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Union City weighs future of Historical Museum building

DESPITE NECESSARY RENOVATIONS, CITY COUNCIL CONSIDERS SPACE FOR MULTI-USE COMMUNITY HUB

By PANASHE MATEMBA-MUTASA

Union City officials are considering the future of the city-owned building at 3841 Smith Street, which formerly housed the Union City Historical Museum. The City Council received a report on November 26, 2024, detailing potential uses for the site and outlining necessary repairs to make it suitable for occupancy.

According to city manager Joan Malloy, the building, originally a fire station, has been closed since March 2020 due to COVID-19 and significant water damage from a leaking roof. The damage led to mold and mildew issues, prompting safety concerns. Additionally, the museum's operations were severely affected by the deaths of its founder, Myrta Raymundo, in 2021, and president, Domingo Filardo, in early 2024.

The Union City Chamber of Commerce and the Washington Township Museum of Local History have partnered to propose repurposing the site into a multi-use community hub. Their vision includes a revitalized museum honoring local history, alongside a space for business engagement and economic development activities. The partnership aims to foster community connection while boosting local economic activity.

"We're excited about the prospect of opening the museum," said Washington Township Museum of Local History's collections manager Patricia Schaffarczyk.

If approved, the Washington Township Museum would manage the museum operations, while the Chamber of Commerce would sponsor events and use the space as an office. Both organizations have requested a nominal lease, similar to what the Washington Township Museum pays in Fremont for a comparable site.

Despite partial repairs, including roof and front room renovations, the building requires



The Union City Historical Museum has been closed since March 2020 due to the COVID pandemic. Photo by April Ramos

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Officials inspect the PG&E gas pipeline protective apron over Alameda Creek near Sunol. Photo by California Trout

New Alameda Creek project boosts fish access

THANKS TO A \$4.3 MILLION GRANT, THE LAST FISH BARRIER WILL BE REMOVED FROM ALAMEDA CREEK

By ROB KLINDT

A collective cheer is in the air as many environmentalists, wildlife enthusiasts, Alameda County officials and residents celebrate news that funding to remove the last man-made barrier to fish passage in Alameda Creek has been secured.

Claire Buchanan, Bay Area Senior Project Manager for California Trout (CalTrout), a non-profit agency focused on ensuring healthy waters and resilient fish populations in the state, said a new \$4.3 million grant will be used to lower a PG&E gas pipeline that spans the creek about 12 miles upstream from the creek's terminus into the bay. Known as the Sunol Valley Fish Passage Project, it is the last of 16 fish passage projects in the Alameda Creek watershed completed in the last 20 years.

Urbanization in the lower 12 miles of the creek in the Fremont area has choked portions, preventing native Chinook salmon and steelhead from traveling to upstream watersheds to spawn. Previous large fish passage projects on the creek include the installation of fish ladders at the Fremont BART station weir and at the inflatable bladder dams near Niles, both done by the Alameda County Water District (ACWD).

Years of preparation

"This project has been in the works in some way shape or form since about 2012," Buchanan said, adding that the grant is from NOAA Fisheries, a federal agency focused on natural resource conservation. "We at CalTrout only got involved in July of last year when the project was already at 65% design," Buchanan noted. As lead agency on this latest project CalTrout was tasked

with coordinating the efforts of other project partners and for navigating permit processes and lining up grant applications. The grant came through in October.

In addition to ACWD, other partners on the project working under the umbrella of Alameda Creek Fisheries Work Group, include Alameda Creek Alliance, Alameda County Flood Control & Water Conservation District, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Zone 7 Water District, Alameda County Resource Conservation District, Trout Unlimited and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Alameda Creek flows from Packard Ridge in the Diablo Range east of San Jose, for about 40 miles until it reaches Fremont where the lower 12 miles of creek are guided through a flood control channel into San Francisco Bay. The upper watershed is more untouched by development and suitable for fish spawning.

Sinking the pipeline

The PG&E pipeline, built in 1963, spans the creek near the Highway 680 overpass in Sunol Valley and is topped by an erosion control apron built from concrete and rock that protrudes above the water. This creates a barrier preventing salmon, lamprey and other anadromous fish—which spend part of their lives in both fresh and salt water—from easily reaching the upper watershed.

Work on the project will start in June 2025 when fish traffic is lower and continue through October. The project will sink the pipeline between 17 and 20 feet below the creek level and remove the erosion control apron to allow easier passage to upper portions of Alameda Creek.

While PG&E is paying the lion's share of work to move the pipeline, additional funding was needed for supplemental work to complete the project. Buchanan said the last chunk of cash—the \$4.3 million grant—is dedicated to revegetation and regrading after the PG&E work is done.

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Cripps Place spreads holiday cheer and raises money for charities

MORE THAN 70 HOMES LIGHT UP WITH DECORATIONS AND CARTOON DISPLAYS AT CHRISTMAS

By CALLIE YUAN

Cripps Place, a tradition that began out of Robert "Spider" Cantley's backyard in the late 1960s, has now turned into a highly anticipated event attended by thousands. For almost 40 years, Cantley and his neighbors decorated their surrounding neighborhood with lights and grand cartoon displays as a fundraiser in memory of his mother who was lost to Leukemia. In 2004, Cantley retired, and a group of neighbors led by Kate Amon formed the Cripps Place Club to take over the event.

In addition to the original Leukemia-Lymphoma Society organization they donated funds to, the Club added five more charities: H.E.R.S. Breast Cancer Foundation, Safe Alternatives to Violent Environments, Adopt an Angel, Ohlone Humane Society's Wildlife Rehab Center and Fremont Family Resource Center.

Vice President Thomas Sharp has lived at Wellington Place and contributed to the event for more than 30 years. "We've had people bringing their grandchildren to the event that they participated in when they were children," Sharp said, "It's a very big tradition in some families."

The event started in Cripps Place and has now expanded to the adjacent area, Wellington Place, where more than 70 homes decorate with lights and displays each year. The Cripps Place Club begins planning operations at the beginning of the year, and the organization is mainly neighborhood-based. Most of the setup is done by neighbors themselves on their properties. For elderly people with difficulties preparing displays, local volunteers are recruited from places such as American High School. Last year, the Cripps Place event fundraised around \$20,000 for local charities. Volunteers walked around with donation buckets and candy canes to sell along the streets, and the contributions were donated to their six main charities.



Festive lights and popular characters make the neighborhood sparkle. Photo courtesy of Thomas Sharp

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