



City of Palo Alto

City Council Informational Report

(ID # 3035)

Report Type: Informational Report

Meeting Date: 7/23/2012

Title: Open Data Initiative

Subject: 2012: The Year We Embrace and Begin Implementation of Open Data in Palo Alto

From: City Manager

Lead Department: IT Department

Background

The purpose of this Information item is to inform the City Council on progress on the Open Data initiative.

Discussion

Across the world and here in the U.S., government agencies are making collections of publicly available data more easily available and consumable on the Web. This movement is called Open Data. The data is varied and includes information about how taxpayer money is being spent and statistics on just about every aspect of government. Open Data enhances transparency and provides citizens with greater visibility of the workings of their local, state, and federal agencies. Also, Open Data is made available in a format that computers can understand and converted to formats or reports that are easier to understand and be more usable.

Open Data is also enabling communities to use this data to build useful applications that can citizens, our communities, and society. The federal government web site <http://www.data.gov> provides an excellent example of open data in action.

Open Data is open government in action.

As City Manager Keene said during his remarks to City Council in January discussing the year ahead, commencing in 2012 Palo Alto will begin to implement open data for our city. We're now ready to start our Open Data initiative.

The City is working with a local start-up, Junar (<http://www.junar.com>), to provide the platform for delivering the Open Data content on our City website. The vendor agreed to pilot this initiative with us for 12 months beginning August 1, 2012.

The platform will be accessible, via <http://data.cityofpaloalto.org>, on the footer of the homepage and also via the IT department's homepage.

Initially, the City will post basic data sets that help both City staff and the community become familiar with the platform. Later, in working with department directors, the City Attorney's Office, and community participation, IT will make available more agreed-upon datasets.

Here are the planned datasets for the August 1, 2012 go-live.

- Pavement condition ratings
- City tree locations
- Park locations
- Bicycle paths and hiking trails
- Creek water level
- Rainfall tide
- Some basic, utility-approved utility data
- 2010 census data for Palo Alto

We're excited by the value of open data to our community. It's a natural complement to our goal of becoming a leading digital city.

Prepared By: Lisa Bolger, Manager, IT

Department Head: Jonathan Reichental, Chief Information Officer

City Manager Approval: James Keene, City Manager