



**CITY OF EAST PALO ALTO  
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## ***“LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY”***

Dear Community Member:

As you know we are faced with a sudden surge in violence. There have been 5 shooting incidents in the past 5 days with 9 people injured. Although this surge of violence comes on the heels of notable crime and violence reductions over the past few years, many in our community are understandably fearful and concerned.

Although I share that concern, I am extremely confident that we can, as we have done in the past, turn the tide of this violence and end 2008 with the lowest homicide rate since 1999. So far this year there have been 4 homicides compared to 7 last year; 6 in 2006, and 15 in 2005. Over the past 3 years homicides have dropped by over 40% and overall crime by nearly 20%.

This recent spate of violence, however, cannot be minimized by past success. This violence serves as a stark reminder that we, as a community, must remain vigilant in our efforts to make our city safe. It also underscores the need to address the root causes of crime and violence, such as school drop-out rates, joblessness, dysfunctional families, alcohol and drug addiction, mental illness, and many other socio-economic factors, if we are to achieve sustainable violence reductions.

As you know, over the past two years violence has increased the last quarter (October – December) of each year. In preparation of this phenomenon the Department, in partnership with numerous law enforcement agencies and community and faith-based organizations, implemented “Operation 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter” on October 1, 2008.

As part of this operation, the Department implemented several enforcement programs, including warrant services, parole checks and searches, narcotics and gang investigations, and enhanced traffic enforcement and blight removal. The Department also collaborated with numerous community and faith-based organizations to strengthen our prevention and intervention services.

Despite these efforts, however, the Department must enhance its efforts to respond to the recent spike in violence. Accordingly, the Department will take the following additional steps to enhance police officer visibility and increase its strategic enforcement programs, including:

- Enhancing “Operation 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter” – additional officers will be put in the field to increase their strategic enforcement efforts. Officers will target designated “hot spot” areas.
- Implementing “Operation Impact” – the California Highway Patrol (CHP) will assign officers to enhance traffic enforcement in designated “hot spot” areas of the City.

December 9, 2008

- San Mateo County Gang Task Force – the task force will conduct several operations during the next couple of weeks that focus on wanted criminals and parolees and probationers suspected of gang activity.
- ShotSpotter – the installation of the citywide system will be completed by the end of the year. This will allow officers to track gunshots (and those responsible for them) anywhere in the City. This project is funded by the United States Department of Justice.
- Gang Investigations – the Department is collaborating with numerous law enforcement agencies to conduct strategic enforcement actions and short and long-term investigations designed to disrupt and dismantle gangs in the City. These agencies include: San Mateo County Gang Task Force, the Menlo Park Police Department, state Parole, Probation, the Sheriff's Office, the FBI, ATF, and the California Department of Justice (DOJ).

Even though we are faced with an alarming spate of violence, I believe we must stay the course in our long-term, comprehensive response to crime. We cannot arrest our way out of this violence. We must step up our efforts in working with at-risk youth; providing alternatives to gangs and violence, providing reconciliation services to resolve disputes, and work with our community members returning from prison. To this end, the Department, in partnership with community and faith-based organizations, has engaged in numerous prevention and intervention services. For example:

- Parole Reentry Program – to date, the East Palo Alto Community-Based Coalition (CBC) – the city's parole reentry program – has served over 120 program participants. Recidivism rates are decreasing. In response to this violence, the Department has enlisted the assistance of this program to conduct outreach to at-risk youth, gang members, and those in need of services.
- Police Chaplains – as part of "Operation 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter police chaplains and other faith leaders have been conducting street outreach to gang members and at-risk youth. These faith leaders have agreed to enhance this effort.
- Graffiti Arts Project – on December 9, 2008, the Police Department, in partnership with the Mural, Music & Arts Program (MMAAP), launched its Graffiti Arts Project (GAP), which is an anti-graffiti and anti-gang initiative. At-risk youth will learn to transform their graffiti talents into talent that creates art that beautifies the city rather than destroy it. This project is funded by the United States Department of Justice.
- Parolee Job-Program – in January, the Department, in collaboration with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and CAL Trans, will implement a job program for parolees enrolled in the City's parole reentry program. This will provide jobs to many of our residents on parole.
- Police Activities League – pending City Council approval on December 16, 2008, the Department will finalize its contract with two local vendors to start boxing and tracking and field programs as part of the Police Activities League (PAL).

PAL should start early in January. This is funded by the United States Department of Justice.

- Civil Injunctions/Nuisance Abatement – as part of a grant from the United States Department of Justice, the Department has secured legal services to request civil injunctions against gang members and conduct the civil nuisance abatement process against troubled properties. These processes are lengthy, but they should prove extremely beneficial.
- “Live in Peace” Movement – One East Palo Alto, For Youth By Youth (FYBY), Job Train, Essace Designs, Youth United for Community Action (YUCA), Born Again Christian Center, St. Samuels Church, Bread of Live Evangelistic Outreach, and the Police Department have partnered to launch a live in peace marketing and community outreach campaign. The program will use paid youth interns to assist and send the message of peace citywide. This program will be, in part, funded by the United States Department of Justice.

These efforts are in addition to the many programs offered by numerous community and faith-based organizations throughout the City, such as:

- Sponsored Employment Program for Youth
- Youth Summit
- Youth Mentoring
- Conflict Resolution (such as “cease fires”)
- Job Training Programs
- Family Counseling

The Department is committed to doing everything possible to make our city safe. This effort requires your assistance. If you have any information regarding a shooting or homicide, please call the anonymous tip line at: **1-888-MURDER-0**.

Mayor Ruben Abrica and I will host a Special Meeting on Wednesday at City Hall from 6:00 to 8:00 to discuss the recent spate of violence and further outline the City’s efforts to address it. Several community and faith-based organizations will be present to outline their actions steps as well. All are encouraged to attend.

Respectfully,

Chief Ronald Davis