



The Saratogian

Spring 2014

Safest City in California Plans to Stay That Way

Saratoga has always been number one in the hearts of its residents, but it turns out that the City also tops another prominent list. As reported by the *Saratoga News* last November, Saratoga has been named the number one safest city in California by Safewise.com. The security system company made the determination by using FBI crime statistics and its own research as of 2011.

The news most likely did not surprise many residents. Saratoga is a beautiful bedroom community with nearly 30,000 residents across 12.4-square-miles. Known for its high quality of life, excellent schools and distinctive businesses.



The City has always taken safety seriously. Public safety has long been a top priority for the City Council. One of the largest expenditures in the City's budget is its contract with the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office for law enforcement services.

“Saratoga did not become the safest city in California by accident. The ranking highlights the efforts by the City, Sheriff's Office, and residents.”

Saratoga did not become the safest city in California by accident. The ranking highlights the efforts by the City, Sheriff's Office, and residents. Saratoga's residents have taken an active role in the safety of the City by forming neighborhood watch groups and calling the Sheriff's Office to report suspicious activity in their neighborhoods. The Sheriff's Office has a community-oriented policing philosophy, which means partnering directly with the community to help solve problems.

Residents have also created neighborhood and homeowner associations. There are currently 13 such groups in the City. They have been a force for positive change—sometimes when a neighborhood has faced a rise in criminal activity. There are many tools for these groups to use, including social media. Quite a few residents have taken

to social media to use a 21st century tool, such as Nextdoor.com or Facebook, to share safety tips, inform neighbors of a crime they witnessed, or to assess feelings about safety issues.

For more information on neighborhood association resources, visit www.saratoga.ca.us/about/neighborhoods.

New Counter Hours, Same Great Customer Service



The City of Saratoga is always considering new ways to provide better customer service to residents and be more accessible to the public. The Community Development Department is living up to those standards with its expanded Planning and Building counter hours. The new counter hours are Monday-Thursday from 8 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The new hours went into effect last November.

The counters previously had only been open during morning hours. The addition of a new Permit Technician allowed for more flexibility and greater coverage of the counters. The expanded hours have led to reduced waiting times.

The Building Division is responsible for administering the California Building Code, plan-checking and on-site inspections. The Planning Division is focused on zoning administration and land-development review.

For more information on the Community Development Department, visit www.saratoga.ca.us/cd.

Saratoga Has a Plan To Keep General Plan Elements Up-To-Date

The City of Saratoga's General Plan helps guide the growth and land development of the community for the short and long term. A General Plan is so important to cities and counties that it is often referred to as the "constitution for future development."

The City of Saratoga's General Plan contains six elements: land use, circulation and scenic highway, open space and conservation, safety, noise, and housing. These elements combine to provide a basis for local decision-making. These elements inform residents, developers, and policy makers of the ground rules that guide the longterm vision of development within Saratoga.

The City of Saratoga is in the final stages of updating its Noise Element, which is expected to be approved in March 2014. The purpose of the Noise Element is to define and prescribe ambient noise levels for the various land uses in Saratoga in order to maintain the quiet residential atmosphere of the City.

The Housing Element Update is expected to be completed this coming November. While identifying and analyzing existing housing needs, the Housing Element also provides the primary policy guidance for local decision-making related to housing. The Community Development Department will be hosting several informational and community meetings about the Housing Element update.

To stay informed on the latest news and updates, visit www.saratoga.ca.us/cd.



Wildfire Education and Free Chipping Services for Saratoga Residents

Saratoga is one of 14 communities in Santa Clara County that has been identified as being at risk for wildfires.

Property owners in sections of Saratoga that are particularly susceptible to wildfire are required to establish defensible space by clearing brush and grass around permanent structures and road or driveways used for evacuation purposes. This practice helps slow or stop the spread of wildfire and thereby reduces property damage and loss of life during fires.

To encourage residents to create defensible space in wildfire prone areas of Saratoga, the City along with the Saratoga Fire District will be educating residents about wildfire prevention and offering free chipping of brush cleared from defensible space in compliance with City tree regulations. This service will be provided through the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, a non-profit organization.

Visit www.SCCFireSafe.org for more information or to get involved.

The Saratoga Library Commission Has Its Own Story To Tell

It's said that you should never judge a book by its cover. But residents seeking to find out more about the Saratoga Library Commission wouldn't have to dig too deep to find out its story.

The mission of the Library Commission is to ensure that access is provided to informational, educational and recreational library materials and services that respond to evolving community needs. Part of that includes doing community outreach with Saratoga Library staff to encourage residents to sign up for library cards and take advantage of the Library's services –both in the Library and online.

The Saratoga City Council appoints the five Commissioners. One Commissioner is nominated by the Monte Sereno City Council. The Commission meets on the fourth Wednesday of even-numbered months in the Community Room of the Saratoga Library.

Although the Commission has no administrative authority, it does advise the Saratoga City Council on current library issues, as well as the Santa Clara County Library District regarding library budgets, policies, plans and procedures.

For more information on the Library Commission, visit www.saratoga.ca.us/lc.



Saratoga Community Library

Capital Improvement Projects

Current Projects

Project Scope

- **Village Enhancements** This multi-phase project began in 2008. Safety and beautification have been the priorities. This next phase will focus on improvements at Blaney Plaza, including a lighted crosswalk, landscaping, and two new parking spaces.
- **Prospect Road** This project includes median landscaping, ADA compliant ramps, sidewalks, bus shelters, and bicycle detector loops along the 1.9-mile roadway between Saratoga Avenue and Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road. About 88% of this \$4.7 million project will be paid for through grant funding.
- **Quito Road Bridges** This project will replace two bridges on Quito Road along the border of Saratoga and Los Gatos. The 100-year-old bridges no longer meet safety standards. The \$4.9 million project will be mostly funded by a \$4.1 million Federal Government Bridge Replacement Grant.

Visit www.saratoga.ca.us/CurrentProjects for more information.



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The City of Saratoga is on Facebook! You can visit the page at www.facebook.com/CityofSaratoga. “Like” the page to receive the most up-to-date information on City news and events.



Ask Our Staff featuring Captain Ken Binder

Have a question? Send your question(s) to bbabcock@saratoga.ca.us or (408) 868-1275.

Q: What should a motorist do if pulled over by a deputy sheriff in order to make the traffic stop go well for both the driver and the deputy?



A: *Traffic enforcement stops are part of the job for a deputy sheriff, but the deputy never knows exactly what he or she is going to encounter until after making contact with the driver. Traffic stops are one of the most dangerous things a deputy sheriff does. More than 30% of officers killed in the line of duty occur during traffic stops. They're inherently risky. But they can go smoothly if a driver knows what to do.*

Here are some tips on how residents should handle themselves during a traffic stop:

- *Remain in the car and keep their hands in plain view, preferably on the steering wheel, as the deputy approaches.*
- *Drivers should listen to and follow instructions and avoid making abrupt or sudden moves.*
- *If a citation is issued, the driver should sign the citation, even if they don't agree that the violation was committed. The signature on a citation is not an admission of guilt, but merely a promise to appear and to resolve the matter in court. If the driver believes he or she was cited in error, they can make their case at traffic court.*

Captain Ken Binder leads the Santa Clara County Office of the Sheriff - West Valley Patrol Division. The division serves Saratoga, Cupertino, Los Altos Hills and the west side of the unincorporated County.



To learn more about *The Saratogan*, make comments, suggest story ideas, or include events in the Events section, contact Brian Babcock at bbabcock@saratoga.ca.us or 408.868.1275. You can also find *The Saratogan* online and sign up for email alerts at www.saratoga.ca.us/saratogan.