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Thursday Jul 10



Konstandinos Goumenidis / Daily News

East Palo Alto community members applaud during a meeting on Wednesday about the lack of sidewalks throughout the city led by the Youth Leaders of Our Community and the Peninsula Interfaith Action at the Saint Francis of Assisi Church in East Palo Alto.

Organized by Peninsula Interfaith Action and Youth Leaders of Our Community, a local group, the meeting was geared toward one objective - building sidewalks in East Palo Alto. According to study the two groups conducted in conjunction with the East Palo Alto public works department, 25 percent of the streets are without sidewalks in the 2.5-square-mile city.

The majority of them are in the Palo Alto Park neighborhood where Picker lives.

"Our neighborhood is the only one that has no sidewalks," said Picker, who has an 8-year-old son and 13-year-old daughter.

Many of the roads date back before East Palo Alto's 1983 incorporation. Marred by potholes, many are only wide enough for one car and are lined with dirt, gravel and dust. Some of the worst stretches are on Bell Street, Oakwood Drive and Dumbarton, Poplar and Ralmar avenues.

In September, some of those roads will get a makeover, Council Member Ruben Abrica said. The city council recently adopted the first half of a \$2 million plan over two years to repair scores of East Palo Alto streets. Some of the repairs might include sidewalks. The city also received an \$806,000 safe routes to school grant from the state and is applying for \$900,000 from the federal government.

"I think we'll be able to pull it together," Abrica said after the meeting.

Abrica agreed to meet with the two groups within 60 days and said he would work his hardest to bring sidewalks to the entire city within five years.

Several members of the youth group recalled the frustrations of walking down a street near speeding cars. Ana Delgado, 15, recounted a night when a drunk driver crashed into her house.

Along with Angela Sajuthi of the San Mateo County Health Department, speakers also brought up the fact that 28 percent of students in the Ravenswood City School District are either overweight or obese. Children could be encouraged to walk more if there were sidewalks in their neighborhoods, Latrice Bennett said. The community has been pushing for sidewalks for over 20 years, she said.

"And we have yet to see them on our most essential streets," she said.

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A plea for safer walking spaces

Residents, youths push for sidewalks in East Palo Alto

By Banks Albach / Daily News Staff Writer

About two weeks ago, Norm Picker was drawn out of his East Palo Alto home by a large cracking sound. A driver had crashed into his front fence, split one of the poles that was set in two feet of concrete, and sped off.

A sidewalk may have prevented the accident, Picker told a crowd of about 180 people gathered in St. Francis of Assisi Church on Wednesday night. The crowd agreed with a round of applause.

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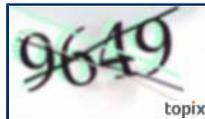
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