

**Community News**

# Fire district study suggests removing station from Atherton

Consulting firm floats idea of moving services to Redwood City; mayor objects to idea



Station 3 of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District on Almedral Avenue on Wednesday afternoon, Oct. 28, 2015. The fire district has received a consultant firm's report that recommends moving the station out of Atherton. (John Orr / Daily News)

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The Menlo Park Fire Protection District board on Feb. 21 received a study report from an outside firm that, among other things, floats the idea of removing Station 3 from Atherton.

The study by Citygate Associates is to evaluate standards of emergency coverage by the district.

Studied were response times from the district's eight stations, most of which are in Menlo Park, and how various changes might influence those times.

One idea was, what would happen if Station 3, on Almedral Avenue in Atherton, and Station 5, on Fair Oaks Avenue in Menlo Park, were combined into one station at 3101 Middlefield Road in Redwood City? That idea was not recommended by Citygate, which said it was too large an area to cover, and response times would be too slow.

Citygate also was against adding a small station at the new Atherton Town Center, saying it would add overlapping coverage to existing stations.

Saying that Station 3 is too far east, Citygate suggested that moving it to 516 Santa Clara Ave. in Redwood City; while moving Station 5 to 763 Marsh Road in Menlo Park, would improve coverage. That scenario would mean the fire district would have to acquire properties it does not own.

The report, which will be studied over the coming months by the board, also made a number of other suggestions, including ways of increasing services east of U.S. 101.

The idea of removing Atherton's one fire station is not likely to sit well with the Atherton City Council.

"I assume that our fire district colleagues will give us plenty of opportunities to get our opinions in on this," said Atherton Mayor Michael Lempres on Monday. "The people of Atherton, through their taxes, have paid plenty of money for fire protection services, and they want more, not less, presence in Atherton."

The Almedral Avenue site of Station 3 is smaller than the fire district might like, although it has not undertaken to expand its space by buying adjacent properties.

The site was recently improved by the addition of a signal light at the intersection of El Camino Real, paid for by the town and the fire district.

The town has invited the fire district to add a facility at the planned Town Center, a proposal the fire district did not warm to even before the Citygate report.

“We’re looking at putting more resources in our town, not taking them away,” said Lempres, adding that he doesn’t think that the fire district will close Station 3.

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**John Orr** John Orr edits and writes for Daily News feature pages, including arts and entertainment. He also reports on the Town of Atherton and some other cities. Previously, he was mysteries and thrillers books columnist for the Mercury News, and also wrote about movies and blues music.

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