

# City, group plan closer ties

*East Palo Alto community  
development group ready  
to help city*

The East Palo Alto City Council and its most prominent community development group are ready to make formal a closer working relationship. The move is aimed to make sure the city's economic redevelopment keeps a strong local flavor.

The East Palo Alto Community Alliance & Neighborhood Development Organization, called EPA-CANDO, is already a voice in the city's redevelopment deliberations, offering advice and criticism of the various proposals as they have been considered.

"It's important that we have some sort of formalized relationship," said Mayor Rose Jacobs Gibson. "They have resources to help us with economic redevelopment."

In particular, Gibson said, "They can provide outreach to the community, especially to small retailers. We want to work with them to determine how redevelopment areas will look."

EPA-CANDO is a non-profit group that formed in 1989. It is in the process of developing 83 housing units and also owns and manages a small amount of commercial property. The group has almost 300 members.

Sherry Zalika Sykes, the group's executive director, said CANDO is already working on an informal basis with city staff and the City Council. While there has been a consensus among Council members and CANDO that some formal relationship will be established, CANDO won't become a city agency.

"We'll retain our independence," Sykes said. "We don't want to become an arm of the city."

Gibson echoed that. "We don't want to restrict them in any way," she said.

Gibson added that the Council needs to explore what that relationship will be, probably in the next month or so.

City Manager Jerry Groomes, who had extensive redevelopment experience in San Diego before he came to East Palo Alto, welcomed a more formal relationship.

"It's truly a community-based community development organization," Groomes said. "We should take advantage of the resources in the community." ■