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City opens spigots on recycled water *Project eventually will save one million gallons of tap water a day*

by [Daniel DeBolt](#)

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The city of Mountain View is opening the valves on a new \$19.8 million recycled water system that officials say may not be the most visible public works project ever, but is visionary nonetheless.

The completion of the project was celebrated at the Rengstorff House at Shoreline Park on Monday afternoon. Congresswoman Anna Eshoo attended, among other officials from Palo Alto, Mountain View and the Santa Clara Valley Water District.

In light of the water shortages that some predict for California cities in the future, "Four, five, six years from now this project will be seen as visionary," said city manager Kevin Duggan.

To build it, the city laid almost seven miles of pipe to form an underground water network all over the Shoreline Business District north of Highway 101. Now landscaping in the area can use recycled water from the sewage treatment plant in East Palo Alto, instead of increasingly expensive and precious tap water. The system is expected to save one million gallons of tap water a day.

Eshoo, who helped secure funding for the project, called it a "contribution to the future."

"Water defines us," she said. "There have been hangings over water in California."

The city is slowly phasing in the system before it reaches the million-gallons-a-day mark. It is currently being used to water vegetation at Charleston Park, the Shoreline Golf Course and Google's soccer field.

A new agreement with the city of Palo Alto allows Mountain View to use up to three million gallons of recycled water a day, but Palo Alto City Council member Peter Drekmeier said Mountain View is welcome to use much more, as millions of gallons are still being dumped into the Bay. Project manager Greg Hosfeldt said the system was designed to allow further expansion into NASA Ames and the rest of the city south of Highway 101.

For now the water will only be used for irrigation purposes, but Hosfeldt said it could be used for other purposes, such as flushing toilets. Although the water has been disinfected it is not meant for drinking.

Public works director Cathy Lazarus said she was unsure how the public would receive the project, noting that other California communities, including San Jose — where recycled water has been proposed as a tap water source — have been scared by the slogan, "From toilet to tap."

The city used \$8.3 million in capital improvement funds for the project, plus another \$5 million the city borrowed through a low-interest state loan. Bay Area Congressman George Miller authored a bill supported by Eshoo that helped a coalition of cities and other agencies obtain federal funding for such projects, including \$5 million that went to Mountain View.

"This is the type of project that costs a lot of money," Duggan said, and unlike a more visible project, such as a new community center, "The public is only going to know about it to the degree we talk about it."

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