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GreenTown Los Altos Newsletter - December 2009 Issue

Your source for news and updates about adopting environmentally sustainable practices in our homes, schools, businesses and government.

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Almond Freiker Students Arrive in Siberia

So far this year, Almond students have collectively biked and walked over 9200 miles on their way to and from school. Following a virtual route around the world, they have arrived on the shores of Lake Baikal in southeast Siberia. Inspired by the GreenTown Freiker Bike-to-School program, these students have already prevented over 6 tons of CO2 from entering the atmosphere, saved nearly 900 gallons of gas and burned almost half-a-million kid calories! Learn more about the Freiker program [here](#).

Sustainable Land Use Group Update

As you know, the Land Use Group first unveiled its posters depicting a re-vitalized downtown Los Altos at the Big Green Easy in September. Since then, the group has been actively presenting the posters to many key individuals and groups within Los Altos. As of this time, Forrest Linebarger, the chair of the group, has presented to City Council members, members of the city staff, Planning Commission, seniors groups, Los Altos Village Association, Chamber of Commerce, realtors, property owners, the Rotary Club, and many others. In addition, many citizens have viewed the posters in the Main Street Cafe, at the Los Altos Fall Festival, and read about the vision in various Town Crier articles and editorials.

Overall, the reception has been very positive; no group has ever presented such an exciting vision in Los Altos. In fact, a major validation of GreenTown's efforts occurred on November 10 when the City Council voted to fund downtown Vision Workshops. These will be public forums where citizens are encouraged to provide their input on what the downtown should look like in the future.

Looking forward, the Land Use Group's outreach effort will continue with two public presentations planned for January. Details on these will be coming soon. We would like to encourage you and as many citizens as possible to attend the January GreenTown Los Altos Land Use presentations in order to understand GreenTown's vision for a re-vitalized

downtown.

Two upcoming Land Use presentations that you can attend include:

- Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), Wednesday, December 9, 7pm, Room 18 at the Hillview Community Center, 97 Hillview Avenue.
- Downtown Development Committee, Tuesday, January 5, 2010, 7:30am, Council Chambers, Los Altos City Hall, One North San Antonio Road.

In late January or early February the city will conduct its downtown vision workshops. Again, we strongly encourage you and other Los Altos residents to attend. These workshops give all citizens a chance to voice their opinions on a revitalized downtown.

A New Mountain in the Valley?

Newby Island, the landfill in Milpitas that Los Altos uses, has applied for a permit to raise its height by 95 feet. This comes at an interesting time for Los Altos, as our city is currently in the process of reviewing bids for a new waste-hauling contract. GreenTown Los Altos has recommended a comprehensive contract – including expanded services such as organic and hazardous waste collection and increased recycling – that can help to extend the life of the rapidly filling Newby Island landfill and avoid the proposed 10-story increase in height.

According to a GreenTown Los Altos Waste Committee research report prepared in December 2008, Newby Island was 64% full and, based on projected waste disposal rates, was expected to close by June 2025. Most of the waste we currently send to the landfill consists of material that can be composted or recycled.

Of that, more than 40% is organic food waste that could be composted. Why is this so important? Landfilled organic food waste produces methane gas, a greenhouse gas more than 20 times as potent as CO₂ in its warming effect, when considered over a 100-year timeframe. In contrast, composting, either at a composting facility or at home, generates little or no methane.

Another GreenTown recommendation for the new waste contract is to increase residential recycling collection frequency from biweekly to weekly using a standard rolling cart. It is estimated that use of such carts, combined with a weekly curbside collection schedule, would increase diversion of recyclable glass, metal, paper and plastics by 15 – 30 percent.

GreenTown Los Altos will continue to work to make sure Los Altos residents get the comprehensive waste contract that we need. More information about the [waste contract](#) and proposed services here.

GreenTown Los Altos Hosts the First Ever Green Coat Exchange!

The GreenTown Los Altos Green Coat Exchange on November 14 at the Los Altos Youth Center was a great success – and it appears to be the first of its kind in the U.S.! We collected over 400 coats over a three-week period. About 85 coats changed hands at the Coat Exchange, and the 320 remaining coats were delivered to InnVision Shelter for families in need.

Barbara O'Reilly, a GreenTown volunteer, said, "The people who attended were very excited

to have this opportunity to buy pre-owned coats, especially for their kids. They said they hope we do it again next year."

Added Grail Nitsch, one of the key drivers behind the coat drive, "We are passing on much more than cloth. To many, the coat offers help with their financial, emotional, and physical health. It forever will touch my heart that we did this and I will always remember seeing the many, many children's coats."

Thank you to everyone who contributed coats and to the volunteers who made this event a success.

Contact GreenTown Los Altos

We have new email addresses to help you provide input and ideas about GreenTown Los Altos in general or any of our key initiatives.

Sustainable Land Use Group: landuse@greentownlosaltos.org

Waste Reduction: waste@greentownlosaltos.org

Business Coop: coop@greentownlosaltos.org

Freiker Bike-to-School Program: bike@greentownlosaltos.org

Community Education Programs: education@greentownlosaltos.org

General Inquiries: info@greentownlosaltos.org

Holiday Gift Giving That's Good For Everyone!

Consider a holiday gift this year that involves no gift wrap or gift wrapping, won't be returned, and will help Los Altos and Los Altos Hills be a healthier, greener place to live – a tax-deductible donation to GreenTown Los Altos.

Your donation will support volunteer-led programs that reduce local energy use, water use, and waste, and promote healthier lifestyle programs, including encouraging kids to bike to school.

Contributions of any amount are welcome. \$100 provides training and materials for 20 volunteers to help with waste reduction and cleanup at one community event. \$500 supports a public educational forum on climate action. Visit our website or click to [make a donation](#).

Thank you and best wishes for a green and healthy holiday season and New Year!

Sincerely,

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