

# INTRODUCTION 1

From the time the City of East Palo Alto was incorporated in 1983, its residents and leaders have worked diligently to maintain and enhance the community. In some parts of the city, these efforts have borne fruit. But change has been slow to come to the Ravenswood Business District and 4 Corners.

In recent years, the City Council has focused its attention on the Ravenswood Redevelopment Project Area, which is the last of its Redevelopment Areas that has seen little change since the adoption of the Redevelopment Plan. As a result, the tide has begun to turn. New apartments have been built near 4 Corners, with rents that are affordable to the city's residents. In addition, the City has worked to improve the appearance and function of Bay Road, making it a more pleasant place for people to walk and ride bicycles. But a great deal of work remains. There are still many vacant properties in Ravenswood/4 Corners that could be developed, as well as opportunities to use developed properties in a way that better meets the community's needs. The area's public utilities, including water, stormwater, and wastewater pipes, must also be improved so that significant new development can occur.

To shape the future of Ravenswood and 4 Corners, the City of East Palo Alto has prepared this plan, the Ravenswood/4 Corners Transit Oriented Development Specific Plan. The Specific Plan outlines how Ravenswood and 4 Corners can be transformed into thriving districts that provide places to live; employment opportunities; parks and open spaces; and amenities for all of East Palo Alto, such as expanded library service and a new community center. It creates a framework for transforming the intersection of University Avenue and Bay Road into a new "downtown" for East Palo Alto. In addition, it provides detailed regulations for all new development that occurs in Ravenswood and 4 Corners.

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The Specific Plan reflects extensive community input. From October 2009 through March 2011, the City led a community process that included 15 public meetings, of which three were highly interactive public workshops. Community members offered a wide variety of ideas for the future of Ravenswood and 4 Corners, and as many of these ideas as possible have been incorporated into this Specific Plan.

The Specific Plan's title refers to the concept of "transit oriented development" (TOD). Successful TOD results in homes, stores, and workplaces that are located near transit stops and designed to increase ridership potential and proximity to services. As a result, TOD can make it easier for people to use public transit for their daily trips. The Plan takes advantage of opportunities to connect new development in East Palo Alto with improved public transit that may be provided in the future.

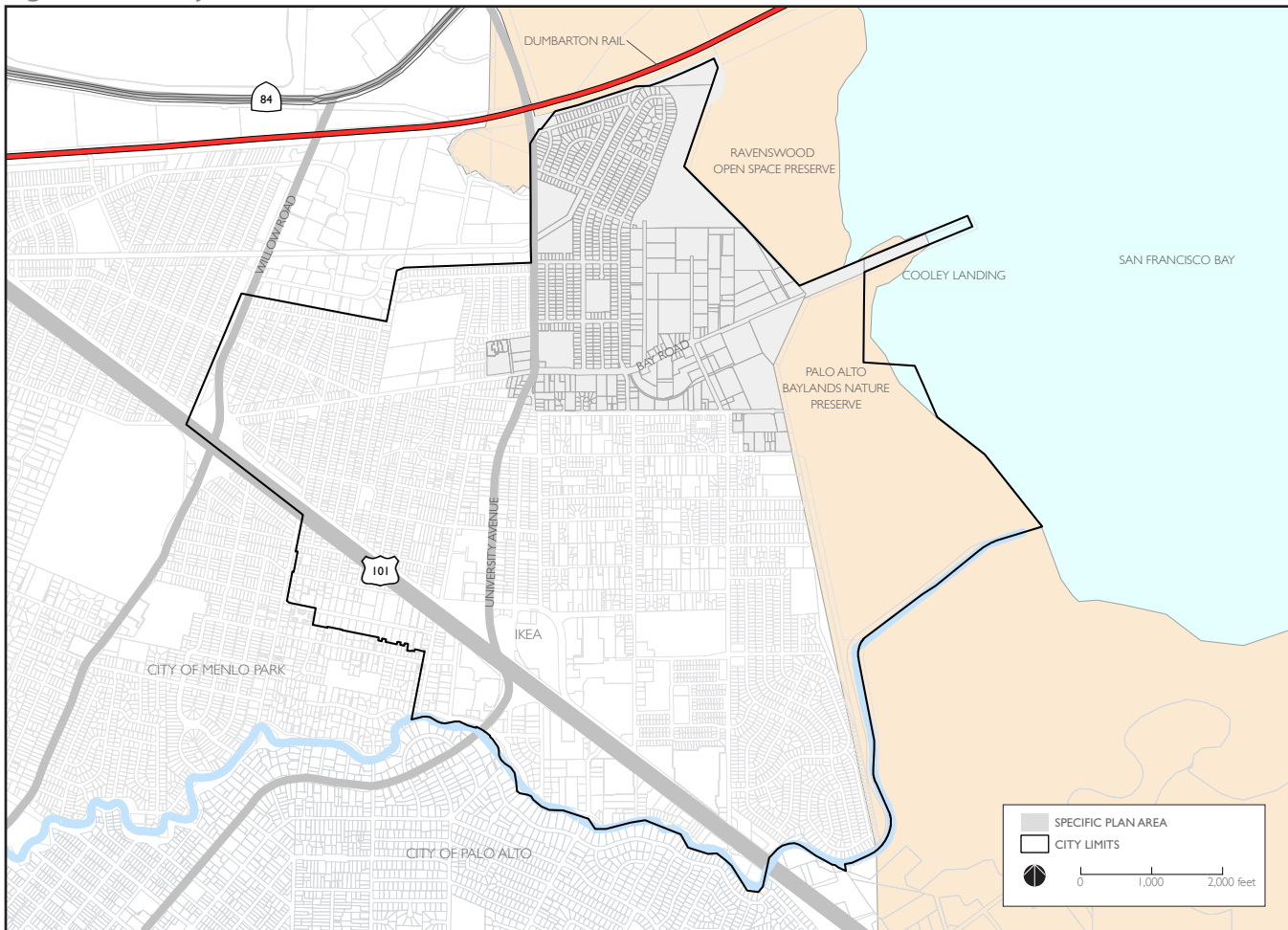
The following sections provide an overview of the Specific Plan and describe the chapters that follow this introduction.



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The Plan Area that is addressed in the Specific Plan is located in the northeast portion of the city, west of the San Francisco Bay. A portion of the Plan Area shares a boundary with the city limits. Figure 1-2 shows how the Plan Area fits within the city.

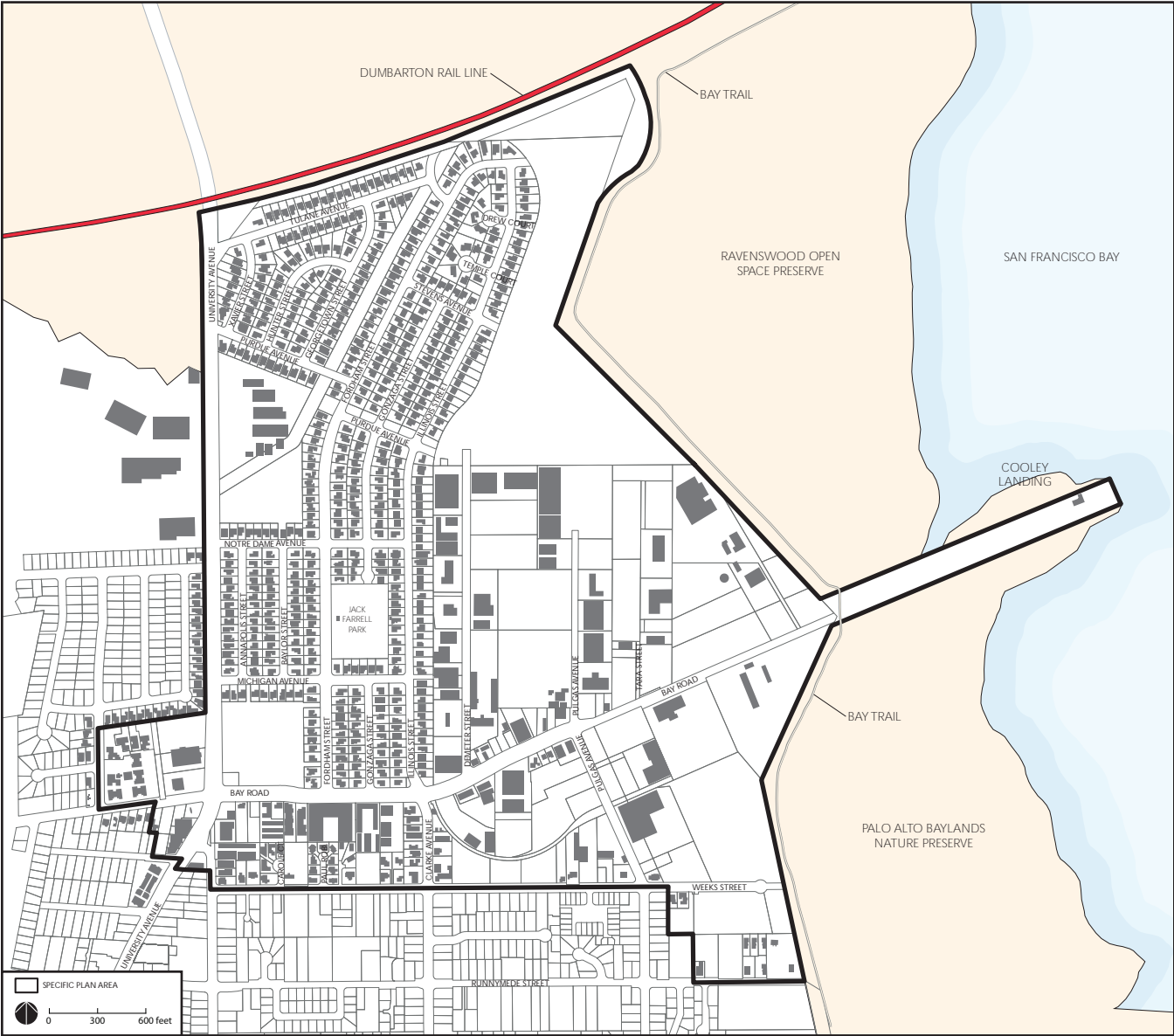
**Figure 1-2: Project Plan Area**



### Specific Plan Area

The Plan Area encompasses approximately 350 acres and is generally bounded at the west by University Avenue; at the north by a rail line, where future Dumbarton Rail passenger service is planned; at the east by the baylands along the San Francisco Bay; and at the south by Weeks Street. The Specific Plan Area also extends south from Weeks Street to Runnymede Street in the southeast along Pulgas Avenue. In addition to University Avenue, which is an important corridor within the city as well as the region, the Plan Area includes Bay Road, a major east-west corridor in East Palo Alto. Figure 1-3 shows the Plan Area boundary.

**Figure 1-3: Plan Area Boundary**



Some small parts of the Plan Area are located outside of the general boundaries described above. At the southeast boundary, a small area south of Weeks Street is included because it is part of the City’s Redevelopment Area. Similarly, the southwest boundary extends to include blocks west of University Avenue in the 4 Corners Area, and to include all parcels within the Ravenswood Redevelopment Area. The Plan Area is bounded at the east by the Ravenswood Open Space Preserve and the Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve. Cooley Landing, which is part of the Plan Area, extends into the San Francisco Bay.

The Plan Area also encompasses University Village, a single-family neighborhood immediately east of University Avenue. While the Specific Plan does not call for new development or land use changes in University Village, it includes focused improvements that will help make University Village a better place to live.

## **Purpose and Intent of the Plan**

This Specific Plan is intended to serve as the primary document and reference guide for the future development and redevelopment of Ravenswood and 4 Corners. In addition to providing the community and decision-makers with clear documentation of the vision for the Specific Plan Area, this Specific Plan is intended to provide a clear policy and regulatory framework by which future development projects and public improvements will be reviewed. Finally, this Specific Plan provides guidance on design, potential public investments, and implementation. It should be noted that a Specific Plan is not a detailed site plan or design plan and does not commit to any specific building design on any specific properties.

## **Key Community-Generated Design Goals**

The community engagement process undertaken for this Specific Plan yielded three major design goals, which are reflected throughout the remainder of the document in its vision, policies, land use regulations, development requirements, circulation improvements, infrastructure recommendations, design standards, and implementation strategy. First, the community expressed a desire to preserve and enhance the protection of public views. The Specific Plan has addressed this by custom development standards and a guide for which public views are most critical to preserve in Chapter Six, Land Use. A second design goal emphasized by the community was improving circulation north of Bay Road in the Ravenswood area, including a new east-west street that would link Demeter Street, Pulgas Avenue, and Tara Road. This new road is identified in Chapter Seven, Streetscape Standards, including provisions to ensure

that the roads in the Ravenswood area would be accommodating for businesses and vehicular traffic, as well as pedestrians and bicycles. In addition to the Streetscape Standards, the development standards in Chapter Six and many of the design guidelines in Appendix A address this very issue. Lastly, the community stated repeatedly that Bay Road should be the activity spine and “heart” of East Palo Alto. To that end, the Specific Plan includes throughout all its chapters policies, regulations, recommendations and guidance that are focused on achieving a walkable environment that becomes a destination for residents and visitors alike. Use regulations and development standards are tailored in the Specific Plan to creating such an environment, and enhanced further by design and streetscape guidelines that expand on these features to show flexible approaches to achieving this condition on Bay Road.

## **Previous Planning Efforts**

This section describes previous planning efforts that have been undertaken within the Specific Plan Area.

### **Weeks Neighborhood Plan**

The Weeks Neighborhood Plan is a plan prepared in 1997 that provided a vision for future change in the Weeks Neighborhood. The study area for this project included much of the southeastern portion of the Plan Area, including properties located on the north side of Weeks Street. While the Plan’s vision did not become formal City policy, the Weeks Neighborhood Plan later influenced the development of the East Palo Alto Revitalization Plan, which is described below.

### **East Palo Alto Revitalization Plan**

The East Palo Alto Revitalization Plan, prepared in 2000, explored potential development strategies and regulations for Ravenswood, 4 Corners, and other areas of the city. In 2005, preliminary work took place to adopt the Plan’s recommendations for Ravenswood, but this work was not completed and the Plan was never officially adopted.

### **Community Vision for the Bay-Clarke-Weeks-Pulgas Project Area**

In 2003, a Community Vision was created for the Bay-Clarke-Weeks-Pulgas Project Area, a large block in Ravenswood bounded by Bay Road, Clarke Avenue, Weeks Street, and Pulgas Avenue. The community’s vision included a mix of housing and retail stores, with additional space for nonprofit groups. As a result of the Plan, RFPs were issued, and two projects were entitled with accompanying General Plan and Zoning Ordinance amendments.

## Dumbarton Dialogue Project

The Dumbarton Dialogue Project, which took place in 2006 and 2007, invited residents of many cities on the peninsula, including East Palo Alto, to identify possible solutions to traffic impacts created by the Dumbarton Bridge and Highway 101 corridor.

## Statutory Requirements of the Specific Plan

This section discusses how this Specific Plan meets the requirements of California State law.

### Required Contents

This Specific Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of California Government Code Section 65451. As prescribed by law, the Plan includes text and diagrams that generally describe the following:

- ▶ The distribution, location and extent of all land uses, including open space.
- ▶ The proposed distribution, location, extent and intensity of major components of public infrastructure, such as transportation and drainage systems.
- ▶ The standards and criteria by which development will proceed.
- ▶ A program of implementation measures, such as financing measures, policies, regulations and public works projects.
- ▶ A statement of the relationship of the Specific Plan to the General Plan.

### Findings of Consistency with the General Plan

California law requires a Specific Plan to be consistent with a City's General Plan and that findings regarding consistency be included in the Specific Plan itself. Although amendments to the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance will be necessary as part of the Specific Plan's adoption process, the recommendations and objectives of the Ravenswood/4 Corners TOD Specific Plan are consistent with the overarching goals of the East Palo Alto General Plan.

## Plan Contents

The chapters described below follow this introduction.

- ▶ **Chapter Two: Community Process and Outreach** provides a detailed discussion of the community process that helped to create this Specific Plan. In particular, this chapter describes the opportunities for public input as the City worked to create a preferred land use alternative
- ▶ **Chapter Three: Existing Conditions** provides a brief description of the Specific Plan Area as it was when this Plan was adopted.

- ▶ **Chapter Four: Vision and Concepts** includes the Vision Statement that guides the remainder of the Specific Plan. It also discusses the land use, development, and public realm concepts that are proposed for Ravenswood and 4 Corners.
- ▶ **Chapter Five: Goals and Policies** describes the “end state” that is desired for the Plan Area, as well as the policies that the City will follow as it works to achieve that end state.
- ▶ **Chapter Six: Land Use** provides the land use framework for the Specific Plan Area, including the uses that are allowed in each part of the Plan Area. This chapter also specifies the rules that must be followed when undertaking new development or significant modifications of existing development.
- ▶ **Chapter Seven: Streetscape Standards** provides recommendations for specific streets and street types within the Specific Plan Area.
- ▶ **Chapter Eight: Circulation** explains how the movement of pedestrians, vehicles, bicycles, and transit can be improved within the Plan Area.
- ▶ **Chapter Nine: Utilities and Public Services** provides recommendations for stormwater, wastewater, and water infrastructure improvements. This chapter also discusses potential improvements to police and fire service, schools, libraries, and parks within the Specific Plan Area that may be necessary as the Specific Plan is implemented.
- ▶ **Chapter Ten: Implementation** discuss potential funding opportunities and financing strategies for improvements recommended in this Specific Plan. This chapter also provides a fiscal impact analysis for implementation of the Specific Plan.

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