

After introductions, the following topics were covered:

1. Altadena Chamber of Commerce: Ed Meyers, Daniel Harlow, Lori Webster

a. Retail issues in Altadena - Ed Meyers, VP of the CoC

Made reference to the Altadena Visioning meetings as a first step to addressing the issue. Filling vacancies and addressing blight were important issues. Ways to address: larger fines for owners who don't keep their property up. Attracting new business is a challenge, to a certain extent because of rules in Altadena (drive-throughs, for instance). Community Standards parking requirements are an issue. Suggestion from the visioning meetings: parking spaces in common (i.e., shared between businesses).

b. Obstacles to improving the retail landscape - Lori Webster

- Permitting process is complex: not one-stop; have to go to LA
- A business needs 15-20 dedicated parking spaces to open.
- Conundrum of what Altadenans say they want and where they actually shop. They say they want independent stores, but they actually shop at chain stores.
- Community involvement: community needs to know what's there and where it is. The Chamber has information on local businesses.

c. Chamber Business Survey Results (see PDF of PowerPoint agenda for detailed charts) - Daniel Harlow

Survey ran from November 2010 until April 2011; 346 completed surveys out of 385 total respondents.

2. Interview with Alex Cortes - El Patron restaurant

Why Altadena? No one wanted to take a chance there. But I live locally, so I decided to take a chance.

What obstacles did you encounter regarding permits and parking? Have to deal with the city, the county, the health department. My concern was lack of parking.

How many parking spots were you required to have? I had to have 5 spaces.

From the time you decided to open, how long did it take to open? About a month and a half. The people who were in before had done a great job with remodeling to meet code.

What do you like best about doing business in Altadena? I think it's a great community. We had a great welcome since day one. The people are great.

What advice would you offer to someone who wants to open up a restaurant in Altadena? Go for it. If you have a passion for it, take a chance. I'd be happy to answer any questions, or help with the process if you want to start a restaurant.

What's the best time to go to El Patron and not have a long wait? Between 9-11:30 in the morning, and between 1-3:30 in the afternoon.

Questions from the audience:

What's your square footage? Between 1,200-1,300 feet; serving area is about half of it.

What kind of marketing have you used? Facebook, word of mouth.

Do you own or lease? Lease.

You had a following from day one. Were you working somewhere else whose clientele followed you? No, it's just the community response from the local community.

What about using the some of the county park area in the triangle for parking? Steve Lamb answered: the county area actually used to be the parking lot for the restaurant at one time. A previous owner surrendered it to the county because he was paying parcel taxes on both the restaurant and the parking parcels and it got too expensive.

3. Altadena Sheriff's Captain John Benedict

April 1 was his first day at the station. Has been in law enforcement for 30 years. Has been going out in the community to meet people. Says Altadena is "a gem."

Questions

Q: Some deputies have been reassigned since you've been there. Is that a normal pattern to move people after a couple of years? **A:** LA County is large, so opportunities for promotion are plentiful. So sometimes people do move fairly frequently, to a position that better matches their skill set, or for a promotion. Lt. Allen is now the operations chief for the station, replacing Lt. Johnson, who took the captain's vacated position. Lt. White took Lt. Allen's position in the station.

Comment: I've seen deputies speeding through neighborhoods, not following traffic rules. **A:** We have routine, emergency, and priority calls. Priority calls don't require emergency procedures (no lights or sirens), but response needs to be fast.

Comment: I see patrol cars speeding for no apparent reason, going TO the station.

A: If you let us know about these, we will look into it and it will be dealt with.

Q: If we call the 798 number, does the call go to Altadena or Crescenta? **A:** It goes to Altadena.

Q: Is the drug collection location at the station the only one, or are there others in Altadena? **A:** Not in Altadena, but in the county, each sheriff's station has a drop-off.

Q: I heard military is giving excess equipment to law enforcement. Has our station gotten any? **A:** We do have access to Federal surplus, anything from cots to gas masks... We definitely can use some of that stuff, but I don't know if we've actually gotten any.

Q: What is the very loud helicopter that flies over? **A:** Pasadena PD has a helicopter. A from audience: The rescue helicopter flies over our area.

Q: Did the department attend the visioning meetings? Do you have plans to address the speeding issues on Lake and other north-south streets? **A:** No, didn't attend. CHP handles traffic in Altadena. Sheriffs do monitor and do issue tickets if they see something, but CHP has primary responsibility.

Q: Do you encourage citizens to call in to the station when there's a suspicious person in the neighborhood? What is your priority for Neighborhood Watch? **A:** A big yes to the first question. You are our eyes and ears. Neighborhood Watch totally ties

into the first question, so again a big yes. If you want to form a Neighborhood Watch, we will come out and work with you.

4. Open discussion

Walmart: The CofC was invited to meet with Walmart reps on 6/26. There was also a rep for the land owner there. Need to understand that this is a done deal. They don't need a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), don't need an environmental impact study. The site was a Market Basket years ago. The lease was signed just a few weeks ago, so it's not a stealth operation. Will be 43,000 square feet, a neighborhood market. Sixty percent will be food items; the rest non-food. They will employ 60 people, about 1/3 part-time. The store will have a pharmacy. Will be active in the community. There will be a job center for people to apply for jobs. Early Q1 2013 will probably be the opening. Store manager determines what food will be sold. Hours are typically 6a-11p. Investing \$4-6MM in the property.

Q: Why did they choose the area? **A:** Walmart said Altadena is underserved, "food desert."

Q: Is the "broken window syndrome" active in Altadena? **A:** vacant lots are places where undesirables might congregate. Dan: All the lighting around the store has been augmented.

Q: Liquor? **A:** At this point no liquor permit is being requested. That would require a CUP and public hearings.

Q: Wages? **A:** The average is \$12.50/hour, but there are those who make minimum wage and the store manager could make \$100K/year; a job that doesn't require a college degree.

Q: What's being done to improve the blight from the private properties that aren't maintained? **A:** The county is innocent in this matter. They would like those sites to be occupied and paying taxes. The quarterly fine is \$600. The CofC has discussed this. The county needs to hear from citizens if they have complaints.

Q: I have lived in Altadena since 1960 and when I heard about the Walmart going in I was furious. The red light at that intersection is horrendous. You have to wait forever. **A:** We asked about parking and traffic issues; we didn't get a good response. They said they would get back to us.

Q: So is there anything we can do? Can't the timer be reset? **A:** from Sussy Nemer: The county can look at that traffic light even separately from Walmart.

Q: What about traffic? **A:** We did bring up with them that the neighborhood needs to be improved. Walmart may increase business for others in that area.

Q: If we already have a traffic issue, what's going to happen with the trucks supplying the store? **A:** Parking lot is sized for a big rig.

General questions:

Q: What's the roadwork that's going on on Woodbury? **A:** There's going to be a bile lane in the median.

Q: What about the traffic for the debris basin clearing? **A:** There's a meeting about that tomorrow, June 27, 6:30 pm at the Pasadena City Yards (see the Altadena Blog).

Q: Are there any regulations about boarding up vacant properties with large glass windows like the Blockbuster site? Half the windows are broken. **A:** Need to call the county if you see something. Don't assume someone else reported it.

Q: What's happening with the cell phone tower? Loma Alta and Fair Oaks? **A:** Carriers are evaluating two Altadena locations to put up a cell tower.

Announcements:

Altadena Food Co-Op: Trying to form a community-owned enterprise, brick and mortar. Looking for locations right now, hopefully in Altadena or northern Pasadena.

Meeting about Walmart at Webster's Fine Stationers 7:30 pm Friday.

Altadena Community Garden is having its fundraiser on Saturday.