

Former ‘murder capital’ now has none

City officials say East Palo Alto can serve as a model for other communities.

By BRITTNY MEJIA

This is what it took to make a small city safe.

In 1992, East Palo Alto was dubbed the “murder capital” of the U.S., with 42 murders in its 2.5 square miles — a per capita rate higher than that of any other city of any size. In 2023, according to East Palo Alto Police Department statistics released last week, the turnaround seemed complete: zero homicides.

Law enforcement leaders, residents and city officials point to a complicated mix of circumstances that turned a crime-ridden community into what the mayor now calls “one of the safest places to live in the peninsula.”

The San Francisco Peninsula that Mayor Antonio López referred to is home to Stanford University, the opulent town of Atherton and well-heeled Palo Alto. Residents and city leaders scoff at the overly simple idea that gentrification solved the city’s problems, although the median household income has drastically increased, and the typical home price is a little more than \$900,000.

They argue that poverty and crime don’t necessarily go hand in hand. They point to increased development since they earned the grim title of murder capital, including an Ikea and a Four Seasons hotel. Also: more job opportunities, programs for youths and community policing. And time.

“In spite of the wrongs of our past, we can move forward and be a model for everyone,” López said.

East Palo Alto, wedged between San Francisco Bay and Palo Alto, was home to a little more than 28,000 people in the last census count. The median household income is \$103,000.

As tech companies in surrounding areas flourished, the city experienced significant growth.

[See East Palo Alto, A8]



Photographs by JAY L. CLENDENIN Los Angeles Times

NIKKI HALEY speaks in Spirit Lake, Iowa, in December. “She’s a very good communicator, a very skilled debater, she has excellent television ads, and she comes across as strong and articulate,” one academic said.

In Iowa, some in GOP see Haley as their ‘only hope’

Strong finish in state could put her ahead in New Hampshire and onto a narrow path to be party’s nominee, observers say

By SEEMA MEHTA

SPIRIT LAKE, Iowa — Retiree Reggie Alt handed a handwritten seven-page memo detailing her ideas for how to beat former President Trump to one of former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley’s aides.

Then she grasped Haley’s hands and offered the GOP presidential candidate some “Star Wars”-themed advice:

“Think of Obi-Wan Kenobi. You are our only hope,” the 68-year-old Algona resident told Haley.

Haley laughed and wrapped her arms around the former receptionist.

Haley needs the support of caucusgoers such as Alt, an independent voter who said she has supported presidential candidates of both parties over the last half a century, if she hopes to narrow former President Trump’s massive lead in state and national polls ahead of this month’s Iowa caucuses. A strong showing in the Jan. 15 contest could better position her to snatch her party’s nomination from her onetime boss.

“Haley has a strong chance” if Trump’s campaign collapses, said Dianne Bystrom, director emerita

[See Haley, A8]



AT CAMPAIGN events, such as this one in Waukee, Iowa, Haley spends more time talking to voters than she does delivering her speech.

‘She has chutzpah.... She says what she feels. And if you don’t like that, well, you can go elsewhere.’

— MICHELLE GARLAND, independent voter in Clear Lake, Iowa, who supports Nikki Haley

COVID cases surging, may rise further

Wastewater data suggest this winter could see the highest level of coronavirus infections since 2021.

By RONG-GONG LIN II

The winter COVID-and-flu season is ramping up in California and nationwide, with doctors and other experts saying the worst of the respiratory illness season is still to come.

New data show pronounced recent jumps in the rate at which coronavirus and flu tests are coming back positive, as well as the number of hospital-admitted patients testing positive for the viruses. Workplaces are also seeing higher numbers of employees call in sick due to infections.

National wastewater data suggest this winter could see the highest number of coronavirus infections occurring during any given week since the first Omicron wave began in fall 2021.

“And we’re probably not quite to the zenith of it yet,” said Dr. Elizabeth Hudson, regional chief of infectious diseases at Kaiser Permanente Southern California. “Looking at some of the data that we can extrapolate out from the wastewater, by the time we get to about Jan. 10 or so, we’re probably going to be seeing, within the U.S., about 2 million cases a day.”

The good news is the number of people becoming seriously ill remains lower than last year, when hospitals were deluged by a “triple-demic” of COVID, flu and respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV.

The peak of the 2021-22 Omicron wave crested at about 5 million cases a day, Hudson said.

This winter, by contrast, there are far fewer critically ill COVID-19 patients requiring intensive hospital care, even though plenty of people are sick.

Flu is also making its presence felt in a major way.

“There’s just this dramatic rise in influenza,” said Dr.

[See COVID, A12]



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

NEW ERA FOR THE GOLDEN GLOBES

Coming off her hugely successful year in 2023, Taylor Swift hits the red carpet at the 81st Golden Globe Awards held at the Beverly Hilton hotel on Sunday. Scan this code for more coverage.



Blowout on Alaska 1282 could have been calamitous later on

By CHRISTOPHER GOFFARD

The airplane was three miles into the sky and still climbing when passengers heard the boom and felt the blast of icy wind. A chunk of the metal membrane separating the 171 passengers and six crew members from the freezing mid-troposphere had unexpectedly “departed the airplane,” as transportation officials clinically put it.

No serious injuries were reported aboard Alaska Airlines Flight 1282, which made an emergency landing at Portland International Airport in Oregon on Friday night with a door-shaped gap in its side and a cabin full of frightened people.

But transportation officials say the midair blowout could have been calamitous if it had happened a little later in the flight, when the plane was at cruising altitude with passengers unbuckled and walking

around.

“We are very, very fortunate here that this didn’t end up in something more tragic,” said Jennifer Homendy, chair of the National Transportation Safety Board, the agency responsible for investigating transportation accidents.

“I imagine this was a pretty terrifying event,” Homendy said. “We don’t often talk about psychological injury, but I’m sure that occurred here.”

[See Blowout, A12]

Israel warns of ‘another war’

The threat regarding Hezbollah comes after the militant group struck an air traffic control base. **WORLD, A3**

Leaders reach deal on spending

The agreement between House and Senate negotiators could help avert a government shutdown. **NATION, A6**

Weather
Sunny but cool.
L.A. Basin: 63/42. **B6**



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