

## 1.1 Purpose of This Environmental Impact Report

This Draft Infill Environmental Impact Report (Draft Infill EIR) for the Middle Plaza at 500 El Camino Real Project (Project) has been prepared by the Project's Lead Agency, the City of Menlo Park (City), in conformance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines, as amended. The lead agency is the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project.

This Draft Infill EIR has been prepared consistent with Section 21094.5 of CEQA and Section 15183.3 of the CEQA Guidelines, which provide guidance for streamlining the environmental review process for eligible infill projects (such as the Project) by limiting the topics subject to review at the project level where the effects of infill development have been addressed in a planning-level decision or by uniformly applicable development policies.

This Draft Infill EIR assesses potentially significant impacts that could result from the Project. As defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15382, a "significant effect on the environment" is:

... a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment. A social or economic change related to a physical change may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.

The purpose of this Draft Infill EIR (as described in more detail below) is to provide the City, responsible and trustee agencies, other public agencies, and the public with detailed information about environmental effects not previously identified in the Specific Plan EIR that could result from implementing the Project, and to examine and institute methods of mitigating any adverse environmental impacts should the Project be approved. The City will use the Infill EIR, along with other information in the public record, to determine whether to approve, modify, or deny the Project, and to specify any applicable environmental conditions or mitigation measures as part of the Project approvals.

## 1.2 Project Overview

Stanford University (Project Sponsor) is proposing to redevelop six parcels of land along the east side of El Camino Real into a mixed-use development. The Caltrain right-of-way is located to the east of the Project site. The Project site includes 300 El Camino Real (two parcels totaling 2.5 acres), 350 El Camino Real (0.9 acre), 444 El Camino Real (1.7 acres), 550 El Camino Real (1.6 acres), and a 1.7-acre parcel with no address, which add up to approximately 8.4 acres. These parcels generally consist of vacant and occupied commercial buildings as well as surface parking lots.

The Project would demolish the existing structures and construct up to 459,013 square feet (sf) of mixed uses at the Project site. The publicly-accessible plaza at the Project site would be approximately 120 feet wide and approximately 0.5 acre in size. The five new buildings at the

Project site would include approximately 305,000 sf of residential space (215 housing units); approximately 144,000 sf of non-medical office space; and 10,000 sf of ground floor retail/restaurant space. The Project would also provide approximately 960 parking spaces within underground parking garages and surface parking, which is a reduction in the number of parking spaces as recommended by a draft shared parking analysis, which accounts for the proposed mixture of uses on site.

The entire Project site is in the El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan General Plan land use designation, which supports a variety of retail uses, personal services, business and professional offices, and residential uses. The Project site is zoned SP-ECR/D (El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan) and is within the ECR SE (El Camino Real South-East) District. The ECR SE District is on the east side of El Camino Real and extends from Ravenswood Avenue to Creek Drive, and is currently characterized by a mix of larger office developments, hotel, and retail uses. The area is bordered by the Caltrain railroad tracks to the east, beyond which are Alma Street, Burgess Park, and residential neighborhoods. The Specific Plan outlines the maximum amount of building intensity permitted in the ECR SE District.

## 1.3 CEQA Process

### Infill Environmental Checklist

As discussed above, the Project site is within the Specific Plan area. Since the Project's site plan and development parameters are consistent with the development anticipated by the Specific Plan, the programmatic Specific Plan EIR is applicable to this Project. For this reason, and because the Project meets the requirements of CEQA Section 21094.5(c), an Infill Environmental Checklist (Appendix 1-1) for the Project was prepared by the City, in conformance with Section 15183.3 of the CEQA Guidelines and Section 21094.5 of the Public Resources Code (PRC), adopted per Senate Bill (SB) 226. SB 226 was developed by the California legislature to eliminate repetitive analysis of effects of a project that were previously analyzed in a programmatic EIR for a planning-level decision or that are substantially mitigated by uniformly applied development policies. The Infill Environmental Checklist was used to limit the scope of the Infill EIR.

The Infill Environmental Checklist determined that the Project would have effects that either have not been analyzed in the prior Specific Plan EIR, or are more significant than described in the prior EIR, and that no uniformly applicable development policies would substantially mitigate such effects. Therefore, since these impacts could be significant, this Infill EIR is required to analyze those effects.

### Notice of Preparation

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Infill Environmental Checklist was released for the Project on June 22, 2016, for a 30-day public review period. The NOP noted that the Project may have a significant effect on the environment and that an Infill EIR would be prepared for the Project.

The NOP was sent to individuals, local interest groups, adjacent property owners, and responsible and trustee state and local agencies having jurisdiction over or interest in environmental resources and/or conditions in the vicinity of the Project site. The purpose of the NOP was to allow various private and public entities to transmit their concerns and comments on the scope and content of the

Draft Infill EIR, focusing on specific information related to each individual's or group's interest or agency's statutory responsibility early in the environmental review process.

In response to the NOP, letters were received from the following agencies.

- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
- San Mateo County Environmental Health
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- Menlo Park Fire Protection District

Based on the Infill Environmental Checklist, the following topics have been scoped out of this Infill EIR: Agricultural and Forestry Resources, Air Quality (other than construction health risk), Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology/Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise (other than noise impacts from vehicle traffic), Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation/Traffic (air traffic patterns), and Utilities and Service Systems. In addition, due to the Project's consistency with SB 743 criteria, aesthetics and parking issues are not considered to be impacts under CEQA. Therefore, this Infill EIR analyzes whether the Project would have significant environmental impacts in the following areas:

- Air Quality (construction health risk)
- Noise (traffic noise)
- Transportation and Traffic

## Draft Infill EIR

### Impact Analysis

This Draft Infill EIR analyzes significant effects that could result from the Project. As explained in Section 15002(g) of the CEQA Guidelines, a significant effect on the environment is defined as a substantial adverse change in the physical conditions that exist in the area affected by a project. Pre-project environmental conditions (the environmental baseline) are considered in determining impact significance. The impact significance thresholds for each of the environmental resource areas presented in this Draft Infill EIR are based on the CEQA Guidelines Appendix N, *Infill Environmental Checklist Form*. In addition, this Draft Infill EIR uses City-adopted significance criteria for traffic impacts. Where significant impacts are identified, the Draft Infill EIR recommends feasible mitigation measures to reduce, eliminate, or avoid the significant impacts, and identifies which significant impacts are unavoidable. Cumulative impacts—two or more individual effects that, when considered together, compound or increase other related environmental impacts—are discussed for each environmental resource area.

As discussed above, this document is a Draft Infill EIR. Per Section 15183(d)(2)(C) of the CEQA Guidelines, if the infill project would result in new specific effects or more significant effects, and uniformly applicable development policies or standards would not substantially mitigate such effects, those effects are subject to CEQA. With respect to those effects that are subject to CEQA, the lead agency shall prepare an Infill EIR if the written checklist shows that the effects of the infill project would be potentially significant. As concluded in the Infill Environmental Checklist for the Project, the Project would have effects that either have not been analyzed in the prior Specific Plan EIR, or are potentially more significant than described in the prior EIR. Further, no uniformly applicable

development policies would substantially mitigate such effects. Therefore, since these impacts could be significant, this Draft Infill EIR is required to analyze the following topics: construction-related air quality, transportation and traffic, and traffic-related noise.

Because the Project is an infill project under CEQA Section 21094.5, this Infill EIR is not required to consider project alternatives that would change the location, densities, or building intensities of the Project. Because any alternative to the Project that could reduce its environmental impacts would change the Project location, densities, or building intensities, project alternatives are not analyzed in this Infill EIR. In addition, an Infill EIR need not analyze growth-inducing impacts and, as such, this discussion is not included.

Section 15131 of the CEQA Guidelines specifies that “the intermediate economic or social changes need not be analyzed in any detail greater than necessary to trace the chain of cause and effect. The focus of the analysis shall be on the physical changes.” Therefore, this Draft Infill EIR does not treat economic or social effects of the Project as significant effects on the environment. In addition, if it is determined that a potential impact is too speculative for evaluation, this condition is noted, and further discussion of the impact is not necessary.

## Public Review

This Draft Infill EIR is considered a draft under CEQA because it must be reviewed and commented upon by public agencies, organizations, and individuals before being finalized. This document is being distributed for a minimum of a 45-day public review and comment period. Readers are invited to submit written comments on the document. Written comments should be submitted to:

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Menlo Park, CA 94025  
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A public hearing to take oral comments on the Draft Infill EIR will be held before the Planning Commission on March 27, 2017. Hearing notices will be mailed to responsible agencies and interested individuals.

## Final EIR and Project Approval

Following the close of the public review period, the City will prepare responses to all substantive comments that relate to potential physical changes to the environment. The Draft Infill EIR, along with the responses to the substantive comments received during the review period, will comprise the Final Infill EIR and will be considered by the City Council in making the decision to certify the Final Infill EIR and to approve, modify or deny the Project.

Certification of the Final Infill EIR by the City Council as complete and adequate in conformance with CEQA does not grant any land use approvals or entitlements for the Project. The merits of the Project will be considered by the City Council after review of the Final Infill EIR. The CEQA Guidelines require that, for one or more significant and unavoidable impact that cannot be substantially mitigated, the Lead Agency must prepare a Statement of Overriding Considerations (SOC) that balances the social, economic, technological, and legal benefits of approving a project

against the significant and unavoidable environmental impacts that would result from project implementation. The SOC will be limited to those effects analyzed in the Draft Infill EIR. Where uniformly applicable development policies or standards would mitigate the significant impacts of the Project, the Lead Agency will also make a written finding, supported with substantial evidence, providing a brief explanation of the rationale for the finding. The City Council must approve the Lead Agency SOC in order for the Project to be approved.

## 1.4 Report Organization

This Draft Infill EIR is organized into the following chapters.

- *Executive Summary*: Provides a summary of the Project and the impacts that would result from its implementation and describes mitigation measures recommended to reduce, eliminate, or avoid significant impacts.
- *Chapter 1—Introduction*: Discusses the overall Draft Infill EIR purpose, provides a summary of the Project and the CEQA process, and summarizes the organization of the Draft Infill EIR.
- *Chapter 2—Project Description*: Provides a description of the Project site, site development, Project objectives, required approvals process, and Project characteristics.
- *Chapter 3—Environmental Impact Analysis*: Describes the existing conditions/setting, analyzes the environmental impact, and provides mitigation measures (if applicable) for each environmental resource area.
- *Chapter 4—Other CEQA Considerations*: Provides additional, specifically required analyses of the Project's effects, significant irreversible changes, cumulative impacts, and effects not found to be significant.
- *Chapter 5—List of Preparers*: Contains a list of the report preparers.

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