



Questions and Answers about Palo Alto's Existing Public Safety Facilities

Q: *What was the Blue Ribbon Task Force's conclusion about Palo Alto's existing public safety facility?*

A: A Council-appointed Blue Ribbon Task Force of citizens charged with reviewing and making recommendations about the current public safety building determined that an effective response in a natural or manmade emergency may be at risk. This is because the current public safety building is not seismically safe and both the 911 dispatch center and emergency operations center are located underground.

Q: *What makes Palo Alto's existing public safety building deficient?*

A: Built more than 30 years ago, the current building does not meet today's seismic codes and other standards, and the Emergency Operations Center is NOT seismically safe. This could affect the ability of police, firefighters, and paramedics to rapidly deploy in an emergency – especially if the safety headquarters are damaged.

Q: *Is the public safety building fully functional?*

A: No. According to the Blue Ribbon Task Force, our public safety building is described as cramped and outdated – it does not include facilities considered standard essentials to ensure our public safety.

Q: *Are there any crime issues that are not being addressed in the best way possible due to these problems?*

A: Yes, unfortunately Palo Alto has a higher percentage of hi-tech crimes like identity theft, on-line sexual predators, elder abuse, and computer fraud than surrounding communities – it is higher than the national average. The public safety building makes it difficult to accommodate the new technology so necessary to address these types of crimes.

Q: *Why should I be concerned about this?*

A: Palo Alto's public safety building is so overcrowded police officers are forced to interview rape victims and crime witnesses in the public lobby with no privacy; there aren't enough holding cells to separate juvenile offenders from adults; the integrity of evidence chain of custody is compromised due to inadequate storage facilities; and lacks a separate ventilation system required for state of the art evidence processing.

Q: *What can be done about this?*

A: Nothing has been decided, but the City will consider placing a future measure on the ballot to improve deteriorating and substandard community facilities.

Q: *How can I get more information?*

A: Please contact Police Chief Lynne Johnson via phone (650) 329- 2115 or email lynne.johnson@cityofpaloalto.org to find out more about the public safety facility needs in our community.