



Friends of Los Altos, Inc. (FOLA)

A non-profit, non-partisan, volunteer-run organization

City Council Fire Sale of.....our two Fire Stations

At its April 28, 2026 meeting, much to the shock and chagrin of residents, the Los Altos City Council voted on consent (without any discussion) to give away our two fire station buildings and the land surrounding them to the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District (CCFD). This agreement provides no guarantee that the Santa Clara CCFD will continue to staff or operate the two stations. At a time of statewide economic uncertainty and stringent housing mandates, the land transfer gives CCFD collateral worth somewhere in the neighborhood of \$20 million (Council provided no valuation) to borrow against and leaves Los Altos with reduced assets and no decision-making power for future land use of these two sites.

If this sounds wrong to you (as it certainly does to us) you (and all Los Altos residents) can stop this giveaway of our city-owned land. The Santa Clara County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) is the county commission with final say on this questionable deal. On June 3, LAFCO tentatively approved what their agenda calls “Annexation 2026.” However, the LAFCO approval process requires that a protest period be provided in order to allow the community to have a say. The following paragraphs provide information on how residents wishing to register a protest with LAFCO can do so by filling out and mailing an official form to LAFCO.

How to register your protest against Annexation 2026 with LAFCO

The official “LAFCO PROTEST” runs between now and July 8th. LAFCO has a dedicated “PROTEST” website and provides a downloadable link to an official form which residents can use to register their protest. We have provided the link and instructions in the next paragraphs. In order to ensure that a resident’s protest is registered, it is important that forms be mailed on or before July 4. The form has two categories; Landowner and Voter. **If you are both, be sure to fill out both boxes.**

Mail the Protest Form to:

LAFCO of Santa Clara County, 777 North First Street, Suite 410, San Jose, CA 95112

It is our understanding that the all-volunteer group For Los Altos plans to set up collection points throughout the City to streamline the process. More information is available on their website at <http://forlosaltos.org/>. By the way, this is the same volunteer-led effort that successfully collected over 3,000 signatures in just 30 days for the November 2026 ballot initiative to ensure voters have a say in what happens to our other city-owned land— our downtown parking plazas.

Most Importantly, if 6,000 (25% of voters) signed forms are returned to LAFCO by July 8, LAFCO will either stop the fire district deal or put in it on the November ballot. If 12,000 (50%

of voters) signed forms are returned, LAFCO will terminate the deal. Think of this protest form as your ballot.

More information about how our fire stations and fire operations work

It's important to note that the City can get exactly the same service from County Fire WITHOUT giving away the land. It can simply do what numerous other cities in the county have done—provide a long-term lease of the building and land to the county at a nominal cost.

We know that not everyone has the time or interest to delve into the details of how municipalities organize and finance essential services like fire departments. We've provided some background information in the paragraphs below to help those who are interested understand more about the recent history of fire operations in Los Altos. But even if the nitty-gritty details don't interest you, skip the background information but please make sure you download the form, fill it out and mail it.

Background

Los Altos originally transferred fire operations to the Santa Clara County Fire in 1996. However, the City operated under a contract rather than officially joining the district. Under the contractual agreement, the fire stations and the land remained the property of Los Altos with the city responsible for maintenance and repair of the buildings. The fee-based contract with the County expires at the end of 2026 and the City decided not to renew it. Instead, City Council voted to officially annex Los Altos into the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District. Regardless of whether the city continues with a contract or officially joins the county fire district, the staffing and services are identical, assuming the county doesn't unilaterally make changes.

Annexation into Santa Clara County Fire requires the transfer of a percentage of property tax, instead of a fixed fee amount, from the City to the district for payment of services. There is no fiscal impact on residents' property taxes. However, the City would see a decrease in property tax revenues as a result of this new agreement. Under the Annexation agreement which the city has signed, it would also include the transfer of the City's two fire station buildings and land, both Almond and Loyola, to the County. According to a Los Altos city official, structuring the deal without giving the district the land and building, "is not something we explored too much."

The City decided, in its contract negotiations, to give the County a percentage of the property tax revenue the City gets from the State, and to turn over the building maintenance and repair to the County. None of this is unusual, other cities in Santa Clara County have made similar arrangements. What is unusual, however, is that the City decided to GIVE the county title to the buildings and the land. The two fire stations—one on Almond Avenue and the other on Fremont Ave are valued somewhere around \$20+ million in total. Other cities have leased their buildings and land for \$1/year (i.e., retaining control and ownership of the land and buildings with minimal fiscal impact).

In the proposed Annexation agreement, the County would have absolutely no obligation to keep either the fire stations or the land, and according to officials at County Fire, they like this arrangement as the building and land are assets that funds can be borrowed against. For Los Altos, the benefits are less clear. But selling—or worse, giving away---our limited and irreplaceable land doesn't make sense. It also means the County has more say in what changes are made to the structures. Keep in mind both stations are surrounded by single family

residences, so what gets built matter. And keep in mind State Housing Mandates have already removed much local control of land use.

Essentially the City is saying is that we, Los Altos, no longer want the buildings and land for the two fire stations. We'll give you, CCFD, the buildings and land, plus \$1.5M for the maintenance we haven't taken care of over the years, and you, CCFD, will then have responsibility for them. We, Los Altos, no longer care that we have no control over the land, the buildings, what they're used for, or even if you, CCFD, retain the buildings as fire stations. Note that Los Altos is out the \$1.5 million for deferred maintenance whether or not CCFD keeps the buildings.

Our take on this matter

There is no getting around it; this is a really bad deal. Los Altos City Council gives up City ownership of both properties with no guarantee that County Fire will maintain the stations, the staffing levels, or even use the land and facilities as fire stations. The County can borrow against the land, develop it, or sell it, and Los Altos has no power in future land use decisions.

Los Altos is already navigating very aggressive state housing mandates. Losing two more parcels of city-controlled land is a risk Los Altos cannot afford. With a combined property value estimated at \$20 million, our fire stations are an asset that provides significant financial security for the City.

Land transfer is not necessary to preserve fire service. Most regional cities retain ownership of their stations even when annexed into a fire district, often with greater reliance on a property tax exchange- which is also part of the Los Altos deal. Los Altos already benefits from a strong regional coordinated fire safety effort and has other fire service options that preserve City-owned land.

What can you do to stop this give-away of City land?

The Los Altos community has one chance to protest this unnecessary loss of City-owned land. The LAFCO PROTEST form is now available. Registered Los Altos voters and property owners must print, sign, and mail the form to LAFCO before July 8 (we recommend that the form be mailed on or before July 4). The City and County will not be distributing the PROTEST form so this is an entirely grassroots effort to save Los Altos land, once again.

Link to PROTEST form:

<https://santaclaralafco.org/protesthearing#docaccess-9937a6fc31ae7bc49099a3b6f64b2d94>

We do not believe the City and our City Council have the best interests of the community in mind by giving away our land. The only way to stop this process is to "vote" by mailing the form. Please do so.

And that is the way we see it.

Friends of Los Altos Board of Directors

Friends of Los Altos

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<https://friendsoflosaltos.org>