

## COMMUNITY UNITES FOR GROCERY STORE May 2005

East Palo Alto residents are hungry—for a full-service supermarket and a development agreement that brings other needed services to their community. For approximately 30 years there has been no full-service grocery store in East Palo Alto, forcing residents to either shop at local “mom and pop” stores with very limited inventory and high prices or “commute” to nearby cities just to go grocery shopping. Residents need jobs, affordable housing, job training, and fair wages too – all of which residents are demanding in a supermarket development that is currently being discussed by the city, a land owner and a developer. For the many low-income residents who lack reliable transportation, a responsible development in the heart of East Palo Alto could greatly improve the quality of life.

Continuing an effort launched by PIA four years ago, Faith Missionary Baptist Church and other leaders from the PIA/ YUCA/ IEPA Accountable Development Coalition collaborated with about a dozen local churches to hold a prayer vigil and rally on March 13 in the front of City Hall, across the street from a vacant site on Bay and University that will hopefully hold the longed-for grocery store. More than one-hundred community members, led by PIA leaders and local clergy, beseeched God, Mayor David Woods and other decision-makers in attendance to do what is right and necessary to fill the community need for reasonably priced groceries and a community benefits agreement to address other necessities. how important easy access to fresh food is for seniors. Pastor Clifton Bennett, of Walls of Faith Ministries, **Father Lawrence Goode**, of St. Francis of Assisi, and Pastor Albert Macklin, of New Sweet Home, prayed for the city, the developer and prayed for the community. Coalition leaders proposed a 15- to 20-month timeline to a grand opening, along with many specific requests that would maximize the benefits of the development for East Palo Alto residents. The Mayor expressed doubt over the proposed timeline but agreed with several specifics of the platform. He restated that the Council is committed to the development and agreed to meet with members of PIA within 30 days to discuss what he supports and where he has objections.

PIA leaders and community clergy delivered a strong message to residents that the community needs to continue to fight together for what is right and doable! The vigil and rally awoke residents and more of the faith community to the fact that the community is organizing and that there's a place for them at the table to bring food, service, jobs, training and more to East Palo Alto.