

City of Belmont  
Daily Journal  
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ERIK OEVERDIEK/DAILY JOURNAL  
Hung-Chiao Wu, 26, covers her head with jacket in Belmont near the Starbucks at El Camino Real and Ralston Avenue. Forecasters predict more rain today, with partly cloudy conditions through Wednesday night. The next chance for rain is Thursday and Saturday and Sunday should be clear, forecasters said.

CITY OF BELMONT  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES  
FEB. 12, 2006

## Around the County

### ► BELMONT

#### **City sells \$7.5 million in bonds to improve sewers**

On Feb. 15, Belmont sold \$7.5 million of revenue bonds to fund improvements to the city's sewer system, including rehabilitation of collection pipelines and pump stations.

The improvements will lessen the accumulation of storm waters during rainy periods and should produce cost savings to the city's 8,300 customers.

The bonds are repayable from the fees Belmont charges its customers for sewer service. The city raised sewer rates in July.

City of Belmont  
Examiner - Independent  
Jan. 7, 2006

# Stream bank collapses, leaving road in danger

## Repairs delayed by government red tape, city says

BY KATE WILLIAMSON  
Staff Writer

BELMONT — East Laurel Creek Road was in danger of collapsing near the waterway it takes its name from after heavy rains caused a reinforced bank to collapse Monday morning.

"I complained about this over a year ago," said Warren Gibson, a resident whose house at 3114 E. Laurel Creek Road overlooks the collapsed bank with its washed-out fencing. "The retaining wall was undermined, and was going to collapse, and the culvert had rusted out and was going to go."

The section of the Laurel Creek bank that collapsed during last weekend's heavy rains was reinforced many years ago with "riprap," or stacked bags of cement. Sodden earth underneath the bags likely "bottomed out" and allowed the bank to collapse, city engineer Kathleen Phalen said. City workers marked off the collapsed area, which comes right up to the edge of the street, but had not yet closed the road entirely at press time.

That would happen if cracks or



DOUG OAKLEY/THE EXAMINER

**Rick Locke of the Belmont Public Works Department sets up a sign where East Laurel Creek was raging on Monday.**

potholes start to appear, Phalen said.

She blamed the lack of action to repair the bank on a slow permitting and environmental review process that involves three state agencies and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"We can't do it this time of year. The state doesn't allow any work in and around creeks after Oct. 15," she said. "We'll just have to monitor it until the spring and then ... reconstruct that area."

The road was narrowed to one lane near the collapse, and Phalen advised driving slowly over it or avoiding that spot altogether.

CITY OF BELMONT  
(FINANCE DEPT.)  
SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES  
MARCH 18, 2006

► BELMONT

**Finance department  
recognized for eighth  
straight year**

For the eighth consecutive year, Belmont's Finance Department was awarded a certificate of achievement for excellence in financial reporting for its comprehensive annual financial report.

The certificate, given by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada, is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting, city officials said.

Belmont's report was judged by a panel for qualities like demonstrating a "spirit of full disclosure," clearly communicating the city's financial story, and presenting information in a manner that entices readers.

The Government Finance Officers Association is a non-profit professional association with about 16,000 members.

Belmont -  
4/11/06

# ON COMMON GROUND



**STUDENTS VISITING** from Belmont's sister city of Namur, Belgium, attend an unveiling of a plaque Monday recognizing the relationship between the two cities.

RON LEWIS — Staff

# El Camino Real struggles with redevelopment

► **PLAN**, from Local 1

you don't get the support that you need, property-wise or business-wise," she said.

Tinyo wonders why there isn't more rallying for Belmont businesses, asking why, for example, materials for the city's new library were not purchased locally.

"There should be an advantage for your being here," she said. "Why can't you make it so that you're looking out for your community?"

Frances Grisgood, owner of Belmont Village Gallery on Ralston Avenue, just a block from El Camino, said she hopes that the city will consider bringing in an expert to look at development of the community as a whole.

"When I first came to Belmont, there was a kind of charm about it. It has a little-town feel," said Grisgood, who has been at her location for almost four years. "I don't think the charm is being utilized enough."

She said there should be more of the feel of the cottages in Twin Pines Park, and less of four nail and beauty salons in the two blocks across the street from her gallery.

"They need someone, a designer, that can carry the qualities Belmont has inherited and carry it through the architecture that people whiz by every day," she said.

There's a taste of what could be in the Belmont Village Center, the shopping center between Ralston and O'Neill avenues with Safeway as its centerpiece and side spots like A.G. Ferrari Foods, Peet's Coffee and Learning Express toy store, that nearly everyone agrees are a step in the right direction.

Dan Divine, a mortgage consultant with Diablo Funding Group, who often works out of his Belmont home, called the center "a shining example of what we should do more of."

"That's the type of development that I think El Camino does best on," he said.

Divine, a 23-year resident, knows that Belmont will not be a Burlingame or San Carlos. With most residents living in Belmont's hills, the city is simply not configured for a downtown avenue.

"I would just like to see continual improvement up and down El Camino," Divine said.

Belmont Mayor Phil Mathewson said he knows that there are valid concerns about El Camino, and that the debate over where and what a downtown ought to be has dragged on.

"We have thoughts in offing but they're not on paper. We're really looking at the area," he said. "We're disappointed with the progress so far. I think I can speak for the council on that."

He said he would like to see mixed-use developments on El Camino between the San Mateo border and Ralston, and perhaps a different customer draw.

"San Carlos is talking about limits on coffee shops. We need to talk about businesses that attract a higher quality of clientele," he said.

There have been efforts to look at development consistency, such as creation of the Downtown Specific Plan. A comprehensive Economic Development Strategy created in 2003 intended to improve the city's tax revenue while strengthening quality of life.

But Mathewson acknowledged that the city hasn't quite accomplished what it has aimed for, and it seems that local business owners have noticed it, too.

"We are trying to make it more uniform and working toward that with several council subcommittees that hopefully are going to come up with a more unified vision very soon," he said.

# El Camino redevelopment struggles

■ Belmont business owners call for more incentives, uniformity

By **Rebekah Gordon**

STAFF WRITER

BELMONT — Take a ride on El Camino Real in Belmont, and residents and local business owners will point out all the things they wish weren't there.

There's a handful of empty lots, like those on the corners of Belmont and O'Neill avenues, whose weeds have nearly overtaken the "for sale" signs.

Or there are the boarded-up restaurants, one at the corner of Broadway and the other at El Camino's north end, that have been that way for years.

Combined with motels, nail salons and a dollar store, some venture to call parts of the thoroughfare "seedy," wishing that Belmont would do more to entice owners to clean up their storefronts, draw in new business, promote local establishments and give the city a



JOHN GREEN — Staff

**A BURNED OUT RESTAURANT** still remains an eyesore at Broadway and El Camino Real in Belmont.

more unified architecture that captures the town's feel. It's a long-standing dilemma for the city, which has struggled to develop itself economically and create a central downtown.

Belmont does have a Facade Improvement Program for businesses

with frontage on El Camino, Old County Road and parts of Ralston, with rebates for improvements to a single building not to exceed \$15,000. The city also will reimburse for design review and building permit fees.

But the reimbursements start slow

— just \$1,000 at first and then 50 percent of the next \$4,000. A new business moving in can get \$3,000 for improvements.

That is but a small carrot for Laurie Tinyo, owner of Workspace Innovations, a company at 240 El Camino Real that designs office spaces, citing other non-reimbursed fees associated with owning a business and making improvements, like hiring someone to design the plans.

"In my opinion, they take it out of their left pocket and put it in their right pocket," Tinyo said about the rebate monies. "How does that help me?"

Tinyo has owned her building for nine years and readily admits it looks like a "sugar shack." That is partly due, she said, to the difficulty she has had with the city in trying to get improvements approved.

"I would never recommend a company to open a business here, because

Please see **PLAN**, Local 3

*City of Belmont  
Alan Mateo & Teresa  
June 2006*