forward.
- 2006 – The Fire District re-prioritizes its Fire Station Modernization Program. Four of seven stations need to be completely rebuilt. Fire Station 2 in East Palo Alto is selected as the District’s highest priority because its condition is categorized as poor and it is the District’s busiest Station. It will take another decade to accomplish the goal of building and opening a new modern fire facility.
- 2010 – An updated Citygate Standards of Cover (SOC) Study associated with the proposed Gateway (Bohannon) development project concludes “the Gateway Project pushes the District into a new era of taller, more intense land use and resultant fire service impacts. The District clearly cannot be served by one ladder truck has no reserve ladder truck. Thus, if the Gateway Project is approved, the District will have passed the threshold of needing a second ladder truck. Given the proximity to the Gateway Project and other likely future high-rise development, Citygate recommends that the second ladder truck be located at a station east of Highway 101 (e.g., Station 2 or Station 77). If the Gateway project were approved, we would recommend that the District consider relocating the existing ladder truck from Station 1 to Station 4 or Station 6 to better cover the western areas of the Fire District”.
- 2010 – The City of Menlo Park changed its zoning designations in the M2 and updated its General Plan. Where building height had been capped at three stories, it was increased up to eleven stories or 140 feet. Where land use development had been allowable to up to 55 percent of the total square footage of a lot, it was increased to 137.5 percent of the same property. The “intensification” changes were significant, especially as it applied to the Fire District who had specifically partnered with the City of Menlo Park and built and staffed Fire Station 77 on what would be an outdated threat profile.

- 2011 – 2019 - Facebook moves its operations from Palo Alto to Menlo Park and begins an unprecedented expansion and growth. It currently owns over 150 acres of land in the City with extensive lease holdings in Menlo Park with an estimated employee population of 25,000.
- 2013 – 2019 - The breakup of the former Belmont/San Carlos Fire Department eventually results in the consolidation of the Redwood City and San Carlos Fire Departments and Belmont and San Mateo Fire Departments. While all of these jurisdictions celebrate the net cost savings and efficiency benefits of these new arrangements, the Fire District under automatic aid notes the elimination of a Ladder Company and Battalion Chief in the San Carlos/Belmont corridor and a doubling of the geographic distance between the current location of Redwood City Truck 9 and San Mateo Truck 23.
- 2016 – Fire Station 2 located at 2290 University Avenue is re-opened. The new two story, 12,000 square foot, three bay, drive thru modernized fire facility can now accommodate the largest piece of fire apparatus, including a tiller ladder truck. Minimum Daily Staffing is increased from 25 to 26 by adding a fourth person on Engine 2.
- 2017 – Minimum Daily Staffing is increased from 26 to 27 by putting two personnel on a new smaller light duty Rescue Squad. Station 2 staffing now consists of three personnel on Engine 2 and two personnel on Rescue 2. The prior two person Rescue unit was taken out of service to help support the Staffing of Fire Station 77 in 1997, twenty years prior.
- 2018 - Minimum Daily Staffing is increased from 27 to 28 by putting a fourth person on Quint 77, which replaces Engine 77. The Quint is a combination Engine/Aerial unit which provides an interim step towards moving to a full four person dedicated Truck Company. It will become the new Reserve Truck once Truck 2 goes into service and Engine 77 will be placed back in service with three personnel.
- 2019 - Minimum Daily Staffing is increased from 28 to 31 by putting Truck 2 into service.

### **In Summary:**

Prior to the re-opening of the new Fire Station 2 in East Palo Alto in 2016, and existing Fire Station 77 in Belle Haven (City of Menlo Park), the Fire District operated two Type 1 (Heavy) Municipal Fire Engines staffed by three personnel each, for a total of two emergency first response units and six personnel.

**Fire Chief Schapelhouman said** *“Effective January 7, 2019, the Fire District will operate four emergency first response units staffed by twelve personnel, or a doubling of capability and the number of units and personnel needed to adequately maintain an effective and essential fire force in this growing area that has challenged our emergency mobility and coverage ability due to traffic congestion and problematic roadway designs on Marsh and Willow Roads along with sections of University Avenue. This will also better stabilize our West side units located in our Atherton, Menlo Park and County Areas, that will see a decrease in emergency unit requests for response and coverage assignments, improving readiness and reflex times District wide”.*

As the new Fire Station 6 in downtown Menlo Park nears completion, the District has re-prioritized Fire Station 4 built, in 1943, and located on the Alameda at Valparaiso in the Unincorporated County Area as its highest Fire Station replacement priority. Design work on a new Station has already started. The new proposed three bay drive thru design will be built to accommodate an Aerial Ladder Truck, Fire Engine and Battalion Chief.

*“We are now looking three distinct and problematic response areas, while we may have temporarily resolved many of our deployment issues east of Highway 101, the areas on either side of El Camino Real and specifically the rail corridor will need to be addressed next. Proposals to reduce the number of traffic lanes along El Camino Real, coupled with new multiple high density residential developments along the rail corridor, electrification, high speed and potential elimination of rail crossings all deeply concern me. I have little confidence that the convergence and impacts of these issues will be well timed and/or managed, so we will need to realistically assume they will all occur and thus start to prepare and plan to re-adjust our unit deployment and staffing models now. Our ideal goal is to be either slightly ahead of, or right behind, these impacts when they actually occur so they don’t significantly deteriorate or impact public safety and our ability to effectively respond”* **Fire Chief Schapelhouman said.**

**END**