



HOME GROWN DESIGN FOR  
COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION

[etb.epa@gmail.com](mailto:etb.epa@gmail.com)

**September 30, 2010**

**COMMUNITY LAND USE PLAN SUMMARY  
EAST PALO ALTO RAVENSWOOD BUSINESS DISTRICT  
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE PRESENTATION**

**I. COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS BACKGROUND**

It is critical for community members not versed in professional planning and design lingo to have their own process, where they feel their own intimate knowledge and/or history of the city and the community is valued. The purpose of the alternative community planning process for the Ravenswood Business District is to make sure that the East Palo Alto community's values are represented and incorporated into the Specific Plan for the RBD. This information is then used to develop a comprehensive vision that could be included in to the city's planning process. The members of the ETB-EPA Coalition included Community Development Institute, EPA CAN DO, Peninsula Interfaith Action, Start-Up and Youth United for Community Action – attended by over 300 East Palo Alto residents. The technical team included the Urban Habitat of the Great Communities Collaborative, Human Impact Partners, and Urban Ecology. This community planning process began in the Fall of 2008 with the creation of this coalition of local non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, organizers and community leaders – many of whom are also residents. The initial engagement phase of the Coalition's work involved a series of community training workshops, looking at historical land use and development experiences in East Palo Alto and lessons learned that could be informative for planning of the RBD area.

That stage of the process laid the foundation for the Planning phase, which kicked off in August 2009 with an interactive Community Planning Fair. Over a period of nearly a year, the coalition facilitated a series of planning workshops that included:

- ❖ goals-setting process and community benefits dialogue
- ❖ general visioning
- ❖ land use planning
- ❖ heights and circulation elements.

The Community Land Use Plan that emerged in July 2010 from this nearly two-year process was a deliberate, knowledge-building and patient community-driven process. While facilitating these efforts, the coalition also attended, outreached for, and participated in the City's Station Area Planning process. The Coalition's goal is to develop a complementary plan that represents multiple views and expertise of East Palo Alto.

**ENVISION – TRANSFORM - BUILD  
 EAST PALO ALTO!**

**Community Planning  
 Workshop #4**



Saturday May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
 10:00am-1:00pm

**Event Program**

- 10:00am: Kick-off & Welcome; Report back on March 18<sup>th</sup> Mapping Workshop
- 10:40am: Regional Transit and the RBD Plan
- 11:00am: Discussion Topics Round-Robin Tables in small groups
- 12:00pm: Stitching Together a Plan
- 12:50pm: Next Steps in Community and City processes

1:00 Event ends

**Create our Community's Plan!**  
 Jobs, Housing, Small Businesses, Transit,  
 Clean and Healthy Environment, a Downtown for East Palo Alto

For more information, email [etb.epa@gmail.com](mailto:etb.epa@gmail.com)

ENVISION TRANSFORM BUILD EPA HOME GROWN DESIGN FOR COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION  
 ETB-EPA is a project of the RBD Coalition: a community-driven process to shape the future of the Ravenswood Business District, integrating grassroots leaders & youth organizing, faith-based, non-profit, and community development organizations from East Palo Alto.

**ENVISION  
 TRANSFORM  
 BUILD  
 EPA** HOME GROWN DESIGN FOR COMMUNITY  
 SELF-DETERMINATION

**Save the Date:**  
**Community Planning Fair**  
 Walking Tours, Interactive Learning Booths  
 Prizes, Snow-cones, Food

Saturday, August 29, 2009  
 10:00am – 5:00pm  
**East Palo Alto City Hall—2415 University Ave, EPA**

**Time is running out for WE IN THE COMMUNITY to plan a  
 Ravenswood Business District!**

Participate to [Save Our Community from County jails, toxic  
 businesses and negative land uses.](#)

**We Need You—Create our COMMUNITY'S PLAN!**  
**Jobs, Housing, Small Businesses, Transit, Clean and Healthy  
 Environment, a Downtown for East Palo Alto**

The product of your participation, a community specific plan, will be  
 submitted to the City and by law has to be considered.  
[HAVE YOUR NEEDS BECOME CITY NEEDS](#)

Sponsored by: Community Development Institute (CDE), Youth United for Community Action (YUCA), Renaissance East Palo Alto  
 For more information: [ETB.EPA@gmail.com](mailto:ETB.EPA@gmail.com)

## II. COMMUNITY PLAN GOALS

The following goals form the basis of the community’s planning ideas. These goals were developed and refined through community workshops held over the last twelve months. While the goals reflect the specific values and desires of the East Palo Alto community, and especially the youth who were an integral part of the community planning process, participants were clear that they wanted to see an economically feasible plan, that balanced public community uses with revenue generating uses for the city.

- The RBD is predominantly an area of mixed industrial/business uses, providing for a variety of activities. It is a model for community development with businesses that are based on **the job needs of EPA residents**.
- The RBD also provides an opportunity for **larger community-serving institutions** such as a city hospital, school, 1-stop social services, multi-cultural center, theater of arts, after school program, and sports facilities.
- The RBD is a place with **uses for youth** to learn good things → “Da Spot”
- The RBD is a model for new and **creative and clean use of contaminated lands**.
- The Plan Area is also an opportunity for **resident-serving businesses and stores** along the adjoining Bay Road corridor and 4-Corners area.

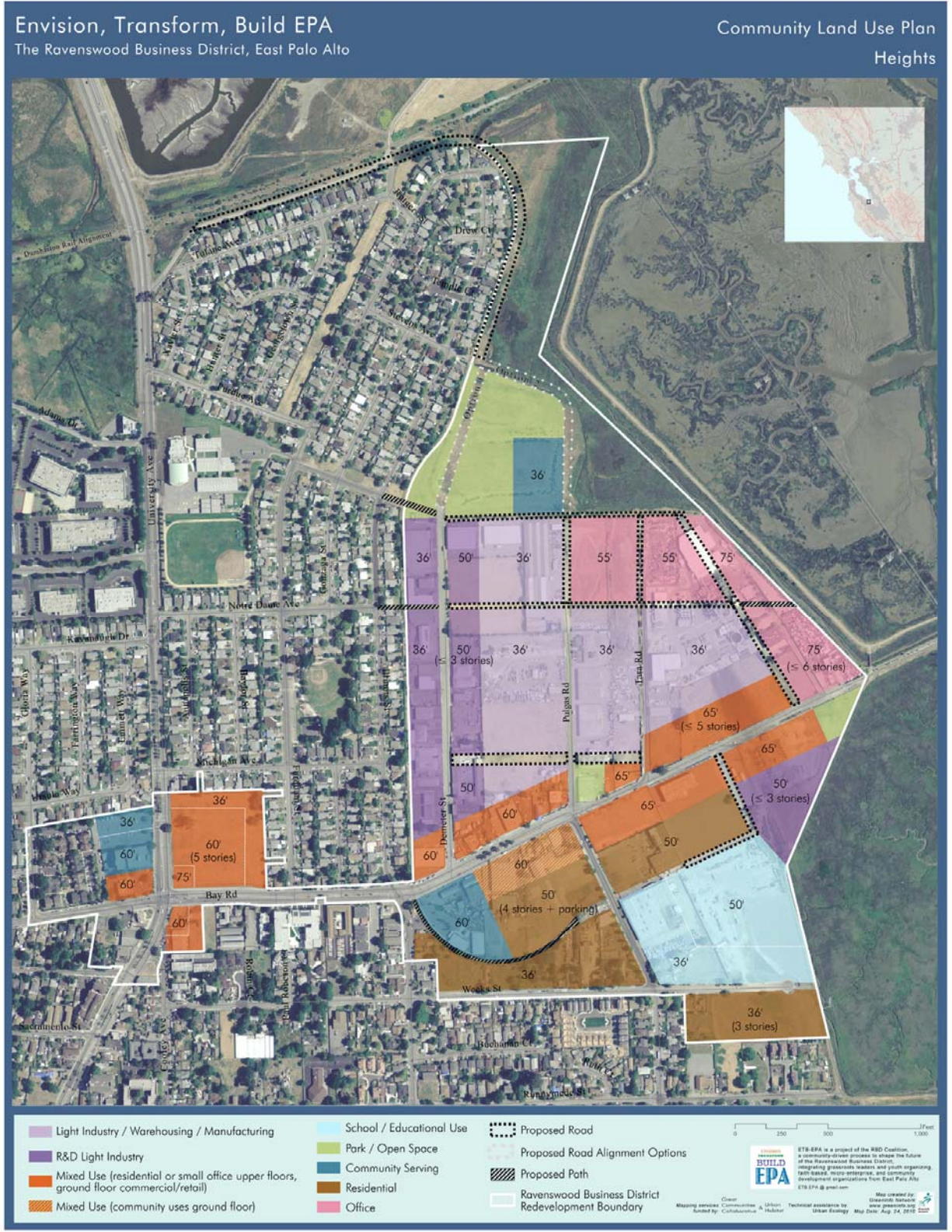
- The Plan Area is an opportunity for **community spaces and social gathering** and homegrown EPA arts. It is safe, fun, and family-friendly. It is EPA's "downtown."
- The Plan Area has active sidewalks with a variety of businesses, **making connections** between the RBD, Cooley Landing, Bay Road and the 4-Corners areas.
- The Plan Area has **sound infrastructure with an upgraded, undergrounded** powerline system.
- The Plan Area has **affordable housing** for CURRENT East Palo Alto low-income residents.
- The RBD maintains **the honest character, quality and priorities** of East Palo Alto.

### III. COMMUNITY LAND USE PLAN DESCRIPTION

The following summarizes the land uses in the community coalition's vision for the redevelopment of the Ravenswood Business District Specific Plan Area. The two main overall themes that the coalition has gathered from the community planning process are wanting: (A) a new "downtown" for East Palo Alto, and (B) a new "job center" with opportunities for new local businesses and jobs to be located in East Palo Alto – these jobs should match the skills and needs of the existing residents. Generally speaking, the RBD is roughly divided into three distinct sub-areas: (1) a main street extending along Bay Road from Four Corner to Cooley Landing, (2) the area north of Bay Road with light industries, R&D, and office, as well as a large recreation park space on the Facciola site (approximately 82 acres), and (3) the area south of Bay Road with housing and a new educational facility (approximately 52 acres).

#### A. FOUR CORNERS GATEWAY (10 acres)

Four Corners is seen as the "gateway" marking the entry into the new downtown for East Palo Alto, with active pedestrian-oriented retail at all corners of the intersection. There is strong consensus that the main 5-acre undeveloped parcel located on the northeast corner of University and Bay Road should be a fairly dense, fairly active mixed-use retail complex. The parcels on the northwest corner including the city hall site should also be redeveloped into a dense and active mixed-use complex to include a new library, City offices and possibly offices and/or housing above. The building heights could stagger up from the residential edges (36-foot high) adjacent to existing housing to the intersection of University and Bay (possibly up to 75-foot height at the corner), which allows for the new buildings at the corners to have a strong architectural form, symbolizing East Palo Alto's new downtown. Commercial spaces with generous heights should line the ground floor, and wide sidewalks and good lighting should attract people to congregate in the city's center.



While the community's discussions about this area did not make its development dependent on future regional transit development, it was also clear that any future rail connection on Dumbarton or BRT line needed to be linked with frequent bus, BRT, or shuttle service to the Four Corners and Bay Road so that it would not be left behind from the potential synergies from future transit connections.

## **B. BAY ROAD MIXED-USE MAIN STREET**

Bay Road is envisioned as the "Main Street" of East Palo Alto's new downtown. Similar to the City staff's preliminary land use alternatives for the RBD Plan Area, this means creating a vibrant mixed-use corridor. On the ground floor level of Bay Road, the community coalition sees an emphasis on locally-serving retail businesses and non-profit community uses, with a mix of housing and/or offices above, for a total of 3-5 stories tall. The maximum building heights could be 60-feet west of Pulgas, and 65-feet high east of Pulgas.

Since the demolition of the historic commercial area at University Circle, formerly known as Whiskey Gulch, the City of East Palo Alto has lacked its own defined commercial downtown district. The new office and large-retail redevelopments at University Circle and Gateway 101 have not become the focal point for community activity for the local residents. The redevelopment of the Bay Road corridor and the Four Corners as part of the RBD Plan represents a last chance to create such a downtown for the community.

The health clinic at the southeast corner of Bay and Clarke is seen as an anchor tenant of the new downtown, therefore it is envisioned to expand/augment the facilities at its current site, and attract other health-related and community serving uses in the adjacent commercial spaces.

The new developments and streetscape design on Bay Road should emphasize the pedestrian experience. The street width should be scaled appropriately with the new mixed-use building street facades and high ceilings for commercial spaces. The architectural design of the buildings at the intersection of Bay Road and Pulgas should reflect the symbolic center of the new downtown for East Palo Alto.

As part of the goals of making connections and having community gathering spaces, two pocket parks are located along Bay Road for public open space. These small parks should be well-lit and surrounded by commercial storefronts to keep "eyes on the street."

## **C. NORTH LIGHT INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT**

The community coalition believes that the RBD should be the location of community & educational programs (job training, extension classes) and jobs for the residents of East Palo Alto. Therefore, the heart of the RBD should be prioritized for light industrial businesses. The maximum building height would be 36-feet so that the economics of the building scale is

affordable for these industrial businesses. The overall idea is to link job training with employment opportunities, with an emphasis on light industry. A potential for “green industry” and research and development facilities is also integrated into the coalition’s land use plan, though it is important that those types of businesses in reality have job entry points and/or career ladder opportunities that fit the East Palo Alto workforce. While this document mainly lays out the community’s land-use vision, it is critical that, in developing the RBD, the city of East Palo Alto proactively seek out appropriate green businesses with a local workforce component to locate in the RBD. At its many workshops and meetings through the community planning process, the coalition heard loud and clear that the community wants a high priority on jobs for residents, balanced with generating new City revenues via new professional white collar jobs for people who for the most part may live outside East Palo Alto.

#### **D. SOUTH HOUSING EDGE**

Adjacent to the Weeks neighborhood, this area has been designated to accommodate 2-3 story medium-density housing, with a mix of market-rate and affordable residential units. The maximum building height would 36-feet for parcels adjacent to the existing residential Weeks Neighborhood and south of the former railroad right-of-way (matching the existing height limits in the Weeks area), and 50-feet for parcels north of the right-of-way further into the Plan Area. This building height should create a transition buffer zone between the Weeks residential neighborhood and the new denser mixed-use development along Bay Road.

Also in this southern edge of the RBD east of Pulgas and north of Weeks Street is envisioned as a secondary school/educational campus site. Ideally, this site would have educational classes and job training in support of the needs of businesses located in the RBD. The buildings on this school site would be limited to 36-feet near 3-story residential homes and up to 50-feet closer into the Plan Area. While this site, linked by Pulgas to the residential areas to the south, was seen as the main new educational center, the community also envisioned that potential new educational uses and workforce development, job training, and entrepreneurship training could be scattered throughout the Bay Road commercial and light-industrial / R&D uses to the north, as part of a well planned new development that serves the community’s economic needs.

#### **E. WEST LIGHT INDUSTRY / R & D EDGE**

The western edge between the University Village residential neighborhood and Demeter Street should maintain the existing 1-2 story light industrial character. Infill development should be similar in building type. The building height would be limited to 36-feet west of Demeter, adjacent to the residential neighborhood, and step up to 50-feet east of Demeter further towards the center of the RBD. To enhance the pedestrian scale and character of Demeter, the lots on the east side of Demeter should also maintain this existing light

industrial character. This land use could also accommodate new research and development within the proposed building heights.

#### **F. EAST OFFICE EDGE**

Along the edge of the Ravenswood Open Space Preserve (the bay marshland), north of Bay Road, north/east of Notre Dame Avenue and East of Pulgas Road is an area designated for corporate office buildings. This land use has the highest potential to bring revenue to the City. The maximum building heights should be 75-feet and less than 6-stories.

#### **G. NORTH RECREATION & PARK SITE (FACCIOLA)**

The Facciola site north of the current end of Demeter Street has been identified as a new open space park for recreational use (e.g. outdoor soccer fields, gymnasium for indoor sports). A new recreational facility to draw residents to the waterfront and provide critical indoor sports facilities. Recreational buildings should have a maximum building height of 36-feet to maintain a low profile adjacent to the marshlands and the University Village neighborhood.

### **IV. NEW ROAD ACCESS & NEW STREET NETWORK**

The community consensus through the planning process was to construct a new vehicular road, extending either Demeter Street or Pulgas, around the University Village neighborhood to University Avenue around the north city limits. This would allow connectivity to the RBD redevelopment area without extending roadways into the University Village neighborhood. This will require negotiations with various responsible agencies including the San Francisco Bay Conservation Development Commission (BCDC), the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, because this roadway will occupy part of the existing Union Pacific right-of-way and parts of the adjacent marshland areas. This roadway would allow both commuters going north, trucks accessing the industrial and R&D areas, and bicyclists, an alternative route to the Bay Road pedestrian-oriented development.

Pedestrian access through the RBD and surrounding neighborhoods should be maximized with pedestrian walkways. Four pedestrian access points have been highlighted by the community to date: (1) at the east end of Purdue Avenue, (2) at the east end of Notre Dame Avenue, (3) the existing right-of-way on a former railroad line from Bay Road to the Bay Trail in the Southern Transitional Housing Edge, and (4) continuing the Bay Trail around the RBD.

One important way to enhance pedestrian connectivity is to divide the heart of the RBD into a series of large and small blocks, with a maximum block size of approximately 600' x 400' (or 5-1/2 acres) and 600' x 500' (or 7 acres). A second important pedestrian amenity is to extend view corridors down the new east-west streets to the marshlands, especially at Notre Dame Avenue through the east office block edge.

## V. PARKING & LOCAL PUBLIC TRANSIT

The issue of parking was introduced at the July 10<sup>th</sup> Workshop. Future discussions with the community should refine the parking design guidelines, as well as on enhancements to the local public transit system to potentially mitigate some of the need for parking. Several issues were discussed:

Along the Bay Road Mixed-Use area, parking should be located along the back edge of buildings, with minimal “teaser parking” spaces off Bay Road. Any ground-level parking garages should be pushed back from the main street and wrapped with commercial storefronts. There are possible sharing arrangements of parking in the office block edge and light industrial districts, where paid parking could be open to the public during evening and weekend hours for people visiting the Bay Road mixed-use main street. Some podium parking in the midrise residential developments just south of Bay Road could have a reverse shared arrangement during business hours with these residents and Bay Road office workers. If parking eventually becomes in high demand, fees could be collected by both public (metered) and private entities (podium parking facilities).

At minimum, a bus or shuttle service should serve Bay Road, linking University Avenue to Cooley Landing, with stops along the way to serve workers and residents in various parts of the new development along the RBD. A potential loop might be developed from Four Corners to Pulgas, and up around the new north road, linking to a future Dumbarton rail or BRT alignment.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This Community Land Use Plan is based on the goals and vision expressed by community members of East Palo Alto. It is a plan that began from a community-based process and has been instilled with the technical help of community planners and architects. We look forward to working with the City of East Palo Alto to further incorporate the vision, goals, and land use alternative map from our Community Plan with the City’s planning process. We also hope to have further discussions with the City of East Palo on various other related issues, including what Community Benefits can arise from this plan as well as greater technical detail on the Land Use Plan.