

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

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This chapter describes the Plan Area as it existed prior to this Specific Plan's adoption. The information in this chapter helps to explain the context within which the Specific Plan was prepared, including a brief overview of demographics in the Area.

Information in this chapter is based on fieldwork and research initially conducted between 2009 to 2011 and refreshed between 2021 and 2023.

*Sources of statistics used in this chapter (and throughout the EIR and Specific Plan) include: the 2022 5-Year American Community Survey, which provides detailed estimates of community structure and is the most recent full dataset available at the time of preparation of this Specific Plan; the U.S. Department of Finance, which provides the most recent overall figures for population and housing units in the City of East Palo Alto; and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), which provides the most commonly used projections for future growth by year 2040.*



Source: East Palo Alto Community Archive, 2022

## Historic Context

East Palo Alto was first settled by the Ohlone Indians because of its abundance of natural resources, including numerous varieties of acorns; marshland edible plants and shellfish; and game animals such as mule deer and tule elk. It was later settled by Spanish missionaries in the late 1700s. Following Spanish settlement, much of the land that is now East Palo Alto was acquired by Isaiah Churchill Woods in the early 1850s. Woods saw East Palo Alto's potential to become a port for transporting goods from San Francisco to the Peninsula, particularly because of the potential for a wharf at Cooley Landing. There was also speculation that the western terminus of intercontinental rail service would eventually arrive near East Palo Alto. Many of these hopes did not ultimately come to fruition, due in part to the parallel growth and economic success of Redwood City.

Into the early 20th century, East Palo Alto remained a largely rural community with a heavy emphasis on farming. As time went on, the importance of farming diminished and suburban development began to occur. In addition, industrial uses began to emerge within East Palo Alto, particularly in the Plan Area, to take advantage of Ravenswood's rail spur and regional location. The legacy of this shift towards industrial development is still present in the Plan Area today.

## Demographics and Community Profile

During the last decade, there have been a number of demographic changes in the City and Plan Area that reflect regional and national trends. This includes increasing housing prices, changes in population and racial composition, and an expansion of the technology sector in the Bay Area.

### Population and Ethnicity

Since the time of the previous Plan, racial composition in the City has shifted, with a marked decrease in African American residents and a corresponding increase in Pacific Islander, Asian, and White residents. The City and the Plan Area share several characteristics which are distinctly different from neighboring jurisdictions and the broader Silicon Valley region, including aging residents and larger than average household sizes. The City and the Plan Area have experienced a 30% increase in residents aged 45-64 years since 2010. While average household size in and near the Plan Area has decreased slightly to 4.1 persons/household, it is still greater than the Citywide average (3.8 persons/household) and significantly higher than the San Mateo County average of 2.8 persons/household. This suggests that there is a need to develop additional dwelling units (both ownership and rental) to provide increased housing choice for lower-income families experiencing overcrowding. Working residents in the Plan Area are mostly employed outside of the community, and current commuting patterns are dominated by automobile travel, in part because of the lack of convenient and affordable transit options.

### Housing Cost and Demand

Housing is becoming more expensive and more in demand in both the Plan Area and East Palo Alto as a whole. Over the past decade, vacancy rates have declined from 5.5% to 4% in the Plan Area and from 11% to 5.7% in the City. Median home value has increased 40% around the Plan Area and by 30% in the City. Market-rate rents in East Palo Alto have surpassed rents in the County even though they were lower than the County average in 2010. Rental income limits for affordable units in the City have increased significantly by more than 50% for 1-bedroom units and over 60% for 2 bedrooms since 2010. Table 3-1 describes the specific income limits that are affordable for residents in East Palo Alto:

**Table 3-1: Affordable Housing Rent and Income Limits, 2021**

	Household (Unit) Size				
	1 Person (Studio)	2 Person (1 BD)	3 Person (2 BD)	4 Person (3 BD)	5 Person (4 BD)
<b>Market Rents and Utilities</b>					
Average Market-Rate Rent (a)	\$1,849	\$2,332	\$3,216	\$6,105	\$5,051
Utility Costs (b)	\$23	\$28	\$36	\$43	\$51
<b>Maximum Affordable Monthly Rent</b>					
<b>Extremely Low Income (up to 30% AMI)</b>					
Household Income (c)	\$36,550	\$41,800	\$47,000	\$52,200	\$56,400
Max. Affordable Monthly Rent (d)	\$891	\$1,017	\$1,139	\$1,262	\$1,359
Amount Above (Below) Market Rate Rent	(\$958)	(\$1,315)	(\$2,077)	(\$4,843)	(\$3,692)
<b>Very Low Income (31-50% AMI)</b>					
Household Income (c)	\$60,900	\$69,600	\$78,300	\$87,000	\$94,000
Max. Affordable Monthly Rent (d)	\$1,500	\$1,712	\$1,922	\$2,132	\$2,299
Amount Above (Below) Market Rate Rent	(\$350)	(\$620)	(\$1,295)	(\$3,973)	(\$2,752)
<b>Low Income (51-80% AMI)</b>					
Household Income (c)	\$97,600	\$111,550	\$125,500	\$139,400	\$150,600
Max. Affordable Monthly Rent (d)	\$2,417	\$2,761	\$3,102	\$3,442	\$3,714
Amount Above (Below) Market Rate Rent	\$568	\$429	(\$115)	(\$2,663)	(\$1,337)
<b>Moderate Income (81-120% AMI)</b>					
Household Income (c)	\$120,200	\$137,350	\$154,550	\$171,700	\$185,450
Max. Affordable Monthly Rent (d)	\$2,982	\$3,406	\$3,828	\$4,250	\$4,585
Amount Above (Below) Market Rate Rent	\$1,133	\$1,074	\$612	(\$1,856)	(\$466)

Notes: (a) Data reflect average asking rates of units in multifamily properties of five units or more in East Palo Alto as of late March 2021. (b) Housing Authority of the County of San Mateo allowances for tenant-furnished utilities and other services for a multifamily unit that uses gas cooking, heating, and water heating, as well as electricity for lights and appliances. The allowance is based on the number of bedrooms in the unit and a household is assumed to have one bedroom fewer than the number of people in the household. (c) Based on California Department of Housing and Community Development income limits for 2020. (d) These figures are 30% of gross monthly household income, the maximum amount that a household can spend on housing expenses without being considered cost burdened.

Sources: California Department of Housing and Community Development, 2020; CoStar Group, 2021; BAE, 2021.

## Household Income and Economic Conditions

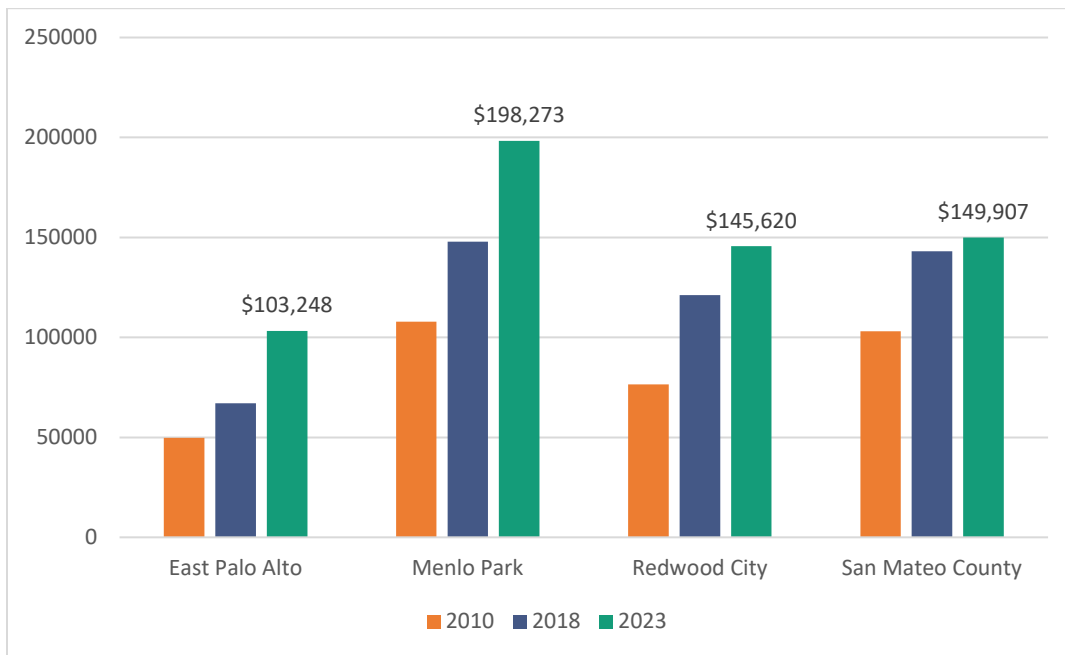
Overall, the City of East Palo Alto is at an economic disadvantage compared to other cities in affluent San Mateo County. East Palo Alto has significantly lower median incomes, higher unemployment rates, higher poverty rates, and fewer jobs per employed resident than surrounding jurisdictions.

**EPA incomes remain far lower than in surrounding cities.** While income in the City has grown steadily since 2010 (household income more than doubled from \$49,711 to \$103,438), it has not kept pace with income growth in the County at large, where the median income increased from \$103,000 to \$149,907 during that same time. In fact, City income has fallen as a percentage of County income over the past decade. Household

incomes also vary greatly by neighborhood in East Palo Alto; incomes in certain areas are 15-25% higher than elsewhere in the City. For example, the average household income in Weeks and Gardens Neighborhoods is \$98,000 compared to \$57,000 on the Westside.

Most significantly, over one-third of households in the Plan Area and East Palo Alto have annual incomes less than \$50,000, which suggests a need for retailers and services that are affordable to lower- and middle-income family households.

**Figure 3-1 Median Household Income**



### Educational Attainment

For both the Plan Area and East Palo Alto, educational attainment data point to the need for aggressive education and workforce training efforts in the community. Approximately 54 percent of Plan Area residents and 52 percent of East Palo Alto residents do not graduate from high school.

The trends in the workforce do not necessarily align with the educational characteristics of the City and Plan Area residents at large. The workforce in East Palo Alto and the Plan Area has grown larger, aged, and become more educated. In contrast, educational attainment of the City and Plan

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Area population is low (and significantly lower than the County average). 32% of East Palo Alto residents and 34% of Plan Area residents have less than a high school or high school education, no college level education compared to 25% countywide (Table 3-2).

**Income in the City is highly correlated to educational attainment.** Residents with a Bachelor’s degree earn more than double compared to those with less than a high school education (\$63,474 versus \$30,999). Those with a graduate degree earn more than three times those with a high school education (\$100,565).

**Table 3-2 Educational Attainment in the City and County**

Educational Level	City	County
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	24.8%	2.2%
9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	9.7%	8.2%
High School Graduate	24.2%	15%
Some College	17%	16.6%
Associate’s Degree	3.7%	7%
Bachelor’s Degree	12.1%	29%
Graduate Degree	8.5%	22%

### Employment and Market Conditions

The main industries that workers in the Plan Area are employed in have changed since 2010. In 2010, the top industries were Accommodation and Food Services (35.6%), followed by Construction and Manufacturing (17.3%). Currently, Health Care is the number one industry in the Plan Area (comprising 35.6% of jobs), which is nearly twice the proportion of healthcare workers in the City overall (Table 3-3).

**Table 3-3 Top Four Industries in the Plan Area and City**

Rank	Plan Area	Share	City	Share
1	Health Care	35.6%	Retail	22.1%
2	Construction & Manufacturing	20.3%	Health Care	17.4%
3	Accommodation & Food Services	15.1%	Accommodation & Food Services	15.8%
4	Public Administration	12.5%	Professional Services	13.8%

Source: LEHD, *On the Map*, 2022.

During hard economic times, unemployment typically rises faster and higher in East Palo Alto compared to neighboring jurisdictions. In the midst of the 2010 economic depression, unemployment was 19.2% in East Palo Alto, while in adjacent Menlo Park the unemployment rate was 6.7%.

### Jobs-Housing Ratio and Jobs-Housing Fit

East Palo Alto suffers from a jobs/housing imbalance, with far more residents than jobs. A typical surrounding jurisdiction has more jobs than employed residents. East Palo Alto is the opposite, with 0.35 jobs for each employed resident in 2022. This would be one of the lowest rates in the State (compared to 0.82 in San Jose or 1.06 in San Francisco).

Another way of looking at jobs and housing is the number of Jobs Per Occupied Housing Unit. East Palo Alto’s number is at 0.52, which is lower than San Mateo County average of 0.70. Again, it is one of the lowest ratios of the cities in the South Bay/Peninsula (compared to 0.82 in Palo Alto, 0.70 in Menlo Park, 0.72 in Mountain View, 0.64 in Redwood City).



**Table 3-4 Growth Projections for the City and Region**

	East Palo Alto		Menlo Park		San Mateo County	
	2022	2040	2022	2040	2022	2040
Total Population	29,888	36,090	31,700	38,500	76,100	96,200
Households	7,610	8,675	12,850	15,430	28,600	36,260
Total Jobs	5,225	6,660	26,350	35,990	51,930	70,250
Employed Residents	15,101	13,395	16,520	22,930	46,470	66,390
Jobs/Employed Residents	0.35	0.50	1.60	1.57	1.12	1.06

Source: ABAG 2040 Projections.

### Jobs-Housing Fit

Jobs-housing “fit” is an alternative way of exploring the relative mismatch between wages and housing affordability. Fit considers the right alignment between the housing stock and the income level of households in a community. Specifically, it is measured as the ratio of low-wage jobs (<\$3,333/month) to low-cost rental units (<\$1,500/month) in a jurisdiction. On this scale, East Palo Alto scores relatively well, with around 2.1 low-wage jobs per low-cost rental unit. The development envisioned by the Specific Plan would have a significant impact on the jobs housing ratio in the City. ABAG projections suggest that in 2040 East Palo Alto will still have less than half a job (0.52) per employed resident, far lower than other jurisdictions in San Mateo County which will continue to have many more jobs than employed residents.

- Given that the development in the Specific Plan area is anticipated to include substantial office and R&D/lab uses, it will be essential to invest in workforce training to ensure that residents can take advantage of these new jobs. Currently, there is a mismatch between the educational attainment and occupations of residents and the projected occupations/skill requirements of new jobs in the Specific Plan area. Future R&D/life science uses are likely to include occupations that pay livable wages and would be accessible to residents without Bachelor’s or advanced degrees through technical and on-the-job training.



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- Flex/industrial uses may provide greater opportunities to offer livable wage jobs that are a better match for the resident workforce; however, market conditions do not favor construction of flex/industrial space without public interventions. Flex/industrial jobs usually offer livable wages and upward mobility.
- Retail/amenity education and skills requirements are compatible with a relatively large share of residents, but these jobs pay lower wages and provide fewer benefits. Investing in small business development could be explored as an alternative way to increase economic opportunity for residents in future retail/amenity spaces.

## Land Use

The term “land use” refers to the way that a property is developed and the activities that take place on the property. This section summarizes land use issues in the Plan Area.

## Existing Uses

The Plan Area has a variety of existing land uses, with an emphasis on retail, light industrial, community/special use, and multifamily housing. Relatively few significant land use changes have occurred in the past decade, with the main exceptions being residential development at Courtyard Housing, the Ravenswood Family Health Center, and EPACENTER. Table 3-2 provides totals for each land use in the Plan Area, while Figure 3-2 shows a map of the existing land uses.

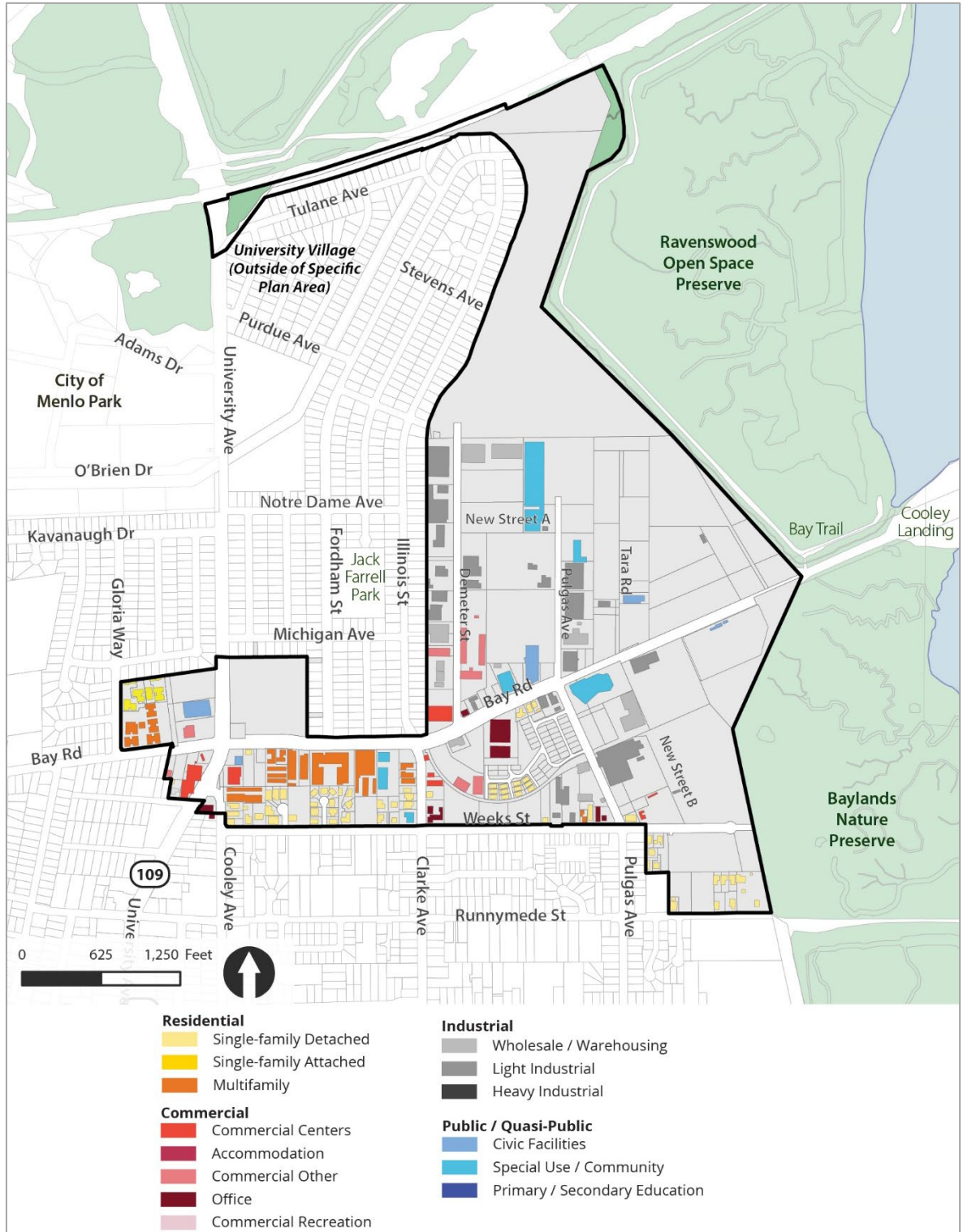
**Table 3-5: Existing Land Use (2023)**

	Non-Residential					Residential
	Office	R&D/Life Science	Light Industrial	Retail	Civic/Community	Housing Units
<b>Existing Plan Area</b>	125,000	0	125,000	200,000	100,000	350 (1,160*)
<b>City Total excluding Plan Area</b>	600,000	0	75,000	350,000	100,000	7,992
<i>City &amp; Plan Area</i>	750,000	0	200,000	550,000	200,000	8,342

(\*including housing units in University Village, formerly within Plan Area)

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**Figure 3-2: Existing Land Use**



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Courtyard Housing  
apartments



CENTERARTS



City Hall and County  
Library

- **Single-Family Residential.** A small number of single-family homes are located along the south side of Bay Road, along Weeks Street, and in the southeastern corner of the Plan Area.
- **Multi-Family Residential.** Multi-family residential uses, which include duplexes, triplexes, apartment buildings, condominiums, and townhomes, are generally concentrated along Bay Road.
- **Retail.** Retail uses in the Plan Area include corner stores, salons, restaurants, cell phone stores, clothing stores, and other small, neighborhood-serving businesses. Retail is most heavily concentrated in the 4 Corners area, near the Bay Road/University Avenue intersection.
- **Office.** Office uses are relatively rare in the Plan Area, with the Bloomhouse office building located at the end of Pulgas Avenue and another located on the north side of Bay Road. A future JobTrain office is planned on the west side of Pulgas Avenue.
- **Public/Institutional.** Public and institutional uses include social services, churches, schools, medical/health facilities, and government buildings. These uses are spread throughout the Plan Area. One notable public use in the Plan Area is the San Mateo County East Palo Alto Government Center, located on the west side of University Avenue just north of Bay Road. The building includes East Palo Alto's City Hall, the City Council chambers, a community meeting room, and a public library. A second large public use is the EPACENTER, located at Bay Road and Pulgas Avenue.
- **Industrial.** Industrial uses include manufacturing businesses, repair shops, warehouses that distribute goods, storage facilities, and other similar uses. These uses are generally located in the Ravenswood Business District in the eastern half of the Plan Area.



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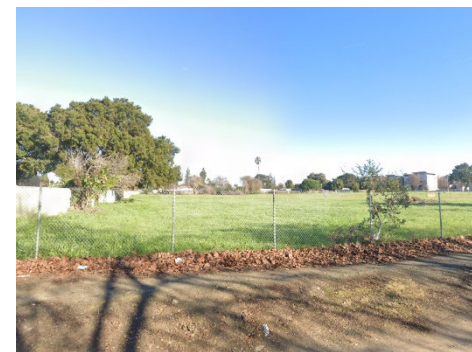
- **Park/Open Space.** Jack Farrell Park, located in the University Village neighborhood, is the only existing park located in the Plan Area. Additionally, a park is located at Cooley Landing, at the far east end of Bay Road. Open space is found at the bay's edge, where development is prohibited or strictly limited.
- **Infrastructure.** Utility infrastructure includes rail corridors, utility corridors, electrical substations and similar equipment. A major electrical substation is located at the east end of Bay Road, near Cooley Landing. Utility transmission infrastructure is also present in the Plan Area. Most notably, Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) towers and transmission lines are highly visible along Purdue Avenue in the University Village neighborhood. Another major infrastructure feature in the Plan Area is the Hetch Hetchy Aqueduct, owned by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), which carries water from Yosemite National Park to cities on the peninsula, including East Palo Alto. The Aqueduct runs southeast beneath the University Village neighborhood and passes beneath the Costaño Elementary School site. Additionally, active and former rail corridors are located along the northern boundary of the Plan Area and through the interior of the block bounded by Bay Road, Clarke Avenue, Pulgas Avenue, and Weeks Street.
- **Vacant Properties.** The Plan Area includes many properties that are undeveloped and contain no usable structures. Vacant properties are widespread in the Plan Area, the largest and most concentrated of which are located in the eastern half of the Plan Area. Some are former industrial sites; others appear to have never been developed. The most visible vacant site is located at the northeast corner of the Bay Road/University Avenue intersection. These sites provide no benefit to the City or the community in their current state.



Jack Farrell Park entrance



Bay Road Phase II Improvements

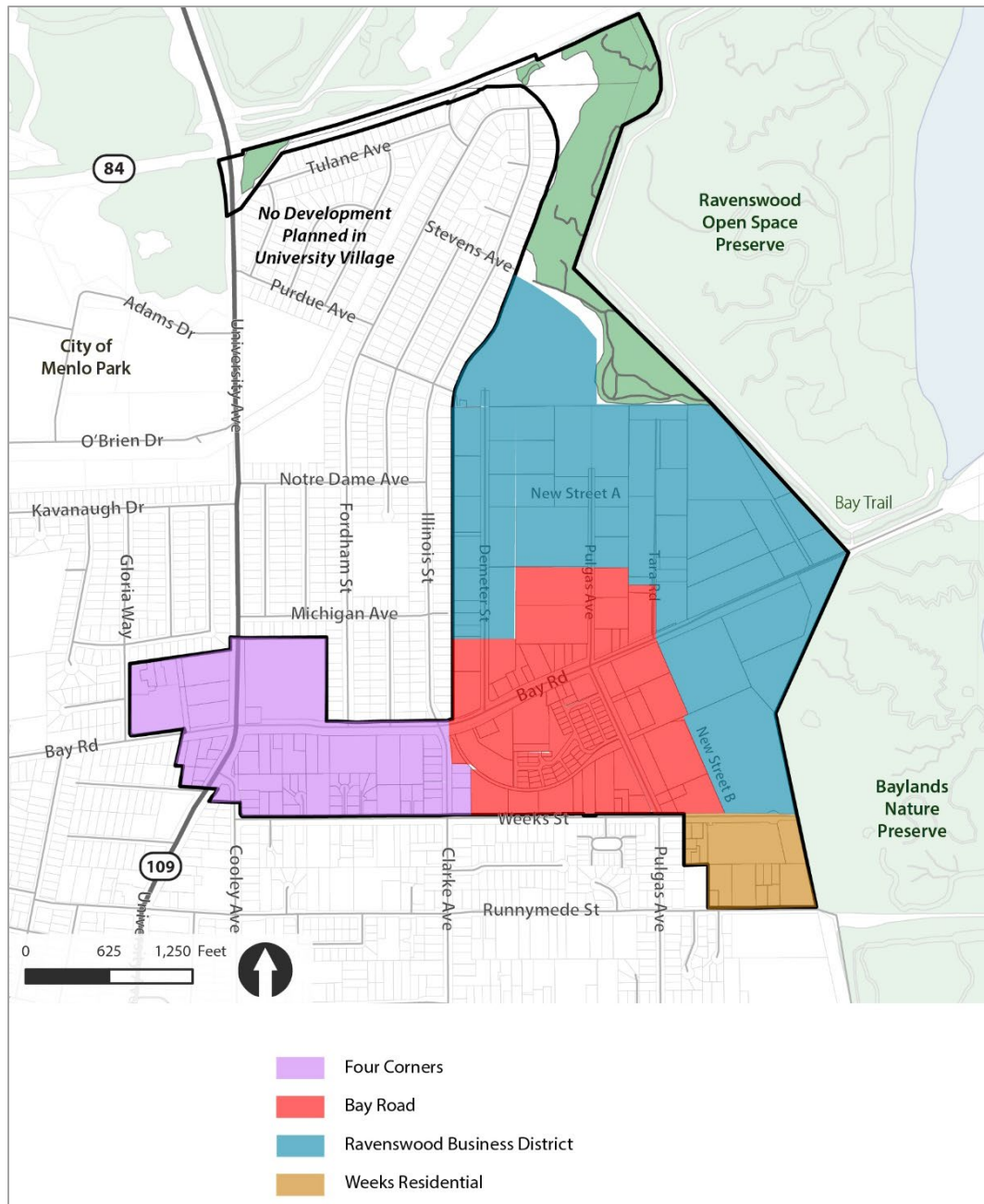


4 Corners vacant site

## Urban Design Character

This section describes the physical form and appearance of the Plan Area’s distinct neighborhoods, districts, and corridors. Figure 3-3 shows a map of these subareas. Locations outside of these four subareas in the Plan Area are not appropriate for urban development.

**Figure 3-3: Urban Design Subareas**



### 4 Corners Subarea

The primary physical feature of the 4 Corners subarea is the intersection of University Avenue and Bay Road. Three corners are developed with one-story structures behind surface parking lots. The fourth corner is a large vacant lot with a fence, creating a void in the built landscape.



Moving away from the primary intersection, the physical environment changes in four different ways. Up University Avenue to the north is the San Mateo County East Palo Alto Government Center building, a three-story building from the 1970s with precast concrete and horizontal windows. It is the home of East Palo Alto's City Hall, as well as the East Palo Alto Branch Library and County offices. Down University Avenue to the south are single-story commercial buildings that line both sides of University Avenue. The buildings on the west side are brightly painted, engage the street, and generally have zero side setbacks and minimal front setbacks, though these are not uniform. On the east side, south of the concrete block Post Office, is a commercial strip that sets back behind parking.

West of the 4 Corners intersection, Bay Road has a number of commercial buildings on its south side, some of them offices in converted houses. Many of these are set back considerably from the street and contain surface parking areas in front. Across Bay Road from these buildings are recently built and well-maintained two-story apartments with landscaped setbacks and prominent trellis features, marking entry to a shared open space. To the east of University Avenue along Bay Road are more apartments, old and new, some well maintained and others not. The apartment buildings generally have pitched roofs, and their façades are composed of brick and concrete materials. These buildings are set back moderately from Bay Road and help to frame the street.

The 4 Corners subarea also includes areas located on the north side of Weeks Street, from Cooley Avenue to Pulgas Avenue. This area generally includes one-story single-family houses, most with approximately three-foot fences in the front. These homes are set back generously from the street and include substantial front yards.



## Ravenswood Business District Subarea

This subarea contains a variety of structures, the majority of which are utilitarian in character and were designed for industrial use. A typical characteristic of this type of development is that each building has space around it on all sides, and most turn their back to the street. The structures are generally single-story, large floorplate buildings greater than 15 feet in height so as to accommodate trucking, loading and shipping activities. For many of these properties, the prominent feature from the street is the fence around the lot, which is often six feet high or more. This type of development is prominent north and south of Bay Road on Demeter Street, Pulgas Avenue, and Tara Street.



Vacant land and outdoor storage areas are also prominent in this subarea. These uses make the visual character of the area seem discontinuous, and property lines are often indistinguishable. However, an exception to this is EPACENTER at the corner of Bay Road and Pulgas Avenue. The EPACENTER (shown at right), is a two-story complex completed in 2022 that houses a creative youth development organization. The complex blends the boxy warehouse character of the surrounding buildings with colorful, modern accents and open elements like glass foyers and long breezeways.



The visual character of the southeast corner of the Ravenswood Subarea is somewhat different. It is defined by vacant lots and some limited residential uses. Single-family homes are generally single-story and set back significantly from the street, as on other parts of Weeks Street. A group of single-family homes, most of which are two stories tall, is located on the north side of Runnymede Street, just east of Veronica Court. The orientation of these homes varies, but most of the homes do not engage Runnymede Street directly. Roofs of these homes are tiled and pitched.

## Bay Road Corridor Subarea

In the western, residential portion of Bay Road from Fordham Street to Illinois Street, multi-family apartment buildings are the predominant use on the south side of the street. A four-story apartment building rises above



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the south side of the street in this area. It has a contemporary character, with steel and wood siding. It fronts Bay Road with storefront windows and entries at the ground level. Older multi-family apartments are moderately set back from Bay Road by approximately ten feet.

On the northern side of this portion of Bay Road, the street is lined by the side yard fences of single-family homes, which face the north-south residential streets that intersect Bay Road in this area.

Development along Bay Road east of Illinois Street exhibits an industrial character. Buildings are usually one-story and have few windows, which is a result of their industrial function. Buildings are often composed of brick and metal materials. Two Quonset huts are located in a prominent location on the south side of the street at a bend in Bay Road, near its intersection with Demeter Street. These structures' distinctive arched roofs make them stand out within the Bay Road corridor and represent a unique aspect of this subarea's industrial character.

From Tara Street to Cooley Landing, the Bay Road corridor retains a strong industrial character, with large warehouses, outdoor storage, and high fencing around many properties. The lack of buildings defines the character of the street. The area feels open and somewhat neglected due to the presence of undeveloped land and discontinuity in built structures.



*Looking eastward along Bay Road*

## Parks and Open Space

This section describes the public parks and natural open spaces that currently exist in the Plan Area.

### City Parks

Jack Farrell Park is located on Fordham Street between Notre Dame Avenue and Michigan Avenue. Jack Farrell Park sits low in a basin under mature shade trees, surrounded by residential areas. One side is open to the street, while the three other three sides are lined with fences to separate the park from backyards. The site is easily navigated with a steady stream of residents who enjoy taking a walk around the loop. Its program consists of mostly active recreation features, including a baseball field, basketball field, and a perimeter walking loop, alongside a playground and dispersed picnic areas. There are murals on the walls lining the south side of the park, adding art into the East Palo Alto park system.

The 11.5-acre Cooley Landing site is located at the eastern terminus of Bay Road primarily in East Palo Alto and borders tidal marshlands and mud flats at the edge of the San Francisco Bay. Cooley Landing is the newest addition to the East Palo Alto parks system. Located along the Bay Trail and separated from the rest of the city by vast swaths of marsh, it features new buildings, seating, and educational signage. It provides a distinct experience that allows residents to connect more with the natural resources of the shoreline. The park accommodates low-impact recreational uses such as walking, bicycling, picnicking, bird watching, water access, and nature study. Public access for pedestrians and bicyclists is allowed on Cooley Landing from sunrise to sunset. Bay Road is envisioned as the heart of East Palo Alto and will ultimately terminate at the Cooley Landing Park site.

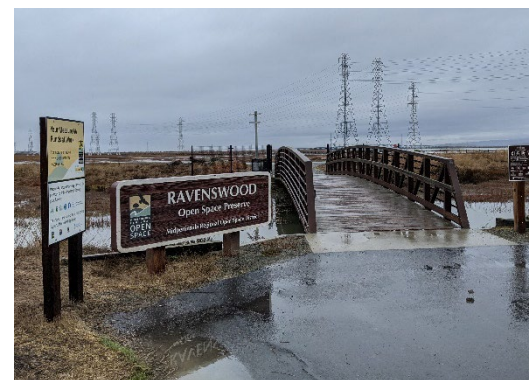
In addition, there is publicly accessible common open space within the Pulte Homes subdivision on Montage Circle and Costano Elementary School has a large track and athletic sports field (which is intermittently available to the public).



Joel Davis Park



MLK Junior Park



Ravenswood Open Space Preserve

### Open Spaces, Preservation Areas, and Trails

Natural open space and wetlands are found at the bay's edge in the form of Ravenswood Open Space Preserve and Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve. The Ravenswood Open Space Preserve is owned and managed by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District. The 373-acre preserve is largely within the City of Menlo Park and is located north and south of the Dumbarton Bridge. The southern portion of the preserve offers pedestrian and bicycle access along the shore and levees along the marshland. Other nearby open spaces include the Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve, which is owned and managed by the City of Palo Alto. The Baylands, located just east and south of the East Palo Alto city limits, include approximately 1,940 acres of salt marsh and mud flat habitats.

The San Francisco Bay Trail, the multi-use public recreation corridor along San Francisco and San Pablo Bays, has two sections within East Palo Alto. The northern section runs approximately along the boundary of the Plan Area and the edge of the Ravenswood Open Space Preserve.

### Traffic and Circulation

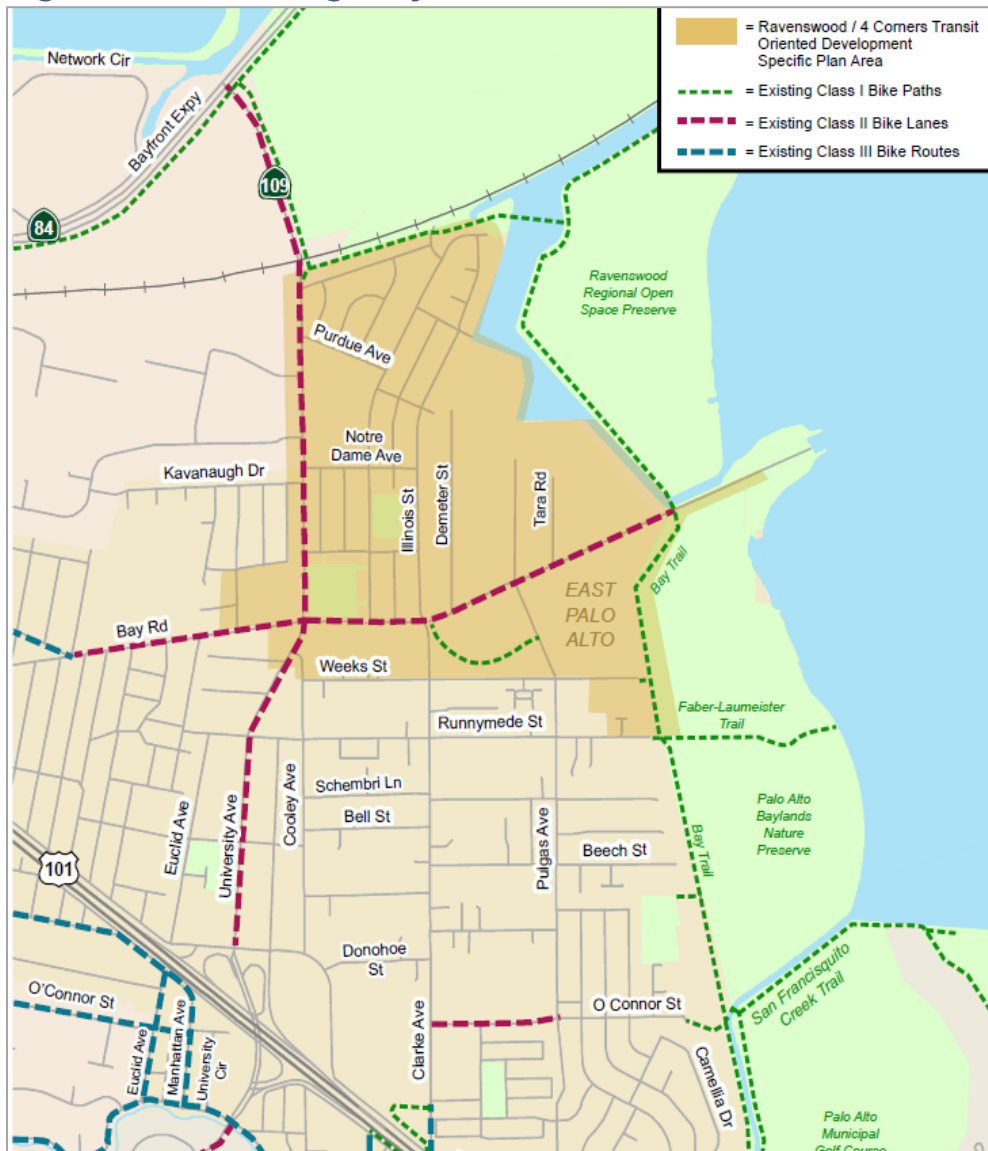
This section describes the existing pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and vehicle circulation in and around the Plan Area.

### Bicycle Facilities

Bicycle facilities are divided into four classes. Class I bike paths offer two-way bicycle travel on a separate path physically separated from motor vehicles and parallel streets. Class II bike lanes are striped bike lanes on roadways marked by signage and pavement markings. Class III bike routes are intended to provide continuity to the bikeway system with bike route signs and optional pavement markings. Class IV bikeways (separated bikeways) are bikeways for the exclusive use of bicycles and includes a separation required between the separated bikeway and the through vehicular traffic. The separation may include, but is not limited to, grade separation, flexible posts, inflexible physical barriers, or on-street parking. Existing bicycle facilities in and around the Plan Area are described below and shown on Figure 3-4.

The City’s Bicycle Master Plan identifies twenty-five segments of Class I, II, and III bike lanes (there are no Class IV bikeways). Thirty-five percent are implemented. The existing bicycle network in East Palo Alto exhibits various gaps, particularly across Highway 101. Planned facilities, such as the bicycle and pedestrian bridge across Highway 101 and bicycle lanes along Pulgas Avenue will improve connectivity, though additional potential new bicycle corridors should be studied, including: University Avenue (buffered lanes), Bell Street, Clarke Avenue, Newell Road, and various connections to the Bay Trail.

**Figure 3-4: Existing Bicycle Facilities**

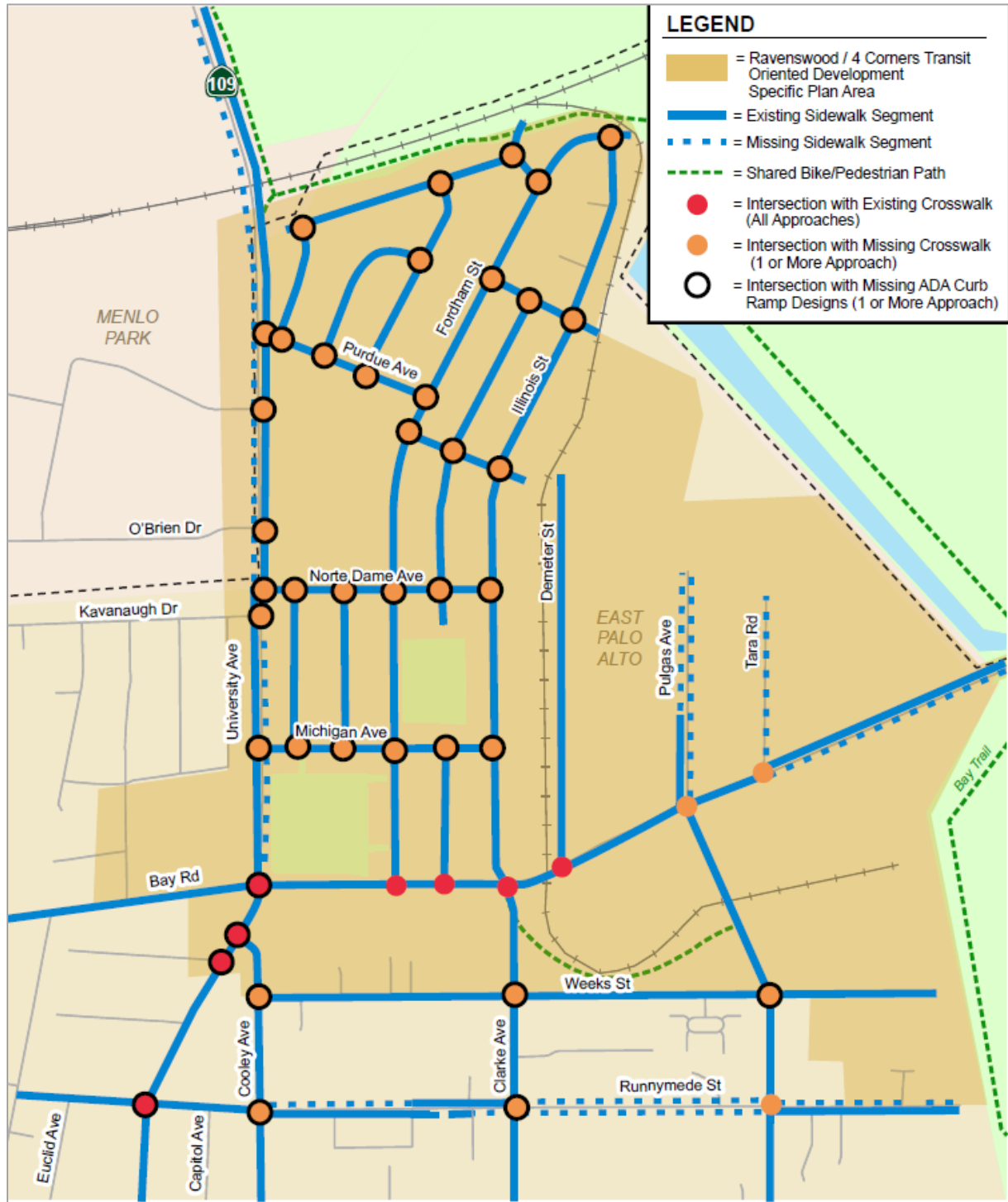


**Pedestrian Facilities**

Pedestrian facilities in the Plan Area consist primarily of sidewalks and crosswalks along the streets in the residential neighborhoods and commercial areas in the Plan Area. Sidewalks and crosswalks are found on many roadways, but there are also many street segments within the Plan Area (e.g., portions of Pulgas Avenue, Tara Road, Bay Road, University Avenue, and Runnymede Street) that lack them (see Figure 3-5). Most intersections within and immediately adjacent to the Plan Area lack crosswalks on at least one approach and do not have ADA compliant curb ramps. Additionally, pedestrian connections to the open space north of the Plan Area are inconvenient because sidewalks are currently found on only one side of University Avenue. Similarly, the absence of sidewalks on both sides of Bay Road discourages pedestrian travel to the open space to the east of the Plan Area.



Figure 3-5: Existing and Future Pedestrian Facilities



### Vehicular Circulation

Currently, the eastern portion of Ravenswood has few roadways making circulation difficult since most trips are focused on Bay Road and increasing the length of vehicle trips. Regional access to the Plan Area is provided by US 101 and SR 84. Local access to the Plan Area is provided via Willow Road, University Avenue, Clarke Avenue, Pulgas Avenue, Bay Road, and East Bayshore Road. For the purposes of this study, US 101, East Bayshore Road, and all parallel streets are considered to run east-west, and cross streets, such as University Avenue and Willow Road, are considered to run north-south.

Existing traffic volumes for most study intersections were obtained from manual peak-hour turning- movement counts conducted prior to the pandemic (in 2018 to 2020) while nearby schools were in session. For study intersections where 2018 or 2019 count data are not available, 2017 traffic volumes were used and increased by 1.2% per year to 2019. They were analyzed in terms of their "levels of service" (LOS), a measure of traffic flow through an intersection, where A represents free-flowing traffic and F represents congestion and very slow-moving traffic. The City of East Palo Alto's minimum standard for intersections is LOS D (signal timing standards are established by San Mateo County).

13 intersections currently operate at unacceptable levels of service:

- Willow Road and Bayfront Expressway
- Willow Road and Newbridge Street
- University Avenue and Bayfront Expressway
- Euclid Avenue and Donohoe Street (unsignalized)
- US 101 NB On-Ramp/University Plaza Phase II driveway and Donohoe Street (unsignalized)
- University Avenue and Purdue Avenue (unsignalized)
- University Avenue and Donohoe Street
- University Avenue and US 101 SB Off Ramp
- University Avenue and Woodland Avenue
- University Circle and Woodland Avenue
- US 101 NB Off Ramp/University Plaza driveway and Donohoe Street
- East Bayshore Road and Donohoe Street
- University Avenue and Adams Drive (unsignalized)



### **SamTrans Bus Service**

Existing bus services to the Plan Area include five SamTrans bus routes with stops along Bay Road, University Avenue, Fordham Street, Notre Dame Avenue, Purdue Avenue, and Pulgas Avenue. The Plan Area is located approximately three miles from two Caltrain stations (Palo Alto Caltrain Station and Menlo Park Caltrain Station). SamTrans routes provide a connection to the Caltrain Stations.

As shown in Figure 3-6, SamTrans operates a variety of bus routes that run through the Plan Area. These routes connect East Palo Alto to the Stanford Shopping Center in Palo Alto, the Onetta Harris Community Center in Menlo Park, and the Redwood City and Palo Alto Caltrain stations, among other destinations. However, only two of these lines provide service through the Plan Area.

In March 2022, SamTrans adopted Reimagine SamTrans, which identifies East Palo Alto as an on-demand zone, where riders call or use a mobile app to request a ride, and a vehicle picks them up and drops them off anywhere within the designated zone. Riders pay a fare and may share the vehicle with other riders, just like riding a regular SamTrans bus.

### **EPX Express Bus Service**

As of 2024, SamTrans now operates an express bus route that runs from East Palo Alto to Downtown San Francisco, utilizing the Highway 101 express lanes to maximize travel speed and efficient delivery of passengers. The service passes through Redwood City (Stanford Redwood City & Caltrain), SFO Rental Car AirTrain, and San Bruno BART. EPX runs on weekdays between around 7am to 7pm, approximately every 50 minutes .

Figure 3-6 Existing Transit Services in the Plan Area

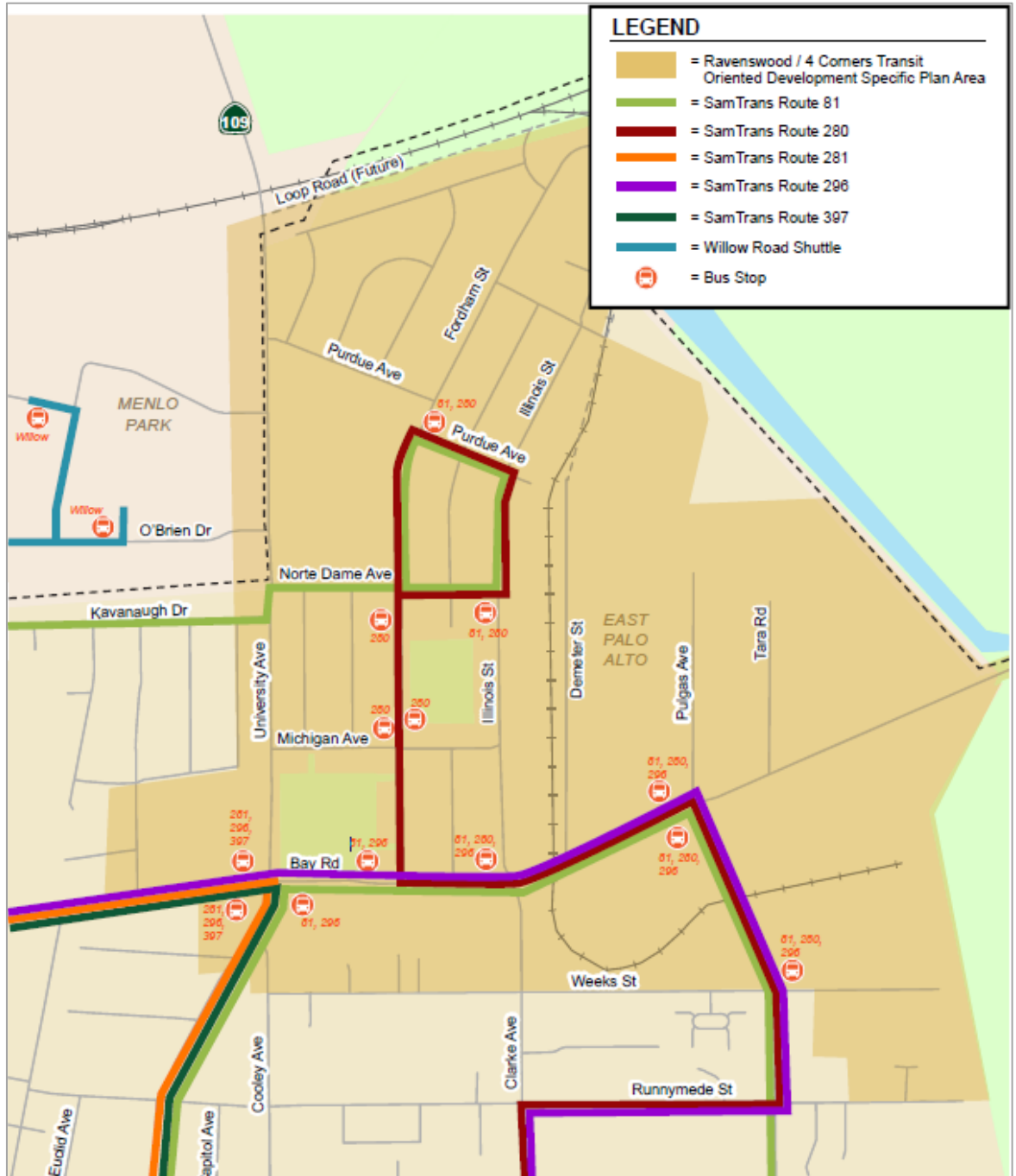
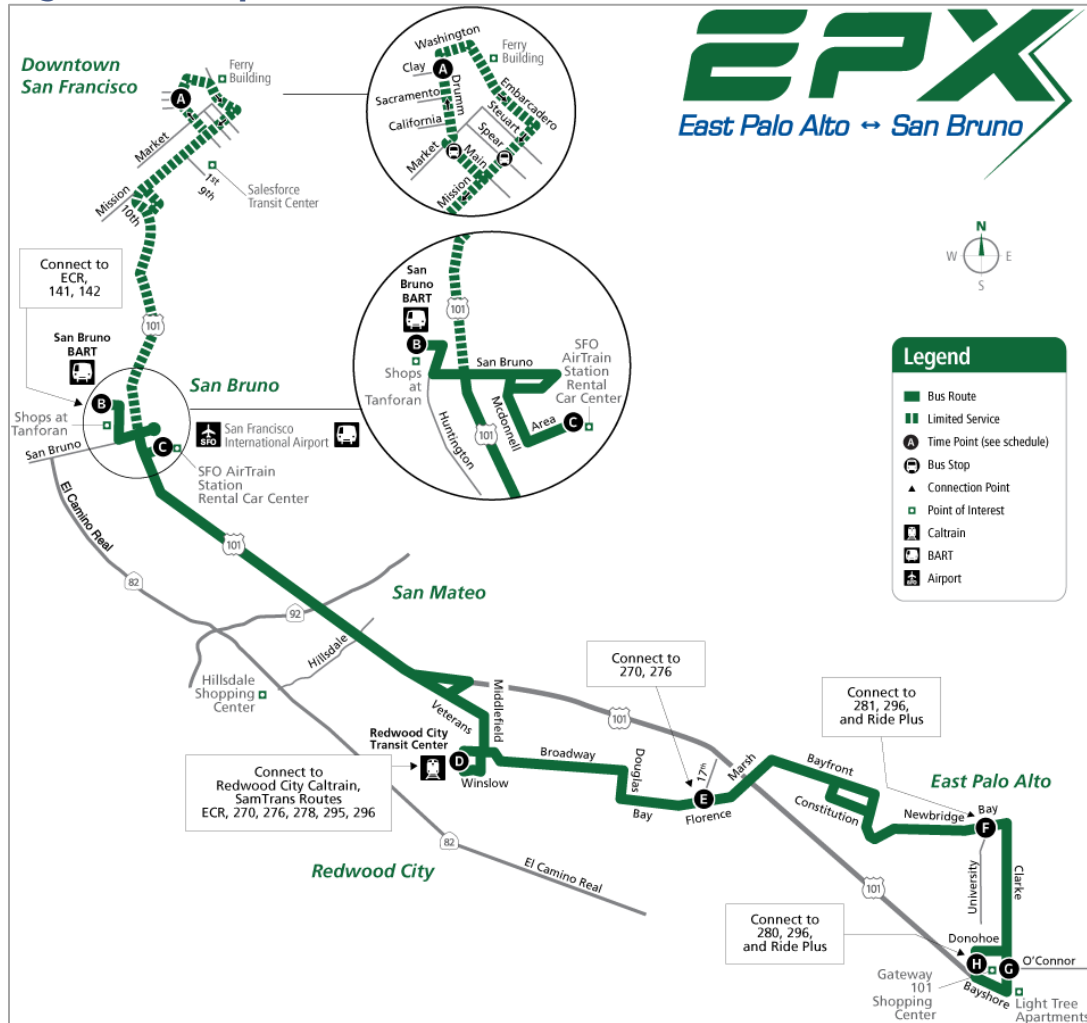


Figure 3-7 Express SamTrans Route



Source: SamTrans, 2024

### Willow Road Shuttle Service

The Willow Road Shuttle is a free shuttle provided by the City of Menlo Park and Caltrain. The shuttle runs between the Menlo Park Caltrain Station and the Willow Road Business Park. The morning shuttle runs between 6:40 AM and 9:25 AM and the afternoon shuttle runs between 4:05 PM and 6:30 PM, with headways of 60 minutes. The closest shuttle stops are just outside of the Plan area at 1200 O’Brien Drive, 1505 O’Brien Drive, and Adams Court.

### **AC Transit Dumbarton Express Service**

The Dumbarton Express Shuttle provides service between Palo Alto and the Union City BART Station via two different routes: DB and DB1. These routes operate on Willow Road, the Bayfront Expressway, Highway 101, and University Avenue. Neither route has a stop in the Plan Area; the nearest stop is at Newbridge Street. The Dumbarton Express operates on 20- to 30-minute headways.

### **Caltrain Service**

Caltrain provides commuter rail service between San Francisco and Gilroy. There is currently no direct access to Caltrain from the Plan Area. The Plan Area is located about 4 miles northeast of the Palo Alto Caltrain station, which is located near the intersection of Alma Street and University Avenue in Downtown Palo Alto. At the Palo Alto station, Caltrain provides service with approximately 20- to 30-minute headways during the weekday commute hours.

### **Proposed Dumbarton Bus Rapid Transit Service**

The San Mateo County Transportation Authority is working to plan and construct the Dumbarton Forward Project, which will provide bus rapid transit service along the existing rail line that passes just north of the Plan Area. This future SamTrans BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) would run between University Ave and Redwood City, with a stop at the northern city limits. SamTrans is conducting a final feasibility study, with a sole focus on the Peninsula side, with a goal of construction within three to five years.

## **Infrastructure**

This section briefly describes the Plan Area's existing water, wastewater, and stormwater systems.

### **Water**

East Palo Alto's municipal water system, which serves the Plan Area, is managed by Veolia North America (Veolia) under a contract with the City that started in 2020. As of 2020, the City serves 4,058 connections within its service area. All municipal water supplied to the City of East Palo Alto is provided to Veolia by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC). Small areas within the City boundaries are served by the

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O'Connor Tract Cooperative Water Company and the Palo Alto Park Mutual Water Company.

The water system for the City is primarily served with purchased water delivered through the SFPUC Supply Turnouts. The main source of the SFPUC's water, approximately 85 percent, is from the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in the Sierra Nevada. The remaining 15 percent of the SFPUC's water supply comes from Bay Area reservoirs in the Alameda and Peninsula watersheds.

Per the Water Supply Agreement between the City and SFPUC, the City has a total contracted supply of 1,271 million gallons per day (MGD). The City's need is only a fraction of this, with an average projected demand of 692 MGD for 2025. Considering historical water use, expected population increase and other growth, climatic variability, and other assumptions, water demand within the City is projected to increase to 1,178 MG by 2045, with the increased development in the Specific Plan area accounting for 100 MGD of this total.

A groundwater well located at the intersection of Bay Road and Gloria Way in the City is the only other source of water besides SFPUC. Groundwater is treated at the well site. The City operates and maintains over 66 miles of pipe, as well as a groundwater well and a water treatment facility. The City does not currently have any water storage tanks. It also does not currently supply non-potable or recycled water to customers.

### Wastewater

The East Palo Alto Sanitary District (EPASD) serves the southern half of the Plan Area, which has greater development potential. Wastewater conveyance and treatment services to the northern half of the Plan Area are provided by the West Bay Sanitary District (WBSD).

The EPASD serves portions of the City and the City of Menlo Park through a collection system comprised of approximately 35 miles of gravity sewer mains, ranging from 6-inch diameter to 24-inch diameter pipe. Wastewater collected by the EPASD is treated at the Palo Alto Regional Water Quality Control Plant (PARWQCP). The City of Palo Alto owns, maintains and upgrades the PARWQCP, and the contributing jurisdictions, including East Palo Alto, purchase capacity rights. The EPASD collected approximately 438 MG of wastewater from the City's service area in 2020.

The WBSD serves customers within the northern portion of the City, as well as other customers within the cities of Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley, and Woodside, and unincorporated San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. The WBSD collection system conveys wastewater to the Menlo Park Pumping Station, where it is then transported to the Silicon Valley Clean Water (SVCW) facilities in Redwood City for treatment and discharge to the San Francisco Bay. The WBSD collected approximately 52 MG of wastewater from the City's service area in 2020.

The SVCW wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is jointly owned and operated by WBSD and the Cities of Redwood City, Belmont, and San Carlos as a joint powers authority. The water recycled by the SVCW WWTP is reused in Redwood City.

### Stormwater

The East Palo Alto storm drain system is comprised of several different watersheds that primarily gravity discharge to San Francisco Bay. Stormwater in East Palo Alto drains into two major drainage systems: the Runnymede Storm Drain System and the O'Connor Storm Drain System. The Plan Area is closest to the Runnymede Storm Drain System. Stormwater infrastructure within the Plan Area is inadequate. Many of the streets do not have storm drains, and those that do are unable to handle stormwater during peak events.

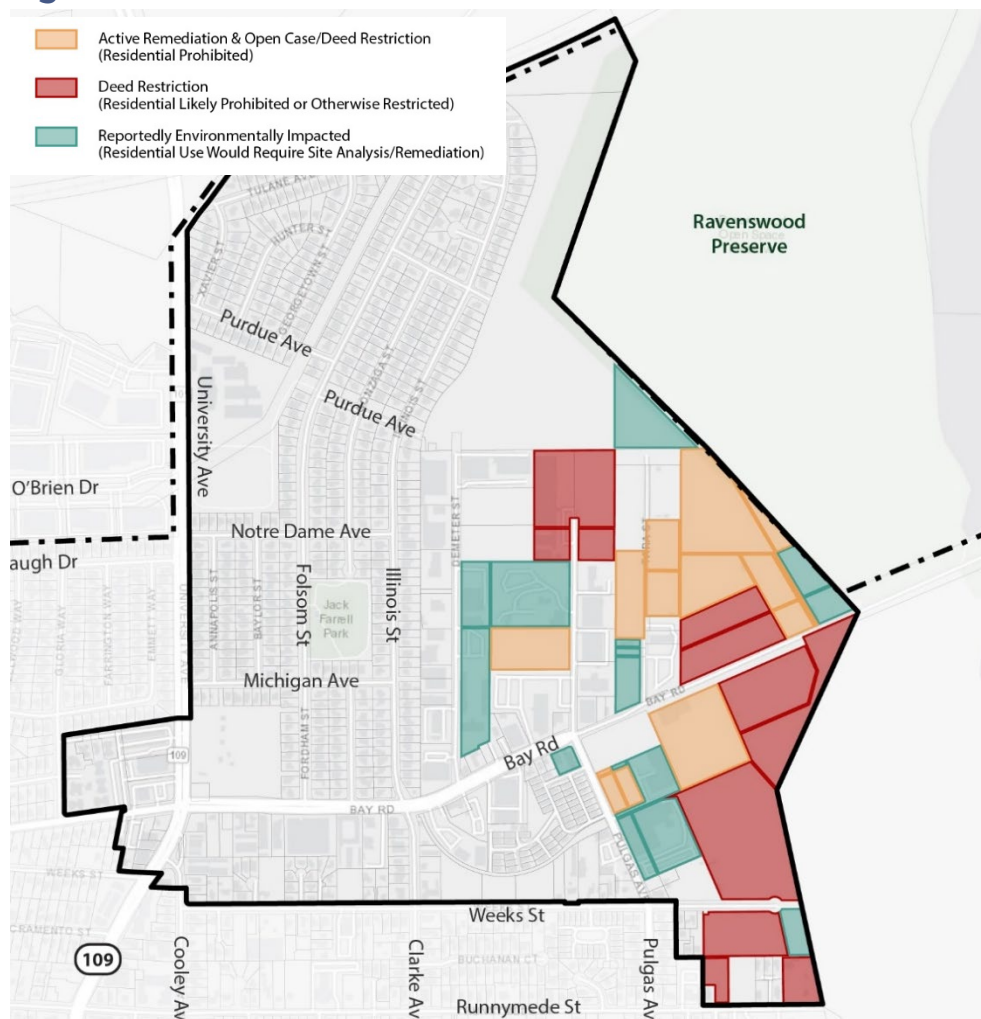
Stormwater for the Runnymede Storm Drain System is carried through a 72-inch reinforced concrete pipe and ultimately flows into the San Francisco Bay. During peak stormwater events and certain high tides, the existing stormwater pipes are unable to handle stormwater flow.

The O'Connor Pump Station receives stormwater from throughout the city via an at-grade canal, which runs along the eastern city limit. The O'Connor Pump Station distributes stormwater outfall into San Francisquito Creek. The 2014 Storm Drain Master Plan (SDMP) improvement program concept eliminates individual local gravity outfalls and conveys storm water south to the existing O'Connor Pump Station, thereby eliminating the influence of SF Bay tides on the storm drain system. The City intends to fully update the Storm Drain Master Plan (SDMP) as soon as funding is available.

## Hazardous Materials

Hazardous materials and contamination are present on many sites within the Specific Plan Area, primarily as a result of industrial uses that did not properly control waste discharge. The amount and type of contamination varies from site to site. Virtually all contaminated sites are now in various stages of cleanup (though some have been granted site closure status), and many have deed restrictions in place that prohibit residential and other sensitive uses (such as schools or daycares). Figure 3-8 gives a general indication of whether remediation is occurring or if deed restrictions are present on a given site. Further details regarding contamination and hazardous materials in the Plan Area can be found in the associated Supplemental Environmental Impact Report.

**Figure 3-8 Land Use Restrictions**





## Community Services

This section describes the existing library, school, police and fire services and facilities that serve the Plan Area. Additionally, the City's Corporation Yard is presently located in the Plan Area on Tara Road.

### Libraries

The East Palo Alto Branch Library of the San Mateo Library System is located in the Plan Area at 2415 University Avenue, at the intersection of University Avenue and Bay Road. In addition to book circulation, the library offers child, adult, and family programming, and has computer work stations that are available for public use. A new site (at 2472 Pulgas Avenue) has been acquired for an anticipated construction of a new library.

### Schools

The Ravenswood City School District (RCSD) chiefly serves students in kindergarten through eighth grade from East Palo Alto. However, the RCSD also operates charter schools that serve ninth through 12th grade. Costaño Elementary School, which is adjacent to the Plan Area, serves students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

Sequoia Union High School District (SUHSD) also serves East Palo Alto residents. Depending on their addresses, East Palo Alto students attend Carlmont High School, Menlo-Atherton High School, or Woodside High School, all of which are located outside of the Plan Area. Some students elect to transfer to Sequoia High School.

### Police

The East Palo Alto Police Department (EPAPD) provides service to a 2.6-square-mile area serving a population of approximately 30,000 people. Responsibilities of the EPAPD include street patrol, investigations, traffic patrol, and emergency services. Additionally, the EPAPD runs several programs that aim to reduce and prevent crime, including the Parolee Reentry Program; Parolee-Job Program; Gang Resistance, Education and Training; and Police Activities League.

### Fire

The Menlo Park Fire Protection District (MPFPD) has a service area of approximately 30 square miles and serves the cities of Atherton, Menlo Park, and East Palo Alto, as well as portions of unincorporated San Mateo

County. The MPFPD's only East Palo Alto station is located within the Plan Area. The MPFPD currently has approximately 150 employees.

MPFPD services include fire suppression, rescue and emergency medical response, and response to hazardous materials incidents, vehicle accidents, severe weather incidents, and other emergency events. The MPFPD also sponsors a cadet training program; runs a Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) program, which trains community members about how to prepare and respond to emergencies and natural disasters; and provides other types of public education.

### Workforce Development Program

Through funds generated by Measure HH, the City is leading a multi-pronged job training pilot program. The Pilot Workforce Development Program is an 18-month program to provide training and job placement services for East Palo Alto residents with focus on employment opportunities in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and building trades fields, and is a partnership with three local non-profit organizations: JobTrain, StreetCode Academy, and Live In Peace.

### Community Organizations

East Palo Alto is home to a wide variety of nonprofit groups and other community organizations that provide important services to the city's residents. Some of these nonprofit groups are located within the Plan Area itself. Among many others, these community organizations include:

- ▶ **Youth United for Community Action (YUCA)**, 2135 Clarke Avenue. YUCA, which is led and run by young people of color, works to empower young people through grassroots community organizing on environmental and social justice issues.
- ▶ **East Palo Alto Community Alliance Neighborhood Development Organization (EPACANDO)**, 2369 University Avenue. EPA CAN DO works to create and maintain affordable housing in East Palo Alto and to promote community and economic development. Their offices are in the Plan Area.
- ▶ **Ecumenical Hunger Program**, 2411 Pulgas Avenue. The Ecumenical Hunger Program provides emergency food, clothing, case

### 3

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management, and household essentials to families in need in East Palo Alto, as well as Menlo Park and Palo Alto. Their offices are in the Plan Area.

- **Ravenswood Family Health Center**, 1798A Bay Road. The Ravenswood Family Health Center provides medical care and prevention services for all ages, including the uninsured and new immigrants, regardless of their ability to pay. Their offices are in the Plan Area.
- **Collective Roots**, 1785 Woodland Avenue. Collective Roots works to educate and engage young people about issues related to food systems, nutrition, science, and sustainability.
- **College Track**, 1877 Bay Road. College Track is an after-school college preparatory program that works to increase high school graduation rates, as well as college eligibility and enrollment. Their offices are in the Plan Area.
- **Fresh Approach Farmers Market**. The East Palo Alto Community Farmers Market is held every Wednesday at 2555 Pulgas Ave. between April and November. The market is operated by a non-profit organization and offers fresh produce from three vendors, other local goods, and community compost drop off.
- **Community Archive**. The East Palo Alto Community Archive is an independent community-led initiative whose mission is to collect, share, promote, celebrate, and preserve the unique history of East Palo Alto for generations.
- **Bloomhouse/Center for Economic Mobility**. A non-profit organization with a major community gathering space at the north end of Pulgas Avenue, Bloomhouse has a mission of ensuring that community voice is at the center of the design process of the future development project in this area.
- **JobTrain, StreetCode Academy, and Live In Peace**. Three non-profits that are working in close partnership with the City to support Measure HH workforce development programs.