

Belmont -
The Independent
Dec. 23, 03

City shutting down to save money

Belmont officials want to remind residents that City Hall will be closed from Dec. 25 to Jan. 5. All departments will be closed, including the permit center for building inspections.

However, the police and crews from the parks and public works departments will remain on duty. The Senior Center will be open for limited hours, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Dec. 29 and 30.

The closure is attributed to a sluggish economy and that has hurt tax revenue — much of which has been taken by the state to resolve its budget deficit. The furlough is expected to save \$100,000.

For public works emergencies, call 595-7427. For emergencies for the parks department, call 595-7400.

City offices to shut down for the holidays

Belmont will save \$108,000
by keeping employees home

BY MICHELE LEUNG
Independent Newspapers

BELMONT — In one of the clearest indications that what goes around in Sacramento, comes around in local communities, city offices here will be closed from Dec. 25 to Jan. 4, saving the city \$108,000.

The city saves money because the general fund, which pays for day-to-day municipal operations, does not pay for the vacation hours. This is the first time the city has needed a furlough to save money, and officials say it is a direct

result of the statewide budget crisis.

Permits and business licenses will not be issued. City Hall will be closed. However, police, firefighters, parks and public works crews will still be on duty to deal with holiday traffic and any emergencies.

Extra police officers beyond the standard staff will be on hand to monitor traffic in the evenings. Belmont police will be participating in the county's drunk driving checkpoints. The Avoid the 23 campaign runs from Dec. 12 to Jan 2.

While Belmont city offices are closed for a week and a half, other cities are shutting down for shorter periods in addition to the standard holidays. For example, Millbrae city employees will be home on Dec. 26.

Belmont already cut \$500,000 due to the state's red ink. The work furlough means that the city is closed for four more days than it normally would be during the holidays.

Some said employees were at first concerned about having to shut down later this month, but there seems to be a spirit of cooperation and understanding in Belmont.

One concern was that new employees may not have enough vacation hours to spare, but those who have not accumulated enough will be able to "borrow" their unearned hours. Another worry was how the community would react.

"The concern was that no one could take out a permit and we're not provid-

ing the service to the public that they expect," said Barbara Ebel of the Public Works Department, who is one of the union representatives for Belmont city employees.

Police Capt. Ed Wood said his union also went along with the furlough.

"I'm proud to say that during the whole budget adjustment, the unions have been very positive," said Wood, whose union represents the city's middle management. "We have a good relationship with the city. Everybody understands. We're not taken advantage of per se. It needs to be done."

Belmont Library
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Nov 16, 2003

Library design gets thumbs up

New Belmont branch will have café and horseshoe rings

BY MICHELE LEUNG
Independent Newspapers

BELMONT — Patrons seem impressed with the chic bookstore feel presented in the design of a new library that has been in planning stages for years.

Residents got a chance to review the newest concept of the library project Thursday. They saw plans for a café and a "marketplace," an area where staff can showcase new or themed material, much like they might see in a bookstore.

"The marketplace is a concept that is relatively new," said David Braunstein, a member of the library steering committee. "The café is a nice wrinkle where it allows people to sit down for an extended period of time and have a latte and a muffin and enjoy the experience of the library."

The meeting was an opportunity for residents to sound off on the plans. There are more conventional, utilitarian proposals, too, including a community room, a separate children's section and a technology lab. The L-shaped library, which will encourage self-checkout, will take advantage of the site's park setting with outdoor picnic areas, horseshoe rings, a reading terrace and playground sets. One side of the library will have large windows that open up to the surrounding oaks.

Patron Debbie Norton was impressed that enough mature trees will be saved so that the library will not be a barren site on its opening day.

"Sounds like the people who are running this are listening to what people are saying," she said.

The steering committee has been hearing recommendations since May.

"It's the community's library," Braunstein said. "We're trying to get it right."

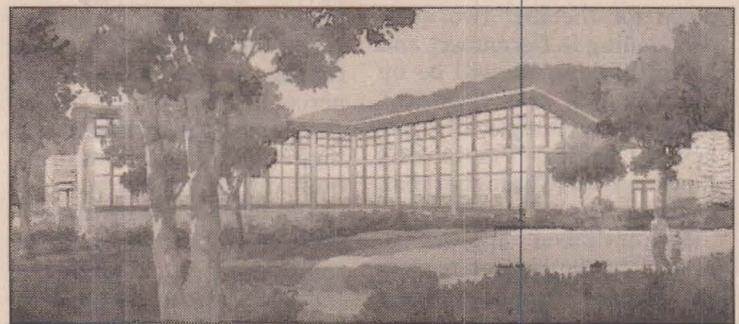
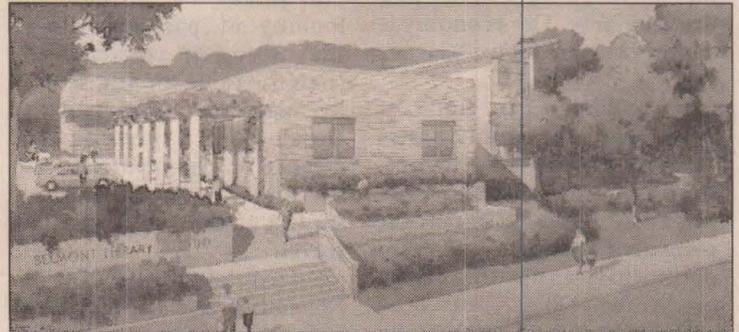
The Friends of the Belmont Library group also presented the beginnings of a fundraising campaign to raise additional money. The project has \$8.65 million from a 2001 bond measure, but it is still about \$1 million short. The group has set up a giving tree, in hopes of generating private donations.

"We want this to be a first-class facility," said Mike Heagerty of the Friends group. "The technology, the audio-visual and furniture, these things come together but have a price tag."

So far, donations have been slow in coming. The steering committee has not decided on how large the library will be, either 18,000 square feet or 21,000 square feet. Braunstein said that the steering committee has until February to figure out how much money will be forthcoming, a decision which will have an impact on the size of the library. The project is also getting additional money from the county's library joint powers authority and the city's park development funds.

"Hopefully donations will come," Braunstein said. "We would be very appreciative of people coming forward. Any denominations add up."

The steering committee is not



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Top, the entrance to the new Belmont library; Above, the view from the park behind the library.

going to pursue a temporary location to house the library during construction. The inconveniences of not having a library in Belmont and needing to go to alternate places would be temporary, Braunstein said.

"We really want to focus our energy and finances on the building," Braunstein said. "This is a long term investment."

If everything goes according to schedule, the city's advisory commissions will review the designs in January and February. Construction is slated for January 2005, and by spring 2006, the library should be open for business.

Contact Michele Leung at 556-1556, Ext. 6 or mleung@sminddependent.com.

CITY HALL + POLICE DEPT.
THE INDEPENDENT
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NEWS*Briefs*

**Belmont offices to
close for construction**

Belmont city offices have been closed intermittently due to planned work on the City Hall and police compound on Sixth Avenue.

City Hall offices at 1070 Sixth Ave. will be closed on Oct. 31 and re-open on Nov. 3. Police, finance, parks and recreation will remain open, however.

Construction is expected to start around Nov. 10 and last about 14 months. During construction the north driveway on Sixth Avenue into the Civic Center and Twin Pines Park will be closed and that side of City Hall blocked to the public.

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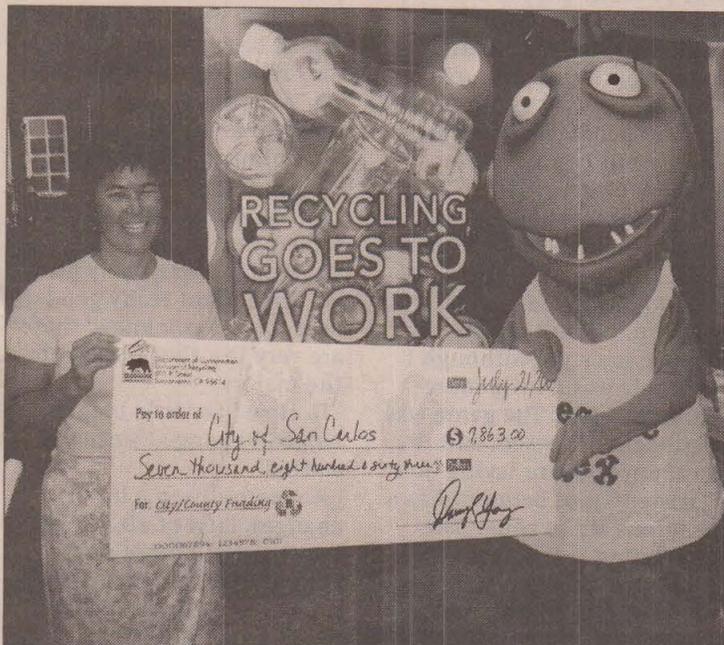
Belmont, San Carlos benefit from state recycling program

As part of an ongoing statewide effort to increase bottle and can recycling, the state Department of Conservation awarded Belmont (\$7,120), Burlingame (\$8,010), Foster City (\$8,154), Hillsborough (\$5,000), Redwood City (\$21,517) and San Carlos (\$7,863) during the annual California Resource Recovery Association conference, held July 20-23 in Ontario.

Every city and county in California is eligible for this yearly recycling support simply by returning a one-page request form provided by the Department of Conservation. Funding is paid from unclaimed refunds of California Refund Value (CRV) beverage containers and is awarded at no cost to the state's general fund.

Communities are required to use the money for projects related to bottle and can recycling, such as installation of recycling bins in public venues, expansion of curbside opportunities or purchase of recycled content products.

"Convenient recycling is the key to increased recycling," said Darryl Young, Director of the Department of Conserva-



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tion. "Our local partners are vital allies in the development of recycling opportunities for busy Californians. This money will help make recycling not only the right thing to do, but the easy thing to do."

More than 18 billion CRV containers were sold in California in 2002, and about 10.6 billion were recycled. That leaves 7.5

billion bottles and cans -- worth about \$187 million in CRV -- that ended up in the trash instead of the recycling bin last year.

The local recycling contact is Debby Kramer, South Bayside Waste Management, at 599-1485. More information is available online at www.conservation.ca.gov.

80th Year, No. 56

NEWSBriefs

City receives state grant money

Belmont has received two state grants totaling more than \$245,000 for code enforcement and housing.

The code enforcement grant is for \$112,387. It will be used to purchase a network computer system, laptops and printers and a range of peripheral devices.

The second grant, part of the state's Jobs/Housing Balance Program, is for \$133,346. The program rewards cities and counties that increase their issuance of residential building permits.

Smile, Belmont: Aerial photos will depict growth

Technology used to mine all sorts of data for municipal staff

By MICHELE LEUNG
Independent Newspapers

BELMONT — In two weeks time, small airplanes will be flying over the city, snapping photos to get a bird's eye view of Belmont.

The aerial shots will bring up to date the city's current photographs, which go back to 1994. A lot has changed since then. Many more buildings have dotted Belmont's land-

scape since those last aerial shots.

Coupled with a database called a "geographic information system," these new photographs can help city employees in a number of ways. Code inspectors, for example, can determine if a house has an addition built without a permit.

"(The photographs) are the foundation," said Kevin DeRouen, the city's GIS coordinator. "It's important to be accurate. It's a necessity to be updated."

The city has old photos that

are black and white, but in six months, the city can rely on new photographs that will be more accurate. They will be color and have better resolution than the current batch. Cars, gutters and sidewalks will be apparent, whereas now, vehicles on the street show up as vague splotches.

In the past, the city relied on a map that was a computer-aided design. But now, DeRouen said, the new GIS system is more "intelligent" — he can mine a variety of details from the photos, such as who owns a particular lot and the

address of the lot. The city staff can click on a property on the map and within five minutes determine who lives within 300 feet of that house, and should the property owner decide to expand the house, all the residents within that radius could be identified so they could be notified of the proposed changes. In the old days, before GIS had been perfected, city staff had to look up the individual lots and match up the address to mail out the letters, a task that could take up to four hours.

The uses of the GIS system are

limitless, and the constraint of the technology comes down to the person using it, DeRouen said.

The public works department can even see which utility poles are wood or metal.

Recently, the Parks and Recreation Department was able to rely on the system to map out its trail system when it solicited the community for trail names. Before this technology was available, Karl Mittelstadt, the city's director of parks and recreation, said the map would have to be drawn by

PHOTOS: page 8A

*copy of DeRouen
file folder
on growth, 2003*

(over)

PHOTOS: Overhead shots are key to system

Continued from 1A

hand. "It would not be that accurate," he said, adding that the computer is precise to within six inches.

Since then, many outdoor aficionados have made use of the map, Mittelstadt said.

Using the technology, DeRouen can also generate maps that show how difficult the trails are, what landmarks are nearby and how prevalent poison oak is.

In 2001, when the City Council decided on the lot merger issue in the San Juan Hills, staff used the existing GIS system to determine that 200 lots were merged because they were on too steep a slope. Craig Ewing, the community development director, expected to receive harsh words from property owners who did not want to have their lots merged, but when they saw the maps that indicated how steep the hills are and how difficult it would be to get emergency vehicles to get up, they became less contentious.

"It took away the arguments against it," Ewing said.

Brian Moura, assistant city manager for San Carlos, said that aerial photographs and the GIS system are more prevalent in larger cities and rarer for smaller ones like San Carlos and Belmont. In San Carlos, the GIS was used to plan the routes



Photo of a San Carlos neighborhood shot by Towill Inc. of San Francisco. The same company is shooting new photographs of Belmont.

for the SCOOT shuttle and to determine how many children live within a particular radius.

He said that the tool makes municipal government more effective.

"It's a new frontier," Moura said.

DeRouen said the new photographs will help Belmont's city departments be able to meet

specific goals, helpful now that the city is focusing on listing performances in the budget process. He envisions an interactive map, updated regularly, that could be used during natural emergencies to indicate where flooding or fires occur. Police and fire departments would dispatch their crews accordingly. The police can

also use this to track crime patterns, such as how many car thefts occur along particular streets during summer months.

"You have to be creative in using this," he said.

Contact Michele Leung at 55601556, Ext. 6 or mleung@smindependent.com.

NEWS Briefs

Belmont City hall re-opens

Belmont government offices at 1070 Sixth Ave. recently closed and moved to accommodate construction and have now reopened for business.

During the construction, the City Clerk's office will be in Suite 301. The finance department, including business licenses and the City Treasurer, are moving to the Lodge at Twin Pines Park. Information services, public works, community development and the permit center will be housed in Suite 200. Police dispatch, patrol, detectives and administration will be at 1215 Ralston Ave. All other offices will remain where they are.

Construction is slated to start Nov. 10 and will last 14 months. During this time, the north driveway on Sixth Avenue, next to Wells Fargo, will not be accessible to the public. Parking on that side of City Hall will be blocked.

Nov 4, 03
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