



## SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

**Date:** 3/22/2025  
**Time:** 10:00 a.m.  
**Locations:** Teleconference and  
City Council Chambers  
751 Laurel St., Menlo Park, CA 94025

### Special Session

#### A. Call To Order

Mayor Combs called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

#### B. Roll Call

**Present:** Combs, Nash, Schmidt, Taylor, Wise  
**Absent:** None  
**Staff:** City Manager Justin Murphy, Assistant City Manager Stephen Stolte, City Attorney Nira Doherty, Deputy City Clerk Sarah Sandoval

#### C. Regular Business

##### C1. Annual City Council priority setting workshop (Staff Report #25-043-CC) (Presentation)

City Manager Justin Murphy introduced the item.

Assistant City Manager Stephen Stolte and Administrative Services Director Brittany Mello made the presentation (Attachment).

- Rob Foster spoke on concerns related to housing development.
- John McKenna spoke in support of prioritizing climate action.
- Jenny Michel spoke in support of prioritizing housing.
- Naomi Goodman spoke on concerns related to biosafety and biosecurity.
- Linh Dan Do spoke in support of prioritizing climate action.
- Menlo Spark Executive Director Brian Schmidt spoke in support of prioritizing climate action and housing.
- Sarah Shaw Hucko spoke in support of prioritizing the annexation of the West Menlo triangle.
- Gregory Faris spoke in support of prioritizing the annexation of the West Menlo triangle (Attachment).
- Ann Diederich spoke on concerns related to biosafety and biosecurity.
- Cheryl Schaff spoke in support of prioritizing climate action.
- Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action representative Audra Loh spoke in support prioritizing climate action.
- Katherine Dumont spoke on concerns related to housing security and in support of prioritizing housing.
- Adina Levin spoke in support of prioritizing safe and sustainable streets and on concerns related to parking and transportation management.

- Lucia Soto spoke in opposition of new apartment housing in the Belle Haven neighborhood and support of safe streets and planting more trees in the Belle Haven neighborhood.
- Jesus Soto spoke in support of prioritizing street improvements and planting more trees in the Belle Haven neighborhood.
- Rahul Thathoo spoke in support of prioritizing the annexation of the West Menlo triangle.
- Lynne Bramlett spoke in support of prioritizing emergency and disaster preparedness programs.
- Pam Jones spoke in support of prioritizing trash removal and on concerns related to the annexation of the West Menlo triangle.
- Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action representative Lauren Smedley spoke in support of prioritizing climate action and joining the San Mateo County model ordinance on disposable food service ware.
- Adrian Silva spoke in support of prioritizing safe streets.
- Marlene Santoyo spoke in support of prioritizing the implementation of the Housing Element and Environmental Justice and Safety elements, housing, anti-displacement, rental assistance and safe streets.
- Cherie Zaslawsky spoke in support of prioritizing the preservation of Menlo Park and revising the Housing Element to withdraw downtown parking lots as opportunity sites for housing, and opposition to the 80 Willow Rd. project.
- Menlo Park Design District President Keith Quiggins spoke in opposition of housing on downtown parking lots and in support of opening Santa Cruz Ave traffic lanes and upgrading downtown facades.
- Ming Chen spoke in support of prioritizing the Caltrain quiet zone.
- Alexa Leon-Prado spoke in opposition of housing on downtown parking lots.

Sustainability Manager Rachael Londer and Senior Planner Calvin Chan continued the staff presentation.

The City Council received information regarding background and highlights for Environmental Justice (EJ) Element implementation, updates for the project team and scoping and implementation efforts.

The City Council considered the community-identified environmental justice priorities per EJ Element Program EJ7.L and provided feedback to staff.

The City Council took a recess at 11:47 a.m.

The City Council reconvened at 12:13 p.m.

The City Council discussed:

- Downtown vibrancy
- Local union labor
- Minimum lot size zoning restrictions
- Economic development planning
- Integrated transportation
- Building code amendments that encourage electrification
- Safe bike routes
- Advancement of the Urban Forest Management Plan
- Downtown parking lots
- Street closures

- Support for local businesses
- Overnight and daytime parking enforcement
- Youth engagement and partnership
- City staffing needs

The City Council received clarification on the differences between project and priorities, listed order of priorities, assigning priority topics for advisory body work plans, including community outreach as a subtopic of each priority, whether or not a priority goes away when it becomes part of City operations, and the City Council work plan.

Assistant City Manager Stolte and Interim Economic Development Manager Fran Dehn continued the staff presentation.

The City Council received clarification on an informal survey of business owners affected by downtown lane closures and the current status of outdoor dining on Ryans Lane and Santa Cruz Ave.

The City Council discussed potential options and timelines for opening the 600 block of Santa Cruz Ave, state building code requirements, maintaining the seating area in front of Walgreens, safety concerns and traffic-use needs of Santa Cruz Avenue.

The City Council directed the return of street closure items at a future meeting.

The City Council discussed the addition of a downtown vibrancy priority, including:

- Visioning process
- Timelines and expectations
- The formation of a downtown commission
- Farmers market and events
- Non-profit or community fund

#### **D. Adjournment**

Mayor Combs adjourned the meeting at 2:05 p.m.

Deputy City Clerk Sarah Sandoval

These minutes were approved at the City Council meeting April 15, 2025.



# City Council Priority-Setting Workshop

March 22, 2025





## Welcome and Agenda

- Opening remarks from Mayor Combs and City Manager Murphy
- Agenda:
  - Accomplishments overview
  - Financial update
  - Community survey results
  - Public comment
  - Environmental Justice Element
  - Top priorities for fiscal year 2025-26
  - Downtown – street closures and other activities





## Workshop ground rules

- Actively listen
- Stay present and engaged
- Assume good intentions in others
- Focus on the agenda to honor our time commitment
- Seek shared citywide priorities through consensus building





## Bike rack

- Not all items will be discussed today due to our focused agenda
- Bike rack items will be recorded for discussion at a later time







# Accomplishments Fiscal Year 2024-25



## Accomplishments overview

- City Council priorities work plan is developed with the fiscal year budget and updated routinely throughout the year
- Fiscal year 2024-25 work plan includes 54 items
  - 20% are complete
  - 61% are in progress
  - 17% are ongoing activities
  - 1 not started yet
- City Council received updates in Sept. 2024 and Feb. 2025





## Accomplishments overview

- Belle Haven Community Campus opening
- Parks renovations
- Sustainability improvements to City facilities
- Traffic calming and street improvements
- Capital Improvement Plan progress
- Library and Community Services programs
- Public safety enhancements
- City workforce
- Technology advancements







# Financial Update

Brittany Mello, Administrative Services Director



## Financial update: Revenue

- Property Tax – largest revenue source
- Transient Occupancy Tax – voter approval of Measure CC
- Sales Tax – remains below pre-pandemic levels
- Property Tax in Lieu of Vehicle License Fee (VLF)
  - Fiscal year 2023-24 shortfall of \$2.8 million (amount due of \$6.6 million)
  - Fiscal year 2024-25 shortfall of \$2.9 million (amount due of \$6.9 million)





## Financial update: Economic influences

- Inflation and CIP cost escalation
  - Cost of services study issued to help with cost recovery
- Grants update
  - Approximately \$85.7 million in total operating and capital grant awards
  - New grants: \$3.6 million from MTC for housing, transportation, and sustainability projects
  - Monitoring uncertainty with grants: changes at the federal government level may result in a loss or reduction of award funds
    - Caltrain Crossing Safety Improvement Project (quiet zone) – \$3.74 million requested; will not be funded (no projects funded in fiscal year 2024-25)



## **Financial update: Budget principles**

- Fiscal year 2024-25 budget principles approved by City Council on March 26, 2024
  - Promote the City's long-term fiscal sustainability
  - Provide City services and infrastructure that contribute to quality of life in Menlo Park
  - Revenue sources and grant accounting
- Budget principles adoption for fiscal year 2025-26 at April 15 City Council meeting



## **Financial update: Budget production**

- Amendments for Capital Improvement Plan in April/May
- General Fund five-year forecast update
  - Evaluate the overall structural balance of the General Fund
- Overall budget calendar
  - Public budget workshop: May 29
  - City Council public hearing: June 10
  - City Council budget adoption: June 24



# Community Input



## Annual community survey results

- 544 survey responses
- Strong support for existing priorities:
  - Housing: 207 (38%)
  - Emergency and disaster preparedness: 169 (31%)
  - Safe routes: 167 (31%)
  - Climate action – mitigation, adaptation, and resilience: 149 (27%)
- Additional priorities:
  - Downtown and business revitalization/activation: 168 (31%)
  - Lack of support for housing redevelopment on downtown parking plazas: 126 (23%)
  - Quiet zones: 79 (15%)





# Annual community survey results

Public feedback analysis		
Topic	No. of respondents	Percent of responses
1 housing (current top priority for fiscal year 2024-25)	207	38%
2 emergency and disaster preparedness (current top priority for fiscal year 2024-25)	169	31%
3 downtown and businesses revitalization/activation	168	31%
4 safe routes (current top priority for fiscal year 2024-25)	167	31%
5 climate action - mitigation, adaptation and resilience (current top priority for fiscal year 2024-25)	149	27%
6 oppose housing redevelopment on downtown parking plazas	126	23%
7 quiet zones	79	15%
8 revisit high-density housing sites	71	13%
9 oppose builders remedy projects including 80 Willow Rd.	67	12%
10 traffic reduction/mitigation	45	8%
11 City infrastructure maintenance and improvement	32	6%
12 public safety/crime prevention	27	5%
13 park and green space protection/expansion/maintenance	21	4%
14 smart growth in housing development coupled with cap on commercial development	20	4%
15 traffic enforcement/education (vehicle, pedestrian, and e-bike)	16	3%
16 litter/trash removal - cleaner streets and sidewalks	15	3%
17 comprehensive study and refurbishing of the Main Library	14	3%
18 support housing redevelopment on downtown parking plazas	13	2%
19 community collaboration and increased transparency	11	2%
20 improved street sweeping and better storm drainage	11	2%
21 reopen Santa Cruz Avenue	11	2%
22 improved public transportation/shuttle service	10	2%



# Public Comment



## City Council Priority Setting Workshop

The City Council will return after a  
brief 15 minute recess.

Session will resume at 12 p.m.





# Environmental Justice Element

Calvin Chan, Senior Planner & Rachael Londer, Sustainability Manager



## Environmental Justice (EJ) Element

- Provide background
- Review community-identified priorities
- Summarize fiscal year 2024-25 highlights
- Review implementation plans for fiscal year 2025-26
- *Program EJ7.L: The City Council shall consider the community-identified environmental justice priorities during its annual priority and goal setting workshop.*

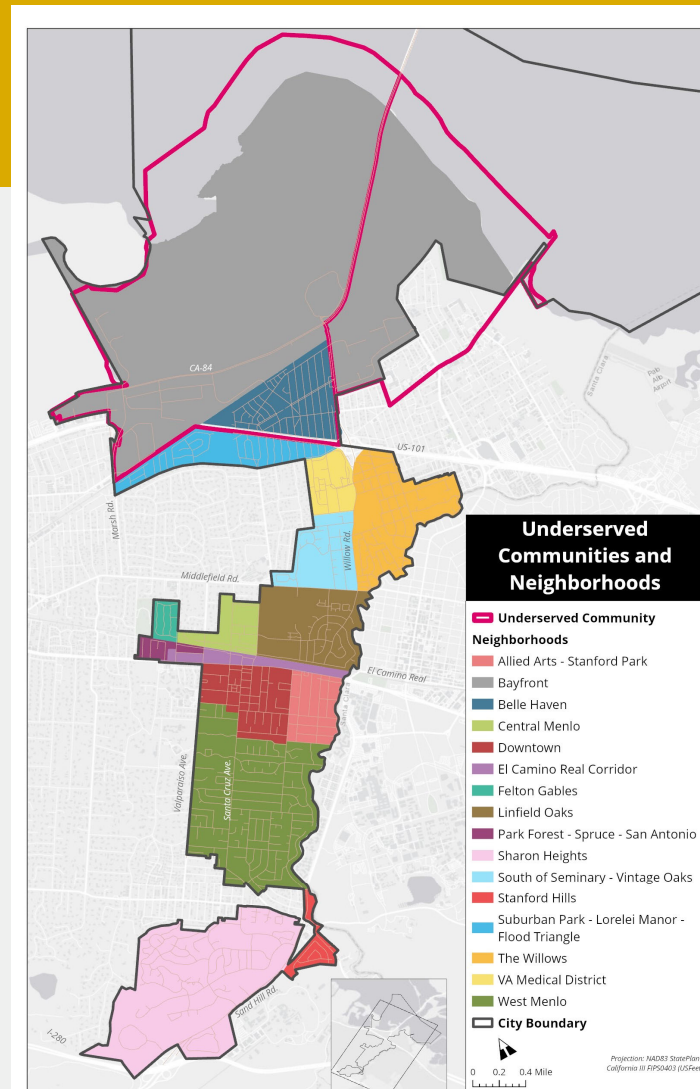


ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE  
ELEMENT



## Background

- Sept. 2024: Menlo Park's first General Plan EJ Element adopted
- Over 15 community outreach and engagement events, and additional digital outreach
- Focused EJ efforts for the Belle Haven and Bayfront neighborhoods



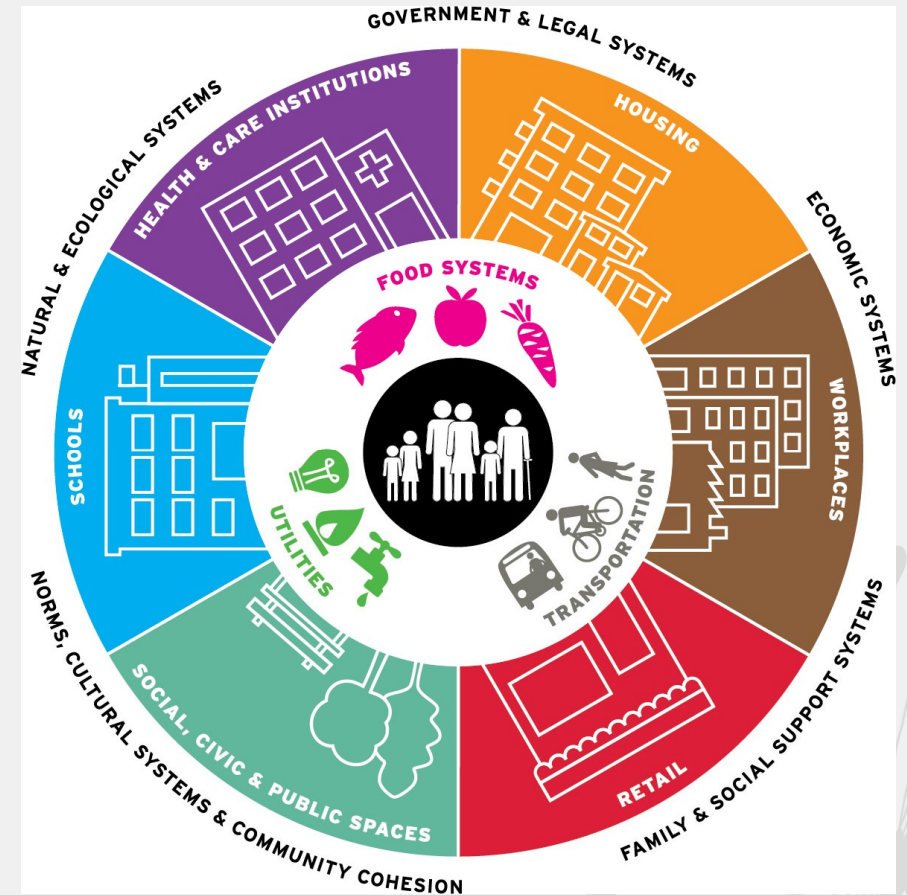




# Improving Social Determinants of Health

## The EJ Element:

- Identified underserved communities
- Undertook extensive outreach
- Developed a policy and reporting framework to address EJ needs (Action Guide)
- Seeks to address/improve social determinants of health





## Community Identified Priorities

### Priority #1:

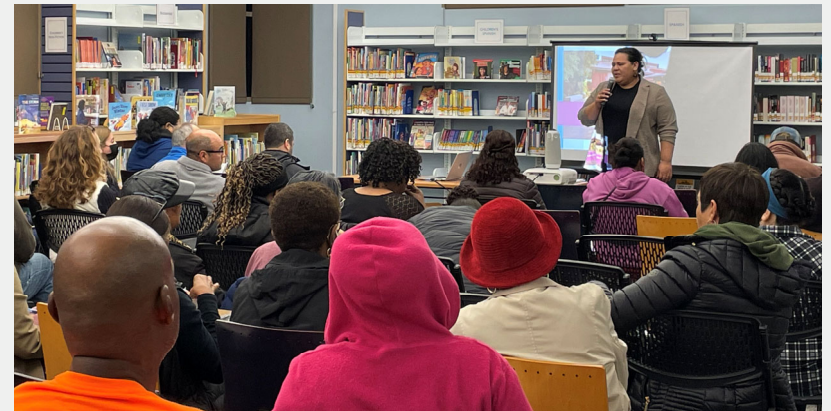
Provide safe, sanitary, and stable homes

### Priority #2:

Promote access to high quality and affordable food

### Priority #3:

Reduce pollution exposure and improve air quality





## Fiscal year 2024-25 highlights

- EJ Element Implementation Fund
- Anti-Displacement Strategy development
- Outreach events with housing resources
- Collaborating with nonprofits and supporting veterans



Community Development Department staff at the Love Our Earth Festival, April 2024



Oak Gardens groundbreaking at 795 Willow Road, February 2025





## Fiscal year 2024-25 highlights

- Climate Action Plan implementation with air quality education and outreach
- Planting new trees along US-101 sound walls and in Belle Haven
- Providing equitable access to Belle Haven Community Campus (BHCC) programs
- Completing Belle Haven Traffic Calming Project
- Launching EJ Element webpage



Front terrace of BHCC



# New webpage: [menlopark.gov/EJElement](https://menlopark.gov/EJElement)

## Environmental Justice (EJ) Element

In 2024, following three years of community outreach and engagement with a focus on meeting people where they are and empowering the voices of Menlo Park's underserved Belle Haven and Bayfront communities, the City of Menlo Park adopted its first General Plan Environmental Justice (EJ) Element.

Through an inclusive, intentional, and equitable planning process with over 15 outreach and engagement events, and additional digital outreaches over a span of three years, the Menlo Park community together created an action-oriented plan that is intended to evolve with and for the community over time.

The community identified three top priorities for advancing EJ: Priority #1: Provide Safe, Sanitary, and Stable Homes; Priority #2: Promote Access to High Quality and Affordable Food; and Priority #3: Reduce Pollution Exposure and Improve Air Quality. The City looks forward to continually engaging and working with the community to implement the community-identified priorities and actions, which better positions Menlo Park for a stronger, more resilient, and equitable future.



[Click here to view the Environmental Justice Element](#)

Click on the priority tiles below to learn more about highlighted goals, policies, programs, and action items to advance EJ, described below:

- **Goals:** Broad actions to pursue to work toward EJ
- **Policies:** Focused principles to guide decision-making
- **Programs:** Precise steps to further policies and goals
- **Action Items:** Additional details from community-based feedback on preferred methods to fulfill programs

**Priority 1: Provide safe, sanitary, and stable homes**

EJ Element Goal 5

**Priority 2: Promote access to high quality and affordable food**

EJ Element Goal 4

**Priority 3: Reduce pollution exposure and improve air quality**

EJ Element Goal 2

Click on the priority tiles below to learn more about highlighted goals, policies, programs, and action items to advance EJ, described below:

- **Goals:** Broad actions to pursue to work toward EJ
- **Policies:** Focused principles to guide decision-making
- **Programs:** Precise steps to further policies and goals
- **Action Items:** Additional details from community-based feedback on preferred methods to fulfill programs

**Priority 1: Provide safe, sanitary, and stable homes**

EJ Element Goal 5

**Priority 2: Promote access to high quality and affordable food**

EJ Element Goal 4

**Priority 3: Reduce pollution exposure and improve air quality**

EJ Element Goal 2

See the EJ Element Action Guide drop down menu below for the full matrix of all EJ Element goals, policies, programs, and action items.

**What is Environmental Justice?**



**EJ Element Action Guide**



**Project History**



**Contact us**



Share     





## Implementation approach

- Collaborate across City departments with support from community-based organizations
- Provide annual progress report – March 24 and March 25
- Scope funding opportunities for priority programs and actions



EJ and Safety Elements Introduction Workshop



## Looking forward: Provide safe, sanitary, and stable homes

- Developing Anti-Displacement Strategy
- Conducting outreach to connect residents with resources



Community members receiving info. at the Housing Resource Fair at Ivy Plaza in Belle Haven, 2024



## Looking forward: Promote access to high quality and affordable food

- Outreach regarding food assistance programs
- Support community gardens and seek opportunities to increase healthy food access



Community members being served at  
the Black Liberation Month event, 2025



## Looking forward: Reduce pollution exposure & improve indoor air quality



- Implement the City's Climate Action Plan
- Conduct air quality education and outreach
- Collaborate with partners for electrification
- Plant trees while continuing to pursue an urban forest management plan



Electric vehicle chargers installed with green infrastructure to promote zero emission vehicles and stormwater protection



Electrifying homes with heat pumps providing air conditioning and heating



## Next steps and discussion

- Annual progress report review
  - March 24, Planning Commission
  - March 25, City Council
- Feedback on top programs for fiscal year 2025-26



City of Menlo Park staff, 2024





# Priority Setting for Fiscal Year 2025-26



## Overview of priority setting

- Select top four to five priorities
- Acknowledge City operations and delivery of basic services is the primary focus for majority of City staff
- Elevate top priorities in City communications to tell our story as a community
- Use top priorities to inform budget development and create a City Council priorities work plan
- Ensure ongoing transparency and reporting on progress



## Current fiscal year 2024-25 priorities

- Climate action – mitigation, adaptation, resilience
- Emergency and disaster preparedness
- Housing
- Safe routes

Website: [menlopark.gov/priorities](https://menlopark.gov/priorities)





## City Council discussion: Fiscal year 2025-26 priorities

- Do current priorities still apply?
- Should an additional priority be added to create five top priorities?



# Downtown: Street closures

Stephen Stolte, Assistant City Manager & Fran Dehn, Interim Economic  
Development Manager



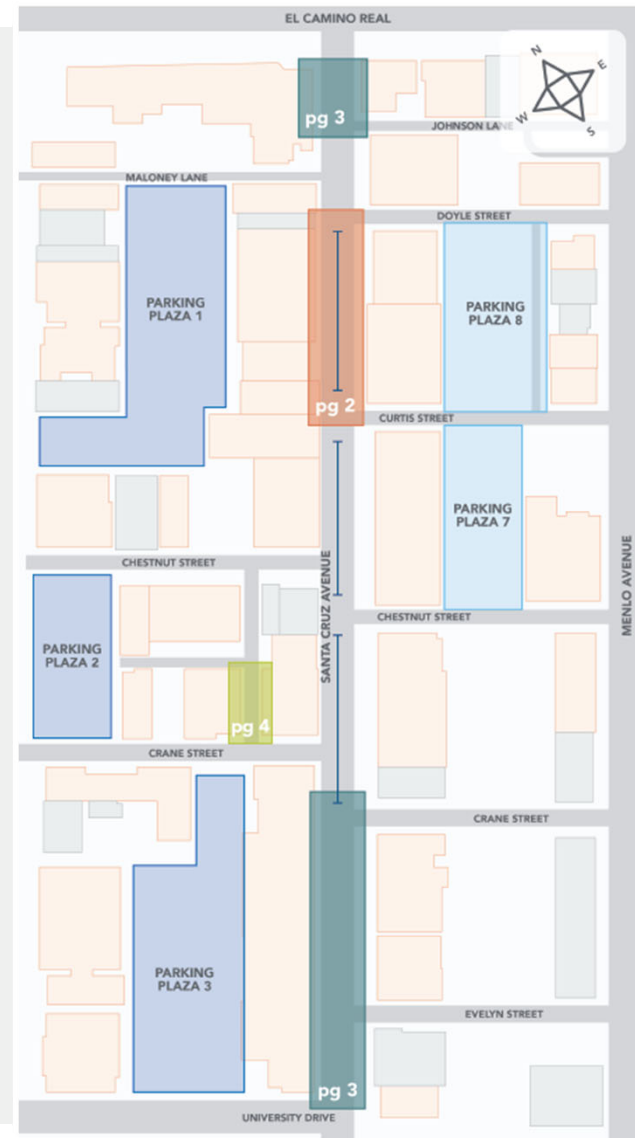
## Downtown workshop topic

- Request at City Council meeting on Feb. 11 by Mayor Combs to discuss Santa Cruz Avenue street closure
  - Direction to discuss at City Council workshop
- Overall downtown topic for workshop:
  - Downtown overview maps
  - Street closures on Ryans Lane and Santa Cruz Avenue
  - Outdoor dining update



## Downtown maps

- Four maps provide layout of:
  - Ryans Lane short-term closure
  - 600 block of Santa Cruz Avenue closure
  - Outdoor dining areas
  - City-owned parking plazas 1, 2, 3, 7, 8
  - Medians on Santa Cruz Avenue from El Camino Real to Crane Street – irrigation repair and replanting

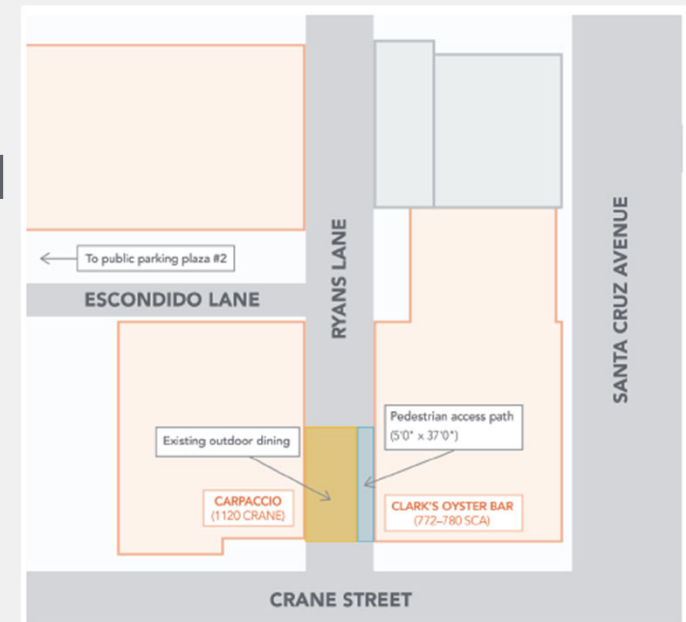






## Downtown – Ryans Lane closure and outdoor dining

- Oct. 10, 2023: City Council adopted resolution to approve short-term closure of Ryans Lane between Crane Street and Escondido Lane for temporary outdoor dining by Carpaccio until end of construction by Clark's Oyster Bar
- City manager extended closure due to construction timeline
- Clark's Oyster Bar indicates mid-April target for major construction completion





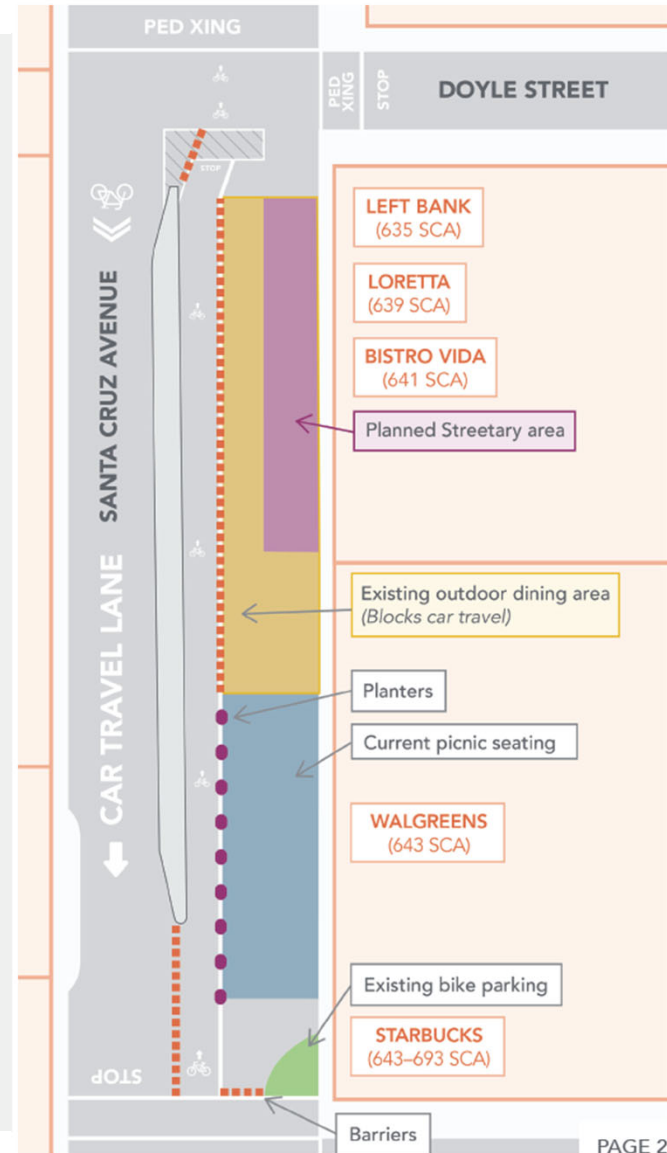
## Downtown – Santa Cruz Avenue closure

- Aug. 29, 2023: City Council adopted resolution to close Santa Cruz Avenue between Curtis and Doyle Streets (600 block) for expanded outdoor dining in travel lane and enhanced outdoor communal space
- City installed bike lane and indicated it would research and potentially install improved outdoor furniture in outdoor picnic seating area



## Downtown – outdoor dining update

- 600 block of Santa Cruz Avenue:
  - Left Bank, Loretta, and Bistro Vida will withdraw from travel lane to original outdoor dining footprints/business frontage





## City Council discussion

- Ryans Lane closure after Clark's Oyster Bar occupancy
- Santa Cruz Avenue closure
- Plans for outdoor picnic seating area





## Next steps

- Final workshop report
- Fiscal year 2025-26 work plan
- Fiscal year 2025-26 budget development based on top priorities and EJ Element
- Menlo Park priorities webpage



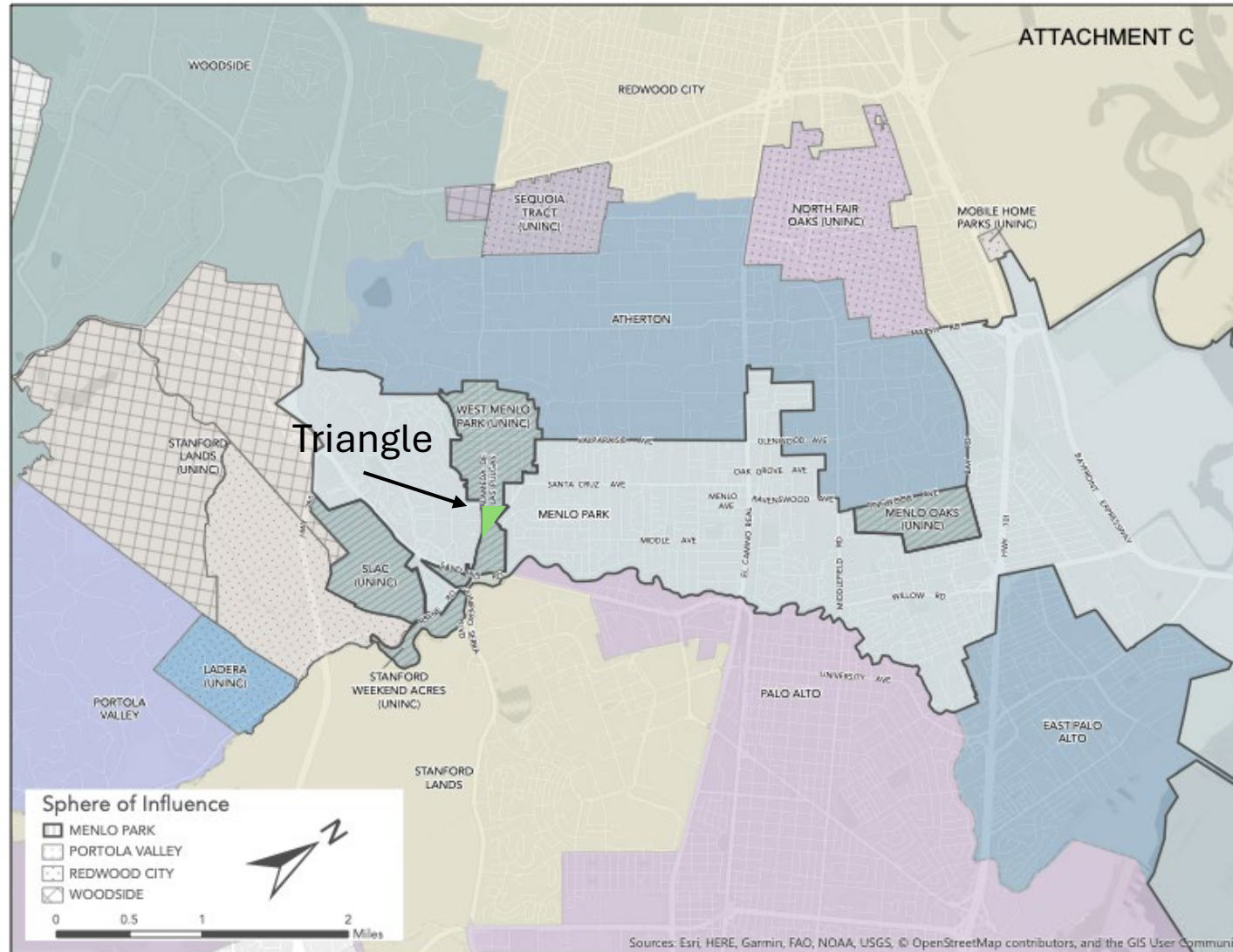


**Thank you!**

# West Menlo Triangle

Greg Faris  
2042 Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Park  
March 22, 2025

# Where is the Triangle?

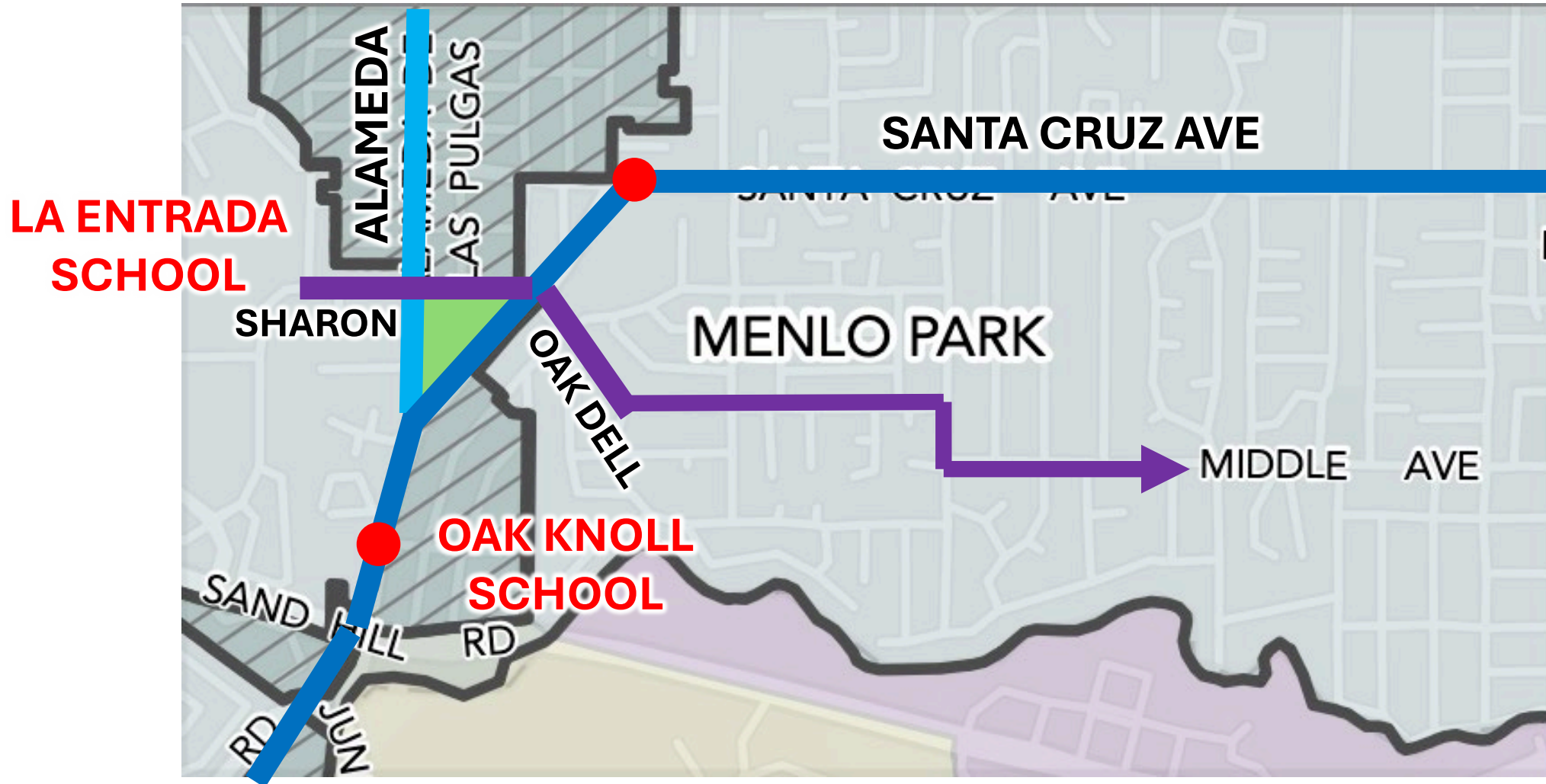




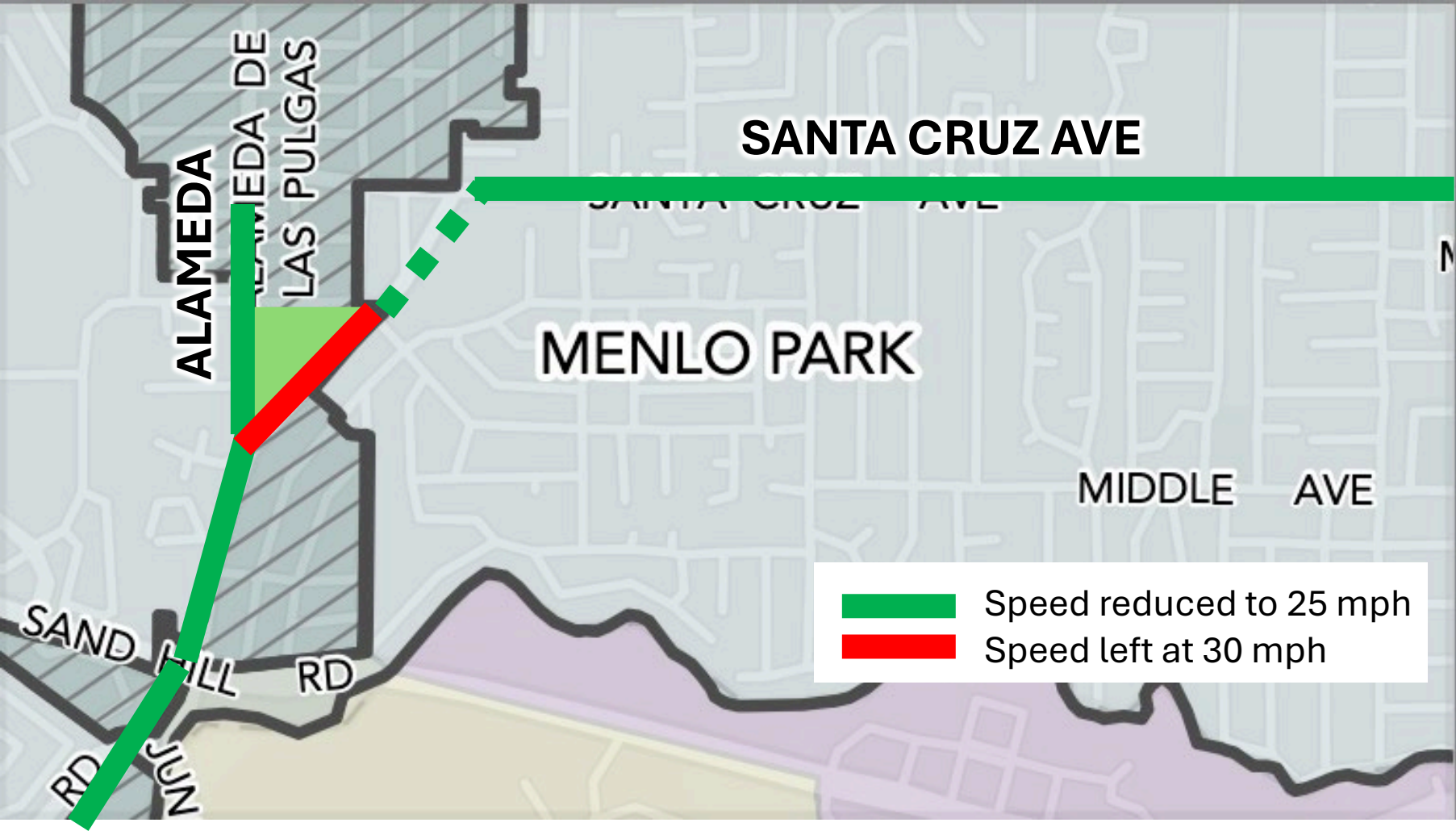
# Where is the Triangle?



# The Triangle is Paramount for Road Safety

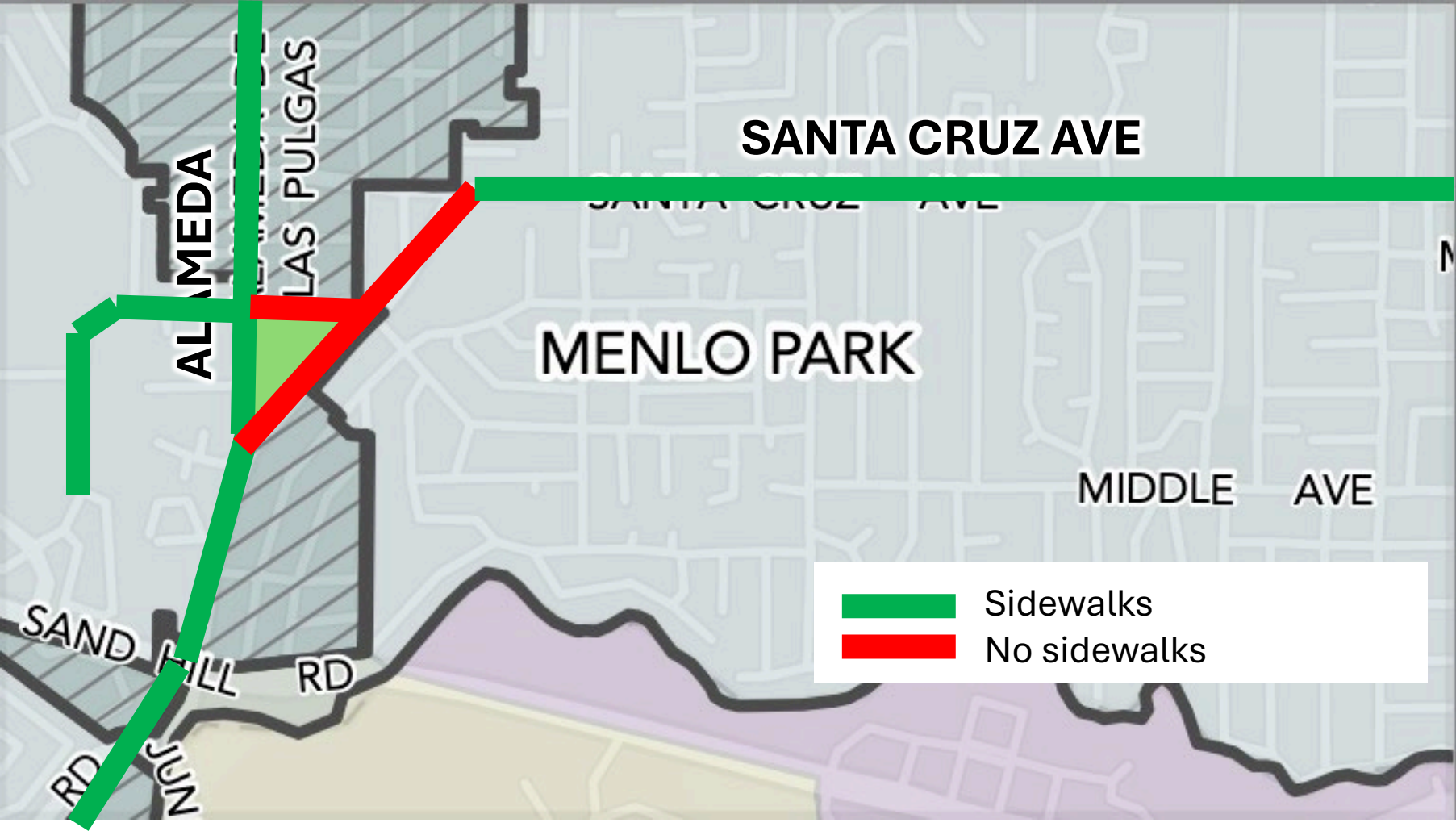


# Speed Limits



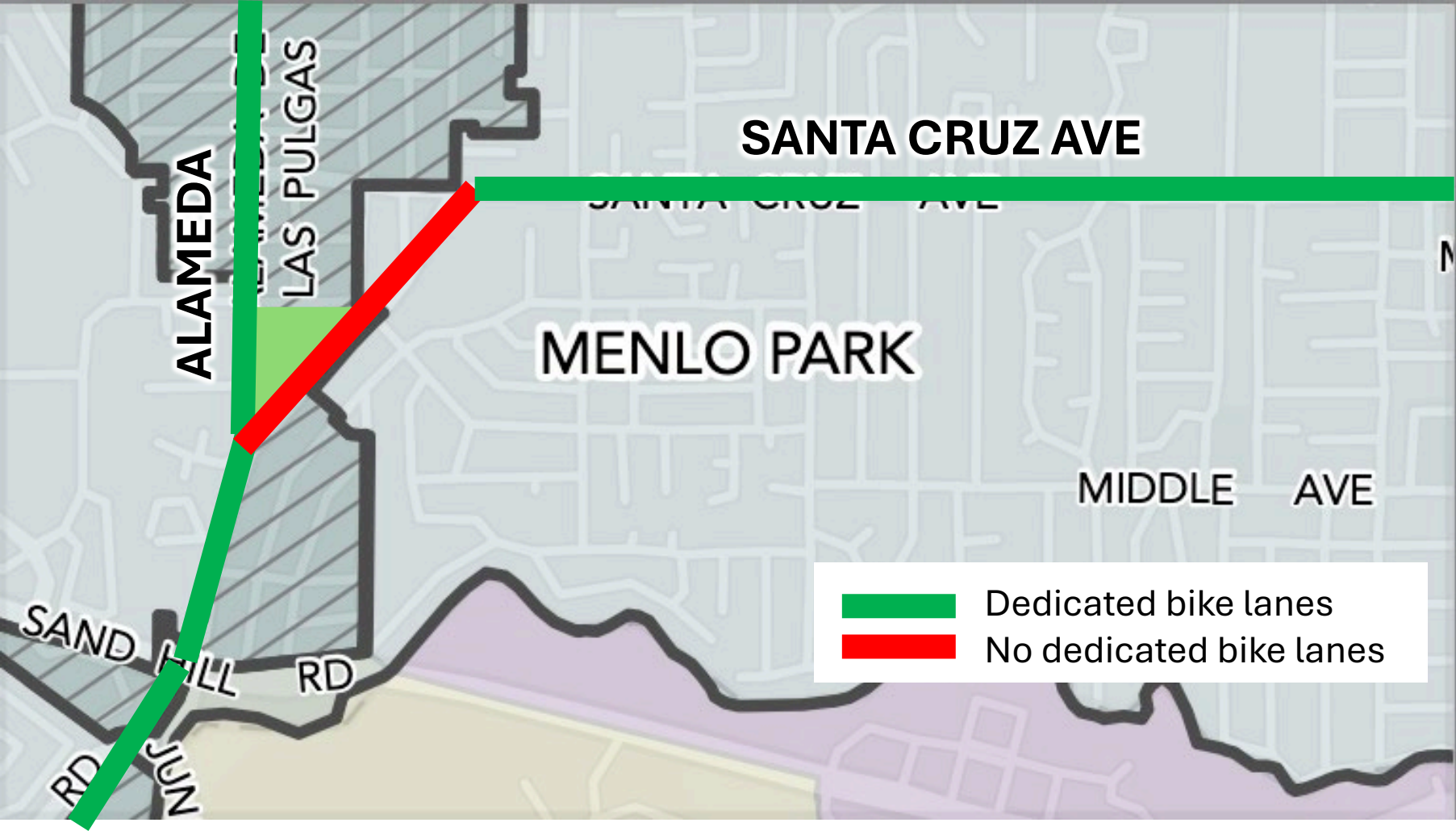


# Sidewalks

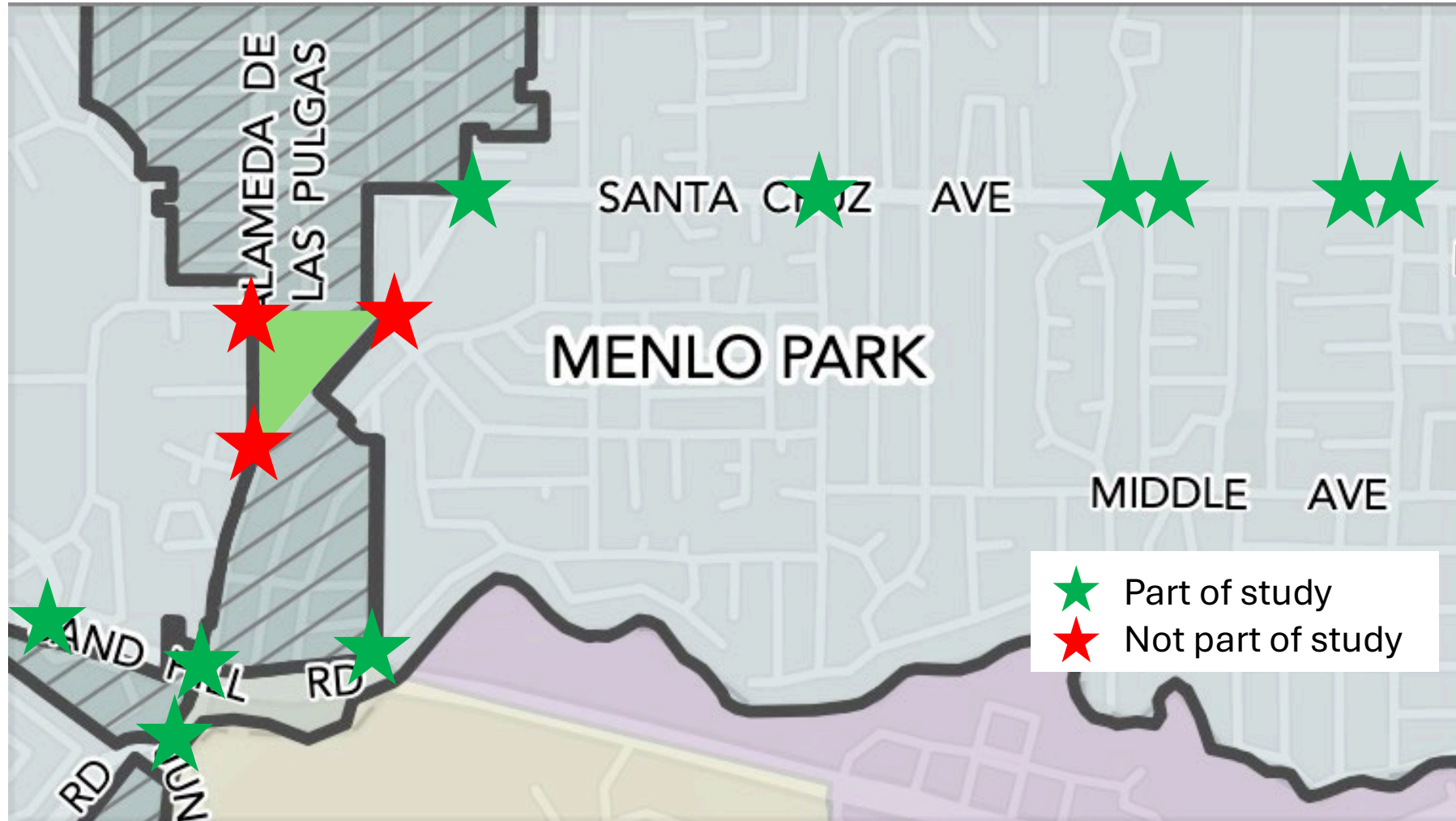




# Bike Lanes



# City – Berkeley SafeTREC Study



# Core Problem

- Why is the most important single block the most neglected?
- Jurisdictional disfunction
  - The triangle is completely surrounded by the Menlo Park, but not part of Menlo Park

# The Triangle is Jurisdictionally Challenged



# Possible solutions

- Portions of West Menlo Park can secede to join the Triangle in the County
- Menlo Park can annex the Triangle

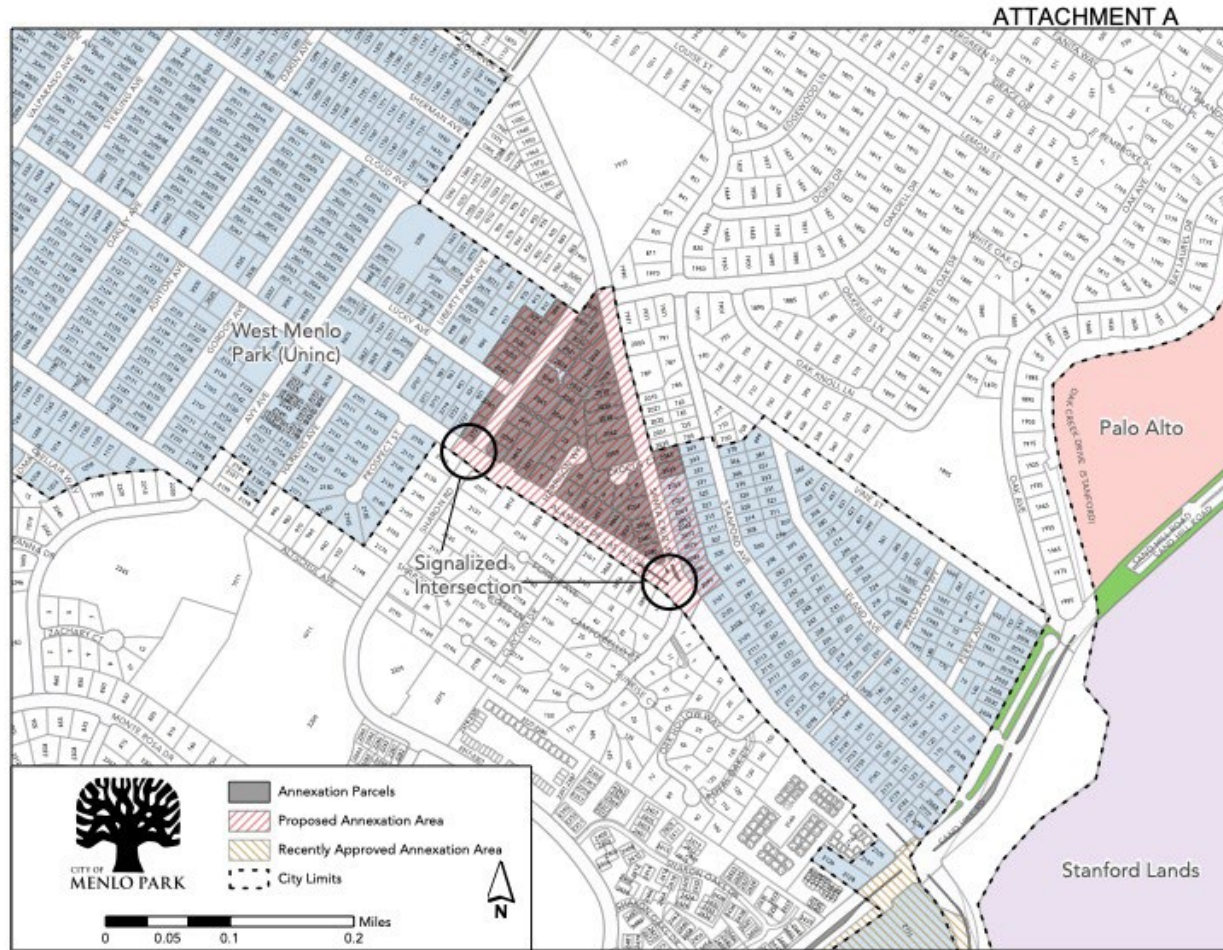


# Triangle Annexation is already pending

- Application pending for 10 years
  - City processed Stanford's annexation application in 3 months
  - Los Gatos did 24 annexations in one year
  - Annexation is no more work than a single home building permit
- City has lost ~\$1.1 million in tax revenue since application
- LAFCo is waiting for city to do two things:
  - Prezone (no decision required here; it is already built out and is R1U)
  - Negotiate tax sharing with County

# Backup Slides

# What is to be annexed?



# Annexation Timeline

- June 2014 First meetings with City staff about Triangle annexation
- June 2015 Formal application to City for Triangle annexation, neighbors paid \$7,000
- Sept 10, 2015 Formal application to LAFCo, neighbors paid \$3,000
  - <https://www.smcgov.org/lafco/update-lafco-file-no-15-07-proposed-annexation-west-menlo-triangle-city-menlo-park-8-5-2016>
- Oct 10, 2017 First City Council Study Session on Triangle annexation
  - [https://menlopark.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/\\_10102017-2983](https://menlopark.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/_10102017-2983)
- Nov 5, 2019 Second City Council Study Session on Triangle annexation
  - [https://menlopark.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/\\_11052019-3351](https://menlopark.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/_11052019-3351)
- Aug 27, 2024 City has still not acted on Triangle annexation

# Advantages to Annexation

- Safer streets for everyone
- Better tree protection, benefitting everyone
- Local law enforcement, ultimately benefitting everyone
- Triangle residents will be able to run for office and vote in the city we live in, Menlo Park



# Disadvantages of Current Situation

- The Triangle is neither in the city, nor, practically, in the county
  - We are surrounded by the city
    - We abut the city on all three sides and all three corners
    - 60% of our border is with the city
- As a result, neither the City nor the County is serving us well
- Menlo Park is losing tax revenue

# Ten Years is Too Long

- Fulfilling city services in a timely manner is a fundamental obligation of city government
- Not being Menlo Park residents is not a reason to deny us becoming Menlo Park residents
- The Stanford annexation was approved in three months
  - <https://www.smcgov.org/lafco/item-4-lafco-file-no-17-09-annexation-stanford-lands-city-menlo-parkpdf>
  - <https://www.almanacnews.com/news/2017/09/27/menlo-park-council-votes-to-annex-stanford-land-approve-office-building/>

# The City is Losing Revenue

- The City has lost out on approximately \$1,100,000 in tax revenue by not acting on our annexation

# Law Enforcement

- The County Sheriff is based two towns away and has repeatedly proven unresponsive
- We want to be served by police right where we live, in Menlo Park
- The County Sheriff is not serving our community well

# Voting Rights Matter

- We weren't automatically granted voting rights in Menlo Park when we moved into our homes, we actively sought voting rights from Menlo Park
- We cannot currently run for office or vote in the city where we live, Menlo Park



# Annexation Steps Are Simple

LAFCo will schedule the application for hearing only after the following actions have been completed:

1. The City must pre-zone the territory establishing the applicable land use. In doing so, the City makes a determination about environmental review.

The area is already residential and should remain so

The city already determined that environmental review is not required

<https://www.menlopark.org/DocumentCenter/View/23339/G2-20191105-West-Menlo-Triangle-Annexation-and-Annexation-Policy-CC>

2. The City and the County must adopt resolutions of property tax exchange, which transfers an agreed-upon property tax from the County to the City to fund the transfer of municipal service responsibility.

This should be straightforward. For Stanford, the negotiated share was 10.5%

<https://www.almanacnews.com/news/2017/09/27/menlo-park-council-votes-to-annex-stanford-land-approve-office-building/>

# Road Safety

- Since we applied for annexation, the Triangle has lost out on safety opportunities in six approved and funded projects

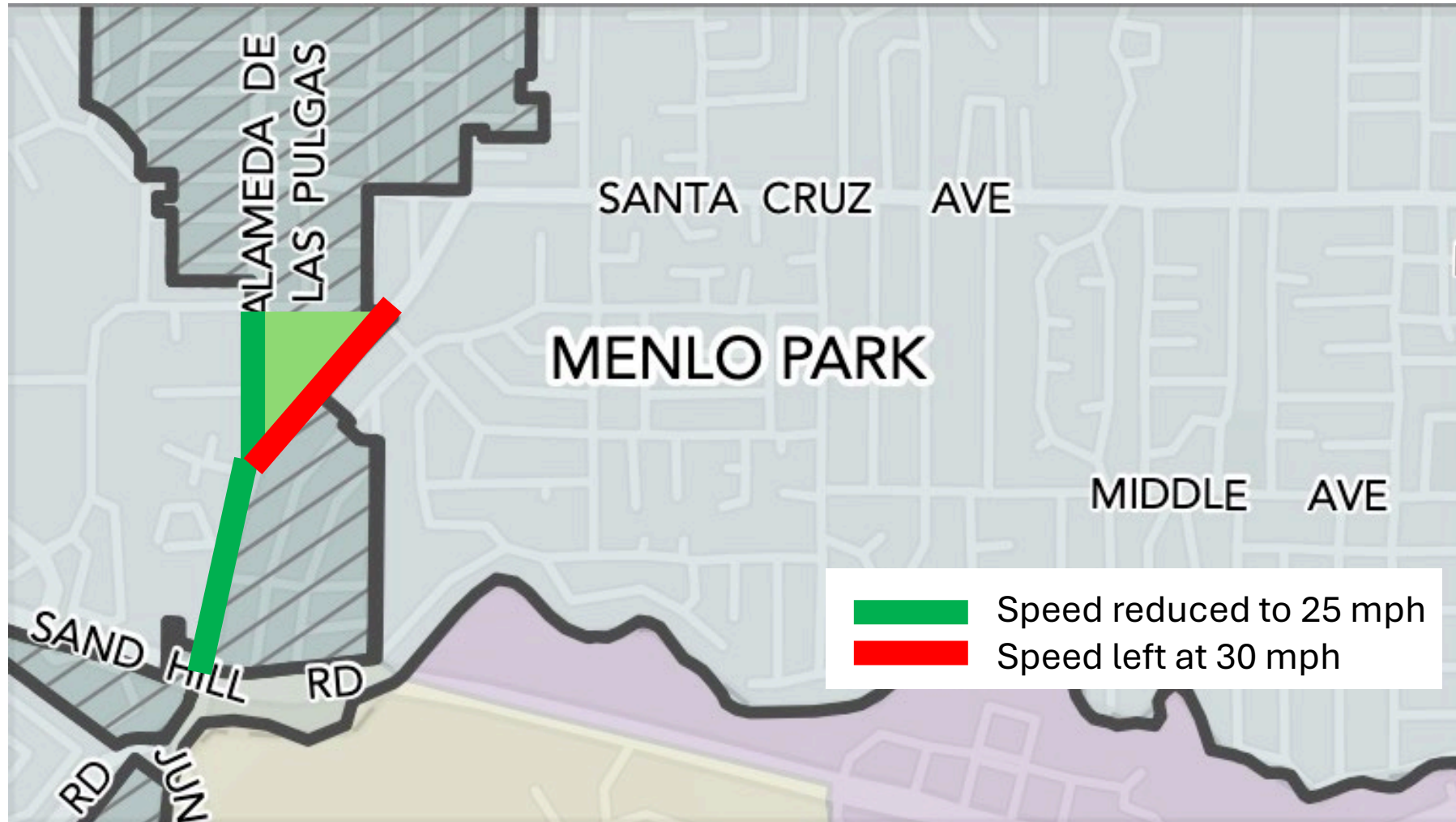
## City

- 25 mph speed reduction on Santa Cruz
- Sidewalks to La Entrada on Sharon
- Consideration in Berkeley SafeTREC study

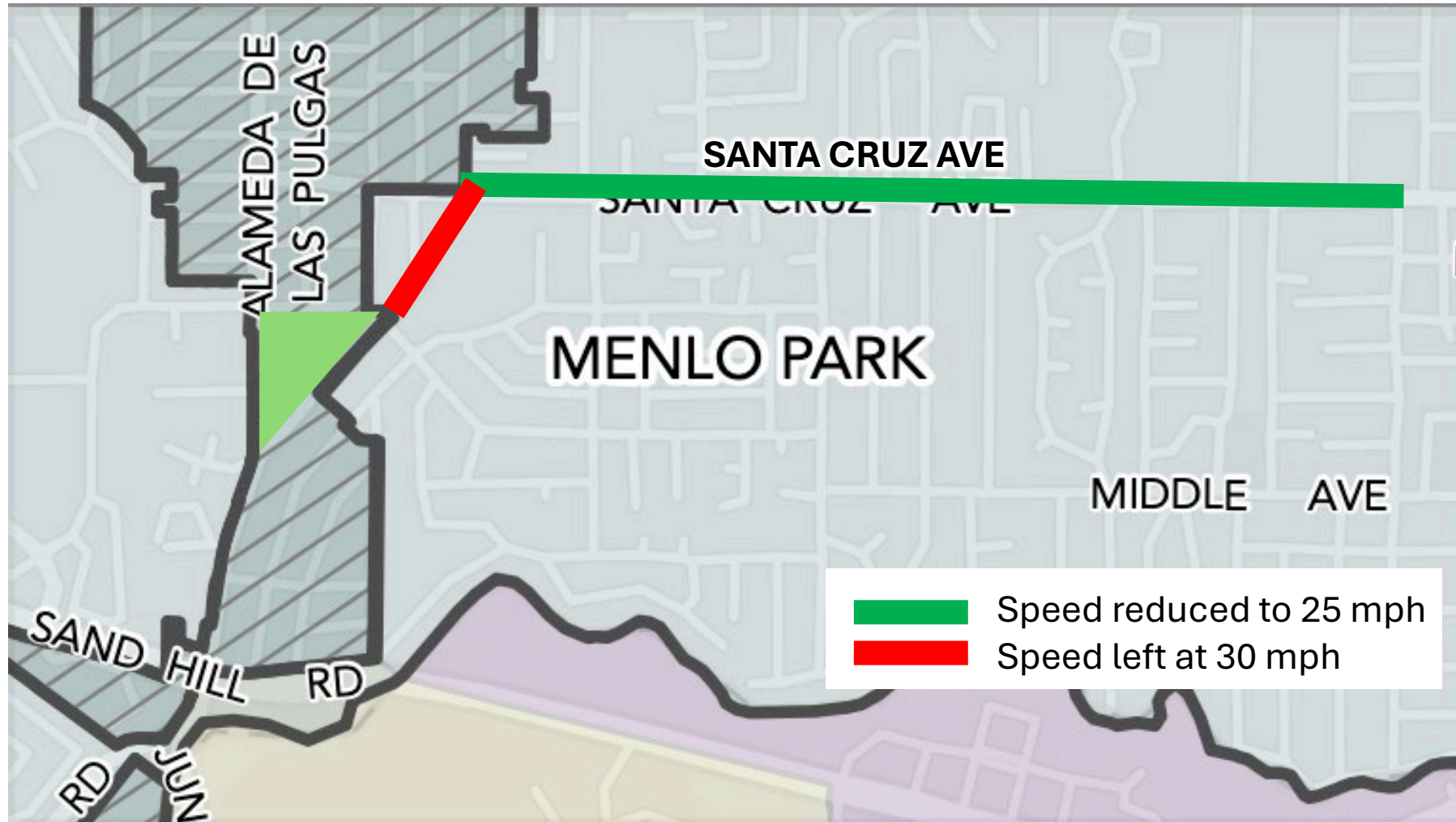
## County

- 25 mph speed reduction on Santa Cruz
- Santa Cruz/Alameda road improvements – SCA North of Y
- Bicycle lane on Santa Cruz

# County – Santa Cruz Speed Limit Reduction



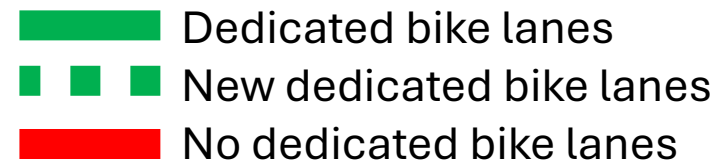
# City – Santa Cruz Speed Limit Reduction



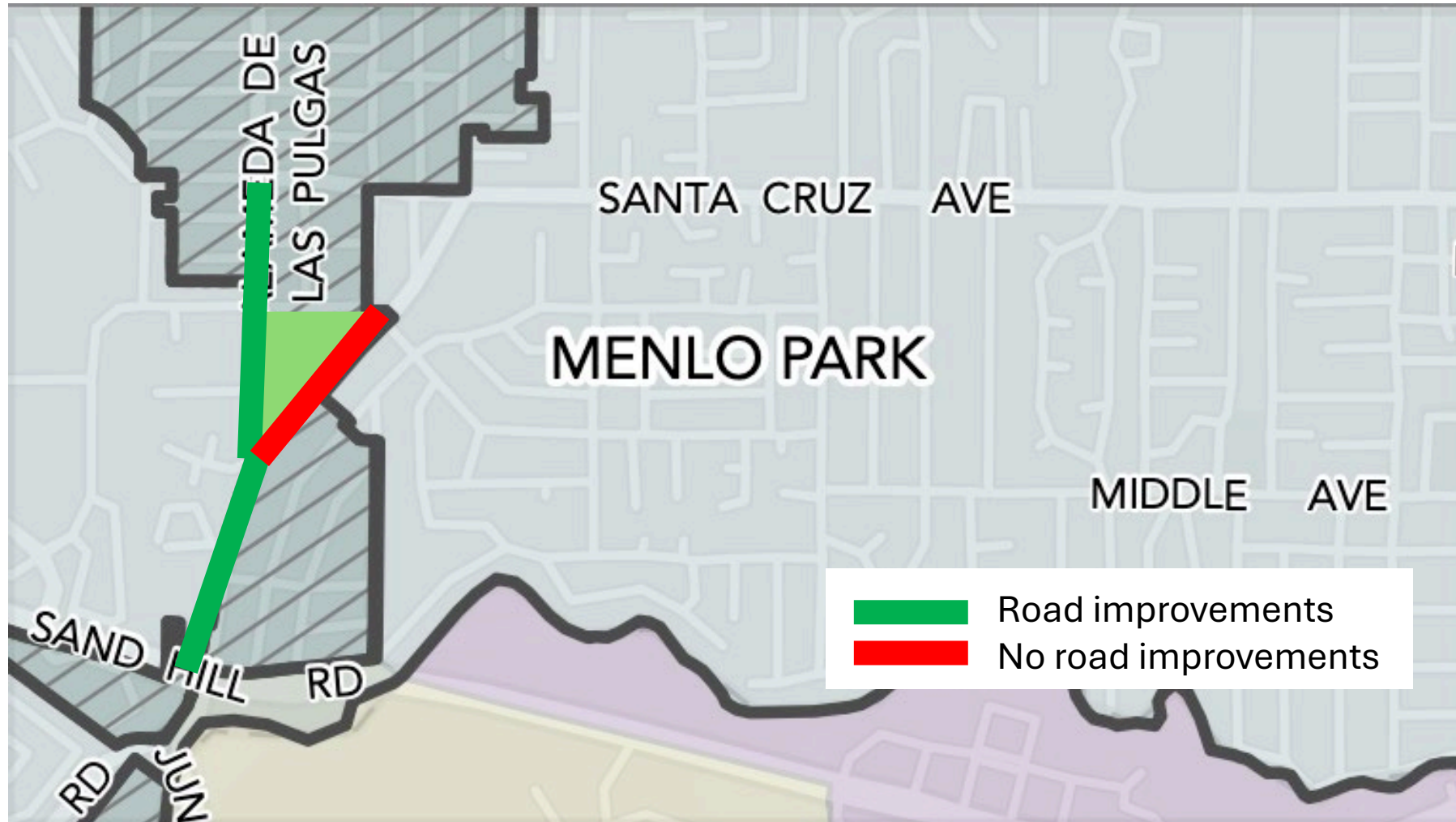
# City – Sidewalks to La Entrada on Sharon



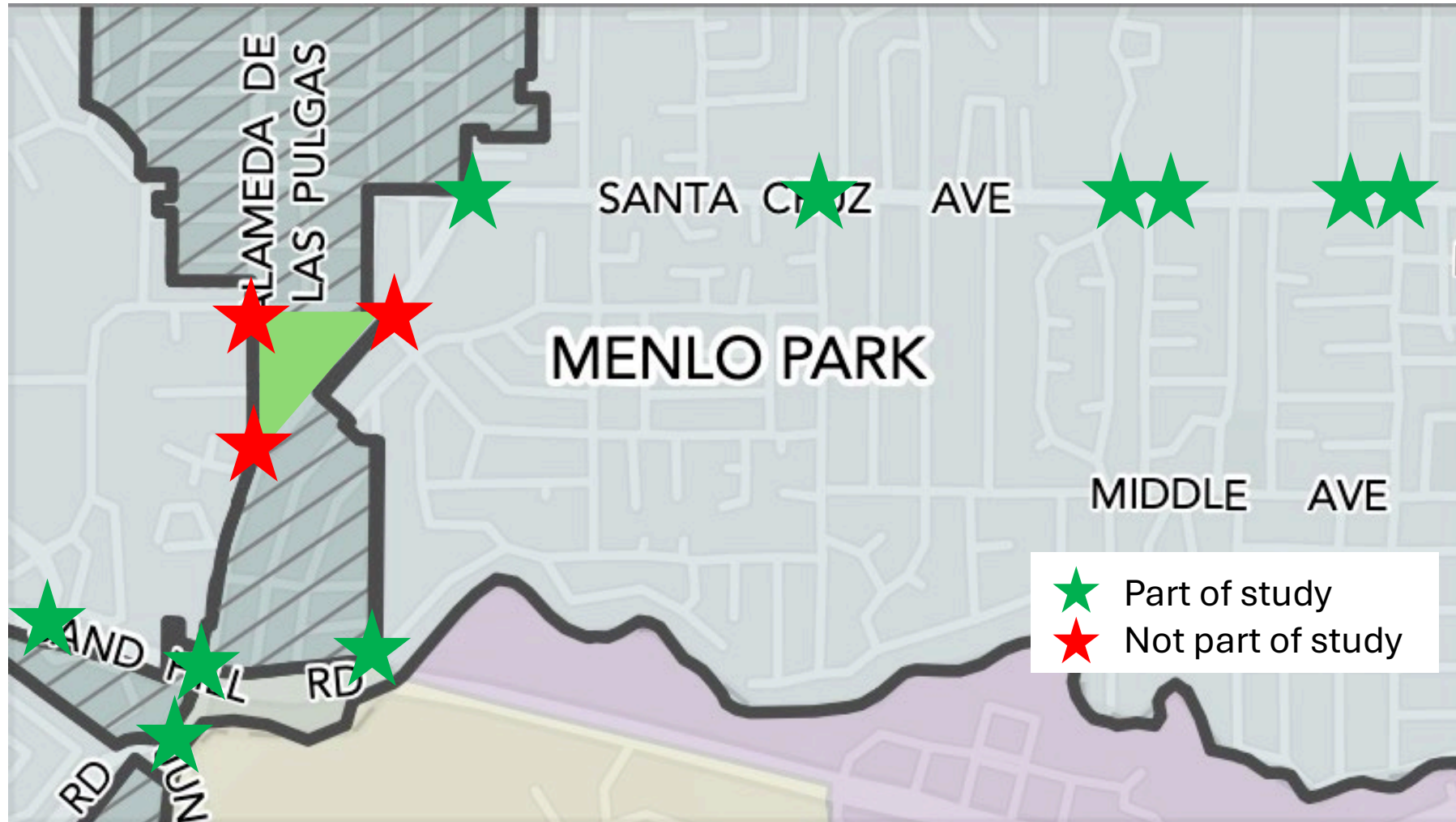




# County – Santa Cruz/Alameda Project



# City – Berkeley SafeTREC Study



# Act on Annexation Now

- Let our roads become safer for everyone
- Let us have local law enforcement
- Let Menlo Park have more tax revenue
- Let us vote!