



Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto

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CLSEPA History:

Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, Inc. had its origins in 2002 as a grassroots community-based group. The East Palo Alto Law Project Board voted to close its doors to the community on May 13, 2002. During the Law Project Board meeting, one Board member who represented the community announced that she would pursue efforts to continue and preserve legal services in East Palo Alto by forming a community transition committee. She went home and called a long-time friend at 12:20am Tuesday, May 14, 2002. They discussed the need to convene a meeting with East Palo Alto residents.

On May 31, 2002, a meeting was held at EPA CAN DO. The meeting included individuals who were members of the Neighborhood Initiative/One East Palo Alto Housing Group and the EPA CAN DO Housing Committee as well as other community members. The residents agreed to form an ad hoc East Palo Alto Community Law Project Transition Committee for the purpose of salvaging the Law Project. The Transition Committee agreed to preserve and continue free legal services to underserved individuals, families, and organizations. It was especially important to the Transition Committee to preserve legal services for the 10,000 residents who lived under the East Palo Alto Rent Stabilization Program. The intent of the Transition Committee was to reclaim the original Law Project with a new Board of Directors committed to its preservation.

The Transition Committee evolved into the first Board of Directors for what is now Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, Inc. and expanded the services provided from a Housing Program to include a general civil practice under the Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP) and an Immigration Program. Eventually, a juvenile justice program was added as well.

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