

Measure O—City of East Palo Alto: Bond Measure

The Question:

Shall the measure constructing a Library, Emergency Command Center, civic center, youth sports park; replacing deteriorating water pipes to provide safe/ clean drinking water; repairing storm drains to prevent flooding; addressing earthquake safety, by authorizing East Palo Alto to issue \$125,000,000 in general obligation bonds, with annual levies averaging \$105.26 per \$100,000 of assessed value (raising approximately \$8,940,000 annually) while bonds are outstanding, with independent audits/ public disclosure, be adopted?

The Situation:

The City of East Palo Alto lacks permanent civic infrastructure and has an aging water delivery system and chronic street flooding.

- **The Civic Infrastructure Deficit**
 - **Rented City Offices:** East Palo Alto currently rents commercial office space for its City Hall operations. It does not own a permanent, dedicated municipal building, costing taxpayers ongoing lease fees.
 - **Inadequate Public Safety Facilities:** The existing police department operates out of cramped facilities that lack modern emergency response capabilities.
 - **Outgrown Library:** The current public library is a small, single-room facility that cannot adequately serve the community's youth or adult literacy needs.
- **Failing Water and Flood Infrastructure**
 - **Chronic Street Flooding:** Lower-income neighborhoods in East Palo Alto suffer severe street flooding during heavy winter storms because of an aging, undersized storm drain system.
 - **Clean Drinking Water Protection:** Portions of the city's underground water pipes are deteriorating, threatening water pressure and long-term water safety.
- **Lack of Youth and Recreational Spaces**
 - **Deficient Park Space:** The city lacks adequate open green spaces, modern playgrounds, and sports facilities for local youth.
 - **Missing Athletic Facilities:** Local students and athletes currently lack standard recreational infrastructure, such as a regulation running track.

The Proposal:

Measure O would authorize the City to issue up to \$125,000,000 in general obligation bonds to finance the acquisition, construction, and improvement of the following:

- Acquisition of land for a civic center that includes a police department, public library, City Hall, and community facilities.
- Water system infrastructure projects.
- Stormwater system infrastructure projects.
- Acquisition of land for recreational facilities and park improvements.

Bond proceeds would be deposited into a separate fund and may be used only for the public improvements described in the measure. Measure O would require an annual independent financial audit and a yearly report from the City's Director of Finance.

Voting "Yes" would mean authorizing the City to issue up to \$125,000,000 in general obligation bonds.

Voting "No" would mean the City would not be authorized to issue the bonds.

Measure O requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

Fiscal Effects:

Measure O would authorize the City to issue up to \$125,000,000 in general obligation bonds. The City estimates the highest required tax rate would be approximately \$114.41 per \$100,000 of assessed value, which the City projects would begin to apply in fiscal year 2028-2029. The City also estimates that the average annual tax rate required to be levied is \$105.26 per \$100,000 of assessed value, with the final fiscal year in which the tax would be collected being 2057-2058. The City also estimates that the total debt service, including principal and interest, required to repay all bonds if issued and sold would be \$268,205,658. The City may be able to leverage private donations and state and federal grants to help finance these improvements if the bonds are issued.

Supporters Say:

- Measure O would protect EPA's safe, clean drinking water by upgrading pipes and protecting against pollution.
- Measure O would provide more safe spaces for the children and young people in East Palo Alto through a modern library and sports park.
- Measure O would improve earthquake safety by updating public facilities and building an emergency command center.
- Measure O would be fiscally responsible because of the built-in accountability provisions.

Opponents Say:

- This is a way for the city to raise taxes without proper oversight.

Supporters:

- Eric Stuart (CEO, EPA Greyhounds)
- Tiffany Hautau (Executive Director, Anamatangi)
- Dr. Heather Starnes Logwood (Executive Director, Live in Peace)
- Antoine Brooks (Physical Security Specialist)
- Sonia Escobar (Treasurer)

Opponents:

- Mark W.A. Hinkle (Silicon Valley Taxpayers Association)

Sources:

- <https://smcacre.gov/elections/november-3-2026-statewide-general-election>
- <https://www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us/clerk/page/city-elections-0>