

# Some Apple 'spaceship' neighbors say life has been hell

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At the end of Nightingale Avenue, a tall yellow brick facade now blocks the view of the Santa Cruz Mountains to the south. Residents call it the "prison wall."

For Apple, the facade is part of the 100,000-square-foot wellness center at its new "spaceship" campus.

But for some of the Nightingale residents, the prison wall - nicknamed for its drab color - symbolizes four years of pent-up frustration from living next door to Apple's huge construction project.

As Apple puts the finishing touches on its \$5 billion campus on 175 acres, Sunnyvale's Birdland neighborhood has become a microcosm of the tensions that can erupt as tech expands and residents deal with clogged streets, fewer parking spaces and higher housing costs.

"We feel neglected," said Bonnie Lieberman, who is raising two children in the neighborhood. "I feel like because we're on the fringe of the city, we don't get as much concern."

Long before the wellness center was built, the quiet neighborhood on the edge of Sunnyvale sat next to the most ambitious and expensive construction project in Silicon Valley history. More than 12,000 workers are expected to fill the campus' 2.8 million square feet, where they will enjoy an orchard, meadow and pond within the ring's interior grounds.

Despite Apple's best efforts to be a good neighbor, some residents say the construction disrupted the daily lives of many of those living in Birdland for more than four years. And they worry that the campus' full opening later this year may force them out for good.

Residents complain of drivers cutting through the

neighborhood to avoid heavy traffic; constant construction noise, sometimes lasting past midnight; a halo of light above Apple Park at night; dirt and dust pollution, which occasionally cakes their cars; and sharp objects on Homestead and nearby streets puncturing car tires.

Apple says it has been quick to respond to complaints, even providing coupons for car washes.

"I would say we were extremely aware of the local complaints," said Dan Whisenhunt, Apple's vice president of real estate and development. "We got emails all the time for the last few years, and I personally saw every single one of them. If the concern of our neighbors were big enough, I would go visit them at their home."

Nevertheless, some residents say they feel neglected by Cupertino, where Apple is based, and Sunnyvale, their hometown. Even after posting complaints on Nextdoor, alerting Apple and writing letters to their local officials, Birdland residents say they have seen no city intervention over the past few years.

Sunnyvale spokeswoman Jennifer Garnett said the city was aware of the construction's impact on the neighborhood and had been monitoring the situation. She promised "solutions ... based on future data and a large amount of money set aside to address community concerns" but nothing immediate.

Resignation permeates Birdland's streets, organized west to east and named after birds from Albatross Drive to Wren Avenue. Many are bracing for a rapid change in Birdland's demographics once Apple Park opens, as longtime residents - many of whom are retired and middle class - cash in on skyrocketing housing prices and increased demand.

"My life has been a constant hell since October 2013," said IrisAnn Nelson, who has lived on Nightingale Avenue since 1996. "We get treated like we don't matter. Cupertino doesn't care because we're not in Cupertino. Sunnyvale doesn't seem to care either."

Nelson complained to Apple about late night construction noises. In one email in February 2016, she described an "incessant mechanical hum" coming from the site at 12:13 a.m.

A project coordinator for Apple Park replied, saying officials "do not allow any active construction at that time." Three others complained about the noise to the Mercury News.

Apple says they've worked hard to minimize the impact on nearby residents.

Whisenhunt said the company ran an extensive outreach campaign for the last five years, holding more than 100 meetings with local organizations and individuals and sending at least five mailers on environmental design and local economic impact to 26,000 households closest to Apple Park.

Apple also provided additional care to Birdland residents, Whisenhunt said, including a ban on construction trucks and company buses driving on its streets, extra street sweeping and more than 100 car-wash tickets to clean construction dust off their cars.

Because Apple Park pushes against the Cupertino-Sunnyvale border, Apple also partnered with Sunnyvale on a number of public projects.

Apple gave \$4.8 million to the Santa Clara Valley Water District for a pipeline project down North Wolfe Road, near Birdland, to provide Apple and other local businesses with recycled water.

Apple plans to give up to \$500,000 to Sunnyvale to monitor potential traffic impacts from "neighborhood cut-through traffic" and parking intrusions. That's part of about \$1.3 million that Apple will pay to the Valley Transportation Authority and Caltrans to help alleviate freeway traffic.

The monitoring program will occur annually for the first five years after Apple moves into Apple Park. Sunnyvale will make improvements based on the monitoring data.

Whisenhunt noted that Apple has also invested up to \$70 million in local traffic measures across the South Bay.

But Birdland residents say their problems remain. They'd like a stop sign on Nightingale or parking signs that would limit nonresidents to a few hours.

"It's almost like they are waiting for this to be a major, major issue," Lieberman said.

Some worry that the neighborhood of mostly single-story homes built in the 1950s and '60s is living on borrowed time as long-time residents sell their homes to newcomers.

Housing values in the neighborhood have doubled since 2011, according to Art Maryon of Intero Real Estate Services. And in the first six months of 2017, 24 houses in Birdland sold on average at \$1,690,350, according to Maryon.

The increase in property values mirrors what has happened in the rest of Sunnyvale, and across the Bay Area, but Birdland's proximity to Apple Park makes it even more desirable.

"Many say we should just be happy that Apple is raising our property values," said Birdland resident Debby MacDonald. "This doesn't do me much good unless I plan to sell. And I am not sure what we have had to put up with and will continue to put up with is worth the money."

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