

1 INTRODUCTION

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared to assess the potential environmental consequences of adopting and implementing the Draft Ravenswood/4 Corners Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Specific Plan (Specific Plan). This Draft EIR is intended to inform City decision-makers, other responsible agencies, and the public of the nature of the project. This Draft EIR has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The City of East Palo Alto is the lead agency for this project. The Notice of Preparation is included in Appendix 1.

The Specific Plan covers an approximately 350-acre area in the in the northeast portion of East Palo Alto. It provides a greater level of specificity than the General Plan for the Specific Plan Area, including the Ravenswood and 4 Corners area. The Specific Plan is a planning and regulatory tool available to local governments in the State of California. As allowed under California State law (Government Code 65450 et seq.), the City of East Palo Alto would use the Specific Plan, in part, to implement its adopted General Plan.¹ Although the Specific Plan is broadly consistent with the adopted General Plan, the City will need to adopt minor revisions to the General Plan to ensure that it is fully consistent with the Specific Plan as required under State law.

The project also includes adoption of amendments to the East Palo Alto General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, changing the current land use designations in the Plan Area and establishing new development standards to replace some of the current zoning provisions applicable to the Plan Area. These amendments must be completed to ensure consistency between the Specific Plan, General Plan, and Zoning Ordinance. This EIR will be used by decision-makers in determining whether or not to adopt the Specific Plan, as well as by the public to clearly understand the environmental implications associated with adoption and implementation of the Specific Plan.

¹ City of East Palo Alto, 1999. *General Plan*.

This document is a programmatic EIR, as described in Section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines. A program-level document is appropriate when a project consists of a series of smaller projects or phases that may be implemented separately. Under the programmatic EIR approach, future projects or phases may require additional, project-specific environmental analysis. In order to identify whether additional analysis would be necessary when the project is implemented, the Lead Agency (the City) will need to determine the following:

- ◆ Whether the planned characteristics of the project are substantially different from those defined in the Programmatic EIR;
- ◆ Whether the project would require additional mitigation measures; or
- ◆ Whether specific impacts were not evaluated in sufficient detail in the Program EIR.

If any of these conditions apply, then a project-specific Initial Study or EIR would be necessary to identify how the impacts of the project differ from those identified in this EIR or what additional mitigation measures would be necessary. This EIR is anticipated to provide a basis for future project-level CEQA analysis.

A. Proposed Action

The proposed project, the Ravenswood/4 Corners TOD Specific Plan, contains land use, urban design, and circulation goals, policies, and actions to guide investment and development in the Ravenswood/4 Corners area of East Palo Alto over the next 25 years (2010 to 2035). The Plan is described in more detail in Chapter 3, Project Description.

B. Report Organization

This EIR is organized into the following chapters:

- ◆ **Chapter 1: Introduction.** Provides a preface and overview describing both the intended use of the document and the review and certification process of both the Plan and the EIR.
- ◆ **Chapter 2: Report Summary.** Summarizes environmental consequences that would result from the Plan; describes recommended mitigation measures; and indicates the level of significance of environmental impacts before and after mitigation. A Summary Table is also included for clarity.
- ◆ **Chapter 3: Project Description.** Describes the Plan in detail, including the Plan Area location and characteristics; Plan objectives; the planning process used to create the Plan; proposed capital improvements; and implementation.
- ◆ **Chapter 4: Environmental Evaluation.** Provides an analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the Plan and presents recommended mitigation measures, if required, to reduce their significance.
- ◆ **Chapter 5: Alternatives to the Proposed Project.** Considers three alternatives to the proposed project, including the CEQA-required “No Project Alternative.”
- ◆ **Chapter 6: CEQA-Required Assessment Conclusions.** Discusses growth inducement, unavoidable significant effects, and significant irreversible changes as a result of the project.
- ◆ **Chapter 7: Report Preparation.**

C. Environmental Review Process

This Draft EIR will be available for review by the public and interested parties, agencies and organizations for a 45-day comment period. During the comment period, the public is invited to submit written or e-mail comments

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on the Draft EIR and/or requested entitlements to the City of East Palo Alto. The City will also hold one or more public hearings on the Draft EIR during the review period. The public is invited to attend the hearing(s) to offer oral comments on the Draft EIR. Written comments should be submitted to:

Sean Charpentier
Project Coordinator II
Attn: Specific Plan/Program EIR
City of East Palo Alto
1960 Tate Street
East Palo Alto, CA 94303
scharpentier@cityofepa.org