



EAST PALO ALTO PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

Monday, October 19, 2026, 7:00 PM
East Palo Alto City Hall
2415 University Ave.
East Palo Alto, CA 94303

AMENDED - 10/15/26

NOTICE

This meeting will be held virtually and in-person at the Council Chambers located on 2415 University Ave, First Floor East Palo Alto, CA 94303. The virtual portion of this Planning Commission meeting will be conducted in accordance with City of East Palo Alto Resolution adopted pursuant to Assembly Bill 361.

The public may participate in the Planning Commission Meeting via Zoom Meeting or by attending in-person in the Council Chambers at 2415 University Ave, First Floor East Palo Alto, CA 94303. Community members may provide comments by submitting a speaker card at the meeting, or using the **RAISE HAND** feature when the Chair or Clerk call for public comment. Emailed comments should include the specific agenda item on which you are commenting.

Please click this URL to join

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86902279757>

Or join by phone:

Dial (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

US: +1 669 900 6833 or
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Webinar ID: 869 0227 9757

International numbers available: <https://zoom.us/u/aMWYF4KT>

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**
2. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**
3. **APPROVAL OF CONSENT CALENDAR**

3.1 **September 14, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes**

Recommendation: Approve meeting minutes

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

5. **INFORMATIONAL REPORTS AMENDED**

5.1

Informational Update on City Ballot Initiatives Recommendation:

Recommendation: Receive an informational update from the Assistant City Manager on the City Ballot Initiatives (Amended to include item 5.1)

6. **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

6.1

Consideration of a General Plan Amendment to update Chapter 7. Health and Equity Element of the Vista 2035 General Plan.

Recommendation:

Adopt a resolution (Attachment 1) recommending that the City Council:

1. Adopt the proposed amendment to the East Palo Alto Vista 2036 General Plan to update Chapter 7. Health and Equity Element of the Vista 2035 General Plan; and
2. Find that the amended element complies with recent changes to California State Law governing Environmental Justice Elements; and
3. Find that the project is exempt pursuant to the common-sense exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), because implementation of the proposed project would not have the potential to cause a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Alternatively, as the proposed action involves policy changes only, it is statutorily exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies).

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

Upcoming meetings:

Regular Meeting	November 2, 2026	7:00pm
Regular Meeting	November 16, 2026	7:00pm
Regular Meeting	December 14, 2026	7:00pm

This AGENDA is posted in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.2(a)

This Notice of Availability of Public Records: All public records relating to an open session item which are not exempt from disclosure pursuant to the Public Records Act, that are distributed to the majority of the Planning Commission will be available for public inspection at 1960 Tate Street, East Palo Alto, CA at the same time that the public records are distributed or made available to the Planning Commission. Such documents may also be available on the East Palo Alto website www.cityofepa.org subject to staff's ability to post the documents prior to the meeting. Information may be obtained by calling (650) 853-3189.

The Planning Commission meeting packet may be reviewed by the public at 1960 Tate Street, East Palo Alto 94303. Any writings or documents pertaining to an open session item provided to a majority of the Planning Commission less than 72 hours prior to the meeting, shall be made available for public inspection at CED office, 1960 Tate Street, East Palo Alto, California 94303 during normal business hours. Information distributed to the Commission at the meeting becomes part of the public record. A copy of written material, pictures, etc. should be provided for this purpose.

East Palo Alto City Council Chambers is ADA compliant. Requests for disability related modifications or accommodations, aids or services may be made by a person with a disability to the City Clerk's office at (650) 853-3127 no less than 72 hours prior to the meeting as required by Section 202 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the federal rules and regulations adopted in implementation thereof.

DECLARATION OF POSTING

This Notice is posted in accordance with Government Code §54954.2(a) or §54956. Members of the public can view electronic agendas and staff reports by accessing the City website. Under penalty of perjury, this Agenda was posted to the public at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

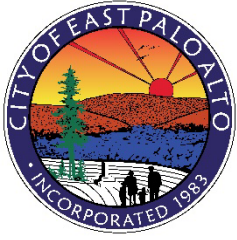
POSTED: (10/15/2026)

ATTEST:

Ruby Phillips

Secretary II

SEAT	COMMISSIONER	EXPIRES	SEAT	COMMISSIONER	EXPIRES
1	Isabel Lopez Ysmael	5/31/2027	5	Robert Sherrard	5/31/2027
2	Juan Mendez	5/31/2027	6	Javanni Brown-Austin	5/31/2027
3	Robert Allen Fisk	5/31/2028	7	Curtis Monette	5/31/2027
4	Michael Mashack	5/31/2028			



EAST PALO ALTO PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

DATE: October 19, 2026
TO: Honorable Chair and Members of the Planning Commission
VIA: Salifu Yakubu, Interim Planning Manager
BY: Ruby Phillips, Secretary II, CEDD
SUBJECT: September 14, 2026, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Recommendation

Accept the September 14, 2026, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes.

Attachments

1. September 14, 2026, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes.



CITY OF EAST PALO ALTO PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

September 14, 2026, 7:00 p.m.

EPA Government Center

City Council Chamber

East Palo Alto, CA 94303

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chair Javanni Brown-Austin at 7:00 p.m.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Isabel Lopez-Ismael	Commissioner	Present	
Juan Mendez	Commissioner	Absent	
Robert Allen Fisk	Commissioner	Present	
Michael Mashack	Commissioner	Present	
Robert Sherrard	Commissioner	Present	7:09
Javanni Brown-Austin	Chair	Present	
Curtis Monette	Vice Chair	Present	

Chair Brown-Austin promoted Commissioner Lopez-Ismael to a voting member.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Monette made a motion to approve the agenda. It was seconded by Commissioner Allen Fisk and unanimously approved.

RESULT:	Motion Carried
MOTION BY:	Monette
SECOND:	Allen Fisk
AYES:	Allen Fisk, Mashack, Brown Austin, Monette, Lopez-Ismael
ABSENT:	Sherrard, Mendez

3. APPROVAL OF CONSENT CALENDAR

Commissioner Mashack made a motion to approve the consent calendar. It was seconded by Commissioner Monette. The motion was unanimously approved.

3.1) July 27, 2026, Planning Commission Minutes

Recommendation: Accept July 27, 2026 Planning Commission Minutes.

RESULT:	Motion Carried
MOTION BY:	Mashack
SECOND:	Monette
AYES:	Allen Fisk, Mashack, Brown Austin, Monette, Lopez-Ismael
ABSENT	Sherrard, Mendez

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

5. **INFORMATIONAL REPORTS**

Community and Economic Development Director (CEDD) Director Elena Lee made the following announcements:

- The City Council approved and adopted the amendment to the Development Agreement for the Woodland Park Euclid Improvement Projects (Woodland I).
- The City Council approved the fire suppression easement for the Euclid Ravenswood School District Project.

6. **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

6.1) **Conditional Use Permit Renewal for MEGA MART 1775 East Bayshore Road**

Presenter: Alvin Jen

Recommendation:

1. Adopt a resolution granting a three-year extension (CUP26-001) of the previously approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP25-001) for the sale of alcoholic beverages, including beer, wine and distilled spirits, for off-site consumption at MEGA MART, a grocery store located at 1775 East Bayshore Road. The extension is based on the findings and subject to the conditions recommended by staff, as may be subsequently amended by the Planning Commission; and
2. Finding that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15301 Class 1, Existing Facilities.

MEGA MART representative Sarah Aung addressed the Commission.

Commissioner's asked questions and provided feedback.

Applicant and staff responded to questions as needed.

Chair Brown-Austin opened the Public Comment period.

No public comments were received.

Commissioner Monette made a motion to approve the Conditional Use Permit renewal for MEGA MART. It was seconded by Commissioner Allen Fisk. The motion was unanimously approved.

RESULT:	Motion Carried
MOTION BY:	Monette
SECOND:	Allen Fisk
AYES:	Allen Fisk, Sherrard, Mashack, Brown Austin, Monette, Lopez-Ismael
ABSENT:	Mendez

7. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

7.1 Vista 2035 General Plan Chapter 7. Health and Equity (Environmental Justice) Element Update Study Session

Presenters: Tanya Sundberg – PlaceWorks, Kamille Lang – Climate Resilient Communities

Recommendation:

No formal action was required for the study session.

Commissioners asked questions and provided feedback.

Chair Brown-Austin opened the public comment period.

Public speaker: Michael Francois

Following public comment, Commissioners participated in a gallery walk to review and discuss the materials presented.

Commissioners then returned to the dais for an open discussion.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

ATTEST:

Planning Commission Clerk

Planning Commission Chair

East Palo Alto Planning Commission

September 14, 2026, Minutes



EAST PALO ALTO PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

DATE: October 19, 2026

TO: Honorable Chair and Members of the Planning Commission

VIA: Shiri Klima, Assistant City Manager

BY: Salifu Yakubu, Interim Planning Manager
Elena Lee, Community and Economic Development Director

SUBJECT: Consideration of a General Plan Amendment to update Chapter 7. Health and Equity Element of the Vista 2035 General Plan.

Recommendation

Adopt a resolution (Attachment 1) recommending that the City Council:

1. Adopt the proposed amendment to update Chapter 7. Health and Equity Element of the East Palo Alto Vista 2035 General Plan; and
2. Find that the amended element complies with recent changes to California State Law governing Environmental Justice Elements; and
3. Find that the project is exempt pursuant to the common-sense exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), because implementation of the proposed project would not have the potential to cause a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Alternatively, as the proposed action involves policy changes only, it is statutorily exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies).

Alignment with City Council Strategic Plan

This recommendation is primarily aligned with the following strategic priorities:



- **Public Health, Safety, and Quality of Life:** Implement and enforce strategies to ensure public safety, improve the livability of neighborhoods, and prepare the City and its residents for disasters and emergencies.
- **Civic Engagement:** Provide diverse and inclusive opportunities for all EPA community members to participate in City meetings, have a voice in City affairs, and develop leadership skills for EPA youth.

Background

General Plan and Environmental Justice Requirements

State law requires cities and counties to adopt and maintain General Plans that address specified mandatory elements. The General Plan is the City's principal policy document for guiding land use, development, infrastructure, public services, and other long-term decisions. It establishes a citywide vision and provides goals, policies, and implementation measures intended to achieve that vision while reflecting community priorities and values. The City of East Palo Alto comprehensively updated its General Plan in 2016 through adoption of the Vista 2035 General Plan (see link:

https://www.cityofepa.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_amp_economic_development/page/2731/epa_full_final_general_plan_reduced_201807271727020784.pdf).

Cities and counties with disadvantaged communities must adopt additional elements. For these purposes, a “disadvantaged community” (DAC) is defined as a community identified based on geographic, socioeconomic, public health, and environmental hazard criteria, and may include, but is not limited to: a low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation; or areas with concentrations of people that are of low income, high unemployment, low levels of homeownership, high rent burden, sensitive populations, or low levels of educational attainment.

Jurisdiction with a DAC must adopt an Environmental Justice Element. “Environmental justice” refers to a focus on ensuring fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people - regardless of race, income, or background - in environmental laws, policies, and protections, particularly addressing the disproportionate environmental burdens placed on marginalized communities. The Vista 2035 General Plan update in 2016 included Chapter 7, the Health and Equity Element, which serves as the City's Environmental Justice Element.

In 2026, the Legislature enacted Assembly Bill (AB) 1457 (Bryan), which amends the State's environmental justice planning requirements pursuant to Senate Bill (SB) 1000 which was passed in 2016. Among other changes, AB 1457 establishes June 30, 2031, as a deadline for jurisdictions required to have, but that have not already adopted, an Environmental Justice Element. AB 1457 also establishes additional transparency and community-engagement requirements for the development, adoption, and implementation of environmental justice policies. AB 1457 was approved by the Governor and chaptered as Chapter 517, Statutes of



2026, on September 27, 2026.

Although the statutory deadline established by AB 1457 is June 30, 2031, the City had already begun updating its Health and Equity Element in 2023 to ensure that its General Plan remained responsive to the requirements of SB 1000 regarding environmental justice conditions, community priorities, and applicable State law.

Purpose of the Update

The Health and Equity Element is being updated to:

- Address current environmental justice conditions and community concerns in East Palo Alto;
- Incorporate current data and analysis regarding environmental and socioeconomic conditions;
- Identify DACs and the environmental justice issues affecting those communities;
- Strengthen existing General Plan policies and establish new policies where existing guidance does not adequately address identified conditions;
- Establish implementation measures and timeframes to support implementation of the Element;
- Coordinate environmental justice policies with other elements of the Vista 2035 General Plan, including the Safety Element; and
- Continue to provide a policy framework for improving environmental health, equity, and quality of life throughout East Palo Alto.

Environmental justice issues addressed through this element include pollution exposure, air quality, access to safe and sanitary housing, access to healthy food, opportunities for physical activity, access to public facilities and services, climate vulnerability, and meaningful participation in governmental decision-making.

Environmental Justice Elements Planning Initiative

In 2023, the City of East Palo Alto joined the Environmental Justice Elements Planning Initiative, a collaborative effort involving the City of Burlingame, the City of East Palo Alto, and the County of San Mateo. The initiative was supported by a consulting team led by PlaceWorks to assist the participating jurisdictions with updating their General Plans to address environmental justice.

Climate Resilient Communities was engaged to assist PlaceWorks with community outreach based on its knowledge of and relationships within the local community. The multi-jurisdictional approach allowed the participating jurisdictions to share technical resources, analytical methods, and lessons learned while tailoring the resulting policies and recommendations to



local conditions.

The Environmental Justice Element Update process provides an opportunity for the City to identify and address environmental justice conditions by reducing exposure to pollution and other environmental hazards, improving access to community assets and services, and supporting improved health and quality of life.

The updated Health and Equity Element (Attachment 2 – Clean Copy; Attachment 3 – Tracked Copy) will provide the policy framework for advancing environmental justice and health equity throughout East Palo Alto. The Element is intended to work in conjunction with the other elements of the Vista 2035 General Plan rather than duplicate policies addressed elsewhere in the General Plan.

Analysis

Environmental Justice Conditions and Disadvantaged Communities (DACs)

The update process began with an evaluation of federal, State, regional, and local datasets to identify preliminary environmental justice conditions and DACs within East Palo Alto. The analysis considered the following datasets and screening tools: CalEnviroScreen 4.0; Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Plan Bay Area 2050 Equity Priority Communities; MTC Sensitive Communities; Urban Displacement Project Sensitive Communities; California Air Resources Board (CARB) Priority Populations; California Healthy Places Index; Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool; and the Community Vulnerability Index.

The analysis resulted in a preliminary map identifying five DACs:

1. Kavanaugh–University Village DAC;
2. Palo Alto Park–University Corridor DAC;
3. Weeks–Gardens North DAC;
4. Willow–Woodland DAC; and
5. Gardens DAC.

These DACs are depicted in the map located on the page dedicated to this project on the City's website

(<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/3f581b7062a24d3bb757ca9a413b4d41/page/East-Palo-Alto>).

The analysis recognizes that a substantial portion of East Palo Alto meets one or more disadvantaged-community screening criteria. The five DACs provide a framework for more detailed analysis of environmental justice conditions and for understanding how environmental



burdens and community assets are distributed throughout the City.

Individual indicators from CalEnviroScreen 4.0 were evaluated to identify environmental justice conditions affecting each DAC. CalEnviroScreen is a science-based mapping tool developed by California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) and the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA). The tool identifies communities across California that are disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution and are particularly vulnerable to its associated health and environmental effects. It is intended to help identify DACs and support State and local agencies in prioritizing resources, cleanup efforts, and environmental justice initiatives. For this analysis, indicators scoring at or above the seventieth percentile for the applicable issue were identified as areas of elevated concern and used to characterize the environmental justice conditions affecting each DAC.

The preliminary DAC map (see link: <https://envirojusticeplanning.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/DAC-East-Palo-Alto-Subgroups.pdf>) and the identified environmental justice issues were subsequently reviewed through the first phase of community engagement. Planning staff invited community members to provide input through flyers posted at various public venues throughout the City and outreach efforts conducted through Climate Resilient Communities' networks. This engagement provided opportunities for residents, including DAC community members, to identify additional concerns, share local knowledge regarding environmental conditions, and assess whether the preliminary analysis accurately reflected conditions in their neighborhoods. Community input was then incorporated into the refinement of the DAC map and the identification of environmental justice issues, establishing a community-informed foundation for subsequent policy development.

Policy Evaluation and Development

The existing Health and Equity Element, other elements of the Vista 2035 General Plan, and related City planning documents were reviewed to determine how existing policies address the environmental justice issues identified through the technical analysis and community engagement process.

Where existing policies adequately addressed an issue, those policies were retained or refined as appropriate. Where existing policies did not sufficiently address an identified environmental justice concern, new goals, policies, and implementation measures were developed.

The update was coordinated with the City's Safety Element Update to identify areas of overlap and ensure that related issues are addressed consistently without unnecessary duplication.

The resulting goals, policies, and implementation measures address the following broad areas:

- Pollution exposure;
- Environmental contamination and respiratory health;
- Healthy, safe, and affordable housing;
- Healthy and affordable food;



- Healthcare, mental health, and social services;
- Physical activity
- Safe and accessible public facilities and infrastructure;
- Climate vulnerability and community resilience; and
- Meaningful civic engagement and community participation.

Proposed Changes.

The proposed update addresses the environmental justice topics identified in State law while incorporating local conditions and priorities identified through the planning and community engagement process. Major changes are summarized below.

1. Environmental Justice. The Element provides an expanded discussion of environmental justice and the new requirements in State law. It explains how environmental justice is addressed through the Health and Equity Element and how the Element is coordinated with other chapters of the Vista 2035 General Plan.
2. Disadvantaged Communities. The Element identifies and describes five DACs that experience disproportionate environmental and/or socioeconomic burdens:
 - a. Kavanaugh–University Village;
 - b. Palo Alto Park–University Corridor;
 - c. Weeks–Gardens North;
 - d. Willow–Woodland; and
 - e. The Gardens.

The updated Element describes the environmental justice conditions affecting each DAC and includes a new figure identifying their locations. The Element also recognizes that environmental justice concerns extend beyond the boundaries of the five DACs.

3. Implementation Approach. The Element establishes implementation measures and anticipated timeframes for carrying out the goals and policies. The implementation framework is intended to provide a practical structure for advancing the Element based on available City resources, funding opportunities, partnerships, and coordination with other agencies and organizations.
4. Issues and Opportunities. The Issues and Opportunities section has been updated and reorganized to reflect current data, community input, and environmental justice conditions. The section is organized around eight topic areas:
 - (1) Life expectancy and preventable disease;



- (2) Income and employment;
- (3) Physical and mental health;
- (4) Environmental hazards;
- (5) Safe and affordable housing;
- (6) Nutritious and affordable food;
- (7) Reliable, safe, and complete public facilities and services; and
- (8) Civic engagement and advocacy.

5. Goals and Policies.

The updated Element substantially expands and refines the City's goals and policies to address environmental justice conditions and community priorities identified through the planning process.

The proposed Element Update increases the number of goals from 13 to 19 to address the expanded requirements of state's environmental justice laws and to reflect the issues, needs, and opportunities identified during community workshops facilitated by the Planning Staff and the consultant team, comprising PlaceWorks and Climate Resilient Communities. Several existing goals have been retained and strengthened, while six new goals have been added. In addition, many existing policies have been revised, consolidated, or expanded, and new implementation measures have been added where appropriate.

The revised goals address employment and economic mobility, parks and recreation, active transportation and air quality, environmental contamination, respiratory health, healthy housing, anti-displacement, homelessness, healthy food, healthcare and social services, drinking water, childcare, transportation safety, public facilities and services, civic engagement, and governmental transparency.

6. Environmental Justice Technical Appendix.

A new Environmental Justice Technical Appendix (Exhibit 1) has been prepared to support the Element. The Appendix documents the methodology and data sources used to identify and delineate DACs; provides socioeconomic profiles and environmental justice information for each DAC; identifies environmental justice indicators and data sources that can be used to monitor conditions over time; and provides a basis for tracking implementation and evaluating progress toward the goals and policies of the Element.

Summary of Goal Changes.

The table below summarizes the relationship between the existing and proposed goals

**PUBLIC HEARING ITEM 8.1**

No.	Existing Goal	Proposed Goal	Nature of Change
1.	HE – 1. Improve overall health conditions in East Palo Alto	HE – 1. Improve overall health conditions and wellness in East Palo Alto.	Retains one existing policy and strengthens six existing policies. Adds implementation measures to Policies 1.3 and 1.6.
2.	HE – 2. Promote the City as a health leader for residents and businesses.	HE – 2. Promote healthy practices through City operations, programs, and community partnerships.	Strengthens all four existing policies.
3.	None	HE – 3. Improve and expand access to employment opportunities within or near East Palo Alto to reduce long commutes, transportation costs, and pollution exposure.	New goal. Policies are intended to address employment and economic mobility consistent with environmental justice requirements.
4.	HE – 3. Create land use patterns, a transportation network, and a parks system that encourages physical activity, promotes healthy living, and reduces chronic illnesses.	HE – 4. Create a parks and recreation system that encourages physical activity, promotes healthy living, and reduces chronic illness.	Retains and strengthens the existing parks-related policy. Remaining policies are new.
5.	None	HE – 5. Provide safe and convenient alternatives to motorized vehicle travel that support community health through physical activity and cleaner air.	New goal incorporating and strengthening policies from existing Goal HE-3.
6.	HE – 7. Strive for East Palo Alto to be a smoke-free community.	HE – 6. Strive for East Palo Alto to be a smoke-free community.	Retains three policies and strengthens two existing policies.
7.	HE – 4. Safely and systemically address toxics, legacy pollutants, and hazardous materials.	HE – 7. Safely and systematically clean up and eliminate toxics, legacy pollutants, and hazardous materials.	Retains three policies, strengthens two, and adds seven new policies.
8.	HE – 10. Improve respiratory health throughout the City and strive to reduce incidence of asthma and other respiratory illnesses.	HE – 8. Improve respiratory health throughout the City and strive to reduce incidence of asthma and other respiratory illnesses.	Retains three policies, modifies three, and adds one new policy.
9.	HE – 13. All housing is designed and built in a way that facilitates health,	HE – 9. Provide housing that supports the health, and safety of residents.	Modifies five existing policies and adds five new policies.

**PUBLIC HEARING ITEM 8.1**

	sustainability, and efficiency.		
10.	None	HE – 10. Prevent displacement and preserve affordable housing. (NEW)	New goal with six new policies.
11.	None	HE – 11. Provide support, resources, and housing options for unhoused people.	New goal with two new policies.
12.	HE – 6. Improve access to healthy food for all East Palo Alto Residents.	HE – 12. Provide access to affordable healthy food for all East Palo Alto residents.	Retains four policies, modifies four, and adds four new policies.
13.	HE – 8. Strive for all residents to have access to affordable, quality health care, mental health care and social services.	HE – 13. Strive for all residents to have access to affordable, quality healthcare, mental health care, and social services.	Retains six policies, modifies three, and adds two new policies.
14.	None	HE – 14. Strive for safe and affordable drinking water that is protected from pollution and contamination.	New goal with six new policies.
15.	HE – 9. Increase the number and distribution of childcare facilities throughout the City.	HE – 15. Increase the number and distribution of childcare facilities throughout the city.	Retains three policies and modifies two.
16.	HE – 5. Improve pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle safety around schools in East Palo Alto.	HE – 16. Improve pedestrian, bicycle, and motorized vehicle safety in East Palo Alto.	Expands the geographic and topical scope; retains five policies and modifies one.
17.	None	HE – 17. Provide other public facilities, infrastructure, and services that meet the needs of, and are accessible to, residents of disadvantaged communities.	New goal with nine new policies.
18.	None	HE – 18. Empower all residents to have a strong and effective voice in City decisions that affect their lives.	New goal with seven new policies and two policies carried forward from existing Goal HE-12.
19.	HE – 12. Maintain transparency and integrity in East Palo Alto's decision-making process.	HE – 19. Maintain transparency and integrity in East Palo Alto's decision-making process.	Modifies three existing policies, deletes two, carries forward one policy from Goal HE-11, and adds two new policies.



Overall, the proposed update increases the number of Health and Equity Element goals from 13 to 19. The revised goals also contain a greater level of policy detail and, where appropriate, implementation measures intended to facilitate implementation and monitoring

Public Outreach

Community engagement was a central component of the Health and Equity Element Update. In addition to funding provided by the City of East Palo Alto, the outreach effort was significantly supported by a \$115,000 grant awarded by the Climate Smart Communities Initiative (CSCI) in July 2024 to support the City's Environmental Justice and Safety Elements update efforts. Among other uses, the grant enabled the City to engage Climate Resilient Communities (CRC) as outreach consultants throughout the process. CRC's knowledge of and longstanding relationships with the local community proved particularly valuable in supporting meaningful and inclusive engagement. The engagement strategy was designed to promote inclusion, equity, transparency, responsiveness, accountability, broad participation, recognition of local and community knowledge, and sustained community involvement throughout the planning process.

Outreach efforts placed particular emphasis on reaching residents and communities that have historically been underrepresented in planning processes, including through multilingual engagement and targeted outreach to community-serving organizations and resident groups.

The engagement process was organized into two primary phases. Phase 1, which occurred from May 2024 through January 2025, focused on understanding community experiences related to environmental justice, identifying and verifying disadvantaged communities, and identifying key environmental justice issues and priorities. Phase 2, from May 2025 through November 2025, focused on community input regarding potential policy approaches for addressing the environmental justice issues identified during Phase 1. Specific engagement activities included the following:

1. Project Website

A project website served as the central source of project information. The website provided access to project materials, document libraries, event announcements, and community engagement tools. Workshop summaries and related materials were also posted for residents who were unable to attend meetings in person. Link: <https://envirojusticeplanning.com>

2. Environmental Justice Community Workshops

Three in-person community workshops were conducted between May and September 2024: 43 people attended an English-language workshop; 26 people attended a Spanish-language workshop ; and 35 people attended a workshop focused on the Pacific Islander community, which was conducted in English with Samoan and Tongan interpretation. The Planning staff and consultant team comprising PlaceWorks and Climate Resilient Communities (CRC) introduced the project and provided opportunities for community members to identify environmental justice concerns, describe neighborhood conditions, and provide input regarding the preliminary DAC map.



3. Environmental Justice Survey

The City's Planning consultant, PlaceWorks, conducted online and in-person community surveys between September 2024 and January 2025 to gather information regarding residents' experiences with environmental justice conditions and related issues. The City received a total of 266 responses.

4. Community Policy Approach Workshops

Planning staff and the consultant team comprising PlaceWorks and CRC conducted two community workshops in May and June 2025, including separate English- and Spanish-language sessions. The workshops focused on potential policy approaches for addressing environmental justice issues and priorities identified through the first phase of engagement. Feedback received by the Planning staff and consultants during these workshops informed the development and refinement of the Element's goals, policies, and implementation measures.

5. Safety Element Focus Groups

The City held three in-person focus groups between June and July 2025, including: a Spanish-language session; an English-language session; and an English-language session with Samoan and Tongan interpretation. Approximately 50 East Palo Alto residents participated. The focus groups addressed Safety Element issues that overlap with environmental justice, including contaminated sites, earthquake and emergency preparedness, disaster insurance, flooding, emergency communications, and access to emergency resources.

6. Stakeholder Interviews

The City conducted eight stakeholder interviews with community-based organizations and resident-serving groups to gather perspectives on community needs and priorities, to identify environmental justice and safety concerns, and to inform policy development. Organizations participating in the stakeholder interview process included:

- a. Anamantangi Polynesian Voices (APV);
- b. Nuestra Casa;
- c. EPACANDO;
- d. Ecumenical Hunger Program (EHP);
- e. Drew Center;
- f. El Komite of East Palo Alto;
- g. Youth United for Community Action (YUCA); and
- h. Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter.

7. Planning Commission Study Sessions and Gallery Walks



Two Planning Commission study sessions and gallery walks were held on July 28, 2025, and September 14, 2026. The July 28, 2025, session provided an opportunity for the Planning Commission and community members to review the approach to policy development and provide feedback on potential policy directions. The September 14, 2026, session supported public review of the Draft Health and Equity Element Update. The event provided opportunities for Planning Commissioners and community members to review information regarding DACs and environmental justice conditions, discuss potential policy approaches, ask questions, and provide comments on the Draft Element.

Community Priorities

Several recurring environmental justice issues emerged through the various engagement activities. These issues, which reflect common concerns raised across the engagement process, are presented below in no particular order:

- Pollution and Land Use Decisions – industrial contamination and pollution; Lead, asbestos, pests, mold, and indoor air pollution;
- Mobility Options – traffic and transportation-related impacts and safety; alternative transportation options; and pedestrian and bicycle connectivity;
- Community Participation –accessibility and language barriers; barriers to meaningful civic participation; and concerns regarding power dynamics in decision-making;
- Safe and Affordable Housing –housing affordability and displacement; resources and services for unhoused residents; drinking water quality; and power outage impacts on seniors and people with disabilities;
- Public Safety and Climate Resilience –energy efficiency and sustainability; and climate resilience; Seismic risk;
- Health and Nutrition – access to healthcare and personal services; and access to healthy, affordable, and fresh food.
- Access to Community Resources – lighting, trees, and landscaping; road maintenance and potholes; telecommunications infrastructure; and equitable access to quality parks and recreational facilities;

As described in the Environmental Justice section of the Draft Health and Equity Element Update, some of these issues are addressed through policies contained in other elements of the Vista 2035 General Plan. Issues not adequately addressed elsewhere are addressed through the updated Health and Equity Element.

A summary of community engagement activities and the manner in which community input informed the Element is provided in the East Palo Alto Community Engagement Activities document (Exhibit 2).



Public Review of Draft Element

The Draft Health and Equity Element was published for public review on August 4, 2026, with the public comment period extending through September 18, 2026. The Draft Element was also presented through an online link:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/3f581b7062a24d3bb757ca9a413b4d41/>, which provided an accessible overview of the proposed update in a digital storytelling format.

Public comments received during the review period, including the Planning Commission Study Session and Gallery Walk held on September 14, 2026, have been considered in preparing the version of the Draft Element presented to the Planning Commission. A written summary of substantive comments and any corresponding revisions, as appropriate, are provided in Attachment 2 and in tabular form in Attachment 3.

Recommended Changes

Based on the public comments received, staff recommend incorporating the following changes to the Draft Health and Equity Element:

- Expand Policy 12.8, Healthy Youth Program, to promote community gardens at the school level.
- Expand Policies 12.2, Fresh Food Vendors; and 12.4, Healthy Corner Stores to further encourage ground-floor grocery stores.

Conclusion

The proposed Health and Equity Element Update provides an updated policy framework for addressing environmental justice and health equity in East Palo Alto. The update incorporates current data, identifies DACs and associated environmental justice conditions, responds to community input, strengthens existing policies, and adds new goals and policies addressing issues that were not adequately addressed in the existing General Plan.

The proposed Element is intended to maintain consistency with the City's other General Plan elements, including the Safety Element, and to provide an implementation framework that can be advanced through City programs, partnerships, funding opportunities, and future planning and capital improvement activities.

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution recommending that the City Council adopt the proposed amendment to Chapter 7, Health and Equity Element, of the Vista 2035 General Plan and make the findings identified in the resolution, including the applicable California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemption.

The Draft Plan is scheduled for City Council on November 17, at which time the Council would consider a General Plan Amendment to update Chapter 7. Health and Equity Element of the Vista 2035 General Plan



Fiscal Impact

Preparation of the update is funded through the General Fund FY24-25 and FY25-26 budgets. A General Plan Update surcharge for future large projects will help offset costs related to this General Plan Element update. An additional funding source from the Climate Smart Communities Initiative (CSCI) grant was awarded to the City to support enhanced community engagement activities.

Public Notice

Public notice was provided through postings on the City's website and on a bulletin board at City Hall, located at 2415 University Avenue, East Palo Alto. Notice was also published in the Palo Alto Daily News on October 9, 2026.

The Public Draft was made available on August 4, 2026, on both the City's website and the multi-jurisdictional Environmental Justice Element Planning Initiative website. Email notifications were also distributed to inform the public of the availability of the Public Draft and the associated public comment period.

Environmental

The updates to the Health and Equity Element have been analyzed pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and it has been determined the project qualifies for a CEQA exemption under the common-sense exemption set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), as it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the project may have a significant effect on the environment. Specifically:

- The proposed project does not include land use or zoning changes that would result in direct or indirect growth or changes in building density and intensity.
- The proposed project would not implement provisions that would result in direct or indirect population growth and thus would not place additional demands on natural resources, public services, or infrastructure.
- The proposed project does not include any site-specific designs or proposals to develop specific projects, nor does it grant any entitlements for development projects.
- The proposed project does not authorize any changes in land use or zoning that would allow development in areas not previously allowed.

Following adoption of the Health and Equity Element Update, staff will file the Notice of Exemption (Attachment 7) with the San Mateo County Clerk and post it with the State Clearinghouse, as required.



Government Code § 84308

Applicability of Levine Act: The approval of this does not require approval of an entitlement; therefore, the Levine Act does not apply.

Analysis of Levine Act Compliance: Not applicable.

Attachments

1. Resolution
2. 2026 Draft Health and Equity Element Update. Link to Clean Version:
https://envirojusticeplanning.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/EPA-GP-Chapter-7-Health-Equity_Public_Review_Draft_v1_clean_fixed.pdf
3. 2026 Draft Health and Equity Element Update. Link to Tracked Draft:
https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fenvirojusticeplanning.com%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2026%2F08%2FEPA-GP-Chapter-7-Health-Equity_Public_Review_Draft_v1_tracked_fixed_cleaned.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK
4. Written Summary of Public Comments
5. Public Comment and Responses Matrix
6. CEQA Notice of Exemption Memorandum
7. CEQA Notice of Exemption

Exhibits

1. Environmental Justice Technical Appendix (Exhibit 1). Link :
https://envirojusticeplanning.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/EPA_EJ_Technical_Appendix_PublicReviewDraft_v1.pdf
2. East Palo Alto Community Engagement Activities (Exhibit 2). Link:
https://envirojusticeplanning.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/EPA_Community_Engagement_Activities_Summary_Report_Final_w_Attachments.pdf

ATTACHMENT 1

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-XX

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF EAST PALO ALTO RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL ADOPT AN AMENDMENT TO THE EAST PALO ALTO VISTA 2035 GENERAL PLAN TO UPDATE THE HEALTH AND EQUITY ELEMENT, WHICH SERVES AS THE CITY'S ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ELEMENT, TO ADDRESS RECENT CHANGES IN STATE LAW, AND MAKE THE REQUIRED FINDINGS UNDER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

WHEREAS, pursuant to California Government Code Section 65300, each city and county in California is required to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the jurisdiction and, as appropriate, any land outside its boundaries that, in the planning agency's judgment, bears a relation to the planning of the jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, the City of East Palo Alto Vista 2035 General Plan ("General Plan") was adopted by the City Council in 2016 pursuant to Resolution No. 4785 and has been amended from time to time as necessary to reflect changing conditions, community needs, and applicable requirements of State law; and

WHEREAS, California Government Code Section 65302 identifies the mandatory elements that must be included in a city or county general plan including land use, circulation, conservation, open space, noise, safety, housing and environmental justice, as applicable; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1000 (2016), also known as the Planning for Healthy Communities Act, established requirements concerning environmental justice in general plans and requires disadvantaged communities to either adopt an environmental justice element or incorporate specified environmental justice goals, policies, and objectives into other elements of its general plan; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 7. Health and Equity Element of the City of East Palo Alto Vista 2035 General Plan serves the functions of the City's Environmental Justice Element and establishes goals, policies, and objectives intended to advance health, equity, and environmental justice throughout the City; and

WHEREAS, environmental justice generally seeks to ensure the "fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, culture, income, or other characteristics in development and implementation of environmental laws, regulations, policies, and decisions"; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1000 complements other State environmental justice and environmental protection initiatives, including Senate Bill 535 and Assembly Bill 617, by advancing the identification of communities experiencing disproportionate environmental burdens, encouraging meaningful community engagement, and supporting policies intended to reduce pollution exposure and improve public health and environmental conditions in disadvantaged communities; and.

WHEREAS, the City has prepared an update to the Health and Equity Element ("Health and Equity Element Update") to further address environmental justice, health, equity, and community well-being, and to ensure that the General Plan remains consistent with applicable requirements of State law; and

WHEREAS, the Health and Equity Element Update addresses the environmental justice topics identified in California Government Code Section 65302(h), including reducing exposure to pollution, promoting access to public facilities, promoting access to healthy food, promoting safe and sanitary homes, promoting physical activity, and promoting civic engagement in the public decision-making process; and

WHEREAS, the City has provided numerous opportunities for members of the public to participate in the development and review of the Health and Equity Element Update, including in-person and virtual community workshops, online surveys, focus-group discussions, and discussions with community-based organizations and service providers; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to California Government Code Sections 65352 through 65352.5, the City provided notice and opportunities for review and consultation to applicable public agencies, governmental entities, California Native American tribes identified by the Native American Heritage Commission, and other entities, as required by law; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Government Code Sections 65352 through 65352.5 the City of East Palo Alto mailed a public notice to all applicable agencies including California Native American tribes provided by the Native American Heritage Commission and other entities; and

WHEREAS, there have been numerous opportunities for members of the public to participate in the development of the Health and Equity Element update, including in-person and virtual workshops, online surveys, focus group and service provider discussions; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Environmental Justice (Health & Equity) Element Update is intended to serve as a foundation and framework for advancing the City's environmental justice, health, and equity goals for promoting a more livable, healthy, resilient, and equitable community for all residents of East Palo Alto; and

WHEREAS, after several study sessions, on October 19, 2026, the Planning Commission of the City of East Palo Alto conducted a duly noticed public hearing on the proposed Health and Equity Element Update and considered all maps, plans, reports, staff recommendations, exhibits, correspondence, public comments, testimony, and other evidence submitted in connection with the matter, pursuant to California Government Code Section 65353; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 18.114.070(A) of the East Palo Alto Municipal Code, if the City Council approves the Planning Commission's recommendation, the General Plan amendment will become effective 30 days thereafter; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has considered the proposed Health and Equity Element Update, the applicable provisions of State law and the East Palo Alto Municipal Code, the General Plan, the CEQA documentation, and the public testimony and evidence presented at the public hearing.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF EAST PALO ALTO HEREBY FINDS:

1. Recitals. The foregoing recitals are true and correct and are incorporated by this reference into this action.

2. **Public Interest and General Welfare.** The proposed amendment to the Health and Equity Element, as set forth in the Health and Equity Element Update, is in the public interest and will further the City's responsibility to promote and protect the public health, safety, and general welfare. The amendment is not expected to be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or welfare of the City.
3. **Environmental Justice and Health Equity.** The Health and Equity Element Update advances the City's environmental justice and health equity objectives by establishing and updating goals, policies, and objectives intended to reduce environmental burdens, promote equitable access to public resources and opportunities, improve living conditions, and support meaningful participation by affected communities in public decision-making.
4. **Compliance with Environmental Justice Requirements.** The Health and Equity Element, which serves as the City's Environmental Justice Element addresses the applicable environmental justice requirements of California Government Code Section 65302(h), including the following six mandatory topics:
 - a. Reducing exposure to pollution and improving environmental conditions;
 - b. Promoting access to public facilities and services;
 - c. Promoting access to healthy and affordable food;
 - d. Promoting safe and sanitary homes;
 - e. Promoting physical activity and access to safe and healthy opportunities for recreation; and
 - f. Promoting meaningful civic engagement in the public decision-making process.
5. **Internal Consistency.** The Health and Equity Element Update is internally consistent with the other elements of the City of East Palo Alto Vista 2035 General Plan, consistent with the requirements of California Government Code Section 65300.5.
6. **Compliance with Applicable Law.** The Health and Equity Element Update has been prepared in accordance with applicable provisions of the California Government Code, the California Government Code's general plan requirements, applicable State environmental justice requirements, and other applicable provisions of State law.
7. **Public Participation.** The Planning Commission finds that the City has provided substantial opportunities for community participation during preparation and review of the Health and Equity Element Update, including through workshops, surveys, focus groups, and engagement with community organizations and service providers, and that the public comments and input received have been considered as part of the update process.
8. **CEQA Review.** The Planning Commission has reviewed and considered the City's environmental documentation prepared for the proposed Health and Equity Element Update, including the applicable Notice of Exemption and supporting findings, and recommends that the City Council make the appropriate findings under CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission recommends that the City Council find that the Health and Equity Element is consistent with the certified General Plan Environmental Impact Report, and that the proposed action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15262.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission recommends that the City Council adopts a General Plan Amendment to the Health and Equity Element.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Commission authorizes the Planning Director and City staff to make any minor, non-substantive revisions to the Health and Equity Element Update that may be necessary to correct typographical, grammatical, formatting, or cross-reference errors, or to ensure consistency with applicable State law, prior to consideration by the City Council.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 19th day of October 2026, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Javanni Brown-Austin, Chair

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Bryan Tran, Planning Clerk

John D. Lê, City Attorney

7. Health and Equity

Overview

This element presents the community's priorities for achieving a healthy and equitable community. It includes goals and policies that address existing community health concerns as well as approaches to managing new development to prevent future health issues, covering topics such as environmental justice, mental health, access to healthy food, disease prevention, healthy housing, and opportunities for physical activity. This element also addresses civic engagement, including transparency and inclusivity in public decision-making processes.

Statutory Requirements

California Senate Bill (SB) 1000, enacted in 2016, requires general plans to address environmental justice by improving conditions in communities that are disproportionately burdened by pollution and other health impacts (i.e., "disadvantaged communities") and by ensuring that historically marginalized residents are included in planning decisions. SB 1000 identifies a set of topics that must be addressed in an environmental justice element. This Health and Equity Element covers those required topics, including:

- Pollution exposure
- Public facilities
- Food access
- Safe and sanitary homes

- Physical activity
- Additional health risks (e.g., climate vulnerability)
- Community and civic engagement

This element identifies specific neighborhoods in East Palo Alto that are of particular concern for environmental justice and provides policy guidance to improve health outcomes and quality of life throughout the city and within these specific disadvantaged communities, which are described further in the following section.

Environmental Justice

This General Plan comprehensively addresses environmental justice, primarily through this Health and Equity Element, which contains goals, policies, and actions directly addressing each of the SB 1000 topic areas. Additional goals, policies, and actions related to environmental justice are incorporated throughout the following elements:

Land Use and Urban Design Element: Addresses land use patterns, compatibility standards, and area-specific plans that affect environmental quality in communities.

Transportation Element: Addresses safe and accessible multimodal transportation infrastructure, including pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements that support equitable mobility, opportunities for physical activity through active transportation, and improved air quality through reduced vehicular emissions.

Parks, Open Space, and Conservation Element: Addresses equitable access to parks and open space, physical activity opportunities, soil contamination on

park sites, and environmental stewardship of San Francisquito Creek, Cooley Landing, and the Bay Trail.

Infrastructure, Services, and Facilities Element:

Addresses pollution and contamination exposure related to stormwater management, water quality, and hazardous waste disposal as well as access to public facilities and services.

Safety and Noise Element: Addresses soil and groundwater contamination, hazardous materials management, flooding and sea-level rise, rising groundwater and associated risks of contaminant mobilization in low-lying areas, fire hazards, climate vulnerability, and emergency preparedness, all of which can have disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities. This element also includes anti-displacement protections associated with climate hazards.

Westside Area Plan: The Westside neighborhood, west of Highway 101 and home to approximately 22 percent of East Palo Alto's population, is one of the city's disadvantaged communities (discussed in the next section). The Westside Area Plan provides neighborhood-specific goals and policies on affordable housing preservation, anti-displacement strategies, parks and public facilities, street safety, infrastructure, and community engagement that complement the citywide policies of this Health and Equity Element.

Housing Element: Addresses housing affordability, anti-displacement strategies, preservation of affordable housing stock, healthy and safe housing conditions, and equitable access to homeownership.

Disadvantaged Communities

East Palo Alto has many of the hallmarks of disadvantaged communities due to lower life expectancy, lower income levels, and lower educational attainment compared to the rest of San Mateo County. It has suffered historical environmental injustice caused in part by discriminatory housing and zoning practices and political marginalization.

Although all of East Palo Alto is considered disadvantaged, particular areas experience

disproportionate environmental and socioeconomic burdens; these areas are referred to as Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) in this element, consistent with the terminology used in SB 1000. Under SB 1000, DACs are defined as areas that are disproportionately burdened by, and vulnerable to, multiple sources of pollution and other health risks. The State of California identifies DACs using environmental and socioeconomic screening tools, including CalEnviroScreen, which scores census tracts based on pollution exposure indicators and population vulnerability characteristics. Preliminary DACs in East Palo Alto were identified through a combination of state, federal, and regional data, and were subsequently refined through community engagement, including three community workshops and an equity-focused survey conducted by Climate Resilient Communities in 2024. Through this process, five DACs were identified, as shown in Figure 7-1 and described here.

Kavanaugh–University Village DAC

The Kavanaugh–University Village DAC is located in the northeastern part of the city and spans parts of the Kavanaugh and University Village neighborhoods. Residential development is predominantly single-family homes, with industrial and office uses along the northern border with Menlo Park. Key environmental justice concerns include health risks from lead in older housing stock, housing cost burdens, groundwater threats from contamination in the adjacent Ravenswood Project Area, hazardous waste from nearby industrial uses, traffic and parking impacts, limited park access, and flood hazards from the adjacent Bay shoreline (with portions of the DAC lying within Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] 100- and 500-year flood zones).

Palo Alto Park–University Corridor DAC

The Palo Alto Park–University Corridor DAC encompasses the Midtown/Palo Alto Park neighborhood and the University Avenue corridor in the northwestern part of the city. The area consists primarily of single-family homes and small apartment complexes, with larger multifamily buildings along the University Avenue corridor. This DAC has the highest pollution burden score in the city according to CalEnviroScreen 4.0, a State developed tool that measures pollution burdens and

population characteristics across California census tracts. Key environmental justice concerns include health risks from lead in older housing, groundwater and hazardous waste threats from the adjacent Ravenswood Project Area, air quality and traffic impacts from Highway 101 and Willow Road, housing cost burdens, high rates of unemployment, and low educational attainment.

Weeks–Gardens North DAC

The Weeks–Gardens North DAC is located in central East Palo Alto, encompassing the Weeks neighborhood and the northern portion of the Gardens neighborhood. The area contains a mix of single-family and multifamily housing. Key environmental justice concerns include health risks from lead in older housing, soil contamination from pesticides associated with former agricultural uses, groundwater threats along the Bay Road corridor, hazardous waste sources, impaired water quality in San Francisco Bay, legacy contamination from the former Cooley Landing landfill, and seismic risks to soft-story multifamily buildings.

Willow–Woodland DAC

The Willow–Woodland DAC is located in the southwestern part of the city between San Francisquito Creek and Highway 101, with housing ranging from single-family homes to large apartment complexes and a majority of renter households. Key environmental justice concerns include air quality and traffic impacts from Highway 101, health risks from lead in older housing, impaired water quality, flooding impacts along San Francisquito Creek and from low-lying areas within FEMA-designated 100- and 500-year flood zones, seismic risks to multiple soft-story buildings and homes, high rates of poverty and housing cost burdens, and linguistic isolation.

Gardens DAC

The Gardens DAC is located in the southeastern part of the city, bordered by San Francisquito Creek to the south and Highway 101 to the west. The area consists primarily of low-density single-family residential development, as well as a mobile home park and an affordable apartment complex in the western portion of the DAC. It shares a census tract with the Weeks–Gardens North DAC and

faces many of the same or similar environmental justice concerns, including lead exposure risk, groundwater threats, hazardous waste, impaired water quality, legacy contamination from the former Cooley Landing landfill, high asthma rates, and housing cost burdens, and flooding impacts from San Francisquito Creek and low-lying areas within FEMA-designated 100- and 500-year flood zones.

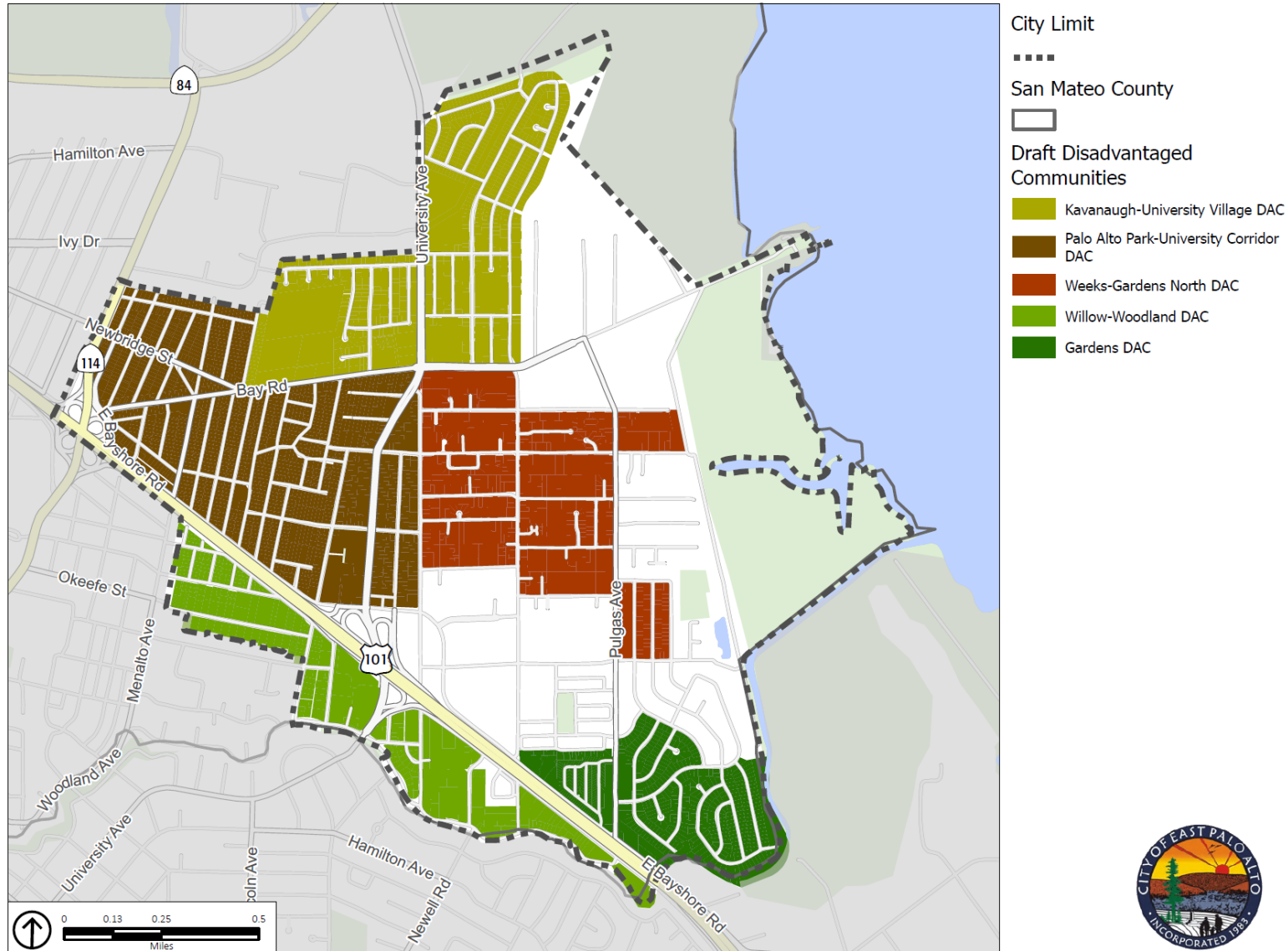
Environmental Justice Technical Appendix

The Environmental Justice Technical Appendix provides detailed socioeconomic profiles and descriptions of environmental justice issues for each DAC identified in this element. The appendix documents the methodology and data sources used to identify and delineate DACs, including the environmental, health, and socioeconomic indicators used to assess cumulative burden and vulnerability. It also identifies recommended data sources and indicators for tracking and monitoring environmental justice conditions over time, providing a foundation for the City to regularly assess and report on outcomes in these communities.

Implementation

For each action, this element identifies a relative timeframe for implementation. Implementation of the actions in this element depends on the resources the City and its partners have available and must remain consistent with the City's long-term financial plans, as reflected in its annual budget.

Figure 7-1: Disadvantaged Communities in San Mateo County



Issues and Opportunities

Place, race, income, living conditions, and educational attainment are all significant factors influencing health outcomes. How the City plans for and prioritizes future growth will shape the long-term health and well-being of residents. As East Palo Alto works to create a healthier and more equitable community, it must also address the threat of displacement facing long-term residents as neighborhood conditions improve.

Life Expectancy and Preventable Disease

Health conditions in East Palo Alto are steadily improving; however, life expectancy remains lower and rates of preventable disease remain higher than in surrounding communities and San Mateo County overall. Life expectancy is an overarching health indicator for any population. Leading causes of death can highlight a population's risk factors and suggest policy priorities. Average life expectancy in East Palo Alto is 81 years, which is five years lower than the San Mateo County average of 86 years and lower than surrounding jurisdictions, such as Menlo Park (83 years) and Redwood City (82 years). There is no single cause for this disparity. Rather, it reflects the combined effects of physical, social, and economic conditions that negatively affect health status and life expectancy. This disparity underscores the importance of improving community health as a critical long-term goal. Unless otherwise noted, health statistics cited in this section are drawn from the San Mateo County All Together Better dashboard (smcalltogetherbetter.org), which compiles data from state and local sources for Zip Code 94303, covering East Palo Alto and portions of Palo Alto. Data years vary by indicator and are noted where relevant.

The leading causes of death in East Palo Alto are generally similar to those in San Mateo County. The top three causes – heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, and stroke – share several risk factors, including poor diet and lack of physical activity. Better access to nutritious food and more opportunities for physical activity could reduce residents' vulnerability to these diseases. Poverty,

lower educational attainment, and limited access to healthcare may also contribute to these causes of death.

Although health conditions are steadily improving, rates of asthma, heart disease, and other chronic conditions remain higher in East Palo Alto than in surrounding communities and the county overall. Heart attacks occur approximately 30 percent more frequently in East Palo Alto than in San Mateo County, though at rates comparable to the state as a whole. Data from 2020 to 2022 show that the age-adjusted hospitalization rate for heart failure was 28.5 per 10,000 residents, compared to 19.5 countywide. Similarly, the hospitalization rate for hypertension, also known as high-blood pressure, was 4.6 per 10,000 residents – more than 3.5 times the County rate of 1.3.

Rates of asthma-related hospitalizations and emergency room visits are also significantly higher in East Palo Alto compared to the county. The age-adjusted hospitalization rate for asthma across all ages groups is 4.4 per 10,000 residents in East Palo Alto – more than three times the county rate of 1.3. Among adults, the asthma hospitalization rate is 3.6 per 10,000 residents, compared to 0.9 countywide. Pediatric asthma hospitalizations occur at a rate of 6.9 per 10,000 children, nearly three times the county rate of 2.5. Similarly, the pediatric asthma emergency room visit rate is 38.7 per 10,000 children, more than double the county rate of 15.8.

Diabetes is another major and growing health risk on the rise. In East Palo Alto, the age-adjusted hospitalization rate for diabetes is 18.1 per 10,000 residents, more than twice the county rate of 8.7. The hospitalization rate for Type 2 diabetes specifically is 16.4 per 10,000 residents, compared to 6.8 countywide. Hospitalizations related to long-term diabetes complications occur at a rate of 10.9 per 10,000 residents, more than twice the county rate of 4.2. Addressing the underlying causes of diabetes through improved nutrition, physical activity, and broader social interventions will be necessary to reverse this trend.

In San Mateo County, cancer mortality rates among Black males and females are significantly higher than the county average across all demographic groups. High

mortality rates are often an indicator of limited access to preventive and post-diagnosis care. These disparities underscore the ongoing importance of preventive health services and affordable access to medical care within the East Palo Alto community.

Income and Employment

Employment status and income are among the significant determinants of individual health outcomes. These factors influence a person's ability to secure housing, purchase healthy food, access medical services, and cope with environmental stressors. Despite being located within one of the wealthiest regions in the world, East Palo Alto residents continue to experience significant and persistent economic disadvantage relative to surrounding communities.

The City's median household income is \$113,493, substantially lower than the county median of \$158,855.¹ Income disparities within the community are pronounced, with median household incomes for Black/African American households (\$66,194) and Hispanic/Latino households (\$90,150) significantly lower than those of White households (\$177,942). About 7 percent of families in East Palo Alto live below the federal poverty level, compared to 4 percent countywide. Poverty rates are particularly elevated among Black/African American families (15 percent) and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander families (22 percent). In addition, many households are severely cost-burdened, spending more than half of their income on housing, which limits the ability to afford food, healthcare, and other necessities.

Educational attainment is closely linked to employment opportunities and income. Only 27 percent of adults in East Palo Alto hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 54 percent countywide. Educational attainment gaps are especially pronounced among Hispanic/Latino and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander residents. Approximately 5 percent of youth are neither enrolled in school nor employed — more than five times

the county rate of less than 1 percent, and rates are substantially higher among young men (7 percent).

East Palo Alto has a very low jobs-to-housing ratio and functions as a net exporter of workers to neighboring cities, with most residents commuting elsewhere for employment. Closing the gap between where residents live and where economic opportunities are located will require intentional investments in workforce training aligned with local skill sets, support for small and locally owned businesses, and development of career pathways in accessible sectors such as construction, infrastructure, and clean energy. The City's Measure HH workforce development program is a critical local tool supporting these efforts.

The income and employment goals and policies in this element are bolstered by the Economic Development Element, which contains additional policies on business attraction and retention, local hiring, and economic vitality, and should be read in conjunction with that element. Addressing the underlying socioeconomic conditions that shape health, including income, education, and economic mobility, is fundamental to realizing the goals of this element.

Physical and Mental Health

Regular physical activity is essential to maintaining good health throughout the lifespan. Research consistently demonstrates that adults who engage in regular moderate physical activity experience significantly lower rates of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, and obesity. Access to safe, well-maintained parks and recreational facilities is a key factor in supporting physical activity, particularly for residents who cannot afford private gym memberships. Because East Palo Alto residents experience higher rates of heart disease, heart failure, and hypertension than the county overall, expanding and improving access to parks and recreational facilities is an important strategy to reduce these chronic health burdens.

Children also need access to opportunities for physical activity to grow, learn, and thrive. Research consistently

¹ US Census Bureau, 2024, *2020–2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*.

shows a strong association between physical activity, student attendance, and academic achievement. Over 60 percent of children in the Ravenswood City School District are considered unfit by the California Physical Fitness Test, compared to approximately 30 percent of children in San Mateo County overall. In addition, one in three children in the Ravenswood City School District is considered overweight based on the same assessment.

Active transportation is an effective way for residents to incorporate regular physical activity into their daily lives, particularly for those without access to private recreational facilities or gym memberships. Safe, connected pedestrian and bicycle routes to parks, schools, transit stops, grocery stores, and other community destinations enable residents to incorporate physical activity into routine travel rather than relying on dedicated exercise. Research consistently links active transportation to reduced risks of cardiovascular disease, obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and other chronic health conditions. East Palo Alto currently has gaps in its pedestrian and bicycle network, particularly in the Willow-Woodland and Weeks-Gardens neighborhoods, that limit residents' ability to safely walk or bike to everyday destinations. Improvements such as upgraded sidewalk, protected bike facilities, safer street crossings, and well-lit routes are therefore both a transportation and a public health priority.

Feeling safe in your neighborhood also contributes to stronger mental health, which is shaped by a combination of environmental, social, and economic conditions. The physical environment can influence mental health in important ways – from the psychiatric effects of exposure to neurotoxins such as lead, pesticides, and air pollution, to the psychological impacts of living in communities with high rates of crime and violence, to the restorative mental health benefits of access to green space and nature. Communities that face disproportionate environmental burdens, economic insecurity, housing instability, and displacement pressures, as East Palo Alto does, also tend to face elevated rates of psychological distress, depression, and anxiety.

Among adults in the city, 24 percent report a diagnosis of depression, compared to 22 percent for the county

(2021–2022). Adults reporting frequent mental distress (defined as 14 or more days of poor mental health in the past 30 days) stand at 17 percent, compared to 14 percent countywide. Age-adjusted hospitalization rates for adult mental health are 29 per 10,000 residents, above the county rate of 21. Pediatric mental health hospitalizations are 28 per 10,000 children, which is slightly above the county rate of 26. Hospitalization data reflects only the most severe cases; broader rates of unmet need and untreated mental health conditions are likely higher.

Social isolation and loneliness are increasingly recognized as significant contributors to poor mental health. A 2022 County-led survey found that 45 percent of San Mateo County residents were struggling with loneliness and isolation. In February 2024, San Mateo County became the first county in the United States to formally declare loneliness a public health emergency, citing research linking social isolation to elevated risks of dementia, depression, anxiety, heart disease, stroke, and premature death. East Palo Alto residents — who face elevated rates of housing cost burdens, overcrowding, long commutes, and economic stress — may be particularly vulnerable to social isolation. At the same time, the community's strong cultural networks and CBOs represent important assets for promoting social connection and mental resilience.

Access to parks, green space, and safe outdoor environments is associated with reduced symptoms of mental illness and improved well-being, and children raised in greener neighborhoods have measurably lower rates of psychiatric disorder in adulthood. Improving park access, expanding tree coverage, reducing pollution exposure, and creating safe and welcoming public spaces in East Palo Alto are planning priorities for both physical and mental health improvement.

In terms of rehabilitation from substance abuse, there are currently only two treatment locations in the city. Free At Last, an organization that provides drug and alcohol services for youth, serves over 4,200 people each year and provides a free drop-in center. While Free At Last provides much-needed residential treatment programs for substance abuse for up to 20 people at a

time, there are no residential rehab programs specifically for youth in the city.

Environmental Hazards (new heading)

As a direct consequence of the industrial land uses that covered much of the city's land area prior to its incorporation in 1983, East Palo Alto has a disproportionate burden of environmental contamination relative to neighboring communities. The greatest concentration of affected sites is in the Bay Road corridor and Cooley Landing area, where agriculture, heavy manufacturing, chemical manufacturing, and auto wrecking operations left behind soil and groundwater contaminants like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), metals, petrochemicals, pesticides, and other hazardous materials. The handling and disposal of these substances were far less regulated during that era, so the legacy of that period continues to affect community health. As such, East Palo Alto was designated a Brownfields Showcase Community in 1997, affording the city specialized assistance from federal agencies to transform contaminated sites into productive assets.

Some sites, including the Gateway 101 and University Circle sites, have been successfully remediated and redeveloped, while others are still undergoing cleanup or operating under use restrictions that prohibit sensitive land uses such as homes or schools. The sites that remain active cleanup cases are managed by a combination of State and federal agencies, including the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, the State Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Beyond legacy industrial sites, other documented sources of contamination in the city include former gas stations with leaking underground storage tanks, areas of former agricultural use with pesticide residue, and older buildings constructed with lead-based paint or asbestos. Illegal dumping of household hazardous waste and other materials occurs across the city and poses a public health concern, particularly in residential neighborhoods. Former agricultural parcels, including sites in the Weeks and Gardens neighborhoods, have contributed to

CalEnviroScreen cleanup site scores in the 84th percentile (meaning residents in the census tract are more exposed to contaminated cleanup sites than 84 percent of the rest of the state), reflecting the ongoing risks posed by pesticide contamination in those areas.

Aerial lead emissions from the Palo Alto Airport are an additional source of concern. Aircrafts have historically operated on leaded aviation gasoline, which contains tetraethyl lead and can contaminate air, soil, and water in communities along flight paths. While the airport began transitioning to an unleaded fuel alternative in December 2024, the City has an ongoing interest in ensuring this transition continues and in advocating for the health of the East Palo Alto residents who live and work beneath the flight path.

The policies related to environmental hazards focus on the aspects of hazard management for which the City has a direct role or unique responsibility from an environmental justice perspective, including preventing new sources of contamination, supporting ongoing communication about legacy site cleanup, addressing illegal dumping, ensuring that new development is appropriately evaluated, and advocating for the community. Policies addressing the siting and regulation of hazardous materials facilities, financial assurance requirements for cleanup, and sensitive land use siting standards are addressed in the Safety and Noise Element of this General Plan.

Safe and Affordable Housing

Housing profoundly affects health and well-being. It is an important determinant of health, and an increasing body of evidence links insufficient housing with infectious and chronic disease, injuries, poor nutrition, and mental illnesses.

For many, unaffordable housing means housing instability, which negatively affects health and forces households to forgo basic needs. Families who have reported that they have trouble paying for housing or utilities are 84 percent more likely to report that they have delayed necessary medical care and 116 percent more likely to report having postponed the purchase of needed medications. In addition, families that spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent also suffer

other adverse health effects, such as reduced cognitive development in youth. Housing cost burden can lead families to double or triple up in overcrowded conditions and accept substandard housing conditions, which can lead to communicable disease and asthma. Displacement and the threat of displacement are also harmful to health, causing stress, depression, long commutes, and poor educational outcomes for youth. Approximately 15 percent of households in East Palo Alto live in overcrowded conditions, nearly twice the countywide rate of 7.5 percent, with renter households most affected at 17 percent.



The renovated Woodlands Newell development, 49 affordable apartments for families in East Palo Alto.

East Palo Alto has a relatively old housing stock, and many homes and residential buildings, particularly in the Willow-Woodland DAC west of Highway 101, have substandard conditions that pose serious health risks. Mold and moisture intrusion are associated with respiratory illness, asthma exacerbation, and allergic reactions. Pest infestations create unsanitary conditions, can contaminate food and surfaces, and are a significant trigger for asthma attacks. Poor indoor air quality from any combination of these sources, as well as exposure to nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, and methane from gas appliances, inadequate ventilation, and secondhand smoke infiltration in multiunit buildings, can be as harmful or more harmful than outdoor air pollution.

Buildings constructed before 1980 likely contain asbestos. Asbestos is a known carcinogen that when disturbed during renovation or deteriorates over time, airborne fibers are emitted causing mesothelioma, lung

cancer, and asbestosis. Lead exposure is also a serious hazard, which can be found in homes and buildings constructed before 1978 if they have lead-based paint. Children exposed to lead face lasting impacts to their neurological development, learning, behavior, and health over their lifetimes, and adults with elevated lead exposure face increased risks of cardiovascular disease and cognitive decline. Given East Palo Alto's older housing stock and the elevated CalEnviroScreen scores for children's lead risk from housing – with census tracts scoring at or above the 76th to 99th percentile – these hazards are an ongoing public health concern that warrants proactive investment in testing, abatement assistance, and code enforcement.

Nutritious and Affordable Food

As of 2022, 3.7 percent of children in East Palo Alto between the ages of 2 and 11 were overweight for their age, compared to only 0.6 percent in San Mateo County, and 23.1 percent of high school students were overweight or obese, compared to 14.5 percent countywide. Additionally, in 2022, 11.4 percent of East Palo Alto adults consumed one or more sodas a day, compared to 8.2 percent countywide. This underscores the importance of providing affordable, accessible nutritious food options for East Palo Alto residents. The community desperately needs more opportunities to buy fresh fruits and vegetables.

Compared to surrounding communities, there are very few food retailers of any kind in East Palo Alto. Overall, the city has more “unhealthy” food retailers (fast food, liquor stores, and convenience stores) than “healthy” retailers, such as supermarkets that sell fresh food. Compared to other cities its size in the region, the city is underserved by full-service markets and grocery stores. Except for two supermarkets, convenience stores are the most common food retailer in the city (representing about one-third of the total). Many of the food retailers authorized to accept SNAP benefits in East Palo Alto are convenience stores rather than full-service grocery stores. There are a limited number of markets that sell fresh fruits and vegetables in the city, including Cardenas Supermarket, Mega Mart, and a small number of neighborhood grocers.

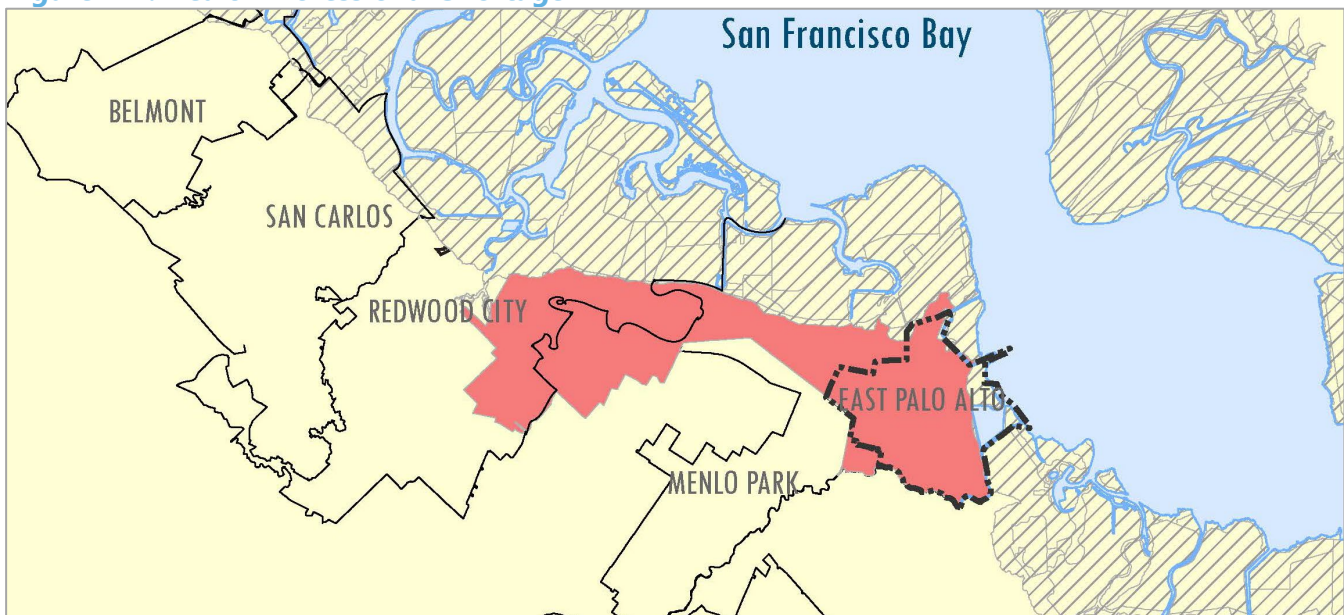
These markets are well distributed within the city, but still a large percentage of residential parcels are located further than a one-quarter mile walk from any market. The East Palo Alto Community Farmers' Market, which offers a wide selection of fresh produce, is operated by the local nonprofit Collective Roots and generally operates every Wednesday from April through November (the lack of weekend operation is a barrier for some residents).

Another concern for public health is the number and concentration of liquor stores in East Palo Alto. According to the San Mateo County Public Health Department, overall, East Palo Alto has a lower rate of liquor stores per 100,000 people than many other cities in the county. However, in East Palo Alto, there are concentrations in some areas such as along University Avenue and East Bayshore Road. In addition, there are a larger number of liquor stores relative to other food stores and thus liquor stores may be a higher percentage of total food stores compared to other communities. Further, liquor stores are associated with other criminal activity, making them a concern for residents.

Reliable, Safe, and Complete Public Facilities and Services (new heading)

Access to quality public facilities and services is essential for community health and well-being. For residents of East Palo Alto, and in particular DACs, gaps in public facilities, from medical care and safe drinking water to childcare and pedestrian infrastructure, compound the environmental and socioeconomic burdens described throughout this element. Equitable access to these facilities and services is both a public health priority and an environmental justice requirement under SB 1000. As shown in Figure 7-2, all of East Palo Alto and a small portion of Menlo Park and Redwood City are designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA), a federal designation given to areas that demonstrate a shortage of healthcare professionals, including primary care professionals, dentists, and mental health professionals. It is the only HPSA in all of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. The area is also designated as a Medically Underserved Area (MUA), a related but distinct federal designation administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration. MUAs identify geographic areas with inadequate access to primary care services more

Figure 7-2: Health Professional Shortage



broadly, based on factors such as the ratio of providers to population, the percentage of residents living below the federal poverty level, the percentage of residents over age 65, and the infant mortality rate. Both designations make the area eligible for federal programs and resources, including the National Health Service Corps loan repayment program, J-1 visa waivers for foreign medical graduates, and support for Federally Qualified Health Centers.

Even with the addition of the Ravenswood Family Health Clinic's new 53,000-square-foot facility, residents still lack adequate access to primary and specialty healthcare services. A shortage of healthcare professionals is a common occurrence in lower-income areas throughout the United States, and can have particularly negative impacts on older adults, low-income residents, and those with limited English proficiency. The distance to healthcare providers can also have a significant effect on whether children and older adults receive preventive care, particularly in areas such as East Palo Alto that have limited transit access. Approximately 25 percent of adults in the city delayed or had difficulty obtaining medical care and only 69 percent had received a routine checkup in the prior year, compared to 72 percent countywide and 78 percent nationally (2021–2022). This element proposes strategies to increase access to medical services, promote culturally appropriate and linguistically accessible care, and improve coordination with the County Health System.

Access to safe and affordable drinking water is also a basic public health necessity. East Palo Alto residents are concerned about drinking water quality, and distrust of tap water is common, particularly among renters in older multifamily buildings where aging plumbing and water supply infrastructure can introduce contaminants even when the public water supply meets regulatory standards. East Palo Alto's proximity to numerous contaminated groundwater sites, combined with rising groundwater levels due to climate change (see the Safety and Noise Element), create potential pathways for contaminant migration that warrant ongoing monitoring and transparent public communication. Lower-income households are also more likely to face water affordability burdens as rate increases are needed to fund infrastructure improvements. Policies for

addressing this include system maintenance and investment, water quality monitoring and public transparency, resident resources for home water quality, and affordability assistance for lower-income households.

Access to affordable, high-quality childcare is both a workforce and a public health issue. Early childhood care and education are associated with improved developmental and long-term health outcomes for children, and reliable childcare supports the ability of parents and caregivers to maintain stable employment. East Palo Alto has a relatively young population with a high share of households with children, and many working families face significant challenges securing affordable care. Gaps in childcare supply, in terms of both the number of facilities and their geographic distribution, are a documented concern, particularly for families in DACs where access to transportation is most limited.

Safe streets and accessible pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure are important public safety concerns for East Palo Alto residents. Gaps in the sidewalk network, missing or substandard crosswalks, poor lighting, and high vehicle volumes on major arterials create dangerous conditions for people walking and cycling, particularly for residents of the Westside (Willow-Woodland DAC) where infrastructure deficiencies and lower-income renter households are most concentrated. The City's active transportation policies, Safe Routes to Schools program, and Vision Zero commitment address these conditions, with this Element reinforcing the priority to invest in pedestrian and bicycle improvements in DACs as a health equity measure.

More broadly, the equitable distribution of public facilities and services, including parks, libraries, community centers, and resilience infrastructure, is a core principle of environmental justice planning. Historically, lower-income communities and communities of color have received less public investment in infrastructure and amenities than wealthier neighborhoods, and the cumulative effect of these disparities is reflected in health outcomes, community safety, and quality of life. Policies for addressing this

explicitly prioritize investments in DACs and require that community input inform facility planning and design.

Every year, the Fire District responds to over 2000 calls for service in East Palo Alto, of which almost two-thirds are for emergency medical incidents. Each Fire Engine is staffed by a paramedic firefighter for first response in the community.

Civic Engagement and Advocacy (new heading)

Community participation in local government is essential to ensuring that City policies and investments reflect the needs and values of all residents. Inclusive, participatory processes lead to better-informed decisions and build trust between residents and local government and are foundational to environmental justice. Effective engagement includes investing in culturally appropriate outreach and addressing the persistent structural barriers to sustain meaningful participation over time.

East Palo Alto is a linguistically diverse community, and language access is one of the most significant determinants of who can meaningfully participate in civic life. According to the American Community Survey, two-thirds of East Palo Alto residents speak a language other than English at home. Approximately half of the population speaks Spanish, making it the most widely spoken language in the city, of which, nearly 20 percent have limited English proficiency. East Palo Alto also has one of the largest Tongan and Samoan communities in San Mateo County, with approximately 9 percent of households speaking Tongan, Samoan, or another Asian or Pacific Islander language.

Beyond language, other structural barriers limit participation. Public meetings are often held at times and in formats that are inconvenient or inaccessible for working families. Technical government documents can be difficult to navigate. Public settings can feel unwelcoming to residents who face disparities in income, education, or immigration status. Engagement is most effective when it occurs early in a process, compensates participants fairly for their time, involves trusted community partners, and demonstrates that input has been genuinely incorporated into decisions.

East Palo Alto has a strong network of CBOs that maintain trusted relationships with residents across the community's diverse linguistic and cultural groups. Partnering with these organizations is essential for equitable and effective civic engagement. The policies in this element establish a framework for embedding these principles across City departments and decision-making processes, so that all residents have a genuine and effective voice in shaping the future of East Palo Alto.

Goals and Policies

Goal HE-1. Improve overall health conditions and wellness in East Palo Alto.

Intent: To reduce public health disparities and improve health outcomes for current and future East Palo Alto residents through coordinated policies, partnerships, and equitable access to health resources and programs.

Policies:

- 1.1 City actions and programs.** Promote, address, and incorporate proactive public health and wellness considerations into City decision-making services, policies, programs, and communications to support healthy living for residents of all ages and abilities.
- 1.2 Inter-agency and community cooperation.** Work with the San Mateo County Health Department (SMC Health), Ravenswood Family Health Center, Stanford Hospital, community-based organizations, healthcare providers, schools, and residents to implement programs and services that improve physical and mental health outcomes of East Palo Alto residents, particularly for the vulnerable and underserved population. Support collaboration on initiatives such as Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Aging and Disabilities Services, Get Healthy San Mateo County initiative, along with similar future health initiatives.

- 1.3 Measuring success.** Encourage the San Mateo County Health Department to develop and maintain measurable community health indicators and performance metrics collaboratively with community stakeholders to evaluate progress towards improved health outcomes and continually track the health status of residents over time. Periodically share results at public meetings.

IM-1.3a: Encourage the San Mateo County Health Department to develop community health indicators, metrics, and a reporting schedule through a meaningful public engagement process.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

- 1.4 Data coordination and information sharing.** Foster coordination and data sharing between the City, County, and community members through public engagement efforts and the use of existing County and regional datasets.

- 1.5 County health system.** Actively work with the County Health System to secure funding support for robust and multiyear health initiatives and other healthy community work that support community needs and priorities for positive health outcomes, such as community implementation grants.

- 1.6 Preventative care.** Promote preventative care as a means of improving health conditions in the city.

IM-1.6a: Develop preventative care programs in partnership with the San Mateo County Health Department, along with local community-based organizations.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

- 1.7 Health-related employee programs.** Encourage local employers to adopt healthy living/healthy employee programs, practices, and events (such as walk-a-thons and other group walks).

Goal HE-2. Promote healthy practices through City operations, programs, and community partnerships.

Intent: To have City staff, City agencies, and City-sponsored activities and events set a precedent for healthy behaviors and choices, representing a positive health focus for healthy outcomes for residents and all who come into this community.

Policies:

- 2.1 City leadership.** Promote healthy lifestyles and activities at government offices and government-sponsored events for all community members.
- 2.2 City employees.** Promote the health and well-being of City employees as a model and proponent of healthy lifestyles through health challenges, healthy food choices, and healthy work environments.
- 2.3 City events.** Leverage resources and relationships to provide healthy food choices, including in vending machines, and activities to participants at City-funded events, along with access by active transportation modes, to integrate positive health outcomes into the way the City provides resources to residents, including at annual events like National Night Out, Love our Earth Fest, and Mama Dee Day.
- 2.4 School food.** Work with the Ravenswood City School District and the Sequoia Union School District on policies and programs related to healthy food in cafeterias and in vending machines to provide healthy and fresh food options while remaining culturally relevant and respectful of the communities that are consuming the food.

Goal HE-3. Improve and expand access to employment opportunities within or near East Palo Alto to reduce long commutes, transportation costs, and pollution exposure. (New)

Intent: To expand access to jobs for East Palo Alto residents and develop their workforce capacity by attracting and retaining quality employers, supporting local business growth, and reducing barriers that prevent residents from accessing jobs close to home.

Policies:

3.1 Business attraction and retention. Attract and retain businesses that are committed to long-term establishment in East Palo Alto and that offer living-wage employment opportunities. Additionally, encourage businesses to hire from the local workforce, particularly those in emerging industries aligned with the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy.

3.2 Jobs-housing balance. Support land uses and development patterns that bring quality employment opportunities closer to where residents live. Balance new jobs with seeking housing, including affordable housing, that meets community needs.

3.3 Small business support. Promote and support entrepreneurship, growth, and success of locally owned businesses and economies, particularly those owned by disadvantaged community members.

IM-3.3a: Coordinate with San Mateo County to promote their Green Business Program to eligible East Palo Alto businesses for them to become certified and reduce cost, conserve resources, reduce pollution, and lower their carbon footprint.
Timeframe: Short-Term

IM-3.3b: Explore providing grant opportunities to residents taking entrepreneurship courses to foster entrepreneurship growth and economic development.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

IM-3.3c: Partner with local community-based organizations to encourage and promote their programs for training residents on how to run restaurants and source produce from their local community garden.

Timeframe: Short-Term (Ongoing)

3.4 Regional collaboration. Work collaboratively with neighboring jurisdictions, regional agencies, and major employers in the surrounding area to expand employment opportunities for East Palo Alto residents by encouraging local hiring and improving transit connections to job centers.

3.5 Workforce development programs. Leverage Measure HH and other available local, state, and federal funding to sustain and expand workforce development programs that provide multilingual job training, apprenticeships, certifications, and job placement services to East Palo Alto residents. Conduct proactive multilingual outreach about these programs to disadvantaged community members.

3.6 Public service. Promote local hiring of residents for City employment positions as a way to expand civic engagement through public service.

IM-3.6a: Educate residents about the various municipal functions and services that the City provides, including the various roles and jobs that comprise the workforce of the city and related agencies.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

3.7 Prioritized sectors. Prioritize workforce development investments in sectors offering accessible, living-wage career pathways, including the construction and building trades, infrastructure operations and maintenance, environmental remediation, and clean energy and climate resilience work. Ensure sector

prioritization is aligned with community feedback and resident priorities.

- 3.8 Re-entry programs.** Collaborate with San Mateo County to fund and operate job finding and training programs and promote them to people newly released from jail. (moved from existing Goal HE-8)
- 3.9 Clean technology.** Attract renewable technology companies to the Ravenswood Employment Center District, such as solar panel manufacturing and recycling companies and companies that focus on innovative energy, water, and waste technologies. (moved from existing Goal HE-10)

Goal HE-4. Create a parks and recreation system that encourages physical activity, promotes healthy living, and reduces chronic illnesses. (Previously Goal HE-3)

Intent: To ensure that East Palo Alto's parks, trails, open spaces, and recreational facilities are safe, welcoming, well-maintained, and equitably accessible to all residents.

Policies:

- 4.1 Park improvements.** Prioritize improving and maintaining existing parks, trails, and open space facilities in disadvantaged communities, including enhancements to amenities, lighting, accessibility, and safety.
- 4.2 Community engagement on parks.** Continue to engage community members on specific park and recreation facility needs, prioritizing outreach to disadvantaged communities when planning improvements or new facilities.
- 4.3 Recreational facilities.** Encourage the development of recreational facilities, gyms, and exercise spaces in the city, including City-created and privately or nonprofit-operated facilities such as basketball and tennis courts. Explore opportunities to expand access to low-cost programming through local facilities, including potential subsidized or free-day options for residents.
- 4.4 Joint-use agreements.** Pursue joint-use agreements with the Ravenswood City School District and other local school districts to expand access to recreational spaces outside of school hours, reducing the gap in meeting the City's parkland standard and increasing opportunities for physical activity for residents of all ages.
- 4.5 After-school programs.** Work with school districts and community organizations to provide after-school fitness and educational programs for children, such as existing partnerships with EPACENTER and the YMCA and Summer Park Activation program, prioritizing programs in disadvantaged communities.
- 4.6 Lighting and tree coverage.** Provide adequate lighting for all parks, trails, sidewalks, and open spaces, and expand tree coverage and shade, prioritizing improvements in disadvantaged communities and along pathways to parks and recreational facilities.
- 4.7 Park safety and quality.** Enhance the safety and quality of parks and open spaces in disadvantaged communities, including preventing and addressing vandalism and disrepair.

Goal HE-5. Provide safe and convenient alternatives to motorized vehicle travel that support community health through physical activity and cleaner air. (New)

Intent: To promote health and mobility by encouraging safe and convenient alternatives to driving.

Policies:

- 5.1 Active transportation.** Prioritize transportation system improvements that encourage walking, biking, and transit use. This policy is implemented through the Mobility Element. (Moved from existing Goal HE-3)
- 5.2 Transportation improvements.** Consider the positive and negative health impacts of new transportation projects prior to approval, including impacts on air quality, physical activity, and pedestrian and bicycle safety. (Moved from existing Goal HE-3)
- 5.3 Transportation safety.** Strive to improve the safety of the transportation system by making transportation improvements in areas with a high incidence or a greater potential of pedestrian/vehicle or bicycle/vehicle collisions. (Moved from existing Goal HE-3)
- 5.4 Land use.** Promote land use patterns that encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyles. This policy is implemented through the goals and policies of the Land Use and Urban Design Element. (Moved from existing Goal HE-3)

Goal HE-6. Strive for East Palo Alto to be a smoke-free community.

Intent: To reduce the exposure of community members to nicotine, carcinogens associated with cigarettes, second-hand smoke, and various forms of cancer.

Policies:

- 6.1 Smoking in public spaces.** Prohibit smoking in public buildings and public spaces such as parks, open spaces, and outside of public buildings. The ban would cover cigarettes, cigars, medical marijuana, and similar products.
- 6.2 Anti-smoking ordinances.** Work with the County of San Mateo to implement any smoke-free multiunit housing policies, and affirm local landlords' smoke-free policies.
- 6.3 Second-hand smoke.** Partner with the County to develop educational materials and presentations that discourage and prohibit smoking to address second-hand smoke.
- 6.4 Limitations on retailers.** Within legal frameworks, take steps to limit the number of tobacco retailers in East Palo Alto and limit advertising for tobacco products, especially near schools.
- 6.5 Advertising.** Encourage store owners to remove tobacco signage from shop windows.

Goal HE-7. **Safely and systemically clean up and eliminate toxics, legacy pollutants, and hazardous materials. (Previously Goal HE-4)**

Intent: To protect residents, future generations, and workers and visitors who frequently travel to East Palo Alto against harmful health and other impacts associated with dangerous materials that may pose a threat to life and property, and may dictate costly public improvements. Reduction or elimination of these hazards can be accomplished with concerted efforts.

Policies:

- 7.1 Toxic waste.** Prohibit new nonresidential land uses that are known to release or emit toxic waste at levels that are harmful to human health while continuing to allow research and development (R&D) uses, medical uses, and other necessary services, such as dry cleaners, consistent with the Development Code.
- 7.2 Legacy pollutants.** Continue to work with state, federal, regional, and local agencies, as well as academic institutions to eliminate and reduce concentrations of regulated legacy pollutants and improve stormwater runoff quality from old industrial-use areas. Engage with community-based organizations and resident advocates to ensure health concerns and impacts are understood and addressed.
- 7.3 Emerging contaminants at legacy sites.** Work with state and federal regulatory agencies to evaluate whether contaminated sites in East Palo Alto that were previously closed or remediated should be reassessed for contaminants of emerging concern, including per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) compounds and other substances not assessed in earlier cleanup efforts, and advocate for reopening investigation of sites where new evidence suggests ongoing risk to community health.

7.4 Clean-up progress updates. Proactively engage with US Environmental Protection Agency and California Department of Toxic Substance Control case managers of contaminated sites to obtain regular updates on clean-up progress and share findings with the community, including those who are within the vicinity who are directly impacted by the site as well as any advocacy groups concerned about the site.

7.5 Manager-community mediation. Coordinate with the US Environmental Protection Agency and California Department of Toxic Substances Control to support mediation between managers of contaminated sites and advocacy groups and East Palo Alto residents who are concerned with the site as a path towards building accountability and transparency around exposure risks and to promote safer and more equitable health outcomes for current and future residents.

7.6 Academic and healthcare partnerships. Partner with local academic institutions and affiliated healthcare providers to assess the health risks associated with contaminated sites in East Palo Alto and to facilitate access to medical screening, monitoring, and care for residents who may have been exposed to environmental contaminants.

7.7 Community information. Provide regular, accessible information and updates to community members about contamination and pollution threats in East Palo Alto, including individual protective actions and available programs to support them.

IM-7.7a: Conduct periodic community education workshops about contaminated sites to raise broader awareness of locations, risks, and remediation progress.

Timeframe: Short-Term (Ongoing)

IM-7.7b: Provide links to applicable databases, such as the Department of Toxic Substances Control EnviroStor database, on the City's website showing information about contaminated sites, including clean-up status, exposure risks, and

information on how residents can get involved or learn more.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

- 7.8 Airport hazards.** Advocate before the City of Palo Alto, the Santa Clara County Airport Land Use Commission, and relevant state and federal agencies to address environmental justice concerns associated with the Palo Alto Airport, including the timely elimination of the use of leaded aviation fuel, mitigation of aircraft noise impacts on nearby residents, and measures to reduce risks to surrounding communities from aircraft accident hazards.
- 7.9 Cross-jurisdictional coordination.** Actively engage neighboring jurisdictions, including the Cities of Palo Alto and Menlo Park, and relevant regional agencies on land use and development proposals in their jurisdictions that may pose contamination or hazard risks to East Palo Alto residents.
- 7.10 Illegal dumping.** Prioritize the prevention of illegal dumping and hazardous waste dumping, and the removal of dumping by the Public Works Department when it does occur, to protect health, safety, environmental quality, and community aesthetics.
- 7.11 Agricultural pesticides.** Reduce exposure to legacy pesticides, particularly in areas previously under agricultural use, and whenever possible work with landowners and developers to eliminate concentrations of pesticides from soil and groundwater.
- 7.12 Illegal wells.** Seek out and shut down illegal or unpermitted private wells in the city to protect the city's aquifer and water quality.

Goal HE-8. Improve respiratory health throughout the city and strive to reduce incidence of asthma and other respiratory illnesses. (Previously Goal HE-10)

Intent: To use policies and regulations that reduce the impact of air pollution on residents in East Palo Alto.

Policies:

- 8.1 Highway buffers.** Discourage the development of sensitive land uses (schools, healthcare clinics, and elder and childcare facilities) within 500 feet of freeways and stationary sources of air pollution.
- 8.2 Air pollution mitigation.** Require that new multifamily development located within 500 feet of freeways or along University Avenue implement appropriate mitigation measures, such as air filtration/ventilation systems, landscaping, and other physical improvements, as recommended by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and/or the Bay Area Air District to reduce indoor air pollution.
- IM-8.2a:** Partner with the Bay Area Air District, the Sequoia Foundation, community-based organizations, and other regional agencies to deploy and maintain a network of low-cost public air quality monitors in East Palo Alto to identify neighborhood-level pollution hotspots and use monitoring data to prioritize and target mitigation investments in disadvantaged communities.
- Timeframe: Short-Term
- 8.3 Landscape barriers.** Plant landscape buffers between Highway 101 and residential areas to reduce noise and air pollution for residential areas, coordinating with Caltrans as necessary and partnering with community-based organizations and nonprofits that may provide trees or landscaping services.

- 8.4 No new truck routes.** Prohibit the designation of new truck routes on residential and collector streets in East Palo Alto.
- 8.5 Electric vehicle fleet.** Improve air quality and respiratory health by transitioning City programs and operations, such as converting to a clean-air and primarily electric fleet.
- 8.6 Electric vehicle adoption.** Promote community-wide electric vehicle (EV) adoption to reduce vehicle emissions and improve air quality, including by expanding publicly accessible EV charging infrastructure through the City's EV charging capital project and partnering with community organizations to increase EV awareness and access in disadvantaged communities.
- 8.7 Other mobility strategies.** Implement the strategies in the Transportation Element that improve air quality. These include transit, walking, biking, and Transportation Demand Management strategies.

Goal HE-9. Provide housing that supports the health and safety of residents. (Previously Goal HE-13)

Intent: To ensure that all housing, including existing and new, has healthy indoor air that limits exposure to pollutants such as tobacco smoke, mold, carbon monoxide, and radon, and is constructed from materials that do not contain hazardous elements, such as lead or asbestos.

Policies:

- 9.1 Community cohesion.** Implement fair housing laws in a manner that all residents, regardless of race or ethnicity, may feel welcomed and included in the community. (Previously Goal HE-11)
- 9.2 Housing and public health.** Recognize that affordable housing is a crucial public health issue and that housing instability leads to mental and physical health issues. (Moved from existing Goal HE-3; struck portion moved to the next goal.)
- 9.3 Substandard housing rehabilitation.** Encourage and incentivize owners of substandard housing units in disadvantaged communities to repair and rehabilitate their buildings, with particular focus on neighborhoods with concentrations of older housing stock where mold, pests, lead, and asbestos issues are most prevalent.
- IM-9.3a:** Expand financial assistance to help residents identify and address substandard housing and indoor air quality, mold, and pest issues, prioritizing outreach and implementation in disadvantaged communities.
Timeframe: Short-Term
- IM-9.3b:** Fund programs for home weatherization and retrofit improvements, including seismic, air filtration, and energy-efficiency retrofits, prioritizing outreach and implementation in disadvantaged communities.
Timeframe: Short-Term
- 9.4 Abatement assistance.** Collaborate with San Mateo County to establish or support abatement assistance programs that help residents eliminate common pollutants from their homes, such as providing free or subsidized supplies to test and monitor indoor air quality and providing grants to remediate indoor air pollution problems in low-income homes or affordable rental units.
- 9.5 Code enforcement.** Coordinate with San Mateo County to address health issues in buildings, such as mold, that compromise the health of residents. Ensure code enforcement compliance for all single-family residences and multifamily housing units.
- 9.6 Pesticides.** Reduce or eliminate toxic pesticide use in civic buildings using integrated pest management (IPM) techniques and encourage the use of these techniques on private property.
- 9.7 Electrification and natural gas.** Support the voluntary removal of natural gas infrastructure

and appliances from homes and their replacement with electric appliances, and promote programs and incentives that help residents make this transition affordably.

9.8 Tenant education. Partner with community-based organizations to host tenant education workshops on housing health and safety issues, helping residents understand their rights and the resources available to address substandard conditions.

9.9 Landlord education. Partner with community-based organizations to provide education and outreach to landlords on housing health and safety standards, habitability requirements, and their legal obligations to tenants, promoting voluntary compliance and reducing substandard housing conditions.

9.10 Healthy buildings. Encourage and incentivize new and rehabilitated buildings to be designed and constructed to improve the health of workers, residents, and visitors. Activities could include:

- Using materials that are proven to eliminate negative health impacts on employees and residents.
- Siting buildings to encourage walking.
- Designing internal staircases that are visually prominent and attractive.
- Designing buildings to allow for high levels of natural light and air.

IM-9.10a: Work with developers to prioritize health in planned construction, using healthy design checklists and/or other review tools (such as the [Building Design Checklist](#) by the Center for Active Design).

Timeframe: Short-Term (Ongoing)

IM-9.10b: Review, revise, and update the Municipal Code and other relevant plans, procedures, regulations, guidelines, programs, and design manuals as needed to promote healthy housing quality, including providing

assistance to tenants having to relocate due to the landowner recovering possession of the property, or an owner move-in eviction.

Timeframe: Long-Term

Goal HE-10. Prevent displacement and preserve affordable housing. (New)

Intent: To complement and reinforce the City's Housing Element by addressing displacement from an environmental justice and community health perspective, recognizing that stable, affordable housing is foundational to health equity.

Policies:

10.1 Affordable housing. Pursue the addition of new "income-restricted" affordable housing in East Palo Alto. (Moved [portion] from existing Goal HE-3)

10.2 Anti-displacement priority. Prioritize preservation of existing affordable housing as an important component of the City's housing supply, and ensure that new development and public investment do not result in a net loss of affordable units or the preventable displacement of long-time residents.

IM-10.2a: Maintain and continue to implement the City's existing anti-displacement programs and protections, including:

- The Rent Stabilization Program and the Rent Stabilization and Eviction for Good Cause Ordinance, which provides just-cause eviction protections effective from the first day of tenancy.
- Funding eviction defense legal services and rental assistance through Measure JJ funds.
- Below-Market Rate (BMR) administration for affordable rental and ownership opportunities.

Timeframe: Short-Term

IM-10.2b: Seek opportunities to expand and strengthen the City’s anti-displacement strategy. Collaborate with CBOs and residents to identify strategies appropriate and effective for East Palo Alto. These may include:

- Completing a rental inventory of all dwelling units.
- Updating or expanding rent stabilization laws or implementing regulations.
- Strengthening implementation of relocation assistance for tenants, including assistance for tenants relocating due to the landowner recovering possession of the property or an owner move-in eviction.
- Exploring strengthening implementation of tenant anti-harassment policies.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

10.3 Affordable housing development. Promote and prioritize the development of 100-percent affordable housing within the city, and continue to require that new developments include affordable units consistent with the City’s Inclusionary Housing Ordinance.

10.4 Alternative housing models. Explore and support the establishment of alternative affordable housing models, such as community land trusts, social housing, and tenants-in-common, as long-term strategies for affordability, anti-displacement, and community wealth-building.

10.5 Tenant protections. Strengthen implementation of tenant protections to reduce the risk of unjust eviction and displacement, including ensuring that just-cause eviction protections apply from the first day of tenancy.

IM-10.5a: Identify areas within East Palo Alto at greatest risk of displacement, using available data on rent burden, eviction rates, income levels, housing age and condition, and proximity to planned public investments. Use the findings to

prioritize implementation of the City’s anti-displacement programs and resources in the highest-risk areas.

Timeframe: Long-Term

10.6 Development streamlining. Streamline the development review and permitting process for housing construction and rehabilitation to reduce costs and facilitate production.

Goal HE-11. **Provide support, resources, and housing options for unhoused people. (New)**

Intent: To expand services and housing pathways for unhoused people, in coordination with County agencies and community organizations.

Policies:

11.1 Emergency and transitional housing. Support the expansion of emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing for unhoused people, including low-barrier navigation centers focused on rapidly connecting residents to permanent housing.

11.2 Services coordination. Work in partnership with San Mateo County and local community organizations to implement continuum-of-care strategies and provide mental health, substance use, and supportive services for unhoused people.

Goal HE-12. **Provide access to affordable, healthy food for all East Palo Alto residents. (Previously Goal HE-6)**

Intent: To provide easy access to healthy food, attract economic anchors and jobs, and promote stronger local economies, vibrant neighborhoods, and healthy people. Poor diets can lead to higher levels of obesity and other diet-related illness, such as diabetes and heart disease.

Policies:

12.1 Healthy food environment. Improve the food environment in East Palo Alto and pursue programs, policies, and regulations that encourage healthy eating habits and discourage concentrations of unhealthy food vendors.

12.2 Fresh food vendors. Pursue the attraction and retention of high-quality, full-service grocery stores and other healthy food purveyors² in the city. Primary locations for healthy food stores are in the Ravenswood 101 Shopping Center, along University Avenue, and along Bay Road in the Ravenswood/4 Corners Specific Plan Area.

12.3 Farmers' markets. Work with farmers' market operators to increase market frequency and expansion to new locations, prioritizing underserved neighborhoods and disadvantaged communities, and continue to streamline permits to facilitate temporary uses, such as farmers' markets.

12.4 Healthy corner stores. Encourage corner stores and small markets to carry a wider array and more healthy food options.

IM-12.4a: Work with independently owned corner stores, convenience stores, and small markets in East Palo Alto to encourage healthy food options.
Timeframe: Medium-Term (Ongoing)

12.5 Community organization partnerships. Work with community-based organizations to expand access to healthy and affordable food in disadvantaged communities.

12.6 Food assistance outreach. Promote information about food assistance programs — such as CalFresh, WIC, and the California Universal School Meals Program — to help residents access the resources available to them, with outreach provided in English, Spanish, and other languages spoken predominantly by the community.

12.7 Fast food restaurants. Strive to balance the number of fast food restaurants with healthy food establishments so that there are not concentrations of fast food and other unhealthy food vendors in the city.

12.8 Healthy youth programs. Work with school districts and schools to create or implement educational programs for kids about healthy eating, such as edible school yards and healthy cooking classes.

12.9 Food recovery. Support food recovery programs in schools and food facilities to minimize food loss and increase donations to food banks.

12.10 Community gardens. Support the use of public and private vacant lots and public facilities for growing food for personal consumption, as feasible or appropriate. Encourage use of low-flow, drip, or similar highly efficient irrigation methods.

IM-12.10a: Explore providing public financing options for community organizations to purchase land for agricultural uses and investigate access to capital for larger community agricultural projects.
Timeframe: Long-Term

12.11 Urban agriculture. Support opportunities for community gardening, food cultivation, and small-

² Healthy food outlets include full-service grocery stores, regularly held farmers markets, fruit and vegetable markets, healthy mobile vendors,

and convenience stores or corner stores that sell a significant proportion of health foods.

scale urban agriculture consistent with applicable zoning, health, and nuisance regulations.

IM-12.11a: Review and update the Municipal Code to permit limited on-site sales and processing activities for urban farms and ensure that zoning regulations do not create unnecessary barriers to community gardens or urban agriculture.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

- 12.12 Liquor stores.** Avoid concentrations of liquor stores and corner stores that sell liquor (multiple stores on the same block or intersection).

Goal HE-13. **Strive for all residents to have access to affordable, quality healthcare, mental health care, and social services.** (Previously Goal HE-8)

Intent: To help members of the community to command appropriate healthcare resources to preserve or improve their health. To acknowledge and ameliorate special healthcare needs in East Palo Alto, such as mental health and addiction.

Policies:

- 13.1 Health education.** Provide information about existing healthcare facilities through City-sponsored events, publications, and activities.

- 13.2 Homeless services.** Build on and enhance existing strategies and planning for addressing homelessness, including prevention, services, access to mental health services, and necessary facilities.

- 13.3 Location of services.** Encourage the County to provide new and expanded health services and be supportive of them coming. Encourage co-location with other existing health providers.

- 13.4 Mobile health clinics.** Collaborate with San Mateo County Health to support the operation of mobile health clinic services in East Palo Alto, prioritizing

stops in disadvantaged communities to expand access to urgent care, health screenings, vaccinations, and referral services.

- 13.5 Community health fairs.** Seek opportunities to partner with local organizations to hold periodic community health fairs that provide free screenings and educational information to promote wellness and disease prevention, prioritizing locations in disadvantaged communities.

- 13.6 Regulatory incentives.** Explore and encourage financial and regulatory incentives for low-cost medical clinics and doctor's offices to locate in East Palo Alto.

- 13.7 Culturally sensitive services.** Encourage healthcare service providers to provide services in a way that is culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate for members of the community.

- 13.8 Factors of mental health.** Work to reduce factors that cause stress and mental health issues, such as the lack of affordable housing, crime, and financial instability.

- 13.9 Continuum of care.** Work in partnership with County agencies to implement continuum of care strategies and retain the Wellness Clinician position in East Palo Alto for continued culturally competent continuum of care.

- 13.10 Mental health services.** Work with other agencies to provide information about available mental health services available to East Palo Alto residents.

- 13.11 Drug rehabilitation programs.** Collaborate with San Mateo County Health to provide more information and better outreach about available treatments at treatment centers in East Palo Alto and San Mateo County Health. Expand the programs to cover youth and other mental health issues.

Goal HE-14. **Strive for safe and affordable drinking water that is protected from pollution and contamination. (New)**

Intent: To ensure that all residents have access to safe and affordable drinking water and that the City proactively monitors and communicates water quality information.

Policies:

14.1 **Water system maintenance and investment.**

Prioritize maintenance and repair of the public water distribution system to reduce exposure to contaminants and ensure safe, reliable delivery of drinking water to all residents.

14.2 **Water quality monitoring and transparency.**

Coordinate with the San Mateo County Environmental Health Services Groundwater Protection Program and other relevant agencies to conduct testing results and make results available to the public in plain language and in the predominant languages of the community.

14.3 **Water quality education.** Partner with state and federal agencies to support public education efforts about potential water quality threats, protective actions residents can take, and the meaning of water quality data.

14.4 **Resident water quality resources.** Provide information and resources to help residents improve water quality in their homes, including awareness of alternative residential water treatment and filtration options.

IM-14.4a: Streamline building permits for installation of whole-home filtration systems and other water quality upgrades.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

14.5 **Funding assistance.** Pursue grant funding and partnerships with the County, state agencies, and community-based organizations to support low-

income residents in identifying and addressing home water quality issues, including assistance for pipe repairs and water filtration upgrades, prioritizing outreach in disadvantaged communities.

14.6 **Water affordability.** Explore options to help lower-income residents manage water utility costs, including by advocating to water providers for affordability measures that serve disadvantaged communities and promoting existing assistance programs, such as the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's Customer Assistance Program for low-income residents.

Goal HE-15. **Increase the number and distribution of childcare facilities throughout the city. (Previously Goal HE-9)**

Intent: To coordinate better quality care from birth through early childhood because early care of children should be a primary concern of society. To provide childcare professionals with support and training to reach their full potential to provide quality care. To recognize there is a need for more affordable, high-quality care as many parents in East Palo Alto are working.

Policies:

15.1 **Diversity of childcare services.** Encourage the development of a range of childcare facilities, including family day care homes and public and private childcare centers to fulfill the childcare needs of East Palo Alto families.

IM-15.1a: Update the Development Code to encourage a range of childcare facility types and locations throughout the city, including licensed home daycares, childcare centers, and employer-sponsored or shared childcare facilities, to improve access to childcare for East Palo Alto residents.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

15.2 Childcare demand. Work with local and regional agencies to assess childcare supply and demand in East Palo Alto and encourage the implementation of programs to address childcare shortfalls.

15.3 Developer incentives. Provide regulatory and financial incentives to encourage new childcare facilities while ensuring they are sited near compatible uses.

15.4 Integrated childcare. Coordinate and integrate childcare programs with housing and social programs, where feasible.

15.5 City events. Incorporate childcare programs into City-sponsored public programs and events, where feasible.

Goal HE-16. Improve pedestrian, bicycle, and motorized vehicle safety in East Palo Alto. (Previously Goal HE-5)

Intent: To create a physical environment where it is safe and convenient for residents to walk and bike. To promote physical exercise and reduce traffic fatalities and injuries.

Policies:

16.1 Safe Routes to Schools. Pursue and support local Safe Routes to Schools programs.

16.2 Aging pedestrians. Promote safe routes for aging adults, particularly routes to transit and shopping centers.

16.3 Vision Zero. Work to achieve a roadway system with no pedestrian or bicycle fatalities or serious injuries in road traffic.

16.4 Pedestrian improvements. Prioritize transportation improvements in areas immediately around schools or on primary walking routes to/from schools.

16.5 Coordination with school districts. Work with the Ravenswood School District, Sequoia Union School District, charter schools, and private schools to improve transportation safety around schools.

16.6 Emergency vehicles. Maintain a multi-modal transportation network that allows for direct, safe routes for emergency response vehicles.

16.7 Emergency response and safety. Prioritize emergency vehicle access and response by ensuring the transportation network meets all California Fire Code requirements. The geometry of all roadways, intersections, and traffic-calming features must accommodate fire and emergency apparatus. Within these established public safety parameters, designs shall incorporate enhancements for pedestrian and cyclist safety, favoring pedestrian-oriented intersection and crosswalk geometry where feasible.

Goal HE-17. Provide other public facilities, infrastructure, and services that meet the needs of, and are accessible to, residents of disadvantaged communities. (New)

Intent: To ensure that public facilities and infrastructure are equitably distributed and that investments prioritize the areas and populations with the greatest need.

Policies:

17.1 Prioritized public facility investment. Prioritize investments in public facilities, infrastructure, and community amenities, including sidewalks, lighting, streetscapes, parks, libraries, and community centers, in disadvantaged communities, and ensure that City capital improvement planning reflects these priorities.

17.2 Inclusive design. Ensure that City facilities and services are designed and maintained to meet the needs of all users, including people with disabilities, older adults, non-English speakers, and

families with young children. Apply principles of universal and barrier-free design in the planning and renovation of public facilities.

- 17.3 Greater interaction.** Increase opportunities for intercultural interaction, especially at public gathering spaces throughout the city. (Moved from existing Goal HE-11)
- 17.4 Transit and mobility access.** Work with transit providers to prioritize service improvements in disadvantaged communities.
- 17.5 Active transportation access.** Partner with regional agencies and transit providers to develop mobility solutions and improve active transportation connections for isolated areas of East Palo Alto with limited transit access.
- 17.6 Mobility assistance.** Partner with regional agencies and transit providers to improve access and affordability for public and private mobility options, such as by providing financial assistance to East Palo Alto residents to help cover transportation costs.
- 17.7 Frontloaded community benefits from development.** When community benefits are negotiated as part of development agreements with major development projects, prioritize implementation of such community benefits in the earliest possible phase of development, where feasible and appropriate.
- 17.8 Community input on facility design.** Incorporate community input into the planning and design of public facilities, including opportunities to incorporate art, murals, cultural elements, and placemaking features that reflect neighborhood identity and foster community connection.
- 17.9 Digital access.** Seek partnerships with telecommunications providers, technology companies, and regional agencies to expand affordable access to broadband internet and digital tools for residents in disadvantaged communities.

Goal HE-18. Empower all residents to have a strong and effective voice in City decisions that affect their lives. (New)

Intent: To reduce barriers to participation in City decision making and ensure that engagement processes are accessible, culturally appropriate, and responsive to the community's needs and expressed priorities.

Policies:

- 18.1 Multilingual access.** Expand translation, interpretation, and accessibility of public materials, notices, and meetings for decisions that affect residents of East Palo Alto. Explore [working](#) with community-based organizations who can translate information and answer community questions in the predominant languages spoken in the community, as well as at the literacy and pace of the affected community.

IM-18.1a: Develop and maintain an equitable community engagement toolkit for use by all City departments that provide guidance on strategies to reach underrepresented residents, addressing different power dynamics in public settings, facilitation techniques that resonate with residents, and conducting outreach in a culturally sensitive and linguistically accessible manner. As part of this effort, establish baseline metrics to understand current levels of community participation, and use these metrics to track and assess where participation could be enhanced and identify opportunities for capturing the voices of the most impacted residents. Collaborate with community-based organizations on the development of this toolkit and periodically update it based on community and community-based organization feedback.

Timeframe: Long-Term

IM-18.1b: Solicit feedback from community-based organizations on how best to navigate cultural sensitivity as a best practice throughout community engagement and how to navigate

complex topics associated with health and equity.

Timeframe: Short-Term

- 18.2 Technology and analog access.** Continue to expand the use of technology to improve access to and distribution of information about City decisions, programs, and services, while simultaneously improving information access for residents without computers or reliable internet through multilingual flyers, canvassing, door-to-door outreach, and other analog methods.

18.3 Accessible and convenient participation.

Schedule, format, and locate public meetings and community engagement activities in collaboration with the community and community-based organizations to maximize convenience for residents, including by considering the time constraints of working families, how easy it is to access the meeting location through multiple modes of transportation, and the availability of multiple ways to participate.

IM-18.3a: Make special efforts to accommodate all residents, including providing simultaneous translation services in the languages predominantly spoken in East Palo Alto or the neighborhood concerned, as well as listening devices for all meetings, using a variety of venues throughout the community to ensure even neighborhood access, and using participatory facilitation techniques that could be implemented by community partners. Consider hiring representatives from the community to provide translation services for the engagement process, event, or activity.

Timeframe: Short-Term

IM-18.3b: Establish a direct, multilingual system for residents to communicate with City government and receive timely information about matters that affect them, such as text alerts, a dedicated phone line, or other accessible tools, in English, Spanish, and other predominant community languages.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

- 18.4 Participation standards.** Prior to conducting major community engagement activities, establish participation standards aimed at reaching as many residents as possible, and consider repeating outreach activities if participation standards have not been met.

- 18.5 Participation support.** Provide resources and support for broad resident participation in City meetings and events, including fair financial compensation, childcare, food, and transportation assistance, when feasible.

18.6 Community-based organization partnerships.

Maintain and continue to expand partnerships with local organizations that have trusted relationships with East Palo Alto residents. Engage organizations early in planning processes, collaborate for implementation, outreach and technical assistance, and acknowledge their expertise. Consider partnerships with community-based organizations for the following services and activities:

- Translating written documents and information into predominantly spoken languages.
- Advising on and reviewing complex and technical language in planning and policy documents, announcements, and decisions.
- Designing or advising on the development of community engagement strategies, including designing for cultural sensitivity.
- Leading and/or facilitating outreach meetings, events, activities, or tours.
- Coordinating distribution of information and updates at regularly scheduled community meetings already hosted and maintained by community-based organizations as a trusted communication channel with residents who attend these meetings.

- Building capacity of East Palo Alto residents to be community leaders and potentially take up positions in City advisory bodies or public service through trainings, leadership academies, and similar programs.

18.7 Youth engagement. Encourage the meaningful participation of East Palo Alto youth in local governance, planning, and outreach activities, including through partnerships with schools, youth-serving organizations, and youth leadership programs.

18.8 Social capital. Strive to preserve and strengthen social capital by supporting formal and informal social networks in the community.

18.9 Community participation. Strive to increase rates of participation in community events such as voting, youth activities, adult education, senior activities, and family-oriented programs.

Goal HE-19. **Maintain transparency and integrity in East Palo Alto’s decision-making process.** (Previously HE-12)

Intent: To ensure that the City engages with its community throughout its decision-making processes in a manner that is intentional, transparent, and accountable by proactively seeking out the voices of residents who have historically been underrepresented in local decisions.

Policies:

19.1 Open meetings. Enhance the community’s trust by holding open meetings that are accessible, inviting, and available to any community member to attend and participate. Proactively and meaningfully engage residents in planning decisions that impact their housing and neighborhoods.

IM-19.1a: Partner with community-based organizations to design open meeting structures for outreach, facilitation, and meeting summaries such that they reflect the community needs and priorities along supporting accountability for the City to address those needs in a timeline that resonates with residents.

Timeframe: Medium-Term (Ongoing)

19.2 Regular public meetings. Provide clear, timely, and easy-to-understand updates on City policy decisions, planning activities, and progress of General Plan implementation through a variety of mechanisms, such as bi-annual Town Hall meetings on major activities to update the General Plan, regular updates to the Planning Commission and City Council, community-based organization-facilitated public meetings and events, and a variety of readily available digital and non-digital media.

IM-19.2a: Explore establishing an ad hoc advisory body to the City Council dedicated to environmental justice and equitable community engagement, with membership that reflects the demographic diversity of East Palo Alto, by developing a proposal for City Council consideration that evaluates whether to establish a new body or expand the mandate of an existing commission or advisory committee.

Timeframe: Long-Term

19.3 Trust and accountability. Build and maintain positive relationships between City staff and East Palo Alto residents by providing a consistent City presence in community spaces (including through partnerships with community-based organizations), demonstrating how community input has been incorporated into City decisions through clear communication and sharing timelines for implementation, and publicly reporting on progress toward the goals and policies of this element, such as through community dashboards.

IM-19.3a: Annually report to the City Council on progress made in implementing the policies and

programs of this Health and Equity Element. Use clear metrics and plain language and make the report available in English, Spanish, and other predominant languages spoken by the community. Partner with community-based organizations on the language and priorities of these progress reports so they can support community understanding.

Timeframe: Short-Term (Ongoing)

IM-19.3b: Consider hiring or contracting with a dedicated community outreach coordinator to serve as a resource navigator and case manager, connecting residents to available resources, maintaining a consistent presence in the community, and serving as a trusted liaison between residents, community-based organizations, and City government.

Timeframe: Long-Term

- 19.4 Holistic community representation.** Encourage holistic representation of the community in the appointment of Commissions and other appointed and advisory bodies. (moved from existing Goal HE-11)

IM-19.4a: Develop a strategy for guiding public appointments of community members to Commissions and other advisory bodies to encourage broad and diverse participation and help ensure engagement of residents who have not traditionally engaged or applied for such roles, including by partnering with community-based organizations to build resident capacity for public service.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

- 19.5 Developer outreach.** Require major development and infrastructure projects to initiate early, substantive, and multilingual community engagement consistent with the City's Community Outreach Policy, and to demonstrate how the community's input was incorporated into the plan prior to approval by the City Council.

- 19.6 Coordinated response.** Continue to notify community-based organizations of new development proposals in accordance with the City's Municipal Code, which requires notification for medium and major projects based on proximity to the project site, to encourage early and informed community engagement and collaboration between the City, community-based organizations, and residents.

7. Health and Equity

Overview

This element presents the community's priorities for achieving a healthy and equitable community. It includes goals and policies that address existing community health concerns as well as approaches to managing new development to prevent future health issues, covering topics such as environmental justice, mental health, access to healthy food, disease prevention, healthy housing, and opportunities for physical activity. This element also addresses civic engagement, including transparency and inclusivity in public decision-making processes.

Statutory Requirements

California Senate Bill (SB) 1000, enacted in 2016, requires general plans to address environmental justice by improving conditions in communities that are disproportionately burdened by pollution and other health impacts (i.e., "disadvantaged communities") and by ensuring that historically marginalized residents are included in planning decisions. SB 1000 identifies a set of topics that must be addressed in an environmental justice element. This Health and Equity Element covers those required topics, including:

- Pollution exposure
- Public facilities
- Food access
- Safe and sanitary homes

- Physical activity
- Additional health risks (e.g., climate vulnerability)
- Community and civic engagement

This element identifies specific neighborhoods in East Palo Alto that are of particular concern for environmental justice and provides policy guidance to improve health outcomes and quality of life throughout the city and within these specific disadvantaged communities, which are described further in the following section.

Environmental Justice

This General Plan comprehensively addresses environmental justice, primarily through this Health and Equity Element, which contains goals, policies, and actions directly addressing each of the SB 1000 topic areas. Additional goals, policies, and actions related to environmental justice are incorporated throughout the following elements:

Land Use and Urban Design Element: Addresses land use patterns, compatibility standards, and area-specific plans that affect environmental quality in communities.

Transportation Element: Addresses safe and accessible multimodal transportation infrastructure, including pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements that support equitable mobility, opportunities for physical activity through active transportation, and improved air quality through reduced vehicular emissions.

Parks, Open Space, and Conservation Element: Addresses equitable access to parks and open space, physical activity opportunities, soil contamination on

park sites, and environmental stewardship of San Francisquito Creek, Cooley Landing, and the Bay Trail.

Infrastructure, Services, and Facilities Element:

Addresses pollution and contamination exposure related to stormwater management, water quality, and hazardous waste disposal as well as access to public facilities and services.

Safety and Noise Element: Addresses soil and groundwater contamination, hazardous materials management, flooding and sea-level rise, rising groundwater and associated risks of contaminant mobilization in low-lying areas, fire hazards, climate vulnerability, and emergency preparedness, all of which can have disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities. This element also includes anti-displacement protections associated with climate hazards.

Westside Area Plan: The Westside neighborhood, west of Highway 101 and home to approximately 22 percent of East Palo Alto's population, is one of the city's disadvantaged communities (discussed in the next section). The Westside Area Plan provides neighborhood-specific goals and policies on affordable housing preservation, anti-displacement strategies, parks and public facilities, street safety, infrastructure, and community engagement that complement the citywide policies of this Health and Equity Element.

Housing Element: Addresses housing affordability, anti-displacement strategies, preservation of affordable housing stock, healthy and safe housing conditions, and equitable access to homeownership.

Disadvantaged Communities

East Palo Alto has many of the hallmarks of disadvantaged communities due to lower life expectancy, lower income levels, and lower educational attainment compared to the rest of San Mateo County. It has suffered historical environmental injustice caused in part by discriminatory housing and zoning practices and political marginalization.

Although all of East Palo Alto is considered disadvantaged, particular areas experience

disproportionate environmental and socioeconomic burdens; these areas are referred to as Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) in this element, consistent with the terminology used in SB 1000. Under SB 1000, DACs are defined as areas that are disproportionately burdened by, and vulnerable to, multiple sources of pollution and other health risks. The State of California identifies DACs using environmental and socioeconomic screening tools, including CalEnviroScreen, which scores census tracts based on pollution exposure indicators and population vulnerability characteristics. Preliminary DACs in East Palo Alto were identified through a combination of state, federal, and regional data, and were subsequently refined through community engagement, including three community workshops and an equity-focused survey conducted by Climate Resilient Communities in 2024. Through this process, five DACs were identified, as shown in Figure 7-1 and described here.

Kavanaugh–University Village DAC

The Kavanaugh–University Village DAC is located in the northeastern part of the city and spans parts of the Kavanaugh and University Village neighborhoods. Residential development is predominantly single-family homes, with industrial and office uses along the northern border with Menlo Park. Key environmental justice concerns include health risks from lead in older housing stock, housing cost burdens, groundwater threats from contamination in the adjacent Ravenswood Project Area, hazardous waste from nearby industrial uses, traffic and parking impacts, limited park access, and flood hazards from the adjacent Bay shoreline (with portions of the DAC lying within Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] 100- and 500-year flood zones).

Palo Alto Park–University Corridor DAC

The Palo Alto Park–University Corridor DAC encompasses the Midtown/Palo Alto Park neighborhood and the University Avenue corridor in the northwestern part of the city. The area consists primarily of single-family homes and small apartment complexes, with larger multifamily buildings along the University Avenue corridor. This DAC has the highest pollution burden score in the city according to CalEnviroScreen 4.0, a State developed tool that measures pollution burdens and

population characteristics across California census tracts. Key environmental justice concerns include health risks from lead in older housing, groundwater and hazardous waste threats from the adjacent Ravenswood Project Area, air quality and traffic impacts from Highway 101 and Willow Road, housing cost burdens, high rates of unemployment, and low educational attainment.

Weeks–Gardens North DAC

The Weeks–Gardens North DAC is located in central East Palo Alto, encompassing the Weeks neighborhood and the northern portion of the Gardens neighborhood. The area contains a mix of single-family and multifamily housing. Key environmental justice concerns include health risks from lead in older housing, soil contamination from pesticides associated with former agricultural uses, groundwater threats along the Bay Road corridor, hazardous waste sources, impaired water quality in San Francisco Bay, legacy contamination from the former Cooley Landing landfill, and seismic risks to soft-story multifamily buildings.

Willow–Woodland DAC

The Willow–Woodland DAC is located in the southwestern part of the city between San Francisquito Creek and Highway 101, with housing ranging from single-family homes to large apartment complexes and a majority of renter households. Key environmental justice concerns include air quality and traffic impacts from Highway 101, health risks from lead in older housing, impaired water quality, flooding impacts along San Francisquito Creek and from low-lying areas within FEMA-designated 100- and 500-year flood zones, seismic risks to multiple soft-story buildings and homes, high rates of poverty and housing cost burdens, and linguistic isolation.

Gardens DAC

The Gardens DAC is located in the southeastern part of the city, bordered by San Francisquito Creek to the south and Highway 101 to the west. The area consists primarily of low-density single-family residential development, as well as a mobile home park and an affordable apartment complex in the western portion of the DAC. It shares a census tract with the Weeks–Gardens North DAC and

faces many of the same or similar environmental justice concerns, including lead exposure risk, groundwater threats, hazardous waste, impaired water quality, legacy contamination from the former Cooley Landing landfill, high asthma rates, and housing cost burdens, and flooding impacts from San Francisquito Creek and low-lying areas within FEMA-designated 100- and 500-year flood zones.

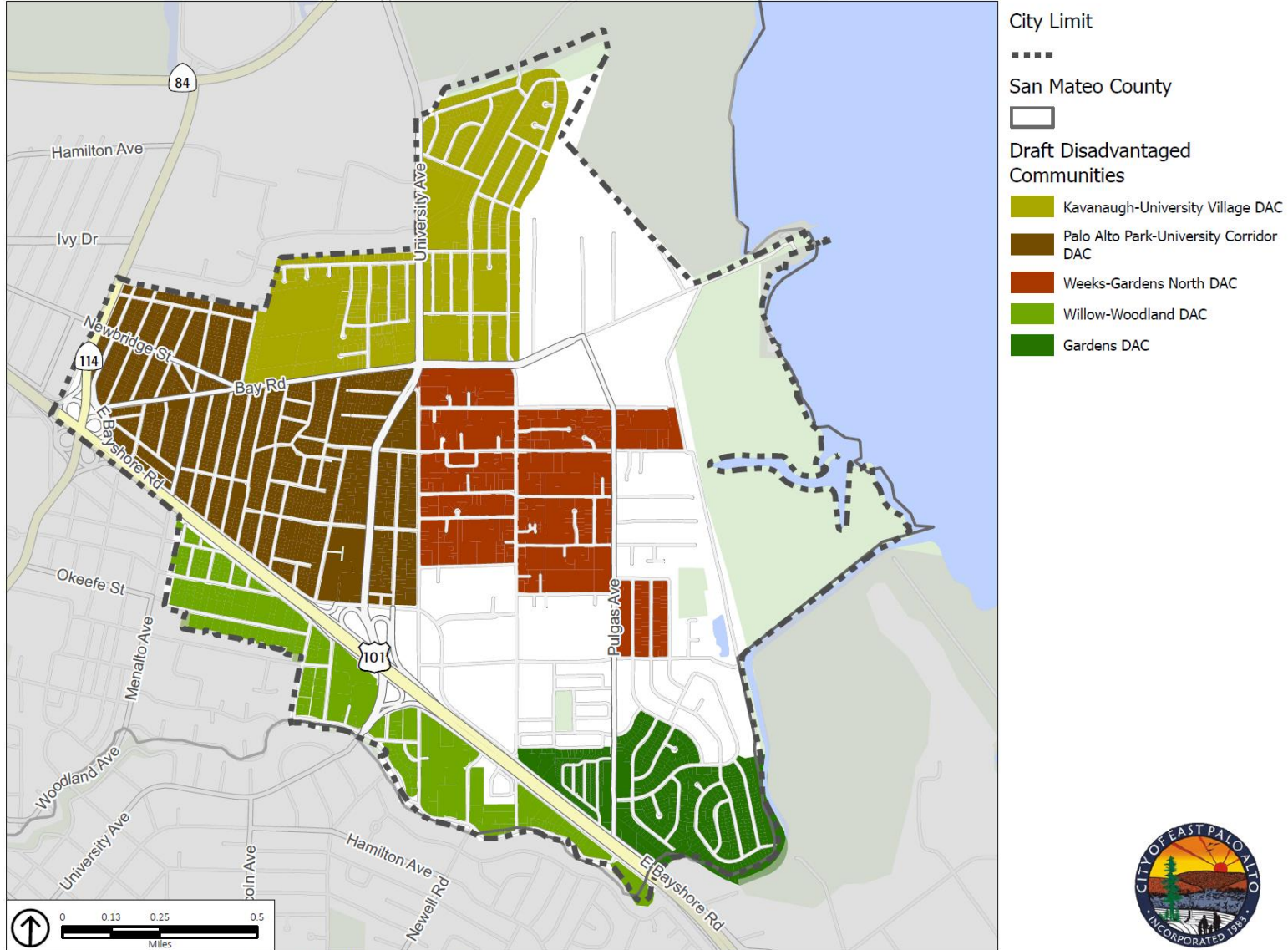
Environmental Justice Technical Appendix

The Environmental Justice Technical Appendix provides detailed socioeconomic profiles and descriptions of environmental justice issues for each DAC identified in this element. The appendix documents the methodology and data sources used to identify and delineate DACs, including the environmental, health, and socioeconomic indicators used to assess cumulative burden and vulnerability. It also identifies recommended data sources and indicators for tracking and monitoring environmental justice conditions over time, providing a foundation for the City to regularly assess and report on outcomes in these communities.

Implementation

For each action, this element identifies a relative timeframe for implementation. Implementation of the actions in this element depends on the resources the City and its partners have available and must remain consistent with the City's long-term financial plans, as reflected in its annual budget.

Figure 7-1: Disadvantaged Communities in San Mateo County



Issues and Opportunities

Place, race, income, living conditions, and educational attainment are all significant factors influencing health outcomes. How the City plans for and prioritizes future growth will shape the long-term health and well-being of residents. As East Palo Alto works to create a healthier and more equitable community, it must also address the threat of displacement facing long-term residents as neighborhood conditions improve.

Life Expectancy and Preventable Disease

Health conditions in East Palo Alto are steadily improving; however, life expectancy remains lower and rates of preventable disease remain higher than in surrounding communities and San Mateo County overall. Life expectancy is an overarching health indicator for any population. Leading causes of death can highlight a population's risk factors and suggest policy priorities. Average life expectancy in East Palo Alto is 81 years, which is five years lower than the San Mateo County average of 86 years and lower than surrounding jurisdictions, such as Menlo Park (83 years) and Redwood City (82 years). There is no single cause for this disparity. Rather, it reflects the combined effects of physical, social, and economic conditions that negatively affect health status and life expectancy. This disparity underscores the importance of improving community health as a critical long-term goal. Unless otherwise noted, health statistics cited in this section are drawn from the San Mateo County All Together Better dashboard (smcalltogetherbetter.org), which compiles data from state and local sources for Zip Code 94303, covering East Palo Alto and portions of Palo Alto. Data years vary by indicator and are noted where relevant.

The leading causes of death in East Palo Alto are generally similar to those in San Mateo County. The top three causes – heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, and stroke – share several risk factors, including poor diet and lack of physical activity. Better access to nutritious food and more opportunities for physical activity could reduce residents' vulnerability to these diseases. Poverty,

lower educational attainment, and limited access to healthcare may also contribute to these causes of death.

Although health conditions are steadily improving, rates of asthma, heart disease, and other chronic conditions remain higher in East Palo Alto than in surrounding communities and the county overall. Heart attacks occur approximately 30 percent more frequently in East Palo Alto than in San Mateo County, though at rates comparable to the state as a whole. Data from 2020 to 2022 show that the age-adjusted hospitalization rate for heart failure was 28.5 per 10,000 residents, compared to 19.5 countywide. Similarly, the hospitalization rate for hypertension, also known as high-blood pressure, was 4.6 per 10,000 residents – more than 3.5 times the County rate of 1.3.

Rates of asthma-related hospitalizations and emergency room visits are also significantly higher in East Palo Alto compared to the county. The age-adjusted hospitalization rate for asthma across all ages groups is 4.4 per 10,000 residents in East Palo Alto – more than three times the county rate of 1.3. Among adults, the asthma hospitalization rate is 3.6 per 10,000 residents, compared to 0.9 countywide. Pediatric asthma hospitalizations occur at a rate of 6.9 per 10,000 children, nearly three times the county rate of 2.5. Similarly, the pediatric asthma emergency room visit rate is 38.7 per 10,000 children, more than double the county rate of 15.8.

Diabetes is another major and growing health risk on the rise. In East Palo Alto, the age-adjusted hospitalization rate for diabetes is 18.1 per 10,000 residents, more than twice the county rate of 8.7. The hospitalization rate for Type 2 diabetes specifically is 16.4 per 10,000 residents, compared to 6.8 countywide. Hospitalizations related to long-term diabetes complications occur at a rate of 10.9 per 10,000 residents, more than twice the county rate of 4.2. Addressing the underlying causes of diabetes through improved nutrition, physical activity, and broader social interventions will be necessary to reverse this trend.

In San Mateo County, cancer mortality rates among Black males and females are significantly higher than the county average across all demographic groups. High

mortality rates are often an indicator of limited access to preventive and post-diagnosis care. These disparities underscore the ongoing importance of preventive health services and affordable access to medical care within the East Palo Alto community.

Income and Employment

Employment status and income are among the significant determinants of individual health outcomes. These factors influence a person's ability to secure housing, purchase healthy food, access medical services, and cope with environmental stressors. Despite being located within one of the wealthiest regions in the world, East Palo Alto residents continue to experience significant and persistent economic disadvantage relative to surrounding communities.

The City's median household income is \$113,493, substantially lower than the county median of \$158,855.¹ Income disparities within the community are pronounced, with median household incomes for Black/African American households (\$66,194) and Hispanic/Latino households (\$90,150) significantly lower than those of White households (\$177,942). About 7 percent of families in East Palo Alto live below the federal poverty level, compared to 4 percent countywide. Poverty rates are particularly elevated among Black/African American families (15 percent) and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander families (22 percent). In addition, many households are severely cost-burdened, spending more than half of their income on housing, which limits the ability to afford food, healthcare, and other necessities.

Educational attainment is closely linked to employment opportunities and income. Only 27 percent of adults in East Palo Alto hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 54 percent countywide. Educational attainment gaps are especially pronounced among Hispanic/Latino and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander residents. Approximately 5 percent of youth are neither enrolled in school nor employed — more than five times

the county rate of less than 1 percent, and rates are substantially higher among young men (7 percent).

East Palo Alto has a very low jobs-to-housing ratio and functions as a net exporter of workers to neighboring cities, with most residents commuting elsewhere for employment. Closing the gap between where residents live and where economic opportunities are located will require intentional investments in workforce training aligned with local skill sets, support for small and locally owned businesses, and development of career pathways in accessible sectors such as construction, infrastructure, and clean energy. The City's Measure HH workforce development program is a critical local tool supporting these efforts.

The income and employment goals and policies in this element are bolstered by the Economic Development Element, which contains additional policies on business attraction and retention, local hiring, and economic vitality, and should be read in conjunction with that element. Addressing the underlying socioeconomic conditions that shape health, including income, education, and economic mobility, is fundamental to realizing the goals of this element.

Physical and Mental Health

Regular physical activity is essential to maintaining good health throughout the lifespan. Research consistently demonstrates that adults who engage in regular moderate physical activity experience significantly lower rates of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, and obesity. Access to safe, well-maintained parks and recreational facilities is a key factor in supporting physical activity, particularly for residents who cannot afford private gym memberships. Because East Palo Alto residents experience higher rates of heart disease, heart failure, and hypertension than the county overall, expanding and improving access to parks and recreational facilities is an important strategy to reduce these chronic health burdens.

Children also need access to opportunities for physical activity to grow, learn, and thrive. Research consistently

¹ US Census Bureau, 2024, *2020–2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*.

shows a strong association between physical activity, student attendance, and academic achievement. Over 60 percent of children in the Ravenswood City School District are considered unfit by the California Physical Fitness Test, compared to approximately 30 percent of children in San Mateo County overall. In addition, one in three children in the Ravenswood City School District is considered overweight based on the same assessment.

Active transportation is an effective way for residents to incorporate regular physical activity into their daily lives, particularly for those without access to private recreational facilities or gym memberships. Safe, connected pedestrian and bicycle routes to parks, schools, transit stops, grocery stores, and other community destinations enable residents to incorporate physical activity into routine travel rather than relying on dedicated exercise. Research consistently links active transportation to reduced risks of cardiovascular disease, obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and other chronic health conditions. East Palo Alto currently has gaps in its pedestrian and bicycle network, particularly in the Willow-Woodland and Weeks-Gardens neighborhoods, that limit residents' ability to safely walk or bike to everyday destinations. Improvements such as upgraded sidewalk, protected bike facilities, safer street crossings, and well-lit routes are therefore both a transportation and a public health priority.

Feeling safe in your neighborhood also contributes to stronger mental health, which is shaped by a combination of environmental, social, and economic conditions. The physical environment can influence mental health in important ways – from the psychiatric effects of exposure to neurotoxins such as lead, pesticides, and air pollution, to the psychological impacts of living in communities with high rates of crime and violence, to the restorative mental health benefits of access to green space and nature. Communities that face disproportionate environmental burdens, economic insecurity, housing instability, and displacement pressures, as East Palo Alto does, also tend to face elevated rates of psychological distress, depression, and anxiety.

Among adults in the city, 24 percent report a diagnosis of depression, compared to 22 percent for the county

(2021–2022). Adults reporting frequent mental distress (defined as 14 or more days of poor mental health in the past 30 days) stand at 17 percent, compared to 14 percent countywide. Age-adjusted hospitalization rates for adult mental health are 29 per 10,000 residents, above the county rate of 21. Pediatric mental health hospitalizations are 28 per 10,000 children, which is slightly above the county rate of 26. Hospitalization data reflects only the most severe cases; broader rates of unmet need and untreated mental health conditions are likely higher.

Social isolation and loneliness are increasingly recognized as significant contributors to poor mental health. A 2022 County-led survey found that 45 percent of San Mateo County residents were struggling with loneliness and isolation. In February 2024, San Mateo County became the first county in the United States to formally declare loneliness a public health emergency, citing research linking social isolation to elevated risks of dementia, depression, anxiety, heart disease, stroke, and premature death. East Palo Alto residents — who face elevated rates of housing cost burdens, overcrowding, long commutes, and economic stress — may be particularly vulnerable to social isolation. At the same time, the community's strong cultural networks and CBOs represent important assets for promoting social connection and mental resilience.

Access to parks, green space, and safe outdoor environments is associated with reduced symptoms of mental illness and improved well-being, and children raised in greener neighborhoods have measurably lower rates of psychiatric disorder in adulthood. Improving park access, expanding tree coverage, reducing pollution exposure, and creating safe and welcoming public spaces in East Palo Alto are planning priorities for both physical and mental health improvement.

In terms of rehabilitation from substance abuse, there are currently only two treatment locations in the city. Free At Last, an organization that provides drug and alcohol services for youth, serves over 4,200 people each year and provides a free drop-in center. While Free At Last provides much-needed residential treatment programs for substance abuse for up to 20 people at a

time, there are no residential rehab programs specifically for youth in the city.

Environmental Hazards (new heading)

As a direct consequence of the industrial land uses that covered much of the city's land area prior to its incorporation in 1983, East Palo Alto has a disproportionate burden of environmental contamination relative to neighboring communities. The greatest concentration of affected sites is in the Bay Road corridor and Cooley Landing area, where agriculture, heavy manufacturing, chemical manufacturing, and auto wrecking operations left behind soil and groundwater contaminants like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), metals, petrochemicals, pesticides, and other hazardous materials. The handling and disposal of these substances were far less regulated during that era, so the legacy of that period continues to affect community health. As such, East Palo Alto was designated a Brownfields Showcase Community in 1997, affording the city specialized assistance from federal agencies to transform contaminated sites into productive assets.

Some sites, including the Gateway 101 and University Circle sites, have been successfully remediated and redeveloped, while others are still undergoing cleanup or operating under use restrictions that prohibit sensitive land uses such as homes or schools. The sites that remain active cleanup cases are managed by a combination of State and federal agencies, including the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, the State Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Beyond legacy industrial sites, other documented sources of contamination in the city include former gas stations with leaking underground storage tanks, areas of former agricultural use with pesticide residue, and older buildings constructed with lead-based paint or asbestos. Illegal dumping of household hazardous waste and other materials occurs across the city and poses a public health concern, particularly in residential neighborhoods. Former agricultural parcels, including sites in the Weeks and Gardens neighborhoods, have contributed to

CalEnviroScreen cleanup site scores in the 84th percentile (meaning residents in the census tract are more exposed to contaminated cleanup sites than 84 percent of the rest of the state), reflecting the ongoing risks posed by pesticide contamination in those areas.

Aerial lead emissions from the Palo Alto Airport are an additional source of concern. Aircrafts have historically operated on leaded aviation gasoline, which contains tetraethyl lead and can contaminate air, soil, and water in communities along flight paths. While the airport began transitioning to an unleaded fuel alternative in December 2024, the City has an ongoing interest in ensuring this transition continues and in advocating for the health of the East Palo Alto residents who live and work beneath the flight path.

The policies related to environmental hazards focus on the aspects of hazard management for which the City has a direct role or unique responsibility from an environmental justice perspective, including preventing new sources of contamination, supporting ongoing communication about legacy site cleanup, addressing illegal dumping, ensuring that new development is appropriately evaluated, and advocating for the community. Policies addressing the siting and regulation of hazardous materials facilities, financial assurance requirements for cleanup, and sensitive land use siting standards are addressed in the Safety and Noise Element of this General Plan.

Safe and Affordable Housing

Housing profoundly affects health and well-being. It is an important determinant of health, and an increasing body of evidence links insufficient housing with infectious and chronic disease, injuries, poor nutrition, and mental illnesses.

For many, unaffordable housing means housing instability, which negatively affects health and forces households to forgo basic needs. Families who have reported that they have trouble paying for housing or utilities are 84 percent more likely to report that they have delayed necessary medical care and 116 percent more likely to report having postponed the purchase of needed medications. In addition, families that spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent also suffer

other adverse health effects, such as reduced cognitive development in youth. Housing cost burden can lead families to double or triple up in overcrowded conditions and accept substandard housing conditions, which can lead to communicable disease and asthma. Displacement and the threat of displacement are also harmful to health, causing stress, depression, long commutes, and poor educational outcomes for youth. Approximately 15 percent of households in East Palo Alto live in overcrowded conditions, nearly twice the countywide rate of 7.5 percent, with renter households most affected at 17 percent.



The renovated Woodlands Newell development, 49 affordable apartments for families in East Palo Alto.

East Palo Alto has a relatively old housing stock, and many homes and residential buildings, particularly in the Willow-Woodland DAC west of Highway 101, have substandard conditions that pose serious health risks. Mold and moisture intrusion are associated with respiratory illness, asthma exacerbation, and allergic reactions. Pest infestations create unsanitary conditions, can contaminate food and surfaces, and are a significant trigger for asthma attacks. Poor indoor air quality from any combination of these sources, as well as exposure to nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, and methane from gas appliances, inadequate ventilation, and secondhand smoke infiltration in multiunit buildings, can be as harmful or more harmful than outdoor air pollution.

Buildings constructed before 1980 likely contain asbestos. Asbestos is a known carcinogen that when disturbed during renovation or deteriorates over time, airborne fibers are emitted causing mesothelioma, lung

cancer, and asbestosis. Lead exposure is also a serious hazard, which can be found in homes and buildings constructed before 1978 if they have lead-based paint. Children exposed to lead face lasting impacts to their neurological development, learning, behavior, and health over their lifetimes, and adults with elevated lead exposure face increased risks of cardiovascular disease and cognitive decline. Given East Palo Alto's older housing stock and the elevated CalEnviroScreen scores for children's lead risk from housing – with census tracts scoring at or above the 76th to 99th percentile – these hazards are an ongoing public health concern that warrants proactive investment in testing, abatement assistance, and code enforcement.

Nutritious and Affordable Food

As of 2022, 3.7 percent of children in East Palo Alto between the ages of 2 and 11 were overweight for their age, compared to only 0.6 percent in San Mateo County, and 23.1 percent of high school students were overweight or obese, compared to 14.5 percent countywide. Additionally, in 2022, 11.4 percent of East Palo Alto adults consumed one or more sodas a day, compared to 8.2 percent countywide. This underscores the importance of providing affordable, accessible nutritious food options for East Palo Alto residents. The community desperately needs more opportunities to buy fresh fruits and vegetables.

Compared to surrounding communities, there are very few food retailers of any kind in East Palo Alto. Overall, the city has more “unhealthy” food retailers (fast food, liquor stores, and convenience stores) than “healthy” retailers, such as supermarkets that sell fresh food. Compared to other cities its size in the region, the city is underserved by full-service markets and grocery stores. Except for two supermarkets, convenience stores are the most common food retailer in the city (representing about one-third of the total). Many of the food retailers authorized to accept SNAP benefits in East Palo Alto are convenience stores rather than full-service grocery stores. There are a limited number of markets that sell fresh fruits and vegetables in the city, including Cardenas Supermarket, Mega Mart, and a small number of neighborhood grocers.

These markets are well distributed within the city, but still a large percentage of residential parcels are located further than a one-quarter mile walk from any market. The East Palo Alto Community Farmers' Market, which offers a wide selection of fresh produce, is operated by the local nonprofit Collective Roots and generally operates every Wednesday from April through November (the lack of weekend operation is a barrier for some residents).

Another concern for public health is the number and concentration of liquor stores in East Palo Alto. According to the San Mateo County Public Health Department, overall, East Palo Alto has a lower rate of liquor stores per 100,000 people than many other cities in the county. However, in East Palo Alto, there are concentrations in some areas such as along University Avenue and East Bayshore Road. In addition, there are a larger number of liquor stores relative to other food stores and thus liquor stores may be a higher percentage of total food stores compared to other communities. Further, liquor stores are associated with other criminal activity, making them a concern for residents.

Reliable, Safe, and Complete Public Facilities and Services (new heading)

Access to quality public facilities and services is essential for community health and well-being. For residents of East Palo Alto, and in particular DACs, gaps in public facilities, from medical care and safe drinking water to childcare and pedestrian infrastructure, compound the environmental and socioeconomic burdens described throughout this element. Equitable access to these facilities and services is both a public health priority and an environmental justice requirement under SB 1000. As shown in Figure 7-2, all of East Palo Alto and a small portion of Menlo Park and Redwood City are designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA), a federal designation given to areas that demonstrate a shortage of healthcare professionals, including primary care professionals, dentists, and mental health professionals. It is the only HPSA in all of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. The area is also designated as a Medically Underserved Area (MUA), a related but distinct federal designation administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration. MUAs identify geographic areas with inadequate access to primary care services more

Figure 7-2: Health Professional Shortage



broadly, based on factors such as the ratio of providers to population, the percentage of residents living below the federal poverty level, the percentage of residents over age 65, and the infant mortality rate. Both designations make the area eligible for federal programs and resources, including the National Health Service Corps loan repayment program, J-1 visa waivers for foreign medical graduates, and support for Federally Qualified Health Centers.

Even with the addition of the Ravenswood Family Health Clinic's new 53,000-square-foot facility, residents still lack adequate access to primary and specialty healthcare services. A shortage of healthcare professionals is a common occurrence in lower-income areas throughout the United States, and can have particularly negative impacts on older adults, low-income residents, and those with limited English proficiency. The distance to healthcare providers can also have a significant effect on whether children and older adults receive preventive care, particularly in areas such as East Palo Alto that have limited transit access. Approximately 25 percent of adults in the city delayed or had difficulty obtaining medical care and only 69 percent had received a routine checkup in the prior year, compared to 72 percent countywide and 78 percent nationally (2021–2022). This element proposes strategies to increase access to medical services, promote culturally appropriate and linguistically accessible care, and improve coordination with the County Health System.

Access to safe and affordable drinking water is also a basic public health necessity. East Palo Alto residents are concerned about drinking water quality, and distrust of tap water is common, particularly among renters in older multifamily buildings where aging plumbing and water supply infrastructure can introduce contaminants even when the public water supply meets regulatory standards. East Palo Alto's proximity to numerous contaminated groundwater sites, combined with rising groundwater levels due to climate change (see the Safety and Noise Element), create potential pathways for contaminant migration that warrant ongoing monitoring and transparent public communication. Lower-income households are also more likely to face water affordability burdens as rate increases are needed to fund infrastructure improvements. Policies for

addressing this include system maintenance and investment, water quality monitoring and public transparency, resident resources for home water quality, and affordability assistance for lower-income households.

Access to affordable, high-quality childcare is both a workforce and a public health issue. Early childhood care and education are associated with improved developmental and long-term health outcomes for children, and reliable childcare supports the ability of parents and caregivers to maintain stable employment. East Palo Alto has a relatively young population with a high share of households with children, and many working families face significant challenges securing affordable care. Gaps in childcare supply, in terms of both the number of facilities and their geographic distribution, are a documented concern, particularly for families in DACs where access to transportation is most limited.

Safe streets and accessible pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure are important public safety concerns for East Palo Alto residents. Gaps in the sidewalk network, missing or substandard crosswalks, poor lighting, and high vehicle volumes on major arterials create dangerous conditions for people walking and cycling, particularly for residents of the Westside (Willow-Woodland DAC) where infrastructure deficiencies and lower-income renter households are most concentrated. The City's active transportation policies, Safe Routes to Schools program, and Vision Zero commitment address these conditions, with this Element reinforcing the priority to invest in pedestrian and bicycle improvements in DACs as a health equity measure.

More broadly, the equitable distribution of public facilities and services, including parks, libraries, community centers, and resilience infrastructure, is a core principle of environmental justice planning. Historically, lower-income communities and communities of color have received less public investment in infrastructure and amenities than wealthier neighborhoods, and the cumulative effect of these disparities is reflected in health outcomes, community safety, and quality of life. Policies for addressing this

explicitly prioritize investments in DACs and require that community input inform facility planning and design.

Every year, the Fire District responds to over 2000 calls for service in East Palo Alto, of which almost two-thirds are for emergency medical incidents. Each Fire Engine is staffed by a paramedic firefighter for first response in the community.

Civic Engagement and Advocacy (new heading)

Community participation in local government is essential to ensuring that City policies and investments reflect the needs and values of all residents. Inclusive, participatory processes lead to better-informed decisions and build trust between residents and local government and are foundational to environmental justice. Effective engagement includes investing in culturally appropriate outreach and addressing the persistent structural barriers to sustain meaningful participation over time.

East Palo Alto is a linguistically diverse community, and language access is one of the most significant determinants of who can meaningfully participate in civic life. According to the American Community Survey, two-thirds of East Palo Alto residents speak a language other than English at home. Approximately half of the population speaks Spanish, making it the most widely spoken language in the city, of which, nearly 20 percent have limited English proficiency. East Palo Alto also has one of the largest Tongan and Samoan communities in San Mateo County, with approximately 9 percent of households speaking Tongan, Samoan, or another Asian or Pacific Islander language.

Beyond language, other structural barriers limit participation. Public meetings are often held at times and in formats that are inconvenient or inaccessible for working families. Technical government documents can be difficult to navigate. Public settings can feel unwelcoming to residents who face disparities in income, education, or immigration status. Engagement is most effective when it occurs early in a process, compensates participants fairly for their time, involves trusted community partners, and demonstrates that input has been genuinely incorporated into decisions.

East Palo Alto has a strong network of CBOs that maintain trusted relationships with residents across the community's diverse linguistic and cultural groups. Partnering with these organizations is essential for equitable and effective civic engagement. The policies in this element establish a framework for embedding these principles across City departments and decision-making processes, so that all residents have a genuine and effective voice in shaping the future of East Palo Alto.

Goals and Policies

Goal HE-1. Improve overall health conditions and wellness in East Palo Alto.

Intent: To reduce public health disparities and improve health outcomes for current and future East Palo Alto residents through coordinated policies, partnerships, and equitable access to health resources and programs.

Policies:

- 1.1 City actions and programs.** Promote, address, and incorporate proactive public health and wellness considerations into City decision-making services, policies, programs, and communications to support healthy living for residents of all ages and abilities.
- 1.2 Inter-agency and community cooperation.** Work with the San Mateo County Health Department (SMC Health), Ravenswood Family Health Center, Stanford Hospital, community-based organizations, healthcare providers, schools, and residents to implement programs and services that improve physical and mental health outcomes of East Palo Alto residents, particularly for the vulnerable and underserved population. Support collaboration on initiatives such as Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Aging and Disabilities Services, Get Healthy San Mateo County initiative, along with similar future health initiatives.

- 1.3 Measuring success.** Encourage the San Mateo County Health Department to develop and maintain measurable community health indicators and performance metrics collaboratively with community stakeholders to evaluate progress towards improved health outcomes and continually track the health status of residents over time. Periodically share results at public meetings.

IM-1.3a: Encourage the San Mateo County Health Department to develop community health indicators, metrics, and a reporting schedule through a meaningful public engagement process.
Timeframe: Medium-Term

- 1.4 Data coordination and information sharing.** Foster coordination and data sharing between the City, County, and community members through public engagement efforts and the use of existing County and regional datasets.

- 1.5 County health system.** Actively work with the County Health System to secure funding support for robust and multiyear health initiatives and other healthy community work that support community needs and priorities for positive health outcomes, such as community implementation grants.

- 1.6 Preventative care.** Promote preventative care as a means of improving health conditions in the city.

IM-1.6a: Develop preventative care programs in partnership with the San Mateo County Health Department, along with local community-based organizations.
Timeframe: Medium-Term

- 1.7 Health-related employee programs.** Encourage local employers to adopt healthy living/healthy employee programs, practices, and events (such as walk-a-thons and other group walks).

Goal HE-2. Promote healthy practices through City operations, programs, and community partnerships.

Intent: To have City staff, City agencies, and City-sponsored activities and events set a precedent for healthy behaviors and choices, representing a positive health focus for healthy outcomes for residents and all who come into this community.

Policies:

- 2.1 City leadership.** Promote healthy lifestyles and activities at government offices and government-sponsored events for all community members.
- 2.2 City employees.** Promote the health and well-being of City employees as a model and proponent of healthy lifestyles through health challenges, healthy food choices, and healthy work environments.
- 2.3 City events.** Leverage resources and relationships to provide healthy food choices, including in vending machines, and activities to participants at City-funded events, along with access by active transportation modes, to integrate positive health outcomes into the way the City provides resources to residents, including at annual events like National Night Out, Love our Earth Fest, and Mama Dee Day.
- 2.4 School food.** Work with the Ravenswood City School District and the Sequoia Union School District on policies and programs related to healthy food in cafeterias and in vending machines to provide healthy and fresh food options while remaining culturally relevant and respectful of the communities that are consuming the food.

Goal HE-3. **Improve and expand access to employment opportunities within or near East Palo Alto to reduce long commutes, transportation costs, and pollution exposure. (New)**

Intent: To expand access to jobs for East Palo Alto residents and develop their workforce capacity by attracting and retaining quality employers, supporting local business growth, and reducing barriers that prevent residents from accessing jobs close to home.

Policies:

3.1 Business attraction and retention. Attract and retain businesses that are committed to long-term establishment in East Palo Alto and that offer living-wage employment opportunities. Additionally, encourage businesses to hire from the local workforce, particularly those in emerging industries aligned with the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy.

3.2 Jobs-housing balance. Support land uses and development patterns that bring quality employment opportunities closer to where residents live. Balance new jobs with seeking housing, including affordable housing, that meets community needs.

3.3 Small business support. Promote and support entrepreneurship, growth, and success of locally owned businesses and economies, particularly those owned by disadvantaged community members.

IM-3.3a: Coordinate with San Mateo County to promote their Green Business Program to eligible East Palo Alto businesses for them to become certified and reduce cost, conserve resources, reduce pollution, and lower their carbon footprint.
Timeframe: Short-Term

IM-3.3b: Explore providing grant opportunities to residents taking entrepreneurship courses to foster entrepreneurship growth and economic development.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

IM-3.3c: Partner with local community-based organizations to encourage and promote their programs for training residents on how to run restaurants and source produce from their local community garden.

Timeframe: Short-Term (Ongoing)

3.4 Regional collaboration. Work collaboratively with neighboring jurisdictions, regional agencies, and major employers in the surrounding area to expand employment opportunities for East Palo Alto residents by encouraging local hiring and improving transit connections to job centers.

3.5 Workforce development programs. Leverage Measure HH and other available local, state, and federal funding to sustain and expand workforce development programs that provide multilingual job training, apprenticeships, certifications, and job placement services to East Palo Alto residents. Conduct proactive multilingual outreach about these programs to disadvantaged community members.

3.6 Public service. Promote local hiring of residents for City employment positions as a way to expand civic engagement through public service.

IM-3.6a: Educate residents about the various municipal functions and services that the City provides, including the various roles and jobs that comprise the workforce of the city and related agencies.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

3.7 Prioritized sectors. Prioritize workforce development investments in sectors offering accessible, living-wage career pathways, including the construction and building trades, infrastructure operations and maintenance, environmental remediation, and clean energy and climate resilience work. Ensure sector

prioritization is aligned with community feedback and resident priorities.

- 3.8 Re-entry programs.** Collaborate with San Mateo County to fund and operate job finding and training programs and promote them to people newly released from jail. (moved from existing Goal HE-8)
- 3.9 Clean technology.** Attract renewable technology companies to the Ravenswood Employment Center District, such as solar panel manufacturing and recycling companies and companies that focus on innovative energy, water, and waste technologies. (moved from existing Goal HE-10)

Goal HE-4. Create a parks and recreation system that encourages physical activity, promotes healthy living, and reduces chronic illnesses. (Previously Goal HE-3)

Intent: To ensure that East Palo Alto's parks, trails, open spaces, and recreational facilities are safe, welcoming, well-maintained, and equitably accessible to all residents.

Policies:

- 4.1 Park improvements.** Prioritize improving and maintaining existing parks, trails, and open space facilities in disadvantaged communities, including enhancements to amenities, lighting, accessibility, and safety.
- 4.2 Community engagement on parks.** Continue to engage community members on specific park and recreation facility needs, prioritizing outreach to disadvantaged communities when planning improvements or new facilities.
- 4.3 Recreational facilities.** Encourage the development of recreational facilities, gyms, and exercise spaces in the city, including City-created and privately or nonprofit-operated facilities such as basketball and tennis courts. Explore opportunities to expand access to low-cost programming through local facilities, including potential subsidized or free-day options for residents.
- 4.4 Joint-use agreements.** Pursue joint-use agreements with the Ravenswood City School District and other local school districts to expand access to recreational spaces outside of school hours, reducing the gap in meeting the City's parkland standard and increasing opportunities for physical activity for residents of all ages.
- 4.5 After-school programs.** Work with school districts and community organizations to provide after-school fitness and educational programs for children, such as existing partnerships with EPACENTER and the YMCA and Summer Park Activation program, prioritizing programs in disadvantaged communities.
- 4.6 Lighting and tree coverage.** Provide adequate lighting for all parks, trails, sidewalks, and open spaces, and expand tree coverage and shade, prioritizing improvements in disadvantaged communities and along pathways to parks and recreational facilities.
- 4.7 Park safety and quality.** Enhance the safety and quality of parks and open spaces in disadvantaged communities, including preventing and addressing vandalism and disrepair.

Goal HE-5. Provide safe and convenient alternatives to motorized vehicle travel that support community health through physical activity and cleaner air. (New)

Intent: To promote health and mobility by encouraging safe and convenient alternatives to driving.

Policies:

- 5.1 Active transportation.** Prioritize transportation system improvements that encourage walking, biking, and transit use. This policy is implemented through the Mobility Element. (Moved from existing Goal HE-3)
- 5.2 Transportation improvements.** Consider the positive and negative health impacts of new transportation projects prior to approval, including impacts on air quality, physical activity, and pedestrian and bicycle safety. (Moved from existing Goal HE-3)
- 5.3 Transportation safety.** Strive to improve the safety of the transportation system by making transportation improvements in areas with a high incidence or a greater potential of pedestrian/vehicle or bicycle/vehicle collisions. (Moved from existing Goal HE-3)
- 5.4 Land use.** Promote land use patterns that encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyles. This policy is implemented through the goals and policies of the Land Use and Urban Design Element. (Moved from existing Goal HE-3)

Goal HE-6. Strive for East Palo Alto to be a smoke-free community.

Intent: To reduce the exposure of community members to nicotine, carcinogens associated with cigarettes, second-hand smoke, and various forms of cancer.

Policies:

- 6.1 Smoking in public spaces.** Prohibit smoking in public buildings and public spaces such as parks, open spaces, and outside of public buildings. The ban would cover cigarettes, cigars, medical marijuana, and similar products.
- 6.2 Anti-smoking ordinances.** Work with the County of San Mateo to implement any smoke-free multiunit housing policies, and affirm local landlords' smoke-free policies.
- 6.3 Second-hand smoke.** Partner with the County to develop educational materials and presentations that discourage and prohibit smoking to address second-hand smoke.
- 6.4 Limitations on retailers.** Within legal frameworks, take steps to limit the number of tobacco retailers in East Palo Alto and limit advertising for tobacco products, especially near schools.
- 6.5 Advertising.** Encourage store owners to remove tobacco signage from shop windows.

Goal HE-7. **Safely and systemically clean up and eliminate toxics, legacy pollutants, and hazardous materials. (Previously Goal HE-4)**

Intent: To protect residents, future generations, and workers and visitors who frequently travel to East Palo Alto against harmful health and other impacts associated with dangerous materials that may pose a threat to life and property, and may dictate costly public improvements. Reduction or elimination of these hazards can be accomplished with concerted efforts.

Policies:

- 7.1 Toxic waste.** Prohibit new nonresidential land uses that are known to release or emit toxic waste at levels that are harmful to human health while continuing to allow research and development (R&D) uses, medical uses, and other necessary services, such as dry cleaners, consistent with the Development Code.
- 7.2 Legacy pollutants.** Continue to work with state, federal, regional, and local agencies, as well as academic institutions to eliminate and reduce concentrations of regulated legacy pollutants and improve stormwater runoff quality from old industrial-use areas. Engage with community-based organizations and resident advocates to ensure health concerns and impacts are understood and addressed.
- 7.3 Emerging contaminants at legacy sites.** Work with state and federal regulatory agencies to evaluate whether contaminated sites in East Palo Alto that were previously closed or remediated should be reassessed for contaminants of emerging concern, including per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) compounds and other substances not assessed in earlier cleanup efforts, and advocate for reopening investigation of sites where new evidence suggests ongoing risk to community health.

7.4 Clean-up progress updates. Proactively engage with US Environmental Protection Agency and California Department of Toxic Substance Control case managers of contaminated sites to obtain regular updates on clean-up progress and share findings with the community, including those who are within the vicinity who are directly impacted by the site as well as any advocacy groups concerned about the site.

7.5 Manager-community mediation. Coordinate with the US Environmental Protection Agency and California Department of Toxic Substances Control to support mediation between managers of contaminated sites and advocacy groups and East Palo Alto residents who are concerned with the site as a path towards building accountability and transparency around exposure risks and to promote safer and more equitable health outcomes for current and future residents.

7.6 Academic and healthcare partnerships. Partner with local academic institutions and affiliated healthcare providers to assess the health risks associated with contaminated sites in East Palo Alto and to facilitate access to medical screening, monitoring, and care for residents who may have been exposed to environmental contaminants.

7.7 Community information. Provide regular, accessible information and updates to community members about contamination and pollution threats in East Palo Alto, including individual protective actions and available programs to support them.

IM-7.7a: Conduct periodic community education workshops about contaminated sites to raise broader awareness of locations, risks, and remediation progress.

Timeframe: Short-Term (Ongoing)

IM-7.7b: Provide links to applicable databases, such as the Department of Toxic Substances Control EnviroStor database, on the City's website showing information about contaminated sites, including clean-up status, exposure risks, and

information on how residents can get involved or learn more.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

- 7.8 Airport hazards.** Advocate before the City of Palo Alto, the Santa Clara County Airport Land Use Commission, and relevant state and federal agencies to address environmental justice concerns associated with the Palo Alto Airport, including the timely elimination of the use of leaded aviation fuel, mitigation of aircraft noise impacts on nearby residents, and measures to reduce risks to surrounding communities from aircraft accident hazards.
- 7.9 Cross-jurisdictional coordination.** Actively engage neighboring jurisdictions, including the Cities of Palo Alto and Menlo Park, and relevant regional agencies on land use and development proposals in their jurisdictions that may pose contamination or hazard risks to East Palo Alto residents.
- 7.10 Illegal dumping.** Prioritize the prevention of illegal dumping and hazardous waste dumping, and the removal of dumping by the Public Works Department when it does occur, to protect health, safety, environmental quality, and community aesthetics.
- 7.11 Agricultural pesticides.** Reduce exposure to legacy pesticides, particularly in areas previously under agricultural use, and whenever possible work with landowners and developers to eliminate concentrations of pesticides from soil and groundwater.
- 7.12 Illegal wells.** Seek out and shut down illegal or unpermitted private wells in the city to protect the city's aquifer and water quality.

Goal HE-8. Improve respiratory health throughout the city and strive to reduce incidence of asthma and other respiratory illnesses. (Previously Goal HE-10)

Intent: To use policies and regulations that reduce the impact of air pollution on residents in East Palo Alto.

Policies:

- 8.1 Highway buffers.** Discourage the development of sensitive land uses (schools, healthcare clinics, and elder and childcare facilities) within 500 feet of freeways and stationary sources of air pollution.
- 8.2 Air pollution mitigation.** Require that new multifamily development located within 500 feet of freeways or along University Avenue implement appropriate mitigation measures, such as air filtration/ventilation systems, landscaping, and other physical improvements, as recommended by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and/or the Bay Area Air District to reduce indoor air pollution.

IM-8.2a: Partner with the Bay Area Air District, the Sequoia Foundation, community-based organizations, and other regional agencies to deploy and maintain a network of low-cost public air quality monitors in East Palo Alto to identify neighborhood-level pollution hotspots and use monitoring data to prioritize and target mitigation investments in disadvantaged communities.

Timeframe: Short-Term

- 8.3 Landscape barriers.** Plant landscape buffers between Highway 101 and residential areas to reduce noise and air pollution for residential areas, coordinating with Caltrans as necessary and partnering with community-based organizations and nonprofits that may provide trees or landscaping services.

- 8.4 No new truck routes.** Prohibit the designation of new truck routes on residential and collector streets in East Palo Alto.
- 8.5 Electric vehicle fleet.** Improve air quality and respiratory health by transitioning City programs and operations, such as converting to a clean-air and primarily electric fleet.
- 8.6 Electric vehicle adoption.** Promote community-wide electric vehicle (EV) adoption to reduce vehicle emissions and improve air quality, including by expanding publicly accessible EV charging infrastructure through the City's EV charging capital project and partnering with community organizations to increase EV awareness and access in disadvantaged communities.
- 8.7 Other mobility strategies.** Implement the strategies in the Transportation Element that improve air quality. These include transit, walking, biking, and Transportation Demand Management strategies.

Goal HE-9. Provide housing that supports the health and safety of residents. (Previously Goal HE-13)

Intent: To ensure that all housing, including existing and new, has healthy indoor air that limits exposure to pollutants such as tobacco smoke, mold, carbon monoxide, and radon, and is constructed from materials that do not contain hazardous elements, such as lead or asbestos.

Policies:

- 9.1 Community cohesion.** Implement fair housing laws in a manner that all residents, regardless of race or ethnicity, may feel welcomed and included in the community. (Previously Goal HE-11)
- 9.2 Housing and public health.** Recognize that affordable housing is a crucial public health issue and that housing instability leads to mental and physical health issues. (Moved from existing Goal HE-3; struck portion moved to the next goal.)
- 9.3 Substandard housing rehabilitation.** Encourage and incentivize owners of substandard housing units in disadvantaged communities to repair and rehabilitate their buildings, with particular focus on neighborhoods with concentrations of older housing stock where mold, pests, lead, and asbestos issues are most prevalent.
- IM-9.3a:** Expand financial assistance to help residents identify and address substandard housing and indoor air quality, mold, and pest issues, prioritizing outreach and implementation in disadvantaged communities.
Timeframe: Short-Term
- IM-9.3b:** Fund programs for home weatherization and retrofit improvements, including seismic, air filtration, and energy-efficiency retrofits, prioritizing outreach and implementation in disadvantaged communities.
Timeframe: Short-Term
- 9.4 Abatement assistance.** Collaborate with San Mateo County to establish or support abatement assistance programs that help residents eliminate common pollutants from their homes, such as providing free or subsidized supplies to test and monitor indoor air quality and providing grants to remediate indoor air pollution problems in low-income homes or affordable rental units.
- 9.5 Code enforcement.** Coordinate with San Mateo County to address health issues in buildings, such as mold, that compromise the health of residents. Ensure code enforcement compliance for all single-family residences and multifamily housing units.
- 9.6 Pesticides.** Reduce or eliminate toxic pesticide use in civic buildings using integrated pest management (IPM) techniques and encourage the use of these techniques on private property.
- 9.7 Electrification and natural gas.** Support the voluntary removal of natural gas infrastructure

and appliances from homes and their replacement with electric appliances, and promote programs and incentives that help residents make this transition affordably.

9.8 Tenant education. Partner with community-based organizations to host tenant education workshops on housing health and safety issues, helping residents understand their rights and the resources available to address substandard conditions.

9.9 Landlord education. Partner with community-based organizations to provide education and outreach to landlords on housing health and safety standards, habitability requirements, and their legal obligations to tenants, promoting voluntary compliance and reducing substandard housing conditions.

9.10 Healthy buildings. Encourage and incentivize new and rehabilitated buildings to be designed and constructed to improve the health of workers, residents, and visitors. Activities could include:

- Using materials that are proven to eliminate negative health impacts on employees and residents.
- Siting buildings to encourage walking.
- Designing internal staircases that are visually prominent and attractive.
- Designing buildings to allow for high levels of natural light and air.

IM-9.10a: Work with developers to prioritize health in planned construction, using healthy design checklists and/or other review tools (such as the [Building Design Checklist](#) by the Center for Active Design).

Timeframe: Short-Term (Ongoing)

IM-9.10b: Review, revise, and update the Municipal Code and other relevant plans, procedures, regulations, guidelines, programs, and design manuals as needed to promote healthy housing quality, including providing

assistance to tenants having to relocate due to the landowner recovering possession of the property, or an owner move-in eviction.

Timeframe: Long-Term

Goal HE-10. Prevent displacement and preserve affordable housing. (New)

Intent: To complement and reinforce the City's Housing Element by addressing displacement from an environmental justice and community health perspective, recognizing that stable, affordable housing is foundational to health equity.

Policies:

10.1 Affordable housing. Pursue the addition of new "income-restricted" affordable housing in East Palo Alto. (Moved [portion] from existing Goal HE-3)

10.2 Anti-displacement priority. Prioritize preservation of existing affordable housing as an important component of the City's housing supply, and ensure that new development and public investment do not result in a net loss of affordable units or the preventable displacement of long-time residents.

IM-10.2a: Maintain and continue to implement the City's existing anti-displacement programs and protections, including:

- The Rent Stabilization Program and the Rent Stabilization and Eviction for Good Cause Ordinance, which provides just-cause eviction protections effective from the first day of tenancy.
- Funding eviction defense legal services and rental assistance through Measure JJ funds.
- Below-Market Rate (BMR) administration for affordable rental and ownership opportunities.

Timeframe: Short-Term

IM-10.2b: Seek opportunities to expand and strengthen the City’s anti-displacement strategy. Collaborate with CBOs and residents to identify strategies appropriate and effective for East Palo Alto. These may include:

- Completing a rental inventory of all dwelling units.
- Updating or expanding rent stabilization laws or implementing regulations.
- Strengthening implementation of relocation assistance for tenants, including assistance for tenants relocating due to the landowner recovering possession of the property or an owner move-in eviction.
- Exploring strengthening implementation of tenant anti-harassment policies.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

10.3 Affordable housing development. Promote and prioritize the development of 100-percent affordable housing within the city, and continue to require that new developments include affordable units consistent with the City’s Inclusionary Housing Ordinance.

10.4 Alternative housing models. Explore and support the establishment of alternative affordable housing models, such as community land trusts, social housing, and tenants-in-common, as long-term strategies for affordability, anti-displacement, and community wealth-building.

10.5 Tenant protections. Strengthen implementation of tenant protections to reduce the risk of unjust eviction and displacement, including ensuring that just-cause eviction protections apply from the first day of tenancy.

IM-10.5a: Identify areas within East Palo Alto at greatest risk of displacement, using available data on rent burden, eviction rates, income levels, housing age and condition, and proximity to planned public investments. Use the findings to

prioritize implementation of the City’s anti-displacement programs and resources in the highest-risk areas.

Timeframe: Long-Term

10.6 Development streamlining. Streamline the development review and permitting process for housing construction and rehabilitation to reduce costs and facilitate production.

Goal HE-11. **Provide support, resources, and housing options for unhoused people. (New)**

Intent: To expand services and housing pathways for unhoused people, in coordination with County agencies and community organizations.

Policies:

11.1 Emergency and transitional housing. Support the expansion of emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing for unhoused people, including low-barrier navigation centers focused on rapidly connecting residents to permanent housing.

11.2 Services coordination. Work in partnership with San Mateo County and local community organizations to implement continuum-of-care strategies and provide mental health, substance use, and supportive services for unhoused people.

Goal HE-12. **Provide access to affordable, healthy food for all East Palo Alto residents. (Previously Goal HE-6)**

Intent: To provide easy access to healthy food, attract economic anchors and jobs, and promote stronger local economies, vibrant neighborhoods, and healthy people. Poor diets can lead to higher levels of obesity and other diet-related illness, such as diabetes and heart disease.

Policies:

12.1 Healthy food environment. Improve the food environment in East Palo Alto and pursue programs, policies, and regulations that encourage healthy eating habits and discourage concentrations of unhealthy food vendors.

12.2 Fresh food vendors. Pursue the attraction and retention of high-quality, full-service grocery stores and other healthy food purveyors² in the city. Primary locations for healthy food stores are in the Ravenswood 101 Shopping Center, along University Avenue, and along Bay Road in the Ravenswood/4 Corners Specific Plan Area.

12.3 Farmers' markets. Work with farmers' market operators to increase market frequency and expansion to new locations, prioritizing underserved neighborhoods and disadvantaged communities, and continue to streamline permits to facilitate temporary uses, such as farmers' markets.

12.4 Healthy corner stores. Encourage corner stores and small markets to carry a wider array and more healthy food options.

IM-12.4a: Work with independently owned corner stores, convenience stores, and small markets in East Palo Alto to encourage healthy food options.
Timeframe: Medium-Term (Ongoing)

12.5 Community organization partnerships. Work with community-based organizations to expand access to healthy and affordable food in disadvantaged communities.

12.6 Food assistance outreach. Promote information about food assistance programs — such as CalFresh, WIC, and the California Universal School Meals Program — to help residents access the resources available to them, with outreach provided in English, Spanish, and other languages spoken predominantly by the community.

12.7 Fast food restaurants. Strive to balance the number of fast food restaurants with healthy food establishments so that there are not concentrations of fast food and other unhealthy food vendors in the city.

12.8 Healthy youth programs. Work with school districts and schools to create or implement educational programs for kids about healthy eating, such as edible school yards and healthy cooking classes.

12.9 Food recovery. Support food recovery programs in schools and food facilities to minimize food loss and increase donations to food banks.

12.10 Community gardens. Support the use of public and private vacant lots and public facilities for growing food for personal consumption, as feasible or appropriate. Encourage use of low-flow, drip, or similar highly efficient irrigation methods.

IM-12.10a: Explore providing public financing options for community organizations to purchase land for agricultural uses and investigate access to capital for larger community agricultural projects.
Timeframe: Long-Term

12.11 Urban agriculture. Support opportunities for community gardening, food cultivation, and small-

² Healthy food outlets include full-service grocery stores, regularly held farmers markets, fruit and vegetable markets, healthy mobile vendors,

and convenience stores or corner stores that sell a significant proportion of health foods.

scale urban agriculture consistent with applicable zoning, health, and nuisance regulations.

IM-12.11a: Review and update the Municipal Code to permit limited on-site sales and processing activities for urban farms and ensure that zoning regulations do not create unnecessary barriers to community gardens or urban agriculture.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

- 12.12 Liquor stores.** Avoid concentrations of liquor stores and corner stores that sell liquor (multiple stores on the same block or intersection).

Goal HE-13. **Strive for all residents to have access to affordable, quality healthcare, mental health care, and social services.** (Previously Goal HE-8)

Intent: To help members of the community to command appropriate healthcare resources to preserve or improve their health. To acknowledge and ameliorate special healthcare needs in East Palo Alto, such as mental health and addiction.

Policies:

- 13.1 Health education.** Provide information about existing healthcare facilities through City-sponsored events, publications, and activities.
- 13.2 Homeless services.** Build on and enhance existing strategies and planning for addressing homelessness, including prevention, services, access to mental health services, and necessary facilities.
- 13.3 Location of services.** Encourage the County to provide new and expanded health services and be supportive of them coming. Encourage co-location with other existing health providers.
- 13.4 Mobile health clinics.** Collaborate with San Mateo County Health to support the operation of mobile health clinic services in East Palo Alto, prioritizing

stops in disadvantaged communities to expand access to urgent care, health screenings, vaccinations, and referral services.

- 13.5 Community health fairs.** Seek opportunities to partner with local organizations to hold periodic community health fairs that provide free screenings and educational information to promote wellness and disease prevention, prioritizing locations in disadvantaged communities.
- 13.6 Regulatory incentives.** Explore and encourage financial and regulatory incentives for low-cost medical clinics and doctor's offices to locate in East Palo Alto.
- 13.7 Culturally sensitive services.** Encourage healthcare service providers to provide services in a way that is culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate for members of the community.
- 13.8 Factors of mental health.** Work to reduce factors that cause stress and mental health issues, such as the lack of affordable housing, crime, and financial instability.
- 13.9 Continuum of care.** Work in partnership with County agencies to implement continuum of care strategies and retain the Wellness Clinician position in East Palo Alto for continued culturally competent continuum of care.
- 13.10 Mental health services.** Work with other agencies to provide information about available mental health services available to East Palo Alto residents.
- 13.11 Drug rehabilitation programs.** Collaborate with San Mateo County Health to provide more information and better outreach about available treatments at treatment centers in East Palo Alto and San Mateo County Health. Expand the programs to cover youth and other mental health issues.

Goal HE-14. **Strive for safe and affordable drinking water that is protected from pollution and contamination. (New)**

Intent: To ensure that all residents have access to safe and affordable drinking water and that the City proactively monitors and communicates water quality information.

Policies:

14.1 **Water system maintenance and investment.**

Prioritize maintenance and repair of the public water distribution system to reduce exposure to contaminants and ensure safe, reliable delivery of drinking water to all residents.

14.2 **Water quality monitoring and transparency.**

Coordinate with the San Mateo County Environmental Health Services Groundwater Protection Program and other relevant agencies to conduct testing results and make results available to the public in plain language and in the predominant languages of the community.

14.3 **Water quality education.** Partner with state and federal agencies to support public education efforts about potential water quality threats, protective actions residents can take, and the meaning of water quality data.

14.4 **Resident water quality resources.** Provide information and resources to help residents improve water quality in their homes, including awareness of alternative residential water treatment and filtration options.

IM-14.4a: Streamline building permits for installation of whole-home filtration systems and other water quality upgrades.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

14.5 **Funding assistance.** Pursue grant funding and partnerships with the County, state agencies, and community-based organizations to support low-

income residents in identifying and addressing home water quality issues, including assistance for pipe repairs and water filtration upgrades, prioritizing outreach in disadvantaged communities.

14.6 **Water affordability.** Explore options to help lower-income residents manage water utility costs, including by advocating to water providers for affordability measures that serve disadvantaged communities and promoting existing assistance programs, such as the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's Customer Assistance Program for low-income residents.

Goal HE-15. **Increase the number and distribution of childcare facilities throughout the city. (Previously Goal HE-9)**

Intent: To coordinate better quality care from birth through early childhood because early care of children should be a primary concern of society. To provide childcare professionals with support and training to reach their full potential to provide quality care. To recognize there is a need for more affordable, high-quality care as many parents in East Palo Alto are working.

Policies:

15.1 **Diversity of childcare services.** Encourage the development of a range of childcare facilities, including family day care homes and public and private childcare centers to fulfill the childcare needs of East Palo Alto families.

IM-15.1a: Update the Development Code to encourage a range of childcare facility types and locations throughout the city, including licensed home daycares, childcare centers, and employer-sponsored or shared childcare facilities, to improve access to childcare for East Palo Alto residents.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

- 15.2 Childcare demand.** Work with local and regional agencies to assess childcare supply and demand in East Palo Alto and encourage the implementation of programs to address childcare shortfalls.
- 15.3 Developer incentives.** Provide regulatory and financial incentives to encourage new childcare facilities while ensuring they are sited near compatible uses.
- 15.4 Integrated childcare.** Coordinate and integrate childcare programs with housing and social programs, where feasible.
- 15.5 City events.** Incorporate childcare programs into City-sponsored public programs and events, where feasible.

Goal HE-16. **Improve pedestrian, bicycle, and motorized vehicle safety in East Palo Alto. (Previously Goal HE-5)**

Intent: To create a physical environment where it is safe and convenient for residents to walk and bike. To promote physical exercise and reduce traffic fatalities and injuries.

Policies:

- 16.1 Safe Routes to Schools.** Pursue and support local Safe Routes to Schools programs.
- 16.2 Aging pedestrians.** Promote safe routes for aging adults, particularly routes to transit and shopping centers.
- 16.3 Vision Zero.** Work to achieve a roadway system with no pedestrian or bicycle fatalities or serious injuries in road traffic.
- 16.4 Pedestrian improvements.** Prioritize transportation improvements in areas immediately around schools or on primary walking routes to/from schools.

- 16.5 Coordination with school districts.** Work with the Ravenswood School District, Sequoia Union School District, charter schools, and private schools to improve transportation safety around schools.
- 16.6 Emergency vehicles.** Maintain a multi-modal transportation network that allows for direct, safe routes for emergency response vehicles.
- 16.7 Emergency response and safety.** Prioritize emergency vehicle access and response by ensuring the transportation network meets all California Fire Code requirements. The geometry of all roadways, intersections, and traffic-calming features must accommodate fire and emergency apparatus. Within these established public safety parameters, designs shall incorporate enhancements for pedestrian and cyclist safety, favoring pedestrian-oriented intersection and crosswalk geometry where feasible.

Goal HE-17. **Provide other public facilities, infrastructure, and services that meet the needs of, and are accessible to, residents of disadvantaged communities. (New)**

Intent: To ensure that public facilities and infrastructure are equitably distributed and that investments prioritize the areas and populations with the greatest need.

Policies:

- 17.1 Prioritized public facility investment.** Prioritize investments in public facilities, infrastructure, and community amenities, including sidewalks, lighting, streetscapes, parks, libraries, and community centers, in disadvantaged communities, and ensure that City capital improvement planning reflects these priorities.
- 17.2 Inclusive design.** Ensure that City facilities and services are designed and maintained to meet the needs of all users, including people with disabilities, older adults, non-English speakers, and

families with young children. Apply principles of universal and barrier-free design in the planning and renovation of public facilities.

- 17.3 Greater interaction.** Increase opportunities for intercultural interaction, especially at public gathering spaces throughout the city. (Moved from existing Goal HE-11)
- 17.4 Transit and mobility access.** Work with transit providers to prioritize service improvements in disadvantaged communities.
- 17.5 Active transportation access.** Partner with regional agencies and transit providers to develop mobility solutions and improve active transportation connections for isolated areas of East Palo Alto with limited transit access.
- 17.6 Mobility assistance.** Partner with regional agencies and transit providers to improve access and affordability for public and private mobility options, such as by providing financial assistance to East Palo Alto residents to help cover transportation costs.
- 17.7 Frontloaded community benefits from development.** When community benefits are negotiated as part of development agreements with major development projects, prioritize implementation of such community benefits in the earliest possible phase of development, where feasible and appropriate.
- 17.8 Community input on facility design.** Incorporate community input into the planning and design of public facilities, including opportunities to incorporate art, murals, cultural elements, and placemaking features that reflect neighborhood identity and foster community connection.
- 17.9 Digital access.** Seek partnerships with telecommunications providers, technology companies, and regional agencies to expand affordable access to broadband internet and digital tools for residents in disadvantaged communities.

Goal HE-18. Empower all residents to have a strong and effective voice in City decisions that affect their lives. (New)

Intent: To reduce barriers to participation in City decision making and ensure that engagement processes are accessible, culturally appropriate, and responsive to the community's needs and expressed priorities.

Policies:

- 18.1 Multilingual access.** Expand translation, interpretation, and accessibility of public materials, notices, and meetings for decisions that affect residents of East Palo Alto. Explore [working](#) with community-based organizations who can translate information and answer community questions in the predominant languages spoken in the community, as well as at the literacy and pace of the affected community.

IM-18.1a: Develop and maintain an equitable community engagement toolkit for use by all City departments that provide guidance on strategies to reach underrepresented residents, addressing different power dynamics in public settings, facilitation techniques that resonate with residents, and conducting outreach in a culturally sensitive and linguistically accessible manner. As part of this effort, establish baseline metrics to understand current levels of community participation, and use these metrics to track and assess where participation could be enhanced and identify opportunities for capturing the voices of the most impacted residents. Collaborate with community-based organizations on the development of this toolkit and periodically update it based on community and community-based organization feedback.

Timeframe: Long-Term

IM-18.1b: Solicit feedback from community-based organizations on how best to navigate cultural sensitivity as a best practice throughout community engagement and how to navigate

complex topics associated with health and equity.

Timeframe: Short-Term

- 18.2 Technology and analog access.** Continue to expand the use of technology to improve access to and distribution of information about City decisions, programs, and services, while simultaneously improving information access for residents without computers or reliable internet through multilingual flyers, canvassing, door-to-door outreach, and other analog methods.

- 18.3 Accessible and convenient participation.** Schedule, format, and locate public meetings and community engagement activities in collaboration with the community and community-based organizations to maximize convenience for residents, including by considering the time constraints of working families, how easy it is to access the meeting location through multiple modes of transportation, and the availability of multiple ways to participate.

IM-18.3a: Make special efforts to accommodate all residents, including providing simultaneous translation services in the languages predominantly spoken in East Palo Alto or the neighborhood concerned, as well as listening devices for all meetings, using a variety of venues throughout the community to ensure even neighborhood access, and using participatory facilitation techniques that could be implemented by community partners. Consider hiring representatives from the community to provide translation services for the engagement process, event, or activity.

Timeframe: Short-Term

IM-18.3b: Establish a direct, multilingual system for residents to communicate with City government and receive timely information about matters that affect them, such as text alerts, a dedicated phone line, or other accessible tools, in English, Spanish, and other predominant community languages.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

- 18.4 Participation standards.** Prior to conducting major community engagement activities, establish participation standards aimed at reaching as many residents as possible, and consider repeating outreach activities if participation standards have not been met.

- 18.5 Participation support.** Provide resources and support for broad resident participation in City meetings and events, including fair financial compensation, childcare, food, and transportation assistance, when feasible.

- 18.6 Community-based organization partnerships.** Maintain and continue to expand partnerships with local organizations that have trusted relationships with East Palo Alto residents. Engage organizations early in planning processes, collaborate for implementation, outreach and technical assistance, and acknowledge their expertise. Consider partnerships with community-based organizations for the following services and activities:

- Translating written documents and information into predominantly spoken languages.
- Advising on and reviewing complex and technical language in planning and policy documents, announcements, and decisions.
- Designing or advising on the development of community engagement strategies, including designing for cultural sensitivity.
- Leading and/or facilitating outreach meetings, events, activities, or tours.
- Coordinating distribution of information and updates at regularly scheduled community meetings already hosted and maintained by community-based organizations as a trusted communication channel with residents who attend these meetings.

- Building capacity of East Palo Alto residents to be community leaders and potentially take up positions in City advisory bodies or public service through trainings, leadership academies, and similar programs.

18.7 Youth engagement. Encourage the meaningful participation of East Palo Alto youth in local governance, planning, and outreach activities, including through partnerships with schools, youth-serving organizations, and youth leadership programs.

18.8 Social capital. Strive to preserve and strengthen social capital by supporting formal and informal social networks in the community.

18.9 Community participation. Strive to increase rates of participation in community events such as voting, youth activities, adult education, senior activities, and family-oriented programs.

Goal HE-19. **Maintain transparency and integrity in East Palo Alto’s decision-making process.** (Previously HE-12)

Intent: To ensure that the City engages with its community throughout its decision-making processes in a manner that is intentional, transparent, and accountable by proactively seeking out the voices of residents who have historically been underrepresented in local decisions.

Policies:

19.1 Open meetings. Enhance the community’s trust by holding open meetings that are accessible, inviting, and available to any community member to attend and participate. Proactively and meaningfully engage residents in planning decisions that impact their housing and neighborhoods.

IM-19.1a: Partner with community-based organizations to design open meeting structures for outreach, facilitation, and meeting summaries such that they reflect the community needs and priorities along supporting accountability for the City to address those needs in a timeline that resonates with residents.

Timeframe: Medium-Term (Ongoing)

19.2 Regular public meetings. Provide clear, timely, and easy-to-understand updates on City policy decisions, planning activities, and progress of General Plan implementation through a variety of mechanisms, such as bi-annual Town Hall meetings on major activities to update the General Plan, regular updates to the Planning Commission and City Council, community-based organization-facilitated public meetings and events, and a variety of readily available digital and non-digital media.

IM-19.2a: Explore establishing an ad hoc advisory body to the City Council dedicated to environmental justice and equitable community engagement, with membership that reflects the demographic diversity of East Palo Alto, by developing a proposal for City Council consideration that evaluates whether to establish a new body or expand the mandate of an existing commission or advisory committee.

Timeframe: Long-Term

19.3 Trust and accountability. Build and maintain positive relationships between City staff and East Palo Alto residents by providing a consistent City presence in community spaces (including through partnerships with community-based organizations), demonstrating how community input has been incorporated into City decisions through clear communication and sharing timelines for implementation, and publicly reporting on progress toward the goals and policies of this element, such as through community dashboards.

IM-19.3a: Annually report to the City Council on progress made in implementing the policies and

programs of this Health and Equity Element. Use clear metrics and plain language and make the report available in English, Spanish, and other predominant languages spoken by the community. Partner with community-based organizations on the language and priorities of these progress reports so they can support community understanding.

Timeframe: Short-Term (Ongoing)

IM-19.3b: Consider hiring or contracting with a dedicated community outreach coordinator to serve as a resource navigator and case manager, connecting residents to available resources, maintaining a consistent presence in the community, and serving as a trusted liaison between residents, community-based organizations, and City government.

Timeframe: Long-Term

- 19.4 Holistic community representation.** Encourage holistic representation of the community in the appointment of Commissions and other appointed and advisory bodies. (moved from existing Goal HE-11)

IM-19.4a: Develop a strategy for guiding public appointments of community members to Commissions and other advisory bodies to encourage broad and diverse participation and help ensure engagement of residents who have not traditionally engaged or applied for such roles, including by partnering with community-based organizations to build resident capacity for public service.

Timeframe: Medium-Term

- 19.5 Developer outreach.** Require major development and infrastructure projects to initiate early, substantive, and multilingual community engagement consistent with the City's Community Outreach Policy, and to demonstrate how the community's input was incorporated into the plan prior to approval by the City Council.

- 19.6 Coordinated response.** Continue to notify community-based organizations of new development proposals in accordance with the City's Municipal Code, which requires notification for medium and major projects based on proximity to the project site, to encourage early and informed community engagement and collaboration between the City, community-based organizations, and residents.

ATTACHMENT 4

A. Written Comment Letters

The following summarizes the public comments received via email on the Draft Health and Equity Element.

1. *General*

- Support for the Element's recognition that environmental justice extends beyond pollution and includes housing stability, displacement, employment, health, public facilities, transportation, accessibility, and meaningful participation in government.
- Emphasis that equity should consider both existing residents and people who will live in East Palo Alto in the future.
- Comment that implementation of environmental justice policies improves health, opportunity, housing stability, and quality of life while allowing existing and long-term residents to remain in East Palo Alto and benefit from improvements in their community.

2. *Income and Employment*

- Support for workforce development and local hiring, with a request for measurable and publicly reported results demonstrating whether public investment and economic development are producing employment, apprenticeships, training, contracts, business opportunities, and career pathways for East Palo Alto residents.

3. *Physical and Mental Health*

- Goal HE-4
 - Support for expanding trees and vegetation throughout East Palo Alto, particularly along streets, to help address air pollution, increase shade, and reduce cooling costs (Policy 4.6).
 - Request to provide a more balanced distribution of safe spaces where youth and other residents can participate in physical activity and socialize.
- Support for preserving and expanding the tree canopy, shade, parks, safe walking areas, open space, and attractive gathering places throughout East Palo Alto, particularly in neighborhoods experiencing the greatest environmental burdens.

4. *Environmental Hazards*

- Goal HE-5 and Goal HE-8
 - Concern about East Bay commuters using local East Palo Alto streets to bypass congestion on University Avenue and Willow Road, contributing to speeding, noise, and air pollution.
 - Support for additional stops, traffic calming, and other measures to discourage cut-through traffic and improve safety and air quality.

5. *Safe and Affordable Housing*

- Request for measurable implementation of anti-displacement objectives, including tracking whether long-term residents are able to remain in East Palo Alto as neighborhoods improve and public and private investment increases.
- Request for greater attention to the actual living conditions of tenants, particularly in large multifamily properties, including tracking recurring habitability and accessibility problems.
- Request to provide more meaningful mechanisms for residents to report unsafe conditions, chronic maintenance failures, harassment, and other conditions affecting health and housing stability.

6. *Nutritious and Affordable Food*

- Goal HE-12
 - Support for community gardens and urban agriculture, including incorporating food-growing opportunities and education at schools to teach youth about food production and improve preparedness for potential food shortages following a disaster (Policy 12.10 and Policy 12.11).
 - Request for additional full-service grocery stores in East Palo Alto to improve local access to groceries and reduce the need to travel outside the city.
 - Support for integrating grocery stores and other retail uses into the ground floors of residential development and providing opportunities for local food entrepreneurs and street vendors to rent appropriate spaces and meet applicable Code requirements.

7. *Reliable, Safe, and Complete Public Facilities and Services*

- Goal HE-16
 - Concern about inadequate pedestrian facilities on streets near schools, specifically Runnymede and Garden Street, where students may be required to walk alongside vehicle traffic.

- Request that accessibility be treated as an essential equity issue, including consideration of the needs of seniors and people with disabilities in public facilities, sidewalks, transportation, meetings, emergency planning, housing, communications, and City services.

8. *Civic Engagement and Advocacy*

- Request for measurable outcomes for major Health and Equity goals, including identification of responsible departments or agencies, implementation dates, and regular public reporting so residents can determine whether conditions are improving.
- Support for transparency and meaningful resident participation, with a request for the City to communicate what input was received, how it influenced decisions, and which recommendations were accepted or rejected and why.
- Suggestion for a publicly accessible Health and Equity implementation report or dashboard identifying goals, responsible departments, deadlines, expenditures, progress, and measurable outcomes.

9. *Safety and Climate-Related Impacts*

- Request for greater attention to disaster prevention and response, particularly given the limited ability of lower-income residents to temporarily or permanently relocate following a major earthquake.
- Support for establishing designated locations throughout the city with earthquake-resistant containers containing emergency supplies such as tents, water, food, and lighting.

B. Planning Commission Study Session and Gallery Walk

The following summarizes the comments received on the Draft Health and Equity Element during the Planning Commission Study Session and Gallery Walk on September 14, 2026, including written comments on the Gallery Walk boards and verbal comments during the Study Session:

1. *General*

The Draft Health and Equity Element is too general and implies that all older homes are unhealthy, but many have been rehabilitated to remove asbestos and other hazards. This sentiment contributes to a sense that older buildings should be torn down in favor of new construction. Instead, the City should evaluate individual buildings to assess health concerns.

- Consider opportunities to strengthen policies throughout the element to function as requirements, such as through changes to the Code, particularly for development projects.

- The City should push developers to include public benefits that are needed by the community, rather than letting developers dictate the types of public benefits that are included.

2. Life Expectancy and Preventable Disease

New residents should be informed when housing has been constructed on remediated or formerly contaminated properties.

- Residual pesticide exposure may be contributing to illness in the community.

3. Income and Employment

Middle-income households may earn too much to qualify for assistance but too little to afford homeownership, while high housing costs can also create barriers to further education.

- More jobs should go to East Palo Alto residents so that earnings remain and are spent within the community.
- City hiring should better represent underrepresented community members.

4. Physical and Mental Health

Greater attention should be given to seniors and their mental health.

- Parks should be kept clean, well maintained, and accessible to residents.

5. Environmental Hazards

Stronger restrictions on Roundup and other pesticides are needed due to concerns about impacts on groundwater.

- New renters and homeowners should be informed about environmental hazards and contamination affecting their properties.

6. Safe and Affordable Housing

The City should consider purchasing and controlling properties rather than relying on outside housing organizations.

- Permit fees and Building Code requirements can create financial burdens for homeowners maintaining and upgrading their homes.
- Air purifiers should be distributed to residents, particularly seniors and as many households as possible.

7. Nutritious and Affordable Food

Partnerships with food assistance organizations, schools, and County programs should expand food distribution and recovery while reducing food waste.

- The farmers' market should be held on weekends to make healthy food options more accessible to residents.
- East Palo Alto needs an additional grocery store.
- The City should address concerns about liquor stores.
- Healthy eating and nutrition education should be provided to students across grade levels.

8. Reliable, Safe, and Complete Public Facilities and Services

Streamline opportunities for childcare and promote the development of more childcare centers that operate with a philosophy (such as the Community Coordinated Child Care model) and promote diversity.

9. Civic Engagement and Advocacy

Residents should have opportunities to learn how to participate in local civic processes.

Comment No.	Page	Chapter Section/Topic	Comment	Submitted By	Date Received	Response
1	7-16	Goal HE-4. Create a parks and recreation system that encourages physical activity, promotes healthy living, and reduces chronic illnesses. (Previously Goal HE-3) Policy 4.6 Lighting and tree coverage. Provide adequate lighting for all parks, trails, sidewalks, and open spaces, and expand tree coverage and shade, prioritizing improvements in disadvantaged communities and along pathways to parks and recreational facilities.	This is very important. Trees and overall plants are essential for combating air contamination. Plus, we need more canopy to reduce cooling costs in summer and for other benefits. So we need more trees throughout the city, especially on streets. Tree coverage is way lower in EPA than in PA, for example. It is critical to provide spaces where youth and the general population can enjoy physical activities and socialize. Most people go home, turn on the TV, and avoid the outside, especially since there is not a balanced distribution of safe places to meet in the city.	Federico Andrade-Garcia	9/17/2026	The current goal and policies already address this comment.
2	7-17 7-19	Goal HE-5. Provide safe and convenient alternatives to motorized vehicle travel that support community health through physical activity and cleaner air. (New) Goal HE-8. Improve respiratory health throughout the city and strive to reduce the incidence of asthma and other respiratory illnesses. (Previously Goal HE-10)	EPA is used by people living in East Bay, to commute to Peninsula businesses and companies. Find creative ways for commuters to avoid using inner-city streets to bypass bottlenecks on University or Willow, such as adding more stops and other traffic calming / slowing measures. This would serve two purposes: preventing speeding (thus improving safety) and ensuring that noise and smog pollution do not increase throughout EPA during commute times.	Federico Andrade-Garcia	9/17/2026	This is a good suggestion, but the proposed traffic and calming measures may be more appropriate to address through the Transportation Element.
3	7-23	Goal HE-12. Provide access to affordable, healthy food for all East Palo Alto residents. (Previously Goal HE-6)	I really like the idea of: 12.10 Community gardens. Support the use of public and private vacant lots and public facilities for growing food for personal consumption, as feasible or appropriate. Encourage use of lowflow, drip, or similar highly efficient irrigation methods. (Related/ Same to 12.11 Urban agriculture.) This should be encouraged at the school level. Majority of local schoolchildren have NO idea (Or very limited knowledge) where food comes from. This should be a critical skill in the future: knowing how to secure one's own food supply n case of a critical event, such as an extended food shortage after a big disaster (Earthquake). Not sure where to add this, but EPA needs more general grocery stores, like a Safeway or a Trader Joe's. Most of the time, people have to travel outside EPA to get groceries; this adds to the city's traffic and pollution issues. In a related idea, housing with ground-floor grocery stores (And maybe, other retail) should be ideal. While uncommon in California, this concept is very common in Asia, Latin America, and Europe. This concept must be considered in more detail. A number of local people are entrepreneurs (And culturally diverse), selling food or similar items on the streets. Instead of cancelling or blocking them, options to rent out spaces and help them meet code requirements. They will not stop selling food, and people will not stop buying from them just because it is not "up to code".	Federico Andrade-Garcia	9/17/2026	Promoting community gardens at the school level could be incorporated into Policy 12.8 Healthy Youth Program. Policies 12.2 and 12.4 already address increasing access to grocery stores and food options. The suggestion to encourage ground-floor grocery stores could be further incorporated into these policies. Grocery stores are also permitted by right along Bay Road within the Specific Plan area.
4	7-26	Goal HE-16. Improve pedestrian, bicycle, and motorized vehicle safety in East Palo Alto. (Previously Goal HE-5)	Critical. Right now, some streets (Runnymede, Garden St., at least, which are near where I live) have schools, but NO proper walkways, forcing students to walk alongside cars. Unfortunately, action will only be taken after a tragedy occurs....	Federico Andrade-Garcia	9/17/2026	This is already addressed through Policies 16.1, 16.4, and 16.5.
5	N/A	General	Another item I'm not sure where to place is "Disaster prevention and response". We are in an active earthquake zone. In nearby cities, more affluent residents can just move out (to a hotel, or by taking a plane) until repairs are done or permanently, but the majority of EPA residents will not be able to. In case of an extreme scenario (Like a large earthquake that flattens many houses), things such as tents, emergency water, food, light, will be needed. Again, this is a bigger problem in disadvantaged communities, due to limited mobility stemming from limited economic resources. Specific places in the city (Maybe some of the lots of churches' lots in EPA, plus the less government offices' parking areas) should have at least one special earthquake-proof container(s) with all those emergency supplies.	Federico Andrade-Garcia	9/17/2026	This is addressed in the Safety and Noise Element.
6	N/A	General	I have reviewed the areas addressed by the Element, and I appreciate the City's recognition that environmental justice is not limited to pollution. Housing stability, displacement, employment, health, public facilities, transportation, accessibility, and meaningful participation in government all affect the health and well-being of East Palo Alto residents.	Gail Wilk Dixon	9/18/2026	This is a general comment.
7	N/A	Safe and Affordable Housing	1. Protect long-term residents from displacement. The Element appropriately recognizes displacement as a health and equity issue. That principle should be accompanied by measurable implementation. The City should track whether long-term residents are actually able to remain in East Palo Alto as neighborhoods improve and public and private investment increases. Housing improvement should not mean improving a neighborhood for the next population while the people who endured its historic disadvantages are displaced.	Gail Wilk Dixon	9/18/2026	This is already addressed under Goals HE 9, HE-10, and HE-11.

Comment No.	Page	Chapter Section/Topic	Comment	Submitted By	Date Received	Response
8	N/A	Civic Engagement and Advocacy	2. Measure results, not merely programs. For major Health and Equity goals, the City should identify measurable outcomes, responsible departments or agencies, implementation dates, and regular public reporting. Residents should be able to determine whether conditions actually improved - not simply whether a program, study, meeting, or partnership occurred.	Gail Wilk Dixon	9/18/2026	This is already addressed in the following goals: Goal HE-1 includes measurable health indicators and performance metrics to track health outcomes over time. Goal HE-19 includes ongoing public reporting, including an annual report to City Council using clear metrics.
9	N/A	Safe and Affordable Housing	3. Preserve safe and sanitary housing while enforcing tenant protections. Housing equity should include the actual living conditions of tenants, particularly in large multifamily properties. The City should track recurring habitability and accessibility problems and ensure residents have a meaningful way to report unsafe conditions, chronic maintenance failures, harassment, or other conditions affecting their health and housing stability. Anti-displacement protection and safe housing must work together.	Gail Wilk Dixon	9/18/2026	This is already addressed under Goal HE-10.
10	N/A	Income and Employment	4. Make local employment and economic opportunity measurable. I support the Element's attention to workforce development and local hiring. East Palo Alto residents should be able to see whether local public investment and economic development are actually producing employment, apprenticeships, training, contracts, business opportunities, and career pathways for East Palo Alto residents. The City should publish measurable local participation and employment results.	Gail Wilk Dixon	9/18/2026	Goal HE-3 partially addresses this with regards to workforce development and local hiring. Goal HE-19, Policy 13, which would require annual public reporting on implementation of the element using clear metrics, would address publishing of local participation and employment results.
11	N/A	Safe, Reliable, and Complete Public Facilities and Services	5. Protect seniors and residents with disabilities. Accessibility should be treated as an essential equity issue rather than an afterthought. Public facilities, sidewalks, transportation, meetings, emergency planning, housing, communications, and City services should be evaluated for the needs of seniors and persons with disabilities.	Gail Wilk Dixon	9/18/2026	This is already addressed under Goals HE-5 and HE-6.
12	N/A	Physical and Mental Health	6. Preserve and expand trees, green space, and welcoming public spaces. Environmental health includes the physical character of our neighborhoods. Tree canopy, shade, parks, safe walking areas, open space, and attractive gathering places should be preserved and expanded throughout East Palo Alto, particularly in neighborhoods carrying the greatest environmental burdens.	Gail Wilk Dixon	9/18/2026	This is already addressed under Goal HE-8.
13	N/A	Civic Engagement and Advocacy	7. Strengthen civic participation and accountability. I strongly support the provisions calling for transparency and meaningful resident participation. However, public participation must mean more than holding a meeting. Residents should be shown what they said, what the City did with that information, what recommendations were accepted or rejected, and why. I therefore encourage the City to maintain a publicly accessible Health and Equity implementation report or dashboard showing goals, responsible departments, deadlines, expenditures, progress, and measurable outcomes.	Gail Wilk Dixon	9/18/2026	This is already addressed under Goal HE-19.
14	N/A	General	Finally, I ask the City to remember an important principle throughout implementation of this Element: equity includes the people who are already here, as well as the people who will live here in the future.	Gail Wilk Dixon	9/18/2026	This is a general comment.
15	N/A	General	East Palo Alto's environmental justice policies should improve health, opportunity, housing stability, and quality of life while allowing existing and long-term residents to share in - and remain here to enjoy - the improvements made in their community.	Gail Wilk Dixon	9/18/2026	This is a general comment.

MEMORANDUM

DATE **September 9 2026**

TO Elena Lee, Planning Division Manager
Salifu Yakubu, Senior Planner
Michelle Huang, Associate Planner
City of East Palo Alto

ADDRESS 1960 Tate Street
East Palo Alto, CA 94303

FROM Liza Debies, Associate Principal; Madeline Miller, Associate
PlaceWorks

SUBJECT **General Plan Health and Equity Element Update
California Environmental Quality Act Exemption Memorandum**

Introduction

PURPOSE

This Exemption Memorandum evaluates the applicability of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to the City of East Palo Alto (City) General Plan Health and Equity Element Update (proposed project). The memorandum summarizes the proposed project, identifies the applicable CEQA requirements, and presents the basis of the findings that the proposed project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to the common-sense exemption in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).

STATUTORY AUTHORITY AND REQUIREMENTS

Once a lead agency determines that an activity is a project subject to CEQA, the lead agency must determine whether the project is exempt from CEQA. State CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15061(b)¹ outlines the ways in which a project may be exempt. A project is exempt from CEQA if at least one of the following five criteria is met:

- 1) The project is exempt by statute (see, e.g., Article 18 of the State CEQA Guidelines, commencing with Section 15260).
- 2) The project is exempt pursuant to a categorical exemption (see Article 19, commencing with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300) and none of the exceptions set forth in Section 15300.2 apply.

¹ California Association of Environmental Professionals, 2025, *2025 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Statute and Guidelines*, https://www.califaep.org/docs/CEQA_Handbook_2025combined.pdf.

- 3) The activity is covered by the common-sense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential to cause a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.
- 4) The project will be rejected or disapproved by a public agency (see State CEQA Guidelines Section 15270[b]).
- 5) The project is exempt pursuant to the provisions of Article 12.5 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

The proposed project would be exempt as a common-sense exemption under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because implementation of the proposed project would not have the potential to cause a significant effect on the environment (criterion 3), as further discussed in *Findings Concerning CEQA Exemption*.

Project Description

REGIONAL LOCATION

The City of East Palo Alto is in southern San Mateo County. The city is approximately 2.6 square miles and is bordered by the Ravenswood Open Space Preserve (in Menlo Park) and the San Francisco Bay to the east, the City of Menlo Park to the north and west, and San Francisquito Creek and the City of Palo Alto to the south. US Highway 101 connects East Palo Alto to other San Mateo County communities and points beyond. State Route (SR-) 109/University Avenue connects East Palo Alto to SR-84, which provides access to the East Bay and connections to the Central Valley.

PROPOSED PROJECT

Project Background

The proposed project is an update to Chapter 7, Health and Equity Element, of the *City of East Palo Alto Vista 2035 General Plan* (General Plan). The Health and Equity Element presents the community's priorities for achieving a healthy and equitable community. It includes goals and policies that address existing community health concerns as well as approaches to managing new development to prevent future health issues, covering topics such as environmental justice, pollution exposure, public facilities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, physical activity, and additional health risks such as climate vulnerability. This element also addresses civic engagement, including transparency and inclusivity in public decision-making processes.

California Government Code Section 65302(h), which adopts Senate Bill 1000, the Planning for Healthy Communities Act passed in 2016, requires local jurisdictions in California to incorporate environmental justice into the General Plan. This includes identifying "disadvantaged communities" within their boundaries and adopting environmental justice goals, policies, and programs that address the unique and compounded health risks facing those communities. The Health and Equity Element includes goals and policies intended to identify the unique and compounded health risks facing disadvantaged communities. Updates to this element are to identify and respond to environmental justice concerns by updating existing and adding new goals and policies to respond to current community needs while continuing to meet requirements in State law.

Health and Equity Element Update

The Health and Equity Element covers the following environmental justice topics: pollution exposure, public facilities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, physical activity, additional health risks (e.g., climate vulnerability), and community and civic engagement. The proposed goals and policies and revisions to existing goals and policies as part of this update are intended to guide decisions regarding improving overall health conditions; promoting healthy practices; improving access to employment opportunities; increasing park and recreation access; promoting alternative modes of travel; creating a smoke-free community; reducing toxics, legacy pollutants, and hazardous materials; improving respiratory health; promoting safe and sanitary housing; preventing displacement and preserving affordable housing; providing support for unhoused people; providing access to affordable and healthy food; increasing access to healthcare and social services; providing safe and affordable drinking water; expanding childcare facilities; improving pedestrian, bicycle, and motorized vehicle safety; increasing the amount of public facilities accessible to disadvantaged communities; ensuring engagement processes are accessible to the community's needs and expressed priorities; and maintaining transparency in East Palo Alto's decision-making process. The proposed project would update the General Plan to ensure that the Health and Equity Element continues to meet the requirements of California Government Code Section 65302(h) while addressing current community needs. Adoption of the update would not result in an increase in development capacity in the planning area or in direct physical changes to the environment.

The proposed project also includes an Environmental Justice Technical Appendix (Technical Appendix). The Technical Appendix includes socioeconomic and environmental information regarding the disadvantaged communities in East Palo Alto, describes the major environmental justice issues facing each of these areas, and describes how disadvantaged communities are identified. The Technical Appendix also identifies the data sources that can be used to monitor and track progress in addressing environmental burdens and advancing the goals of the Health and Equity Element. The City proposes to amend the General Plan by adopting the revised Health and Equity Element text and associated figure updates and incorporating the Technical Appendix into the Health and Equity Element.

Findings Concerning CEQA Exemption

CEQA GUIDELINES SECTION 15061(B)(3): COMMON-SENSE EXEMPTION

The proposed project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to the common-sense exemption under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3). This exemption applies because the proposed project does not have the potential to cause a significant effect on the environment.

ANALYSIS IN SUPPORT OF FINDINGS

The proposed project is a program-level policy document that includes goals, policies, and actions intended to guide decisions to create a healthy and equitable community. The proposed project establishes a framework for how to achieve its goals through policies and actions focused on addressing the most critical health needs in the city, safeguarding and improving residents' personal health, maintaining and enhancing East Palo Alto's parks and open spaces, and protecting local environmental resources. The proposed project does not include land use or zoning changes that would result in direct or indirect growth or changes in building density and intensity. The proposed project would not implement provisions that would result in direct or indirect population growth and thus would not place

**GENERAL PLAN HEALTH AND EQUITY ELEMENT UPDATE
CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT EXEMPTION MEMORANDUM**

additional demands on natural resources, public services, or infrastructure. In addition, the proposed project does not include any site-specific designs or proposals to develop specific projects, nor does it grant any entitlements for development projects. The proposed project does not authorize any changes in land use or zoning that would allow development in areas not previously allowed.

There is precedent for Environmental Justice Elements to be exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3). Recent filings with the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation for such exemptions include, but are not limited to:

- » City of Gustine, Environmental Justice Element (GPA2025-01), Notice of Exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3); filed October 16, 2025.²
- » County of Sonoma, Sonoma County General Plan 2020 Environmental Justice Element, Notice of Exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3); filed August 13, 2025.³
- » City of Hemet, General Plan Amendment (GPA 22-001): A City-initiated amendment to the Hemet General Plan Updating General Plan Chapter 6, Public Safety Element and Climate, Notice of Exemption under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15282(s) and 15061(b)(3); filed October 3, 2024.⁴
- » City of San Joaquin, General Plan Amendment to adopt an Environmental Justice Element and Safety Element update, Notice of Exemption under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15061(b)(3); filed June 5, 2024.⁵

Given the similarity between the legal background, scope, and nature of the Health and Equity Element update to be adopted by the City of East Palo Alto and those adopted by jurisdictions statewide, PlaceWorks concludes adoption of the Health and Equity Element update by the City is exempted from environmental review and does not warrant further environmental review. Therefore, it can be seen with certainty that the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment and is exempt from CEQA review.

² City of Gustine, 2025, October, Environmental Justice Element (GPA2025-01), <https://ceqanet.lci.ca.gov/2025100728>.

³ County of Sonoma, 2025, August, Sonoma County General Plan 2020 Environmental Justice Element, <https://files.ceqanet.lci.ca.gov/321616-1/attachment/FNVQu3EHEBgBEzlt4xWsJImUTGMK8t7CkV6ulu7QwozqLQPiVGelMKVxe9z6udKiVI3Hlp9voiH2jikS0>.

⁴ City of Hemet, 2024, October, General Plan Amendment (GPA 22-001), A City-initiated amendment to the Hemet General Plan Updating General Plan Chapter 6 Public Safety Element and Climate, <https://ceqanet.lci.ca.gov/2024100135>.

⁵ City of San Joaquin, 2024, June, General Plan amendment to adopt an Environmental Justice Element and Safety Element update, <https://ceqanet.lci.ca.gov/2024060109>.

ATTACHMENT 7



CITY OF EAST PALO ALTO

Tel: (650) 853-3189 • Fax: (650) 853-3179

www.cityofepa.org/planning

Notice of Exemption California Environmental Quality Act

TO: COUNTY CLERK

County of San Mateo
555 County Center Redwood City,
California 94063-1665

TO: STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, California 95814

FROM: CITY OF EAST PALO ALTO

Planning Division
1960 Tate Street
East Palo Alto, California 94303

PROJECT TITLE: Health and Equity Element Update

PROJECT LOCATION SPECIFIC:

Citywide

PROJECT LOCATION, CITY, COUNTY:

East Palo Alto, San Mateo County

The proposed project is an update to Chapter 7, Health and Equity Element, of the City of East Palo Alto Vista 2035 General Plan (General Plan). The Health and Equity Element presents the community's priorities for achieving a healthy and equitable community. It includes goals and policies that address existing community health concerns as well as approaches to managing new development to prevent future health issues, covering topics such as environmental justice, pollution exposure, public facilities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, physical activity, and additional health risks such as climate vulnerability. This element also addresses civic engagement, including transparency and inclusivity in public decision-making processes.

California Government Code Section 65302(h), which adopts Senate Bill 1000, the Planning for Healthy Communities Act passed in 2016, requires local jurisdictions in California to incorporate environmental justice into the General Plan. This includes identifying "disadvantaged communities" within their boundaries and adopting environmental justice goals, policies, and programs that address the unique and compounded health risks facing those communities. The Health and Equity Element includes goals and policies intended to identify the unique and compounded health risks facing disadvantaged communities. Updates to this element are to identify and respond to environmental justice concerns by updating existing and adding new goals and policies to respond to current community needs while continuing to meet requirements in State law.

NAME OR PUBLIC AGENCY APPROVING PROJECT

City of East Palo Alto, a municipal corporation

NAME OF PERSON OR AGENCY CARRYING OUT PROJECT:

City of East Palo Alto, a municipal corporation

EXEMPT STATUS (Check One)

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080 (b) (1); 15268)
- ☐ Declared Emergency (Sec 21080 (b) (4); 15269 (a))
- ☐ Emergency Project (Sec 21080 (b) (4) 15269 (b) (c))
- ☐ Statutory Exemption – CODE NO: _____
- ☒ Categorical Exemption – SECTION NO: **15061(b)(3) – Common Sense Exemption**

The proposed project is a program-level policy document that includes goals, policies, and actions intended to guide decisions to create a healthy and equitable community. The proposed project establishes a framework for how to achieve its goals through policies and actions focused on addressing the most critical health needs in the city, safeguarding and improving residents' personal health, maintaining and enhancing East Palo Alto's parks and open

ATTACHMENT 7

spaces, and protecting local environmental resources. The proposed project does not include land use or zoning changes that would result in direct or indirect growth or changes in building density and intensity. The proposed project would not implement provisions that would result in direct or indirect population growth and thus would not place additional demands on natural resources, public services, or infrastructure. In addition, the proposed project does not include any site-specific designs or proposals to develop specific projects, nor does it grant any entitlements for development projects. The proposed project does not authorize any changes in land use or zoning that would allow development in areas not previously allowed.

There is precedent for Environmental Justice Elements to be exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3). Recent filings with the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation for such exemptions include, but are not limited to:

- City of Gustine, Environmental Justice Element (GPA2025-01), Notice of Exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3); filed October 16, 2025.2
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- City of San Joaquin, General Plan Amendment to adopt an Environmental Justice Element and Safety Element update, Notice of Exemption under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15061(b)(3); filed June 5, 2024

Given the similarity between the legal background, scope, and nature of the Health and Equity Element update to be adopted by the City of East Palo Alto and those adopted by jurisdictions statewide, PlaceWorks concludes adoption of the Health and Equity Element update by the City is exempted from environmental review and does not warrant further environmental review. Therefore, it can be seen with certainty that the proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment and is exempt from CEQA review.

LEAD AGENCY CONTACT PERSON

Salifu Yakubu, Interim Planning Manager

AREA CODE, TELEPHONE, Extension

(650) 853-3189

This notice shall be filed only after approval of an exempt project.

IF FILED BY APPLICANT

1. Attached certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project?
Yes ___ No ___
3. Attach original and two copies of this Notice of Exemption.
4. Attach two self-addressed, stamped envelopes.

SIGNATURE	TITLE	DATE
Signed by ___ Applicant ☒ Lead Agency	Salifu Yakubu, Interim Planning Manager	

AFFIDAVIT OF COUNTY CLERK FILING AND POSTING

I declare that on _____ I received and posted this Notice as required by California Public Resources Code Section 2115.2. Said Notice will remain posted for thirty (30) days from the filing date.

By _____ Date _____