

# Embrace tech, president urges East Palo Alto

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President Clinton urged East Palo Alto on Monday to not allow the past to repeat itself and to instead stake its claim in Silicon Valley's future.

More than a century ago, Clinton said, the area lost its chance for economic expansion when a major rail line pulled the plans to place a stop here. But today's high-tech era need not pass the city by if corporations work with residents to bridge the gulf that separates East Palo Alto from the rest of Silicon Valley.

Clinton carried his message about closing the so-called digital divide, joining high-tech CEOs and politicians on the grounds of Plugged In, a non-profit center that has been praised for its work in bringing technology training to the community.

For residents, Clinton's visit was an affirmation that good times have arrived. The president's high-tech invitation comes at a time when new businesses are being built, crime is down and redevelopment is transforming the city.

"Something big is happening here," said Will Griffin, owner of Uncle Henry's barbecue joint on Pulgas Avenue. "If the president can stop here, maybe those who fly through on their way to the Dumbarton (Bridge) will start to accept East Palo Alto."

Many residents stood for hours in the rain in a muddy field Monday to be a part of a historical moment for their city: the visit of a president. Among them was 15-year-old Terrence Sterling, who rose early to catch a glimpse of Clinton.

"If you live here in this community, you should be involved in what's going on here," he said.

Clinton's motorcade traveled rutted streets to reach Plugged In. He addressed the crowd from a stage erected in front of the center, which has a facade brightly painted with the words of a children's poem: "If you are a dreamer, come in."

As he stood under moody skies, Clinton called on high-tech corporations to open the doors to training and jobs. But he also challenged residents to take advantage of their proximity to Silicon Valley, ground zero for the technology revolution.

Many were excited by the promis-

## FUNDING CONNECTIONS

President Clinton, announcing a program Monday to close the "digital divide" in the United States, says both government and businesses will be asked to help prepare low-income people for Internet futures.

### Congress

- \$100 million for community technology centers like Plugged In, an East Palo Alto community technology center
- \$150 million to help train new teachers to use technology and the Internet in the classroom
- \$2 billion in new tax incentives for computer donations and contributions to U.S. schools, libraries and community technology centers

### Business

- \$100 million in donations from such companies as Novell, Hewlett-Packard, Applied Materials, Cisco Systems, People PC, PowerUP, Qualcomm, Gateway, AOL and ATT. Funds will go toward technology training, products, Internet accounts, job-training centers and academic programs related to the Internet, among other things.

Source: Mercury News staff

es made Monday, including corporate-sponsored teacher training, new computers and a high-tech school. Many vowed to take Clinton up on his challenge to take advantage of everything being offered. Councilwoman Myrtle Walker was one who pledged afterward that she was headed to Plugged In for Web design classes.

And many felt confident that long after Clinton had gone, the momentum would carry.

"It's all about follow-through," Wilbur Jackson said after the president's motorcade had left. He looked up at the sky, which was beginning to clear.

"See," he said. "the president's gone. But the sun has come out."

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