



# NOTICE OF PREPARATION ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT CITY OF MENLO PARK

**Date:** June 18, 2015

**To:** State Clearinghouse  
State Responsible Agencies  
State Trustee Agencies  
Other Public Agencies  
Interested Organizations

**From:** Deanna Chow  
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**Subject:** **Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Menlo Park General Plan (Land Use & Circulation Elements) and M-2 Area Zoning Update**

**Lead Agency:** City of Menlo Park Planning Division

**Project Title:** Menlo Park General Plan (Land Use & Circulation Elements) and M-2 Area Zoning Update, also known as ConnectMenlo

**Project Area:** City of Menlo Park

Notice is hereby given that the City of Menlo Park (the City) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare a program level environmental impact report (EIR) for the Menlo Park General Plan (Land Use & Circulation Elements) and M-2 Area Zoning Update, also known as ConnectMenlo (“proposed Project” or “Project”). The proposed Project, its location, and potential environmental effects are described below. Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations Section 15060(d)), the City has determined that an EIR is required for the proposed Project, and therefore an Initial Study will not be prepared and the City will begin work directly on the EIR.

Even though ConnectMenlo is technically a “project” that requires environmental review under CEQA, as a collection of City policies and regulations it qualifies for program level analysis, which evaluates total potential effects on the environment due to anticipated growth and change, but does not require the kind of building-by-building mitigation activities that may be assigned to individual construction and development projects that follow adoption of the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance updates. The level of review and associated processing time needed for those

individual activities may be streamlined if they comply with overarching rules prescribed in the ConnectMenlo Update and EIR.

The City is requesting comments and guidance on the scope and content of the EIR from interested public agencies, organizations and individuals. With respect to the views of Responsible and Trustee Agencies as to significant environmental issues, the City needs to know the reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures that are germane to each agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the Project. Responsible agencies may need to use the EIR prepared by the City when considering permitting or other approvals for the Project.

Comments on the NOP are due no later than the close of the NOP review period 5:00 p.m. on **Monday, July 20, 2015**. However, we would appreciate your response at the earliest possible date. Please send your written comments to Deanna Chow at the address shown above or email to [connectmenlo@menlopark.org](mailto:connectmenlo@menlopark.org) with "Menlo Park General Plan Update EIR" as the subject. Public agencies providing comments are asked to include a contact person for the agency. A Scoping Session is currently tentatively scheduled to be held by the Planning Commission at its regular meeting on:

**September 21, 2015, 7:00 p.m.**  
Menlo Park City Council Chambers  
701 Laurel Street  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

The scoping meeting will provide an opportunity for the City to summarize the General Plan and Zoning Code Update process. **The focus of the scoping meeting will be on the content to be studied in the EIR.** The Scoping Meeting is purposely being held several months after release of this Notice of Preparation to allow the community to participate in the development and review of proposed General Plan Land Use and Circulation Element goals, policies, and programs, and M-2 Area Zoning Ordinance provisions and Design Standards, as those are expected to provide mitigation of environmental effects, in addition to any mitigation measures prescribed in the EIR.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of an EIR is to inform decision-makers and the public of the potential environmental effects of a proposed project. The EIR process is intended to provide environmental information sufficient to evaluate a proposed project and its potential to cause significant effects on the environment; examine methods of reducing adverse environmental impacts; and consider alternatives to a proposed project. A Fiscal Impact Analysis (FIA) is also being prepared to evaluate fiscal impacts on the City of Menlo Park and special districts from the proposed project.

The Menlo Park General Plan (Land Use & Circulation Elements) and M-2 Area Zoning Update EIR, also known as ConnectMenlo, will be prepared as a program EIR in accordance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. The project location, project description, and the potential environmental effects that will be evaluated in the EIR are described generally below. As mentioned above, subsequent projects to General Plan and Zoning changes will be subject to a separate environmental review process.

## **PROJECT LOCATION**

The Project Study Area consists of all land within the city of Menlo Park, its Sphere of Influence (where the City maintains a role in land use and transportation decisions through future annexations of unincorporated areas), and a proposed Planning Area (where the City believes the Menlo Park community should be able to participate in influencing land use and transportation decisions). As shown in Figure 1, Menlo Park is located at the southern edge of San Mateo County. The City is generally bounded by San Francisco Bay to the north and east; the cities of East Palo Alto and Palo Alto and Stanford University to the southeast; and Atherton, unincorporated North Fair Oaks, and Redwood City to the northwest. The City is accessed by Interstate 280 (I-280), U.S. Highway 101 (US 101), Caltrain, State Route 84 via the Dumbarton Bridge, and a variety of arterial, collector and residential streets, as well as regional and local pedestrian and bicycles routes. The majority of land in Menlo Park is designated for residential use; other General Plan land use categories include Industrial/Business Park, Open Space/Recreation, Commercial, and Public Facilities/Institutional.

The M-2 Area, which is the focus of future land use change under the Project, comprises the northern-most portion of Menlo Park. The M-2 Area (see Figure 2) is generally bounded by San Francisco Bay to the north; Redwood City to the west; East Palo Alto to the southeast; and the Menlo Park neighborhoods of Belle Haven, Flood Triangle, Suburban Park, and Lorelei Manor to the south. Currently, most land in the M-2 Area is designated for industrial/business park use. The M-2 Area contains major regional transportation links, including Bayfront Expressway (State Route 84), Willow Road (State Route 114), and University Avenue (State Route 109) all of which are utilized heavily to provide access to the Dumbarton Bridge.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Often described as each city's "constitution," general plans are required by State law to guide land use and development, usually for a period of 20 years. With the Menlo Park Housing, Open Space/Conservation, Noise, and Safety Elements having been recently updated, the focus of the Project is on the Land Use and Circulation Elements (as well as zoning provisions to implement any land use changes in the M-2 Area). These two elements are central components of the General Plan because they describe which land uses should be allowed in the City, where those

land uses should be located, how those land uses may be accessed and connected, and how development of those uses should be managed so as to minimize impacts and maximize benefits to the City and its residents.

The Land Use Element frames the type and scale of potential development that may occur over the next 20 years, particularly in the M-2 Area. The Circulation Element will address transportation issues throughout the City, and both updated Elements will be consistent with the other General Plan Elements and the El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan.

The Project also includes an update to the City's Zoning Ordinance provisions for the M-2 Area to implement the updated General Plan programs, as well as Design Standards for development in the M-2 Area.

Community engagement is the foundation of the Project. Updated planning policy language will only be meaningful if it helps achieve the community's vision for the future. The in-person public outreach and participation process has included workshops and open houses; mobile tours of Menlo Park and nearby communities; informational symposia; stakeholder interviews; focus groups; recommendations by a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) composed of City commissioners, elected officials, and community members; and consideration by the City Council and Planning Commission at public meetings. Many more opportunities will occur throughout the process to ensure that community members play a central role in guiding the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance updates. In addition, the Project features a comprehensive website, online surveys, and a mobile app that provides access to information and documents.

The Menlo Park General Plan and M-2 Area Zoning Update will be evaluated using a program EIR that determines whether potential future land use and circulation system changes may result in impacts that need to be mitigated. By incorporating implementation provisions that purposely reduce environmental impacts, the proposed updates can be made largely "self-mitigating," which reduces the need for separate EIR mitigation measures, improves the efficiency of implementation, and increases the likelihood that development will be environmentally sustainable.

Given the potential for change in Menlo Park and especially the M-2 Area, the City Council established the following objectives for the Project:

- Establish and achieve the community's vision
- Realize economic and revenue potential
- Assume that changes to General Plan Land Use Designations and Zoning will occur only in M-2 Area
- Streamline the development review process
- Improve mobility for all travel modes



- Preserve neighborhood character throughout the city
- Reduce emissions and adapt sustainably

In pursuit of these goals, the Menlo Park General Plan and M-2 Area Zoning Update is making use of the following Guiding Principles, which reflect the stated goals of members of the public, elected officials, and various stakeholders who have participated in the Project, to date. These aspirational statements, accepted by the City Council in December 2014, describe the kind of place that community members want Menlo Park to be. City representatives and community members developed them in a collaborative public process for consideration in guiding growth and preserving the City's unique features over the next 20 years.

- **Citywide Equity:** Menlo Park neighborhoods are protected from unreasonable development and unreasonable cut-through traffic, share the benefits and impacts of local growth, and enjoy equal access to quality services, education, public open space, housing that complements local job opportunities with affordability that limits displacement of current residents, and convenient daily shopping such as grocery stores and pharmacies.
- **Healthy Community:** Everyone in Menlo Park enjoys healthy living spaces, high quality of life, and can safely walk or bike to fresh food, medical services, employment, recreational facilities, and other daily destinations; land owners and occupants take pride in the appearance of property; Menlo Park achieves code compliance and prioritizes improvements that promote safety and healthy living; and the entire city is well-served by emergency services and community policing.
- **Competitive and Innovative Business Destination:** Menlo Park embraces emerging technologies, local intelligence, and entrepreneurship, and welcomes reasonable development without excessive traffic congestion that will grow and attract successful companies and innovators that generate local economic activity and tax revenue for the entire community.
- **Corporate Contribution:** In exchange for added development potential, construction projects provide physical benefits in the adjacent neighborhood (such as Belle Haven for growth north of US 101), including jobs, housing, schools, libraries, neighborhood retail, childcare, public open space, high speed internet access, and transportation choices.
- **Youth Support and Education Excellence:** Menlo Park children and young adults have equal access to excellent childcare, education, meaningful employment opportunities, and useful training, including internship opportunities at local companies.
- **Great Transportation Options:** Menlo Park provides thoroughly-connected, safe and convenient transportation, adequate emergency vehicle access, and multiple options for people traveling by foot, bicycle, shuttle, bus, car, and train, including daily service along the Dumbarton Rail Corridor.
- **Complete Neighborhoods and Commercial Corridors:** Menlo Park neighborhoods are complete communities, featuring well integrated and designed development along vibrant

commercial corridors with a live-work-play mix of community-focused businesses that conveniently serve adjacent neighborhoods while respecting their residential character.

- **Accessible Open Space and Recreation:** Menlo Park provides safe and convenient access to an ample amount of local and regional parks and a range of public open space types, recreational facilities, trails, and enhancements to wetlands and the Bay.
- **Sustainable Environmental Planning:** Menlo Park is a leader in efforts to address climate change, adapt to sea-level rise, protect natural and built resources, conserve energy, manage water, utilize renewable energy, and promote green building.

The Guiding Principles will help chart future change throughout Menlo Park through a careful balance of benefits and impacts, as charted in the General Plan goals, policies, and programs, whether applied to expanding transportation options citywide, to protecting the character of the city's residential neighborhoods, or to managing the growth expected to occur in the M-2 Area. How much the M-2 Area might grow has also been established through an intensive process of community workshops, public meetings, and surveys. Based on this significant body of community input, GPAC recommendations, and Planning Commission and City Council review, a theoretical level of maximum potential development that could be accommodated by the Project has been established (as depicted in Figure 3).

This maximum potential development would consist of approximately 2.1 million additional square feet of nonresidential building space and 4,500 additional multifamily dwelling units beyond what is already realistically achievable under the current Menlo Park General Plan Land Use Element. About 1.4 million square feet of the added nonresidential development would be concentrated in the area between Willow Road and University Avenue (primarily for new and expanded life sciences uses). About 2,000 of the additional dwelling units would be located in that same area, with another 1,000 units in the Jefferson Drive area, and 1,500 units on the Facebook East campus.

The nonresidential development would also include ground floor retail in a number of locations and roughly 500,000 square feet for three hotels with 200 rooms each, one in the Haven area, one in the Jefferson Drive area, and one on the Facebook West campus. The anticipated development would be estimated to increase the number of jobs in the M-2 Area by about 5,500 beyond the amount accommodated by the current General Plan.

In addition to the potential buildout of the Project, development capacity currently exists in the M-2 Area based on the current 1994 General Plan Land Use Element and existing zoning. This current buildout potential, estimated at 1.8 million square feet of nonresidential uses, will be included in the No Project Alternative required to be characterized in conjunction with analysis of the Project. Therefore, the theoretical potential maximum buildout in the M-2 Area, combining development capacities under the No Project condition plus the Project, would be about 3.9 million square feet of nonresidential development beyond what currently exists on the ground.

The No Project alternative will also include development potential in the rest of Menlo Park that also currently exists under the General Plan and zoning in place, an amount that is not proposed to change under the Project.

## LAND USE ELEMENT UPDATE

The updated Land Use Element will reflect the Guiding Principles to ensure that goals, policies and programs integrate the extensive community input on the Project. Where appropriate, policies and programs will also respond to State legislation established since adoption of the 1994 General Plan. These actions range from items such as updating maps of flood prone areas to exercising the ability to adopt “Uniformly Applicable Development Standards” for reducing potential environmental impacts that then may allow individual “infill” development projects to undergo streamlined environmental review per recent changes in State Law.

In addition to reinforcing the community’s vision for the city, the updated Land Use Element primarily will describe the changes shown in Figure 3 for future development in the M-2 Area, including any needed new Land Use Designations and changes in designations for individual parcels. The Land Use Element will also summarize the new pedestrian and bicycle improvements shown in Figure 3 to be installed as development occurs in the M-2 Area.

As with the updated Circulation Element, the updated Land Use Element will include programs that require new or expanded development to provide community amenities such as transportation and quality-of-life improvements, and others that describe how the City will utilize its Capital Improvement Program to prioritize needed infrastructure and physical projects throughout Menlo Park.

## CIRCULATION ELEMENT UPDATE

Goals, policies, and programs in the updated Circulation Element will describe a variety of strategies and requirements to improve mobility and address congestion citywide, including Transportation Impact Analysis, Complete Streets, Transportation Demand Management (TDM), Traffic Management Associations, and the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program. It is important to note that a Complete Streets approach – where bicycle, pedestrian and transit usage are considered in evaluating the effectiveness and performance of a street or intersection – does not assume that all modes of travel can be well accommodated on every street, nor that sidewalks are appropriate in residential neighborhoods where they do not currently exist.

The updated Circulation Element will identify needed transportation system changes to address both existing issues and anticipated development, ranging from physical improvements such as right-of-way modifications, to transit service enhancements, to adjustments to regulations such as parking standards. A summary description of needed improvements and implementation mechanisms for updating the 2009 Transportation Impact Fee Study as an implementation program will specifically be included.

The Circulation Element Update will also specifically evaluate current off-street and on-street parking policies and requirements in the M-2 Area as they relate to providing an appropriate supply of parking and regulating the intensity of land uses. Parking impacts associated with the M-2 Area Zoning Update will be discussed qualitatively based on the proposed parking requirements.

## M-2 AREA ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE

The Project also includes an update to the City Zoning Ordinance for the M-2 Area to ensure consistency with the General Plan Update and previously adopted ordinances and policies. Zoning changes may be needed for any of the districts in the M-2 Area (M2, M3, C4, C2S, C2B, FP, PF, and U), and new districts within the M-2 Area may be created to reflect the community's preferences as established in the Guiding Principles and through additional input during the ConnectMenlo process. Modifications to zoning standards will also be recommended as needed to respond to updated State requirements.

Updates to zoning will also address the following topics, among others:

- Site standards, such as height, bulk, and building design; sidewalk and bike route dimensions; streetscape design; outdoor lighting; and operational issues (e.g., air quality, glare, vibration, and use and storage of hazardous materials);
- Types and mix of land uses;
- Potential affordable housing requirements, housing density bonus provisions, and related incentives, consistent with the City's Municipal Code and State law;
- Landscaping standards, including specific requirements for preliminary and final landscape plan submittal and review;
- TDM, off-street car parking, bicycle parking, and loading standards;
- Development contributions to community amenities and city programs and services;
- Best practices to ensure protection of wildlife and habitat; and
- Energy and water conservation construction and operation practices.

A Water Supply Assessment will be developed as part of the EIR to determine which, if any, strategies may be needed to ensure adequate water supply for anticipated development.

## PUBLIC AGENCY APPROVALS

The EIR will evaluate the Project for potential impacts on the environment and analyze proposed goals, policies, and programs, as well as Zoning provisions and Design Standards, to determine the potential environmental consequences of future change under the updated General Plan Land Use and Circulation Elements and M-2 Area Zoning. The cumulative impacts discussion required per CEQA will consider relevant projects in and around the Planning Area that are not included as part of the Project.

CEQA requires that an EIR evaluate alternatives to a project that could reasonably attain the project objectives while reducing any significant impact of the project, as well as considering the “No Project” Alternative (i.e., what could happen if the Project were not to occur). With the establishment of a Maximum Potential Development alternative for the M-2 Area to ensure that adequate mitigation for any potential environmental is identified, it is expected that other EIR alternatives might describe some lesser subset of development to be considered by the City Council.

## ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED

The EIR will analyze whether development anticipated pursuant to the proposed Project would have significant environmental effects in the following areas:

- **Aesthetic Resources:** the analysis will discuss potential impacts in terms of height and intensity, and the potential for increased light and glare impacts on the existing setting.
- **Air Quality:** the analysis will discuss the potential for local and regional air quality impacts from construction and demolition, and impacts from new development and traffic.
- **Biological Resources:** the analysis will discuss potential impacts on nesting birds, heritage and/or mature trees, and waterways, marshlands and other wildlife habitat.
- **Cultural Resources:** the analysis will discuss potential impacts on known historic buildings and cultural resources.
- **Geology, Soils, and Seismicity:** the analysis will discuss the potential for soil erosion and exposure to seismic risk, including liquefaction.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** the analysis will discuss the potential to generate greenhouse gases and for conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing emissions of greenhouse gases.
- **Hazardous Materials and Hazards:** the analysis will discuss areas of potential soil or groundwater contamination, and the potential for exposure to hazardous materials.

- **Hydrology and Water Quality:** the analysis will discuss the potential for impacts on waterways, or exceedance of the capacity of stormwater drainage systems or violation of water quality standards or waste discharge requirements.
- **Land Use and Planning Policy:** the analysis will discuss the potential for anticipated development to divide an existing community or conflict with applicable land use policy and plans.
- **Noise:** the analysis will discuss potential impacts from demolition, construction, and operational activities.
- **Population and Housing:** the analysis will discuss the potential for inducing substantial population growth or displacing existing housing, businesses, or people.
- **Public Services and Utilities:** the analysis will discuss the potential for an increase in public services such as fire and police protection, solid waste, water supply, and wastewater disposal services. A Water Supply Assessment will determine whether any strategies may be needed to ensure adequate water supply for anticipated development.
- **Recreation:** the analysis will discuss the potential for an increase in the use of existing recreational facilities to the detriment of those facilities, or the need to create new recreational facilities.
- **Transportation and Circulation:** the analysis will discuss potential increases in traffic load on the circulation system that could result in inadequate emergency access, parking capacity, or travel efficiency for vehicles, transit and pedestrians and bicyclists.

The following topics are likely to be associated with less-than-significant impacts and are not expected to be evaluated in detail in the EIR:

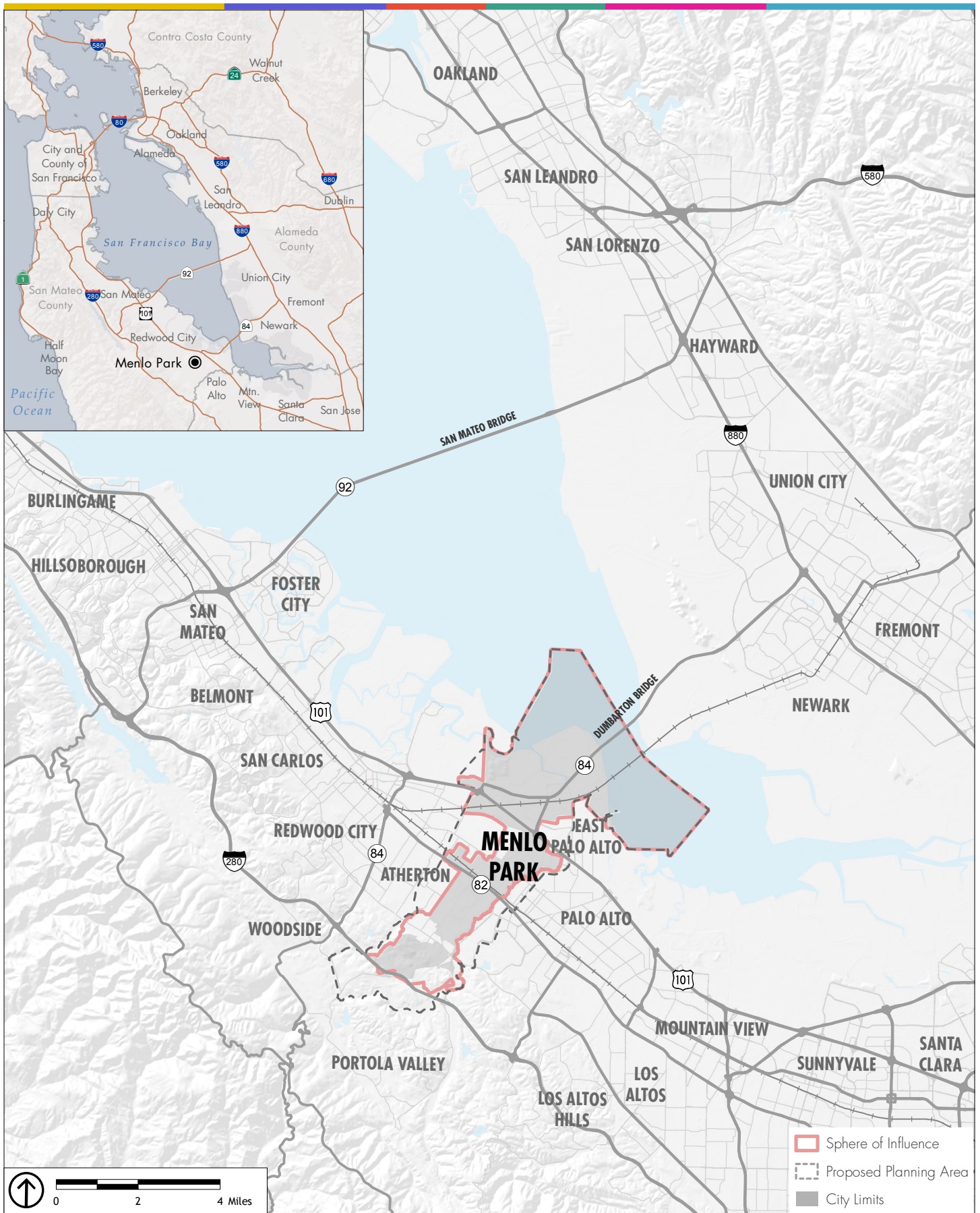
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Mineral Resources

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Figure 1: Menlo Park Regional Location

Figure 2: M-2 Area

Figure 3: M-2 Area Maximum Potential Development



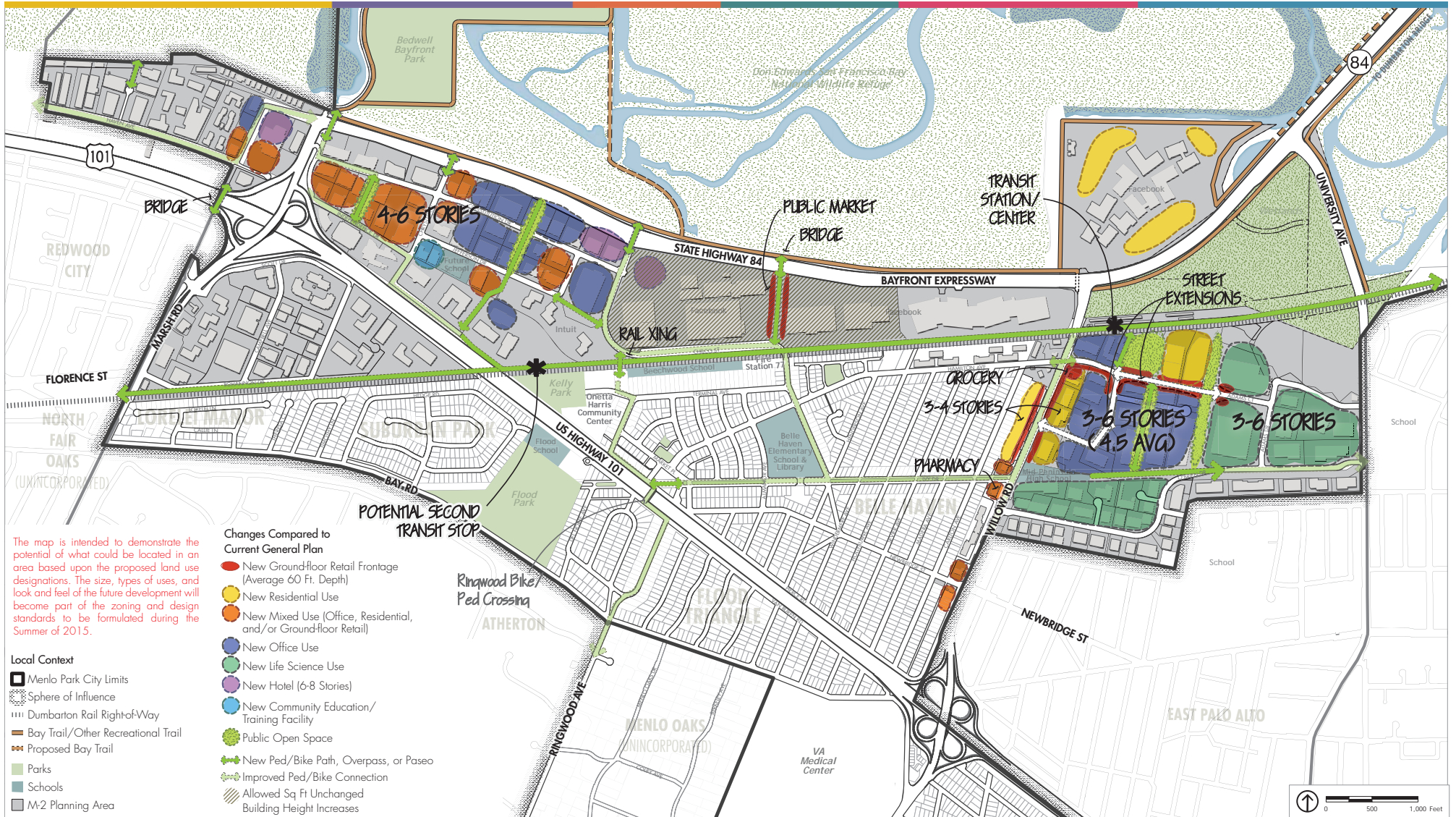
**FIGURE 1: MENLO PARK REGIONAL LOCATION**





**FIGURE 2: M-2 AREA**





**DRAFT M-2 AREA MAXIMUM POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**