



SPECIAL AND REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Date: 11/4/2025
Time: 5:30 p.m.
Locations: Teleconference and
City Council Chambers
751 Laurel St., Menlo Park, CA 94025

Special Session

A. Call To Order

Mayor Combs called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Present: Combs, Nash, Schmidt, Taylor, Wise

Absent: None

Staff: City Manager Justin Murphy, City Attorney Nira Doherty, Assistant City Manager Stephen Stolte, Assistant to the City Manager/ City Clerk Judi A. Herren

C. Closed Session

C1. Conference with legal counsel – anticipated litigation

Initiation of litigation (paragraph (4) of subdivision (d) of §54956.9): Two potential cases

Regular Session

D. Call To Order

Mayor Combs recalled the meeting to order at 6:56 p.m.

E. Report from Closed Session

No reportable action.

F. Agenda Review

None.

G. Public Comment

- Masuud Mostofi spoke on concerns related to water/sanitation issue, street cleaning, and customer service issues.
- Mike Frances spoke in support of retaining Santa Cruz Avenue in its current state and in support of improving city infrastructure.
- Cherie Zaslawsky spoke on concerns related to emergency vehicle access on Santa Cruz Avenue.

H. Presentations and Proclamations

H1. Presentation: Encinal Elementary School 5th graders (Attachment)

Encinal Elementary School Assistant Principal Gina Watkins, San Mateo County office of Education Safe Routes to School Coordinator Theresa Vallez-Kelly and Encinal School 5th graders made the presentation (Attachment).

H2. Proclamation: Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day (Attachment)

Mayor Combs introduced the proclamation.

San Mateo County office of Education Safe Routes to School Coordinator Theresa Vallez-Kelly accepted the proclamation (Attachment).

H3. Proclamation: Native American Heritage Month (Attachment)

Mayor Combs introduced the proclamation.

Chairperson of the Ramaytush Ohlone Tribe Dr. Jonathan Cordero accepted the proclamation (Attachment).

H4. Proclamation: Kepler's 70th anniversary (Attachment)

Mayor Combs introduced the proclamation.

Kepler's Program Manager for Premier Events Heather Birchall accepted the proclamation (Attachment).

I. Consent Calendar

I1. Accept the City Council meeting minutes for October 7, 2025 (Attachment)

ACTION: Motion and second (Taylor/ Nash), to approve the consent calendar, passed unanimously.

J. Public Hearing

J1. Waive the second reading and adopt an ordinance amending Title 12 [Buildings and Construction] of the Menlo Park Municipal Code by adopting by reference the 2025 California Building Standards Code (Title 24, California Code of Regulations Parts 1, 2, 2.5, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12), together with local amendments to parts 2, 2.5, 5, 6, and 11 (Staff Report #25-167-CC)

Assistant Community Development Director Ron La France made the presentation (Attachment).

Mayor Combs opened the public hearing.

Mayor Combs closed the public hearing.

ACTION: Motion and second (Nash/ Wise), to waive the second reading and adopt an ordinance amending Title 12 [Buildings and Construction] of the Menlo Park Municipal Code by adopting by reference the 2025 California Building Standards Code (Title 24, California Code of Regulations Parts 1, 2, 2.5, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12), together with local amendments to parts 2, 2.5, 5, 6, and 11, passed 4-1 (Combs dissenting).

- J2. Receive and file the certification of sufficiency of the petition for the proposed citizen-initiative measure entitled "Downtown Parking Plazas Ordinance Initiative" (Staff Report #25-168-CC)

City Clerk Judi Herren introduced the item.

Mayor Combs opened the public hearing.

- Jenny Michel spoke in support of housing stability.
- Janice Sweeney requested clarification on number of signatures submitted and verified.

Mayor Combs closed the public hearing.

The City Council received clarification on number of signatures submitted and verified.

- J3. Determination of action, pursuant to Elections Code section 9215, regarding the proposed initiative measure entitled "Downtown Parking Plazas Ordinance" (Staff Report #25-169-CC)

City Attorney Nira Doherty introduced the item.

Mayor Combs opened the public hearing.

- Prudence Pingrey spoke in support of affordable housing on the Downtown parking plazas.
- Keith Quiggins spoke in support of adopting the ordinance adopting the citizen sponsored initiative measure.
- Nicole Kemeny spoke in support of affordable housing on the Downtown parking plazas.
- Holden Weisman spoke in support of adopting a resolution ordering the Elections Code section 9212 report.
- Laura Melahn spoke in support of amending the Housing Element with realistic opportunity sites.
- Alex Beltramo spoke in support of adopting the ordinance adopting the citizen sponsored initiative measure.
- Keri Nicholas spoke in support of adopting the ordinance adopting the citizen sponsored initiative measure.
- Cherie Zaslawsky spoke in support of adopting the ordinance adopting the citizen sponsored initiative measure.
- Van Kouzoujian read a letter from Rutan and Tucker, LLP. (Attachment).
- Katherine Dumont spoke in support of adopting a resolution ordering the Elections Code section 9212 report.
- Sean Van Dril spoke in support of adopting a resolution ordering the Elections Code section 9212 report.
- Emma Stanford spoke in support of adopting a resolution ordering the Elections Code section 9212 report including input received from Menlo Together.
- Will Oursler spoke in support of adopting a resolution ordering the Elections Code section 9212

report and adding initiative to the ballot in 2026.

- Nick Merz spoke in support of adopting a resolution ordering the Elections Code section 9212 report.
- Tom Enger spoke in opposition of the ordinance adopting the citizen sponsored initiative measure.
- Jenny Michel spoke in support of adopting a resolution ordering the Elections Code section 9212 report.
- Jen Mazzon spoke in support of adopting a resolution ordering the Elections Code section 9212 report.
- Patrick Reed spoke in support of affordable housing on the Downtown parking plazas and complying with the Housing Element.
- Elysa Gurman spoke in support of affordable housing on the Downtown parking plazas including input received from Menlo Together.
- Rob Foster spoke in support of adopting the ordinance adopting the citizen sponsored initiative measure.
- Karen Grove spoke in support of adopting a resolution ordering the Elections Code section 9212 report including input received from Menlo Together.
- Jennifer Schindler spoke in support of adopting a resolution ordering the Elections Code section 9212 report.
- Mary Seaton spoke on concerns related to the cost of an Elections Code section 9212 report, requested clarification on consultants' methodology and the scope of work and in support of adopting the ordinance adopting the citizen sponsored initiative measure.
- Adina Levin spoke in support of adopting a resolution ordering the Elections Code section 9212 report and including impacts to business environment in the Downtown.

Mayor Combs closed the public hearing.

The City Council received clarification on actions allowed by future City Council, actions required at this meeting and costs of special and general elections.

The City Council discussed Housing Element requirements, building remedy project impacts and requests and suggestions provided by Menlo Together/Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County (HCL) and Rutan & Tucker, LLP. The City Council also discussed additional topics that could potentially be studied in the future:

- Impact on non-vacant land
- Parking benefits and usage
- Parking loss during construction reimbursement
- Short-term and long-term fire impacts
- Car ownership rates of residents
- Percent of residents expected to work within the city
- Impact on the Housing Element timeline
- Gaps between HLC and Menlo Together and existing 9212 scope

ACTION: Motion and second (Schmidt/ Wise), to adopt a resolution ordering a report pursuant to Elections Code section 9212; authorize a one-time budget appropriation in the amount of \$164,951; and authorize the City Manager to execute an amendment to the Master Services Agreement with M-Group in the not-to-exceed amount of \$164,951 to draft and complete the Elections Code section 9212 report, passed 4-1 (Combs dissenting).

K. Informational Items

- K1. City Council agenda topics: November – December 2025 (Staff Report #25-166-CC)
- K2. Police department quarterly update / Q3 July – September 2025 (Staff Report #25-165-CC)
(Informe de Personal #25-165-CC)

L. City Manager Report

City Manager Murphy reported out on the wind advisory Nov. 4 – 6.

M. City Councilmember Reports

City Councilmember Taylor reported out on Home for All meetings resuming Dec. 10.

Vice Mayor Nash reported out on Peninsula Clean Energy board meeting.

C. Closed Session

- C1. Conference with legal counsel – anticipated litigation
Initiation of litigation (paragraph (4) of subdivision (d) of §54956.9): Two potential cases

Report from Closed Session

No reportable actions.

N. Adjournment

Mayor Combs adjourned the meeting at 10:23 p.m.

Assistant to the City Manager/ City Clerk Judi Herren

These minutes were approved at the City Council meeting December 9, 2025.



San Mateo County Office of Education



Promoting safe walking, biking, and rolling around the Encinal community

Encinal Elementary 5th Grade Students -
Community Science Leadership Academy





Today's agenda

1. Background

2. Theme 1: Bike lanes

- a. 3 solutions from 3 groups

3. Theme 2: Walking path on Middlefield

- a. 2 solutions from 2 groups

4. Q&A



Background



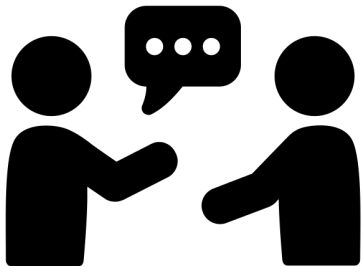
What is Community Science?

Community science can be broadly defined as members of the public working with professional scientists to advance a research project.





The Our Voice Method



Give community members a method and tools to capture their lived experiences

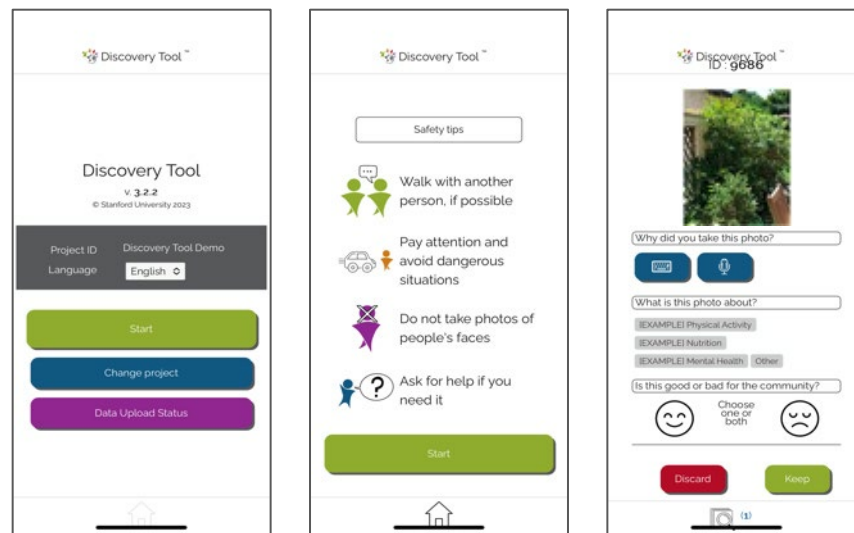
Support community members in using this information to help inform local changes and build healthier communities





The Stanford Discovery Tool™

A simple mobile app that community members can use to document parts of their neighborhood or community that promote or hinder healthy living.





Data Collection Walk

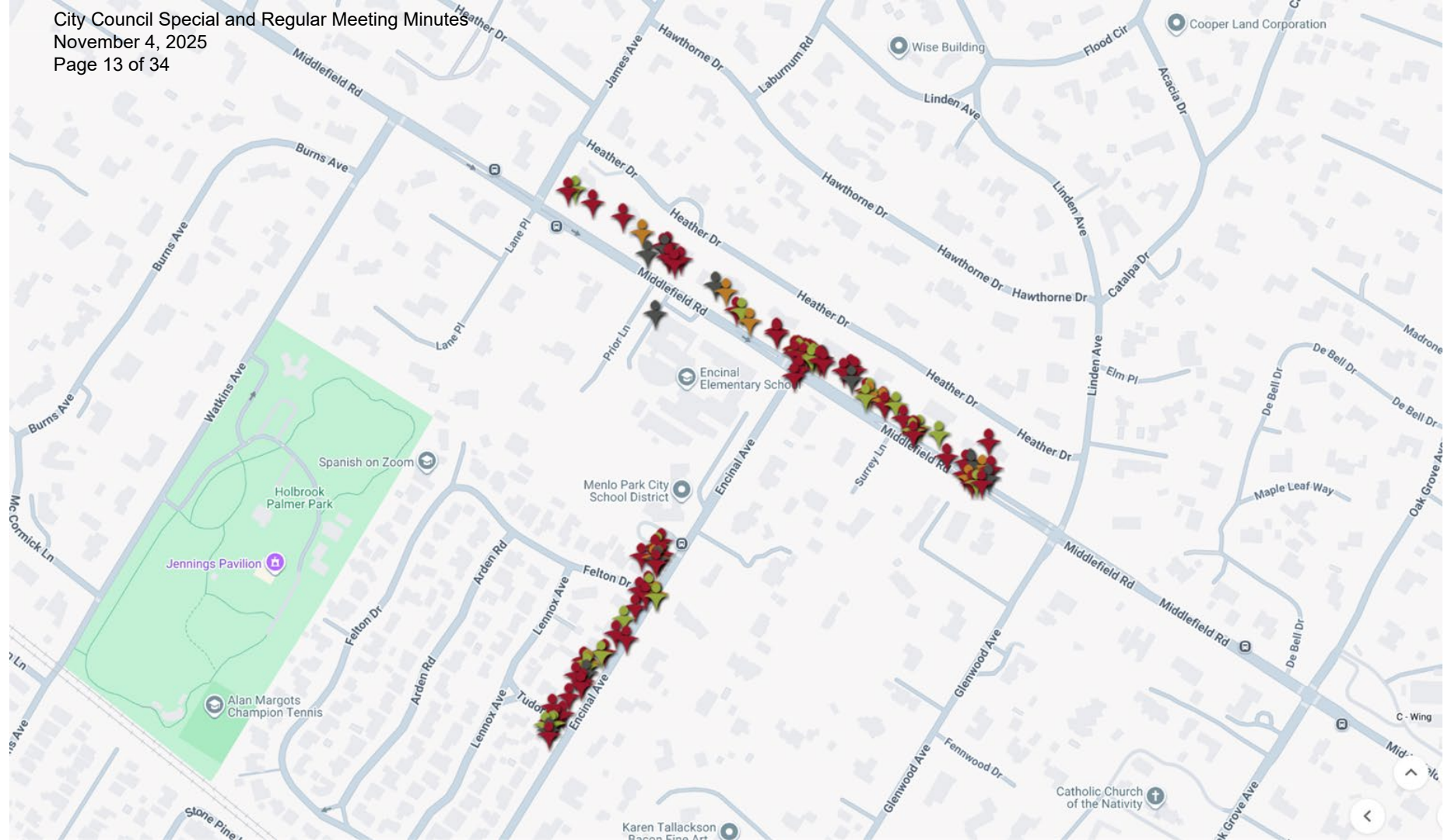
TM

17 pairs of 5th grade students (n= 34 total) completed data collection on August 29th, 2025, along with school staff and project facilitators

Guiding question: *What makes it easy or hard to walk, bike, or roll around Encinal Elementary?*

The pairs collected:

- **123 photos**
- **74 audio comments**
- **50 text comments**





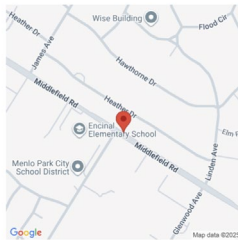
Theme #1: Bike lanes

Quinn

Our findings - bike lanes

Project : ENCINAL

August 29, 2025 12:42 pm - pg 58/123



Good or Bad for the Community?

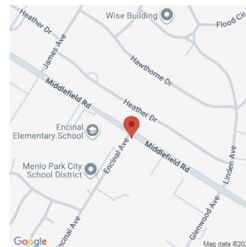


Why did you take this picture?

[🗣️ 1] :There is a bike path.

Project : ENCINAL

August 29, 2025 12:55 pm - pg 58/123



Good or Bad for the Community?



Why did you take this picture?

[text] :Very narrow bike lanes

Project : ENCINAL

August 29, 2025 12:50 pm - pg 72/123



Good or Bad for the Community?



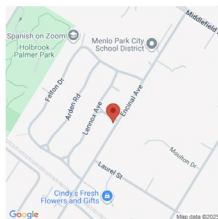
Why did you take this picture?

[🗣️ 1] :This biker is not safe.

Our findings - bike lanes

Project : ENCINAL

August 29, 2025 12:51 pm - pg 103/123



Good or Bad for the Community?

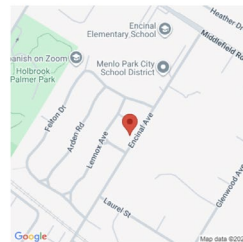


Why did you take this picture?

[1] :This is not very helpful because this is a bike lane and there is no where for people to walk, its very unsafe and we are walking it on right now and there is not much room for us to walk on and I am kinda very scared because a car can pass by and there is just a bike lane and that is all and I am not really comfortable with that.

Project : ENCINAL

August 29, 2025 12:48 pm - pg 56/123



Good or Bad for the Community?

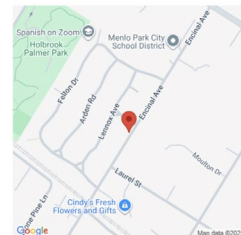


Why did you take this picture?

[text] :The cars are in the way for the bikers

Project : ENCINAL

August 29, 2025 12:53 pm - pg 45/123



Good or Bad for the Community?



Why did you take this picture?

[text] :The bike lane is very narrow.



Our solutions - Group 1

Solution: Widen bike lanes

Project : ENCINAL



Campbell & Yui



Our solutions - Group 2

Solution: Paint bike lanes to be more obvious

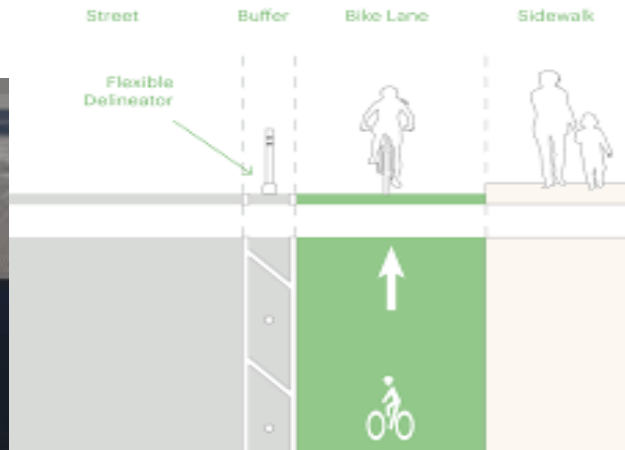


Arin, Dylan & Olivia



Our solutions - Group 3

Solution: Put in recycled vertical delineators to protect bikers



Noel, Elliot, Oliver & George



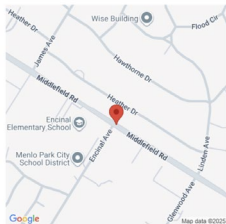
Theme #2: Walking path on Middlefield

Sakura

Our findings - walking path on Middlefield

Project : ENCINAL

August 29, 2025 12:39 pm - pg 57123

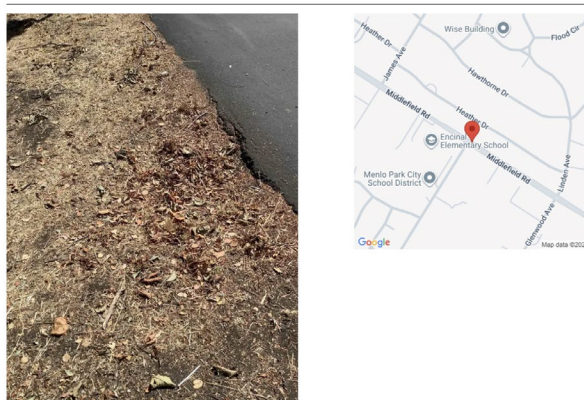


Good or Bad for the Community?



Why did you take this picture?

[text] :No sidewalks



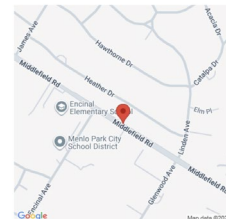
Good or Bad for the Community?



[text] :Because, there is a big hole.

Project : ENCINAL

August 26, 2025 12:45 pm - pg 57123



Good or Bad for the Community?



Why did you take this picture?

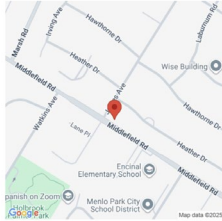
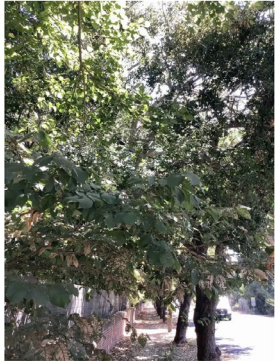
[1] :You can walk but you can't really use a wheelchair or it is hard.

Shiori

Our findings - walking path on Middlefield

Project : ENCINAL

August 29, 2025 12:47 pm - pg 96/123



Good or Bad for the Community?

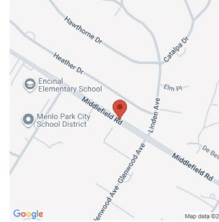


Why did you take this picture?

[text] :Lots of nature and trees which is good for shade and a nice scenery

Project : ENCINAL

August 29, 2025 12:49 pm - pg 71/123



Good or Bad for the Community?



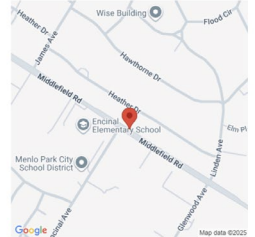
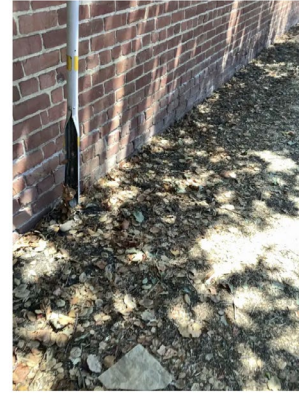
Why did you take this picture?

[1] :There is no protection.

[1] :There is no protection.

Project : ENCINAL

August 29, 2025 12:43 pm - pg 66/123



Good or Bad for the Community?



Why did you take this picture?

[1] :I took this photo because it's very bumpy and unsafe to walk.

Tonya



Our solutions - Group 4

Solution: Even out walking path on Middlefield

- Put in more compact natural material to even out path and decrease fall risk
- Pick up litter and do this as an event with class and peers
- Get rid of debris
- Keep the nature vibe

Examples:



Tonya & Shiori



Our solutions - Group 5

Solution: Create more of a barrier between road and path

- Plant more bushes or trees along the side of the path to protect pedestrians



Example:

Waverly & Olive



Q&A



Proclamation

RUBY BRIDGES WALK TO SCHOOL DAY NOVEMBER 14, 2025

WHEREAS, Ruby Bridges is an icon of the American civil rights movement who at the age of six years old in 1960, became the youngest member to integrate public schools in the American South; and

WHEREAS, segregation continued to exist in various states despite the Supreme Court of the United States' 1954 ruling in Brown v. Board of Education barring any state laws allowing racial segregation in public schools; and

WHEREAS, Ruby Bridges was the lone student of her group of African-American students to integrate William Frantz Elementary School in the City of New Orleans on November 14, 1960, being escorted by four federal agents while bravely walking amongst protesters full of vitriol; and

WHEREAS, the San Mateo County Board of Education adopted a resolution in 2019 that November 14, or the following Wednesday should it fall on a weekend, be henceforth annually known as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in the County of San Mateo to celebrate the spirit of inclusivity; and

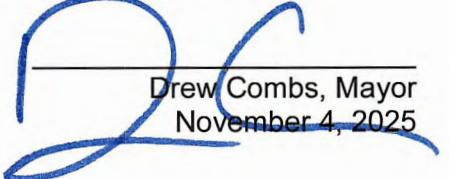
WHEREAS, the California State Senate adopted a resolution in 2021 that November 14, or the following Wednesday should it fall on a weekend, be henceforth annually known as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in the State of California to recognize Ruby Bridges' role in the civil rights movement; and

WHEREAS, the City of Menlo Park Safe Routes to School program encourages children to bicycle and walk to school to develop life-long skills and independence in their community; and

WHEREAS, this year, the City of Menlo Park will participate in its seventh annual Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, partnering with local schools and the community in promoting walking to school and inclusive communities; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that I, Drew Combs, Mayor of the City of Menlo Park, on behalf of the City Council and City, do hereby recognize November 14 as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in Menlo Park.




Drew Combs, Mayor
November 4, 2025

Proclamation

NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH NOVEMBER 2025

WHEREAS, long before Europeans settled North America, the ancestors of Native Americans were the original, indigenous inhabitants, explorers and settlers of the lands that have since become the United States; and

WHEREAS, it is impossible to fully understand the history of California without understanding the history of the indigenous people who have lived within the current boundaries of the state for thousands of years; and

WHEREAS, California is home to more people of Native American heritage than any other state in the country, with 110 federally recognized tribes and several additional tribes petitioning for federal recognition through the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and

WHEREAS, the Ohlone, a band of distinct groups of indigenous people who spoke similar languages, thrived in the land now known as San Mateo County and other parts of the San Francisco Bay Area; and

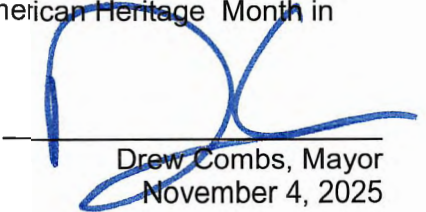
WHEREAS, due to devastating policies and practices of European explorers and missionaries, settlers, and various levels of government, the Ohlone lost the vast majority of their population and land; and

WHEREAS, National Native American Heritage Month encourages San Mateo County residents to actively learn about the Ohlone people, their role in the history of the county and the Bay Area and their efforts to keep their culture alive; and

WHEREAS, Land Acknowledgements, statements that recognize indigenous peoples as traditional stewards of the land, are one way to express gratitude and appreciation to those whose ancestral territory one resides or meets on; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that I, Drew Combs, Mayor of the City of Menlo Park, on behalf of the City Council and City, do hereby proclaim and celebrate November 2025 as Native American Heritage Month in Menlo Park.




Drew Combs, Mayor
November 4, 2025

Proclamation

KEPLER'S BOOKS 70th ANNIVERSARY

WHEREAS, Kepler's, founded in May 1955 by peace activist Roy Kepler, has been an intellectual and cultural hub for the San Francisco Peninsula, known for its outstanding literary events, knowledgeable staff, broad selection of books and magazines and deep ties to the community for the past 70 years; and

WHEREAS, along with Cody's in Berkeley and City Lights in San Francisco, Kepler's led the paperback revolution in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 50's and 60's, attracting a loyal following among Beat intellectuals, pacifists, students and faculty of Stanford University and other members of the surrounding communities, interested in serious books and ideas; and

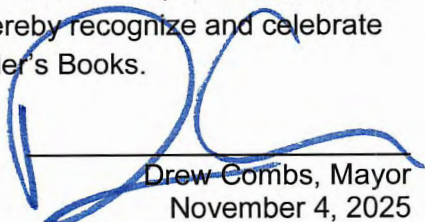
WHEREAS, in 2005, changes in the bookselling landscape and deteriorating business conditions caused Kepler's to close its doors, but the community responded with demonstrations and campaigns in support of the store. Within weeks of closing, Kepler's re-opened its doors with new shareholders from the community, a renegotiated lease, a new board of directors, a new membership program and tons of volunteer support; and

WHEREAS, Kepler's went through a planned transition in 2012 during which the business was re-started in a hybrid business model that includes Kepler's Books, a community-financed bookstore set up as a social purpose corporation and Kepler's Literary Foundation, a nonprofit events organization. Kepler's vision is to continuously innovate to create a model next-generation community bookstore that can be a sustainable cultural institution; and

WHEREAS, since the 2012 restructuring and launch of the Kepler's 2020 program, Kepler's has been a trailblazer in the book industry winning awards, hitting new milestones, growing from strength to strength and implementing a Living Wage initiative that is now being replicated by bookstores across the country; and

WHEREAS, recently, Kepler's started a project called Reimagining Bookstores to articulate and amplify a bold new vision for what bookstores can be - not just as retail spaces, but as essential cultural, civic and community institutions. The inaugural gathering in 2021 attracted over 600 participants from 49 states and a dozen countries to discuss a community-centered vision for bookstores; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that I, Drew Combs, Mayor of the City of Menlo Park, on behalf of the City Council and City, do hereby recognize and celebrate the 70th Anniversary of Kepler's Books.



Drew Combs, Mayor
November 4, 2025



2025 California Building Standards Code Building Adoption with Local Amendments

Ron La France, Extra Help Retired Annuitant Assistant Community Development Director



Background

- California Building Standards Code (CBSC) updated every three years
- Cities allowed to adopt local amendments
- City Council unanimously voted to waive first reading and introduce the ordinance at Oct. 21 meeting
- Proposed ordinance is inclusive of:
 - Local amendments adopted in 2022
 - Amendments adopted in February and August 2025



Recommendation

- Waive the second reading and adopt ordinance (Attachment A):
 - 2025 CBSC as the Building Code of Menlo Park
 - Local amendments to the 2025 CBSC
 - Accept the cost effectiveness study that demonstrate the proposed energy efficiency amendments are cost effective
- Effective Date for ordinance is Jan. 1, 2026



Thank You

November 4, 2025

VIA E-MAIL; city.council@menlopark.gov; dcombs@menlopark.gov

Mayor Drew Combs and Councilmembers
701 Laurel St.
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Re: City Council Meeting Agenda Items J2 and J3 Regarding “Downtown Parking
Plazas Ordinance Initiative”

Dear Mayor Combs and Councilmembers:

We represent the proponents of the Downtown Parking Plazas Initiative, who have asked us to submitting comments to the City Council about a potential “section 9212 report” about the Initiative. Specifically, if the Council elects to use its authority under sections 9215 and 9212 of the California Elections Code to have the City commission a report regarding the Initiative, we respectfully ask that its scope be both comprehensive and balanced, so that the Council and the community receive a full and credible analysis of the Initiative.

Specifically, we request that the report include a fair and impartial evaluation of the following issues relating to the possible redevelopment of the downtown parking plazas:

- **Business viability and economic impacts** on downtown merchants and property owners
- **Risk of litigation**, including potential claims related to business access and viability
- **Parking availability and downtown access**, including ADA accessibility
- **Traffic circulation, congestion, and emergency response access**
- **Fire safety and evacuation implications**
- **Soil and environmental contamination risks** associated with redevelopment of the parking plazas
- **School capacity and projected enrollment impacts**
- **Financial exposure to the City**, including legal costs, mitigation costs, infrastructure costs, and potential lost tax revenue

We also request that the report evaluate the consequences of the City not adopting the Initiative and instead continuing to pursue the redevelopment of the downtown parking plazas. This analysis should include realistic assessments of the business, legal, environmental, safety and fiscal risks associated with that path, thereby providing a baseline for residents and the Council to compare alternatives.



Mayor Drew Combs and Councilmembers
November 4, 2025
Page 2

A complete and transparent report will strengthen public trust and ensure that Menlo Park makes informed, defensible decisions about the future of our community and downtown economy. A one-sided report would not only damage the public decision-making process, but could also run afoul of the legal limitations on City's actions around citizen initiatives.

The request of the Initiative's proponents is simple: if the Council chooses to have a section 9212 report prepared, that the report is a fair, thorough and balanced analysis of the Initiative. The community deserves nothing less.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues surrounding a potential section 9212 report.

Sincerely,

RUTAN & TUCKER, LLP

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James R. Sutton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James R. Sutton

JS:er

cc: City Clerk Judi Herren
City Attorney Nira Doherty
Alex Beltramo, Initiative Proponent