

4.1 Aesthetic Resources

This section evaluates the potential effects of the proposed Specific Plan on aesthetic resources in the vicinity of the Plan area, including potential effects of shadows. This section also considers the proposed project's consistency with relevant visual resource-related policies.

4.1.1 Environmental Setting

The following summary describes the visual character of the built environment in the Plan area and the nearby vicinity. The visual character reflects the Plan area's existing buildings, street grids, and natural and manmade features. Photographs of the existing built environment at select locations as well as renderings of potential development allowed by the Specific Plan at the same locations are included in **Figures 4.1-1** through **4.1-4**.

Visual Character

The Plan area is located in a developed urban area, along El Camino Real between Watkins Avenue to the north and San Francisquito Creek to the south. In downtown, the Plan area includes Oak Grove Avenue, Santa Cruz Avenue, and Menlo Avenue to University Drive to the west, and extends east to Alma Street. The general vicinity surrounding the Plan area contains medium- and low-density residential uses. In addition, the academic buildings, plazas, and recreational fields of the Menlo College campus are adjacent to El Camino Real at the north end of the Plan area, within the Town of Atherton. Immediately to the southeast of the train station are the Menlo Park Civic Center and Burgess Park which are just outside the Plan area. Directly east of these public uses are office and research and development (R&D) uses. The City of Palo Alto and Stanford University are farther to the south along El Camino Real bordering the south end of the Plan area. Fremont Park, Nealon Park, and Holbrook-Palmer Park are also located within two blocks of the Plan area.

The following sections describe the visual character of distinct portions of the Specific Plan area including El Camino Real, Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo/Ravenswood Avenues, and Oak Grove Avenue.

El Camino Real

Within the southern portion of the Plan area, El Camino Real is a six-lane arterial. The roadway becomes a four-lane arterial near downtown Menlo Park, and it exits the city as a five-lane arterial (three southbound lanes and two northbound lanes) north of Valparaiso Avenue. Sidewalk landscaping is intermittently present, and landscaping of the center median is more extensive closer to, and within, downtown. The properties along the roadway are fully urbanized and are characterized by a mix of commercial retail, hotel, service, and office buildings that vary in terms of age and architectural style. Some structures are built to the lot line, but in other locations, the street edge is ill-defined, with parking lots, driveways, and landscaping intervening between the buildings and the street. Most of the buildings are between one and three stories in height, although some office buildings are taller near Menlo/Ravenswood Avenues.



Existing Conditions



Sketch of Buildout of the Specific Plan

SOURCE: Perkins + Will; ESA, 2009

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Figure 4.1-1
El Camino Real at Cambridge Ave., Looking North



Existing Conditions

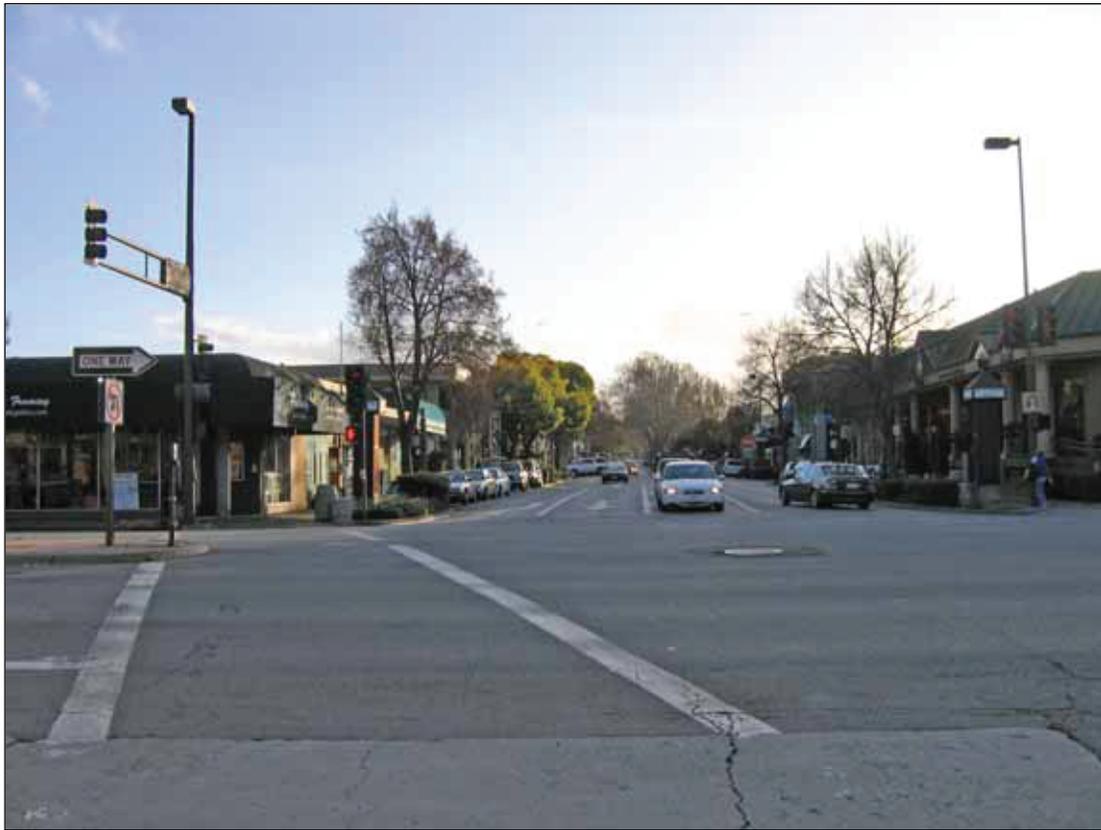


Sketch of Potential Buildout Option of the Specific Plan

SOURCE: DCE; ESA, 2009

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Figure 4.1-2
El Camino Real at Ravenswood Avenue Looking North



Existing Conditions



Sketch of Potential Buildout Option of the Specific Plan

SOURCE: DCE; ESA, 2009

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Figure 4.1-3
Santa Cruz Avenue from El Camino Real Looking West



Existing Conditions



Sketch of Buildout of the Specific Plan

SOURCE: Perkins + Will; ESA, 2009

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Figure 4.1-4
Santa Cruz Avenue at Curtis Street Looking West

Several large parking lots associated with automotive service and sales uses (many of which are currently vacant) and large-format retail stores are present along the street. Other vacant parking lots associated with prior uses are also prevalent. Although cross streets intersect with El Camino Real in standard city grid pattern, the Caltrain right-of-way creates a physical barrier to east-west travel in the area between Menlo/Ravenswood Avenues and San Francisquito Creek.

In downtown Menlo Park, El Camino Real has two through-travel lanes in each direction, as well as a left- and/or right-turn lanes, depending on the approach. The median includes decorative brick and is landscaped. The built form on surrounding properties is more consistently of one- and two-story buildings, typically standing at the lot line. These buildings house primarily retail shops, banks, and restaurants. Menlo Center, a three-story, 46-foot tall building that includes a plaza, retail, office, and restaurant spaces, is on the east side of El Camino Real just south of Santa Cruz Avenue. The Caltrain station is located east of Menlo Center.

North of downtown, median landscaping is sustained consistently to Valparaiso Avenue, and is less consistent but present from Valparaiso Avenue to the northern edge of the Plan area. The built form and uses are again more varied, and parking lots abut the street in several places. Directly to the west, a fence blocks the rear yards of a residential neighborhood near Menlo College, and another fence and vegetation screens the athletic fields of the school, all of which are in the Town of Atherton.

Santa Cruz Avenue

Santa Cruz Avenue is downtown's primary commercial thoroughfare, and primarily has two lanes, with parking on each side. At the University Drive and El Camino Real intersections, Santa Cruz Avenue briefly expands to four lanes. It extends from the train station in the east, where retail and office uses occupy two- to three-story buildings, to the west beyond the Specific Plan area. On the west side of El Camino Real is the main shopping district, characterized by one- and two-story buildings in a variety of architectural styles and constructed to the lot line. The small parcel sizes, typically 50 feet wide, create a pattern of small buildings and allow for a variety of façades. The sidewalks are landscaped, and both the sidewalks and crosswalks are paved in decorative brick. Some buildings include overhangs above the sidewalk, which darken the sidewalk and obscure shop windows, although they also provide protection to pedestrians from the sun and rain. Between Doyle Street and University Drive, a median planted with Liquidambar trees runs down the center of the roadway, and mature street trees provide shade. On one side of the street, parking is at a 45-degree angle, and on the other side, there is parallel parking, with the layout differing by block.

Public parking plazas for the uses along Santa Cruz Avenue and parallel streets are located behind the buildings. These lots include planted medians and street lamps, and many buildings provide a rear access directly from the lots into the retail spaces. In effect, these areas become secondary streets.

Menlo/Ravenswood Avenues and Oak Grove Avenue

Menlo/Ravenswood Avenues and Oak Grove Avenue are the other two primary cross streets in the Plan area. They provide access across the Caltrain right-of-way.

Ravenswood Avenue is an east-west two-lane arterial roadway, with the portion between Alma Street and El Camino Real expanding to additional lanes and being divided by a planted median with mature street trees. Three-story commercial buildings are set back from the street in this location, and they are obscured by mature trees. Crossing El Camino Real, the street becomes Menlo Avenue. A short center median extends from El Camino Real to Doyle Street. The built form here is varied, with some buildings set back from the lot line by parking lots, and others built to the lot line. Buildings are primarily two stories and contain a variety of retail and office uses. Heading west, a mix of two-story office buildings, two-story apartment buildings, and one-story, detached residential structures (many currently used for commercial uses) set back from the street by small yards and driveways line the south side of Menlo Avenue. On the north side are two-story commercial office and services buildings. A couple of private parking lots abut the street in some locations, and the public parking plazas described above under *Santa Cruz Avenue*, are accessed via cross streets, such as Crane Street or Evelyn Street.

Oak Grove Avenue is an east-west two-lane roadway with one parking lane in each direction on the east side of El Camino Real. The sidewalk is landscaped, and there is a mix of retail, service, residential and parking lot uses. The buildings are one to three stories tall. Across El Camino Real, heading west, buildings on the south side of Oak Grove Avenue are two-story tall retail, office, and service-related. Buildings on the north side of the street include one- and two-story tall offices and mixed use developments, some with underground parking, and detached, single-family dwellings set back from the roadway. As with Menlo Avenue, the public parking plazas are accessed via cross streets.

View Corridors and Scenic Vistas

A view corridor is an enclosed area of landscape, viewed as a single entity that includes the total field of vision visible from a specific point, or series of points along a linear transportation route. Public view corridors are areas in which views are available from publicly accessible viewpoints, such as from city streets. As described above, the four primary corridors within the Plan area are along El Camino Real, Santa Cruz Avenue, Oak Grove Avenue, and Menlo/Ravenswood Avenues. In addition, the Caltrain right-of-way and station provide a publicly accessible space from which passengers view the Plan area. View corridors are also present along cross streets, though they are often shorter or primarily outside of the Plan area. Furthermore, cross streets are staggered at Santa Cruz Avenue, limiting the view corridors in those locations. Views from nearby parks are similarly limited due to the topography and intervening buildings.

For purposes of analysis in this EIR, views from the Specific Plan area can be placed in one of three categories: short-range (views from public vantage points of locations to a distance of 0.25 mile); medium-range (views from public vantage points of locations to a distance of 0.25 mile to 0.50 mile); and long-range (views from public vantage points of locations at a distance greater than 0.50 mile).

Given that the Specific Plan area is predominately flat and urbanized, mid- and long-range views of distinctive features or scenic resources are limited, as are scenic vistas. This section will describe what views exist down these corridors from various locations in and around the Specific Plan area, as well as any distinctive landmarks or architectural features that are visible.

El Camino Real and the Caltrain Right-of-Way

Short-range views along El Camino Real are limited to the buildings, parking lots, and sidewalk landscaping along the thoroughfare, described above. Mid- and long-range views to both the north and south are limited due to the flat nature of the Specific Plan area, the street trees within the median and on the sidewalks, and the gradual curve of the street. Figures 4.1-1 and 4.1-2 show the built form and views along El Camino Real under existing conditions.

Views are similar along the Caltrain right-of-way, which provides riding passengers fleeting views of the Plan area except when trains stop at the station. (**Figure 4.1-5** shows views of and from the Caltrain station.) The Victorian architecture of the historic train station building, the oldest continually operating train station in California, is visible in the short-range views. (Please see Section 4.4, *Cultural Resources*, for further description of the station.) The historic train station building and its newer clock tower are distinctive built features and a focal point within the Plan area. Views from the historic train station building are limited due to the flat topography of the Plan area, intervening buildings, and street landscaping.

Santa Cruz Avenue

The Caltrain station is also visible in the short-range views from Santa Cruz Avenue. Other short-range views along the avenue are limited to the surrounding visual character of retail buildings and sidewalk and median landscaping, described above. Mid-range views along the avenue are limited due to the flat topography and mature street trees. At University Drive, partially obscured long-range views of the Santa Cruz Mountains are available looking to the west, although street trees farther west along the avenue primarily obscure such views. Figures 4.1-3 and 4.1-4 show built form and views along Santa Cruz Avenue under existing conditions.

Menlo/Ravenswood Avenues and Oak Grove Avenue

Similarly, the Caltrain station and historic station building are visible in the short-range views from Ravenswood Avenue and Oak Grove Avenue, but other short-range views along these corridors are limited to the surrounding visual character of retail buildings and sidewalk and median landscaping, described above. Mid-range views are limited due to site topography, but partially obscured long-range views of the Santa Cruz Mountains are available looking to the west. In contrast with views along Santa Cruz Avenue, these views are better closer to El Camino Real, and they become more obscured traveling west along Menlo/Ravenswood or Oak Grove Avenues due to the terminus of both streets at or near University Drive.



Caltrain Station Platform and View Corridor



Caltrain Station Building

SOURCE: Perkins & Will; ESA, 2009

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Figure 4.1-5
Caltrain Station Visual Character and Visual Corridor

4.1.2 Regulatory Setting

This section discusses goals and policies contained within the City of Menlo Park General Plan and Zoning Ordinance that are applicable to the Specific Plan area and apply broadly to aesthetics across the City.

Menlo Park General Plan

The General Plan guides development and use of land in the City. The central purpose of the General Plan, as stated in the document, “is to maintain Menlo Park’s special character as a residential community that includes a broad range of residential, business, and employment opportunities and to provide for the change necessary to maintain a vital community.” Several goals and policies of the General Plan apply broadly to aesthetics across the City. The Land Use Element and Open Space and Conservation Element goals and policies that directly relate to visual, design, scenic, and other aesthetic concerns of the Specific Plan area are presented below. The General Plan land use designations applicable to the Specific Plan area are discussed in Section 4.9, *Land Use and Planning Policy*, of this EIR.¹

Land Use Element

Residential

Goal I-A: To maintain and improve the character and stability of Menlo Park’s existing residential neighborhoods while providing for the development of a variety of housing types. The preservation of open space shall be encouraged.

- *Policy I-A-1:* New construction in existing neighborhoods shall be designed to emphasize the preservation and improvement of the stability and character of the individual neighborhood.
- *Policy I-A-2:* New residential developments shall be designed to be compatible with Menlo Park’s residential character.
- *Policy I-A-3:* Quality design and usable open space shall be encouraged in the design of all new residential developments.

Commercial

Goal I-B: To strengthen downtown as a vital and competitive shopping area while encouraging the preservation and enhancement of downtown’s historic atmosphere and character.

- *Policy I-B-1:* The downtown should include a complementary mix of stores and services in a quality design, adding natural amenities into the development pattern.
- *Policy I-B-2:* Parking which is sufficient to serve the retail needs of the downtown area and which is attractively designed to encourage retail patronage shall be provided.

¹ City of Menlo Park, *General Plan Policy Document*, adopted November 30 and December 1, 1994.

Goal I-E: To promote the development and retention of commercial uses which provide significant revenue to the City and/or goods or services needed by the community and which have low environmental and traffic impacts.

- *Policy I-E-4:* Any new or expanded office use must include provisions for adequate off-street parking, mitigating traffic impacts, and developing effective alternatives to auto commuting, must adhere to acceptable architectural standards, and must protect adjacent residential uses from adverse impacts.

Open Space

Goal I-G: To promote the preservation of open space lands for recreation, protection of natural resources, the production of managed resources, protection of health and safety, and/or the enhancement of scenic qualities.

- *Policy I-G-2:* The community should contain an ample supply of specialized open space in the form of squares, greens, and parks whose frequent use is encouraged through placement and design.
- *Policy I-G-3:* Public spaces should be designed to encourage the attention and presence of people at all hours of the day and appropriate hours of the night.
- *Policy I-G-10:* Extensive landscaping should be included in public and private development, including greater landscaping in large parking areas. Where appropriate, the City shall encourage placement of a portion of the required parking in landscape reserve until such time as the parking is needed. Plant material selection and landscape and irrigation design shall adhere to the City's Water Efficient Landscaping Ordinance.
- *Policy I-G-11:* Well-designed pedestrian facilities should be included in areas of intensive pedestrian activity.

Open Space and Conservation Element

Goal: 2: To encourage the enhancement of boulevards, plazas, and other open spaces in residential, commercial, and industrial neighborhoods.

- *Policy 2:* Include landscaping and plazas on public and private lands and well-designed pedestrian facilities in areas of intensive pedestrian activity. Require greater landscaping in extensive parking areas.

Menlo Park Zoning Ordinance

The City of Menlo Park Zoning Ordinance enforces the land uses designated in the General Plan. Chapter 16 of the City of Menlo Park Municipal Code sets forth the City's Zoning Ordinance, the stated purpose of which is "to preserve and extend the charm and beauty inherent to the residential character of the city; to regulate and limit the density of population; encourage the most appropriate use of land; to conserve land and stabilize the value of property; to provide adequate open space for light, air and fire protection; to lessen traffic congestion; to facilitate the provision of community facilities; to encourage tree and shrub planting; to encourage building construction of pleasing

design; to provide the economic and social advantages of a planned community.” A map of existing zoning districts in the Specific Plan area and surrounding areas is shown in Section 4.9, *Land Use and Planning Policy*, Figure 4.9-1.

The following sections provide brief descriptions of the development regulations that currently serve to control building size and placement, thereby influencing the visual character of the area, for the zoning districts located within the Plan area. Additionally, regulations for the review of building design, fences and signage are provided.

Central Commercial District (C-3)

Within the Plan area, the properties bounded by University Drive, Menlo Avenue, El Camino Real, and Oak Grove Avenue and properties along Alma Street between Ravenswood and Oak Grove Avenues are primarily within the Central Commercial (C-3) district. In this district, the floor-area ratio (FAR)² of buildings may not exceed 1.0, although a FAR of up to 2.0 may be authorized by a use permit when required parking for the FAR above 1.0 is provided on site or nearby. The FAR of office uses is limited to 0.5 and residential densities to a maximum of 18.5 dwelling units per acre and residential FAR to a maximum of 1.0. The height of buildings shall not exceed 30 feet. There is no minimum lot area, land coverage, setback requirements, or landscaping requirements in the district. Other properties in this area are within the Parking (P) district, where the only permitted use is landscaped, off-street parking subject to approval of the City Engineer prior to development.

General Commercial District (Applicable to El Camino Real) (C-4 ECR)

The majority of the properties fronting El Camino Real within the Plan area are within the General Commercial district specific to properties on the thoroughfare (C-4 ECR). In this district, the FAR may not exceed 0.55, except by use permit (0.75 for general uses and 1.0 for automobile storage in conjunction with an automobile dealership). Office uses are limited to 0.4 and residential densities are limited to 18.5 dwelling units per acre. Maximum heights are 30 feet. Lot areas must be at least 10,000 square feet, but there are no minimum setbacks or land coverage requirements. Landscaping requirements range between five percent and ten percent of the lot area, depending on the size of the lot.

Planned Development Districts (P-D)

Select properties between El Camino Real, the Caltrain right-of-way, Middle Avenue and Encinal Avenue are within Planned Development (P-D) districts. The purpose of a P-D district is to encourage the consolidation of smaller parcels into larger parcels to provide benefits to the City which could not otherwise be obtained. Application of the P-D district requires rezoning of property and approval of development permits by the City Council. Property owners are required to submit detailed plans of proposed projects, including preliminary building plans detailing height, bulk, setbacks, and landscaping, as well as development schedules. It is intended that the

² Floor-area ratio is the ratio of total applicable floor area within a building to the size of the lot. That is, a two-story building that fully covers its lot would have a floor area ratio of 2.0.

project plans would consider the inclusion of specific controls to develop more usable open space, provide for efficient use of land, utilities and circulation systems, utilize creative and integrated design and allow for innovative and desired mixed use developments. FARs and residential densities are restricted to that of the pre-existing zoning.

***General Commercial District, Conditional (Applicable to El Camino Real)
[C-4 ECR(X)]***

The Conditional Development District (X District) is a zoning district established for combining special regulations with one of the base districts. The X designation allows for variety in the application of development regulations with the exception of FAR and residential density, which must remain consistent with the base district with which the X designation is combined.

Application of the X designation requires rezoning of the property and approval of a Conditional Development Permit by the City Council. Within the Plan area, the Safeway property is within the C-4 ECR(X) district.

Administrative and Professional District (C-1-A)

The property at the northwest corner of El Camino Real and Encinal Avenue (1600 El Camino Real) and the property at 530 Oak Grove Avenue are within the Administrative and Professional (C-1-A) district. In C-1-A districts, the maximum FAR is 0.4 and the maximum height of buildings is 35 feet. Lot areas must be 10,000 square feet, and setbacks must be 15 feet in the front, 10 feet in the rear, a minimum of five feet for the interior side and 10 feet at the corner side. Maximum land coverage is 40 percent.

Administrative, Professional, and Service District (C-1-B)

Several properties at the northwest corner of Santa Cruz Avenue and University Drive lie within the Administrative, Professional, and Service (C-1-B) district. The maximum FAR is 0.4 and maximum height of buildings is 35 feet. Lot areas must be 10,000 square feet, and setbacks must be 15 feet in the front, 10 feet in the rear, a minimum of five feet for the interior side and 10 feet at the corner side. Maximum land coverage is 40 percent.

Apartment District (R-3)

A few of the properties in the northern and southern portions of the project area are within the Apartment (R-3) district. The maximum FAR is 0.45 and the maximum residential density is dependent on the lot area but generally ranges between 12.4 and 18.5 units per acre. The maximum height is 35 feet. Lots must be at least 7,000 square feet in R-3 districts with minimum setbacks of 20 feet in the front and 15 feet in the rear. Minimum setbacks for interior sides are 10 feet and 15 feet for corner sides. Total lot coverage cannot exceed 30 percent and a minimum of 50 percent of the lot area is required to be landscaped.

Apartment-Office District (R-3-C)

Properties on the south side of Menlo Avenue are within an Apartment-Office (R-3-C) district. Residential uses are subject to R-3 district regulations, discussed above. Commercial office uses

are allowed subject to use permit approval and the C-1-A regulations, discussed above. Residential and commercial uses are not permitted on the same property.

Mixed-Use District (R-C)

Finally, properties on the north side of Oak Grove Avenue are within a Mixed-Use (R-C) district. The purpose of the R-C district is to provide for mixed office and residential developments that integrate the functional and physical elements of the development. Residential portions of projects are required to utilize the R-3 district controls (see above), except that, residential density is established at 18.5 units per acre as opposed to the range of densities in the R-3 district. Commercial uses are governed by C-1-A district controls (see above). The FAR is limited to 0.45 for residential uses, 0.4 for commercial uses, and 0.85 in total for mixed uses.

Architectural Control

With the exception of single-family dwellings, duplexes, and accessory buildings, any proposal for a new structure, addition to an existing structure or change to the exterior of a structure that requires a building permit requires that the Planning Commission conduct architectural control review with regard to the following findings:

- (1) That the general appearance of the structures is in keeping with character of the neighborhood;
- (2) That the development will not be detrimental to the harmonious and orderly growth of the city;
- (3) That the development will not impair the desirability of investment or occupation in the neighborhood;
- (4) That the development provides adequate parking as required in all applicable city ordinances and has made adequate provisions for access to such parking.

Limitations for Fences and Walls in the Plan Area

The Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 16.64) includes standards for fences in non-residential and residential areas. In non-residential areas, fences, walls, hedges and similar structures located between the building and front lot line are required to obtain approval by the Community Development Director based on the following factors:

- (1) Structural stability;
- (2) Aesthetics;
- (3) General health, safety and welfare of the community; and
- (4) Clear lines of sight for vehicular and pedestrian traffic or other safety factor.

In residential areas, fences, walls, hedges and similar structures are limited to a maximum height of four feet within the front-setback area, three feet within a line-of-sight triangular area on corner

properties, and seven feet in all other areas. The heights in residential areas may be exceeded subject to the granting of a use permit.³

Design Guidelines for Signs

The Zoning Ordinance and Sign and Awning Design Guidelines also provide regulations for the design of signs and awnings in residential and non-residential areas. The stated intent of the guidelines is to “encourage signage that helps maintain the positive image of the area enjoyed by the residents and businesses of Menlo Park. Every Menlo Park business is encouraged to post an attractive sign stating the name of the business. The sign should be at a scale appropriate to the pedestrian and vehicular streetscape and the nature of the business.”⁴ All new and modified signs require approval by the Director of Community Development or his/her designee.

4.1.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Significance Criteria

Implementation of the Plan would be considered to have significant impacts on aesthetic resources if it would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a viewshed, scenic vista or view corridor;
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings;
- Create a new source of light and glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area; or
- Create new shadow in a manner that substantially affects, in an adverse manner, the use of outdoor recreation facilities, other public open spaces, historic buildings, or a substantial number of properties.

The first four significance criteria above are derived from Appendix G of the state CEQA Guidelines. In addition, the City has elected to consider the potential effects of shadow cast by taller buildings that could be developed pursuant to the Plan. The incorporation into the EIR of a significance criterion for shadow impacts is in recognition of the fact that commenters expressed concern about potential shadow impacts both at the public workshops on the Plan and in response to the Notice of Preparation of this EIR. Accordingly, this EIR considers a substantial adverse effect on the use of outdoor recreation facilities, other public open spaces, historic buildings, or a substantial number of properties to be a significant physical effect on the environment.

³ City of Menlo Park, Municipal Code, Chapter 16: Zoning, available online: <http://www.menlopark.org/departments/pln/zoneordn.pdf>, accessed July 22, 2009, amended through May 21, 2009b.
⁴ City of Menlo Park, 2008. “Design Guidelines for Signs.” Community Development Department, available online: <http://www.menlopark.org/departments/pln/signdesnguide.pdf>, accessed March 22, 2010, published September 2008.

Impacts

Impact AES-1: Implementation of the Specific Plan would alter views along certain corridors, but these changes would not be substantially adverse and so would be less than significant. (Less than Significant)

The City of Menlo Park does not have any officially designated scenic views or vistas. However, view corridors would be affected by development pursuant to the Specific Plan.

Buildout pursuant to the Specific Plan would result in replacement of existing buildings and parking lots with larger and taller buildings along El Camino Real, the Caltrain right-of-way, Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo/Ravenswood Avenues, and Oak Grove Avenue. However, the Specific Plan includes both design controls and requirements for wider sidewalks and open space that would, to some degree, compensate for the increased sizes and heights of buildings. Specifically, the Plan includes height limits for most building facades that would serve to reduce heights along street edges, and massing, modulation and bulk controls that would limit the size of upper floors and provide breaks between buildings. (See Impact AES-4, below.) Widened sidewalks would open up views for pedestrians by providing a wider field of vision. In addition, new and improved plazas and open spaces, such as the Burgess Park Linkage, Civic Plaza, Chestnut Paseo, and Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza, would provide pedestrians access to areas currently closed or dedicated to vehicles, thereby offering pedestrians broader views down specific corridors.

The Specific Plan community workshops included illustrations that show conceptual building massings pursuant to the Specific Plan at several locations along El Camino Real and Santa Cruz Avenue. The illustrations are included as Appendix H.3 Community Workshops of the Specific Plan. The taller building heights are superimposed on the existing buildings to provide a representation of the streetscape at buildout of the Plan, but are not the exact design or height of the buildings at buildout. As shown in the illustrations, the changes in building character would further define the edges of these view corridors and further limit short-range views (views from public vantage points of a location to a distance of 0.25 mile). Taller and larger buildings would partially obscure short-range views along El Camino Real, Santa Cruz Avenue, and other corridors to a greater extent than under existing conditions. These changes would not substantially obscure views of any scenic resources. For example, the existing view of the train station, which is a visual resource, from the Caltrain right-of-way would be maintained.

Although short-range views would be altered by buildout according to the Specific Plan, mid- and long-range views would not change substantially. As stated in the setting, above, due to the flat nature of the Plan area, street trees, and the gradual curve of El Camino Real, mid- and long-range views are already substantially obscured. Therefore, taller or larger buildings that could be constructed pursuant to the Specific Plan, as well as additional landscaping, would not be visible in mid- and long-range views. Similarly, mid- and long-range views from wider sidewalks and plazas constructed pursuant to the Plan would remain limited by the flat topography and urbanized nature of the area. Long-range views of the Santa Cruz Mountains from Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Avenue, and Oak Grove Avenue would remain partially obscured by street trees.

In general, therefore, future views along the various view corridors in the Plan area would be of a more densely built urban environment, but no scenic views or vistas would be obscured. These changes to existing view corridors would not be substantially adverse, and the impact would be less than significant.

Mitigation: None required.

Impact AES-2: Implementation of the Menlo Park El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan would not result in substantial adverse impacts to scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within state scenic highways. (Less than Significant)

There are no scenic highways in or near the Plan area.⁵ Similarly, there are no rock outcroppings in the plan area. As stated above, the Menlo Park Caltrain Station is a visual resource within the Plan area. Potential shadow impacts to this building, as well as other historic architectural resources in the Specific Plan area, are discussed under Impact AES-4 (shadow), below. (Physical impacts to historic architectural resources are discussed in Section 4.4, *Cultural Resources*, of this EIR.) Impacts to views of the Santa Cruz Mountains, which are visual resources partially visible from portions of the Plan area, are addressed under Impact AES-1, above. Finally, given the urban context and fully developed character of the Plan area, mature trees are primarily located within the public right-of-ways, including streets, sidewalks and other public areas, and along the perimeter of private properties. The Specific Plan includes guidelines for the retention of existing mature trees to the extent possible (Design Guidelines D.2.01, D.2.32, D.2.44, D.3.19, D.5.17, and D.5.20) and the addition of trees and landscaping along sidewalks, in plazas and other public spaces (Design Guidelines D.2.03, D.2.20, D.2.25, D.2.39, D.2.49, D.2.53, D.3.04, D.3.07, D.3.13, D.3.22, D.4.05, D.4.14, D.5.03, D.5.04, D.5.18, and D.6.06). With the combination of the design guidelines emphasis on retention and enhancement of trees in the Specific Plan area and the location of many existing trees within public areas and on the perimeter of properties, it is not expected that implementation of the Specific Plan would result in extensive tree removal. Additionally, as discussed in Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, of this EIR, Menlo Park Municipal Code Chapter 13.24 establishes regulations for the preservation of heritage trees. Although permits may be requested for the removal or substantial pruning of a heritage tree, the action to remove a heritage tree is mitigated by requiring replacement trees as a part of the permitting process. Removal of any heritage trees would be subject to the permitting process, as well as compliance with Mitigation Measure BIO-7.

Mitigation: None required.

⁵ California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). *Officially Designated Scenic Highways: San Mateo County*. Available online: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/smatoe.htm. Accessed January 20, 2010.

Impact AES-3: Consistent with the objectives of the Specific Plan, implementation of the Plan would change the visual character of the Plan area, but would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Plan area and its surroundings. (Less than Significant)

The overarching objective of the Specific Plan is to preserve and enhance community life, character and vitality through public space improvements, mixed use infill projects sensitive to the small-town character of Menlo Park and improved connections across El Camino Real. This objective is derived from the Phase 1 Vision Plan goals and embodied in the five guiding principles of the Specific Plan: (1) enhance public space; (2) generate vibrancy; (3) sustain Menlo Park's village character; (4) enhance connectivity; and (5) promote healthy living and sustainability. The Specific Plan acknowledges the need to address the community's desire for a more active and vibrant downtown, station area and El Camino Real corridor with mixed use infill projects, new community public spaces and new connections while also modulating the design of the new development to be sensitive to the existing small-town character.

The community workshops were well attended with over 100 participants at each workshop and were a critical component in determining the objectives of the Specific Plan. Throughout the workshops, participants evaluated and provided feedback on different development scenarios that used varying types of design controls. The workshops are described below as they specifically relate to the discussion of visual character. Detailed summaries of the workshops as well as the presentation graphics are included in Appendix H.3 of the Specific Plan.

The purpose of the first workshop was to have the community reconfirm the Phase 1 Vision Plan goals, understand the existing conditions and constraints, and consider the primary issues and tradeoffs associated with future changes in the Plan area. Recurring themes that emerged from the workshop included (1) support for creating more vibrancy in the downtown through a mix of uses, extended hours, and active uses adjacent to public open spaces, (2) support for up to three-story building heights on Santa Cruz Avenue and up to five-story building heights on El Camino Real with appropriate design and massing controls, (3) a desire for more usable open space, and (4) a desire for improved connectivity for all modes of travel.

The purpose of the second workshop was to use the key concepts of connectivity, vibrancy, public space and character derived from the first workshop to discuss and identify preferred elements to be incorporated into an emerging plan. Recurring themes for the downtown and station areas included (1) having a balanced mix of uses with more development near the train station, (2) improving parks, plazas and other public spaces, (3) using the public parking plazas for infill development, (4) improving parking and consideration of parking structures, (5) support for three-story building heights in the downtown subject to appropriate design controls to be sensitive to the village fabric, and (6) support for widening sidewalks on Santa Cruz Avenue and incorporating bicycle facilities. Recurring themes for El Camino Real included (1) support for mixed use development, (2) support for building heights of up to five-stories on the east side of El Camino Real and up to three stories on the west side of El Camino Real subject to appropriate design controls, and (3) support for improving east-west crossings and connections.

The purpose of the third workshop was to present an emerging plan to the community developed from the first two workshops, receive feedback and have the community help decide on revisions to the plan. The community showed strong support for the diversity of proposed public spaces, proposed building character and massing controls, and proposed enhancements to east-west pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. Majority support was also expressed for up to five-story heights on El Camino Real and the proposed distribution and type of parking downtown.

Overall, through the community workshops, a visual character for the Specific Plan area was defined in terms of both the built environment which includes building heights, massing and design, and the public open spaces such as parks, plazas, sidewalks and roadways. The following analysis of visual character impacts determines how the Specific Plan would affect the visual experience of the Plan area. Although perception of visual character is somewhat subjective, the analysis describes to what extent the visual character would be changed, and whether this change would result in a built form or public open space that would degrade what exists under current conditions.

Built Environment

There are several elements that create the visual character of a building, including the height, massing controls, location and intensity (Floor Area Ratio or FAR). Although all of these elements play a role in building design and character, it is often the architectural design elements that provide the visual experience. As such, the discussion below focuses on height, massing controls and the location of the building relative to public vantage points as the primary drivers of the visual experience. Although intensity is an important element of buildings, it is not necessarily a defining visual element as is height and massing. The discussion below addresses height, massing controls and location on a property as maximums that would be allowed by the Specific Plan, although individual buildings would vary in how the elements are applied within a larger design framework. Figures 4.1-1 through 4.1-4 include photographs of the built environment at select locations, as well as renderings of potential development that could be allowed by the Specific Plan at the same locations.

The existing built environment of the Specific Plan area is primarily comprised of one- and two-story buildings. Although buildings with the same number of stories can have different heights, the discussion uses 14 feet as the height of existing one-story buildings and 29 feet as the height of existing two-story buildings, consistent with commonly found heights in the Specific Plan area. Taller buildings of between three- and four-stories also exist in the area, primarily along El Camino Real. Although some buildings include massing variation, the majority of existing buildings do not have upper level setbacks or other massing differentiation. Buildings, especially in the downtown area, but also along much of El Camino Real are built close to the sidewalks and these sidewalks tend to be narrow at between five and 10 feet.

The Specific Plan allows for taller buildings than currently exists, but also includes massing and design controls to moderate the degree of visual change between existing and new buildings and provide for articulation to enhance the visual interest of buildings. The Plan supports three new height limits for the area: 38 feet for the downtown area, north El Camino Real and south

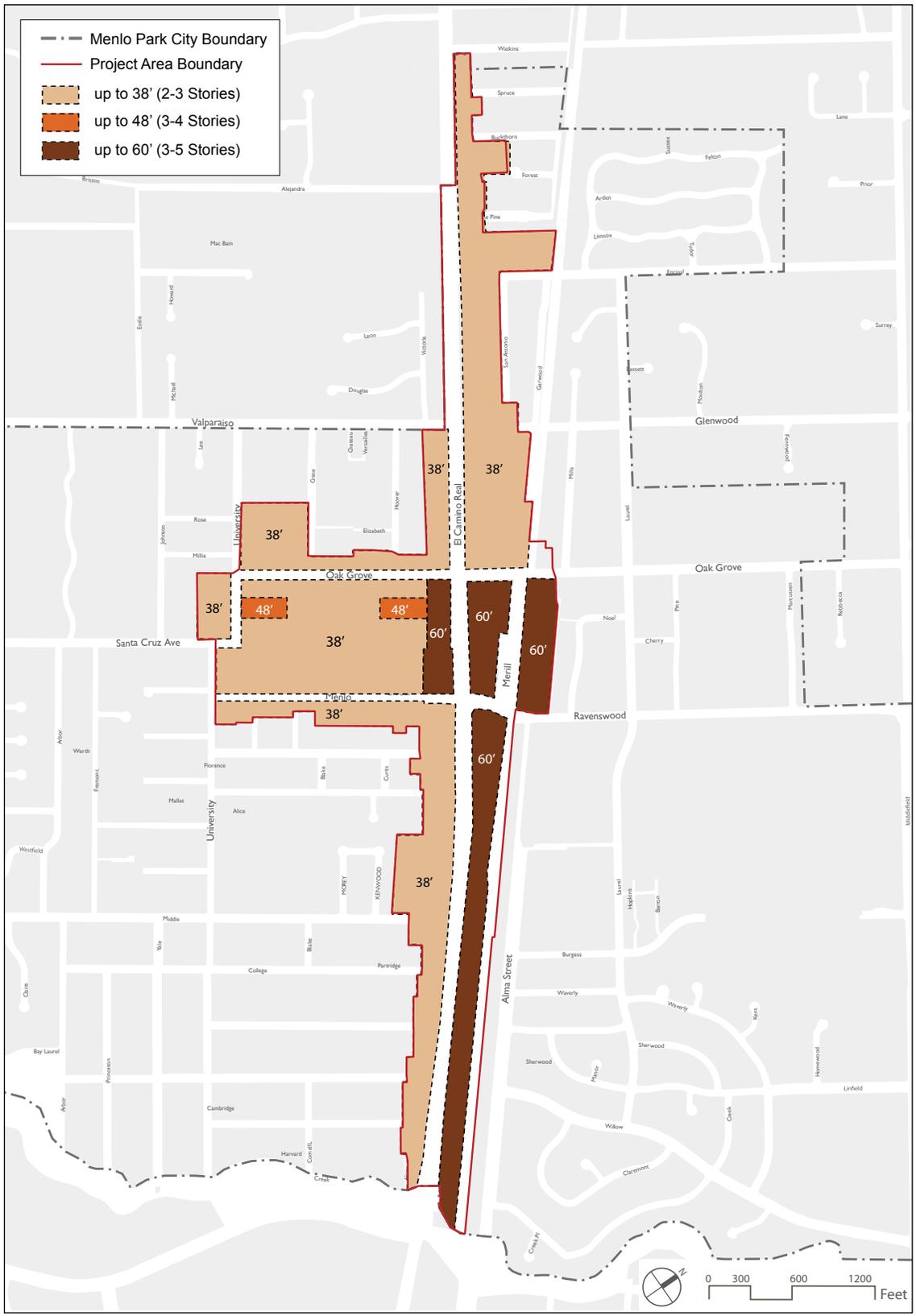
El Camino Real on the west side of the street, 60 feet for the station area and south El Camino Real on the east side of the street, and 48 feet for public parking plazas 1 and 3. **Figure 4.1.6** depicts the proposed maximum building heights. The maximum heights are moderated in most areas by the inclusion of upper level setbacks and 45-degree building profiles above façade heights of 30 feet for 38-foot heights, 38 feet for 48-foot heights, and 45 feet for 60-foot heights. Bulk controls that restrict upper levels above the maximum façade heights to 175 feet in length and 200 feet diagonal are also required in the station area and the east side of south El Camino Real where the tallest heights would be allowed.

Downtown

Within the downtown area, along Santa Cruz and Oak Grove Avenues, approximately half of the buildings are of one-story heights and half of two-story heights. Along Santa Cruz Avenue, one-story heights are concentrated between Chestnut and Crane Streets on the north side of Santa Cruz Avenue and between Crane and Evelyn Streets on the south side of Santa Cruz Avenue. Two-story heights are concentrated between El Camino Real and Chestnut Street on the north side of Santa Cruz Avenue. Along Oak Grove Avenue, one-story heights are concentrated primarily between El Camino Real and Chestnut Street on the south side of Oak Grove Avenue. There is no particular concentration of two-story and taller heights, but they are found throughout the length of Oak Grove Avenue. Along Menlo Avenue there are a higher percentage of two-story heights at approximately 72 percent of the buildings.

The Specific Plan could result in taller buildings than currently exists in the downtown area. With 38 feet of height, buildings could be developed with three stories. However, in practical terms, a third floor cannot be accommodated in the eight feet remaining between the 30-foot façade height and 38-foot maximum height. As a result, three-story tall buildings would likely have a lower façade height of approximately 25 feet to accommodate the required upper level setback and a third floor. But even with a façade height of the full 30 feet, the façade of the buildings would be generally the same height as existing two-story buildings, providing for a cohesive street edge. An upper level setback would reduce the visibility and perceived height of the third floor from the ground level perspective. Although the added height would be a change in the visual character of the downtown, the change would not introduce a substantial new height not already experienced in the downtown. The community's support for three-story heights with design controls such as upper level setbacks was confirmed through the community workshops.

The Specific Plan also includes requirements for ground floor setbacks that are consistent with the existing patterns. In the downtown, no setbacks from the sidewalk edge are required within the downtown core in order to help emphasize the existing pattern that serves to create a strong street edge. The Plan also includes the widening of sidewalks in the downtown core to provide for a minimum 12-foot pedestrian zone and five-foot furnishing zone. The wider sidewalks would serve to balance the taller building heights and help create activity for added vitality, a key goal and community desire expressed through the community workshops. The Specific Plan also includes allowed encroachments for canopies, awnings and other projections and guidelines related to building ground floor, entry and frontage treatments (Guidelines E.3.5.01 through E.3.5.25). The allowed encroachments and guidelines for frontage treatments serve to reinforce



SOURCE: City of Menlo Park, 2009

Menlo Park El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan EIR . 208581

Figure 4.1-6
Proposed Building Heights Map

the current storefront patterns and provide added visual interest. Similar approaches would be taken in the areas along the north side of Oak Grove Avenue and south side of Menlo Avenue, although greater setbacks would be required of 10 to 20 feet along the north side of Oak Grove Avenue and five to 20 feet along Menlo Avenue in order to accommodate sidewalks with minimum widths of 11 feet. The proposed setbacks would be consistent with existing patterns in these areas.

The Specific Plan addresses two of the public parking plazas differently than the remainder of downtown with regards to heights and setbacks. The two plazas would be allowed heights up to 48 feet with upper level setbacks of 10 feet minimum above a façade height of 38 feet. Any development of the plazas would also be required to maintain minimum 25-foot setbacks on all sides of the development. At the community workshops, support was expressed for infill development on plazas located to the north of El Camino Real and for addressing parking needs. The Plan has responded by retaining surface parking south of Santa Cruz Avenue and proposing structured parking and possibly housing on Plazas 1 and 3. Although the development of the plazas would represent a change, it would not be inconsistent with the built urban form of the downtown area nor would it adversely affect the visual character given that the plazas are buffered from street views on all sides for plaza 1 and on the north, south and east for plaza 3.

Station Area

The station area has a varied visual character due to the range of existing building heights and the inclusion of Menlo Center plaza and parking and open space areas adjacent to the train station. The west edge of the station area, located along the west side of El Camino Real, is developed with one-story tall buildings in the block between Santa Cruz and Oak Grove Avenues and two-story tall buildings in the block between Santa Cruz and Menlo Avenues resulting in a character similar to downtown. The area located between El Camino Real and the railroad right-of-way has two three-story tall buildings, Menlo Center at 46 feet and Menlo Square at approximately 45 feet inclusive of roof screening and approximately 50 feet at the top of the elevator tower. Other development includes an even split of one- and two-story buildings evenly located with no areas of concentration. Along Alma Street, existing one-story buildings predominate, with one two-story building. The station area also includes travel corridors of substantial width, including El Camino Real, Alma Street and the Caltrain right-of-way. The width of the travel corridors as well as the inclusion of the Menlo Center plaza and parking and open spaces adjacent to the train station result in the lack of a strong street edge.

The Specific Plan would allow for buildings up to 60 feet in height with upper level setbacks, building profiles and bulk controls required above a maximum façade height of 45 feet. The proposed height would accommodate buildings with up to four stories of commercial development or five stories if residential is included given the lower floor heights for residential development. The proposed heights are designed to implement the overall intent of the station area to create a focal point with a strong civic presence and important arrival point into Menlo Park by emphasizing a higher intensity of use consistent with the existing three-story tall buildings. The community's support for up to five-story heights with design controls such as upper level setbacks, building profiles and bulk controls was confirmed through the community workshops.

The Specific Plan also includes sidewalk requirements intended to support the Plan's goals for greater east-west connectivity. Beginning with the west edge of the station area, the Specific Plan recommends a 15-foot wide sidewalk along the north side of Santa Cruz Avenue consistent with the proposed wider sidewalks of downtown. The Plan further requires a setback of 35 feet by 10 feet at the northwest corner of El Camino Real and Santa Cruz Avenue in order to provide a small plaza with views from downtown to the train station. Moving toward the train station, the Plan proposes a new civic plaza at the east end of Santa Cruz Avenue that would connect the downtown and Menlo Center plaza with the train station and across to Alma Street. Along Alma Street, setbacks of between seven and 12 feet would be required in order to accommodate a minimum 15-foot wide sidewalk leading to two small plazas at the corners of Ravenswood Avenue and Alma Street. The Plan also addresses north-south pedestrian activity by recommending widening sidewalks to 15 feet along the east side of El Camino Real and 12 feet on the west side by adjusting roadways and lane widths to the extent possible. With the exception of Alma Street, no setbacks from street edges are required in the station area, consistent with the existing and proposed character of the downtown. Setbacks would be required along Alma Street of between seven and 12 feet to help accommodate the required sidewalk width.

The existing three-story tall buildings, plaza space and wide roadway and railroad right-of-ways establish a visual character in the station area that is different from the downtown. The Specific Plan builds on the existing visual character by allowing increased heights and additional plaza space while also including elements that better connect the station area to the downtown. The maximum façade height of 45 feet and other massing controls serve to reduce the perceived heights of the buildings from the ground floor perspective, resulting in new buildings that would be compatible with the existing three-story tall buildings. Additionally, taller buildings serve to balance the width of the roadways and railroad right-of-way and create a stronger street edge, consistent with the downtown. The stronger street edges surrounding the enhanced pedestrian facilities and plazas support the greater intensity of use and vibrancy desired by the community as expressed at the workshops. Similar to downtown, the Plan includes allowed encroachments for canopies, awnings and other projections and guidelines related to building ground floor, entry and frontage treatments (Guidelines E.3.5.01 through E.3.5.25) to enhance the visual interest of buildings. Although the Specific Plan would result in a change to the visual character, the change supports the objectives of the Plan and would serve to better integrate the station area with downtown.

El Camino Real North and South of the Station Area

Along El Camino Real to the north of the station area, approximately 75 percent of the buildings are one-story in height. Other buildings are two stories in height with one three-story-tall residential building near the north border of the city. There is a concentration of one-story tall buildings on the east side of the street between Valparaiso/Glenwood Avenue and Oak Grove Avenue, however this area also contains one approved project and one pending project with heights up to 40 feet. The Specific Plan would allow for 38-foot heights, with upper level setbacks above a façade height of 30 feet on the east side of the street north of Encinal Avenue. The remainder of the area would be limited to 38 feet of height but would not require upper level setbacks. The intent of this area is to gradually increase building heights from the northerly

border of the city to the station area, where taller heights would be located in order to encourage greater activity near the downtown and transit center. The Specific Plan also requires setbacks sufficient to widen sidewalks along the east side of the street to 15 feet minimum and along the west side of the street to 12 feet minimum.

Along El Camino Real south of the Station Area, the east side of the street is developed with a three-story, 49-foot tall building and a four-story, 56-foot tall building near Ravenswood Avenue. The center of this segment is comprised of one-story buildings and surface parking lots before being capped on the southern end by the 45-foot tall Stanford Park hotel. Moreover, the area constitutes a relatively narrow strip of land that is heavily developed with automobile-oriented commercial uses, many of which are vacant and do not offer high-quality aesthetic character at present. Along the west side of the street, approximately 72 percent of the buildings are one-story in height, with a concentration of one-story buildings between Menlo/Ravenswood Avenues and Middle Avenue. The Specific Plan would allow for 60-foot heights with upper level setbacks, building profiles and bulk controls above a maximum façade height of 45 feet along the east side of the street, and heights of 38 feet with upper level massing controls above a façade height of 30 feet on the west side of the street. Similar to north of the Station Area, setbacks would be required sufficient to widen sidewalks to 15 feet minimum along the east side and 12 feet minimum on the west side of the street.

Similar to the downtown and station area, the added height would be a change from the visual character of the existing buildings, but would not result in adverse visual impacts. The increased heights help to meet the objectives of the Specific Plan for increased use of underutilized properties, most specifically along the east side of the street. Heights of up to five stories was supported by the community through the community workshops and seen as an appropriate way to generate additional vibrancy and encourage infill development. The change to a 38-foot height north of the station area and south of the station area on the west side of the street would not introduce a substantial new height not already experienced in these areas from existing two- and three-story buildings. For the area south of the station on the east side of the street, the proposed 60-foot height limit would be consistent with an existing building in the area therefore would not introduce a height to the area not already in existence. The proposed 45-foot façade height would be compatible with other existing buildings with heights at or near 45 feet. Additionally, the 60-foot height is concentrated in a commercial corridor separated from residential uses by the approximately 100-foot width of El Camino Real and 200-foot combined width of the railroad right-of-way and Alma Street. The effect along El Camino Real itself would be limited by the width of the street, which would serve to decrease the perception of the increased height, since taller buildings would appear relatively less so in the context of the expansive pavement in the area. The visual perception of both the 38-foot and 60-foot proposed heights would be reduced with use of the various massing controls above the façade maximum heights of 30 feet and 45 feet, respectively. Additionally, the Plan includes allowed encroachments for canopies, awnings and other projections and guidelines related to building ground floor, entry and frontage treatments (Guidelines E.3.5.01 through E.3.5.25) to enhance the visual interest of buildings. Development pursuant to the Specific Plan along El Camino Real north and south of the Station Area would not introduce height not already found in the Specific Plan area, would allow for

infill development of underutilized parcels within development standards that would require varied massing for visual interest, setbacks to encourage a stronger street edge and balance to the width of El Camino Real and railroad right-of-ways thereby not resulting in an adverse impact, but potentially a beneficial impact.

Public Open Space

Public open space is generally comprised of parks, plazas and streetscapes. Although several parks are located close to the Plan area, including Fremont Park, Burgess Park, Nealon Park, and Holbrook-Palmer Park, there are no parks currently located within the boundaries of the Plan area. Similarly, there are limited plazas, with the most notable being the plazas associated with Menlo Center and the train station. The most prevalent form of public open space is the streetscape. Streetscape character is created by features such as landscaping, sidewalk design and street furniture and amenities. Within the downtown, sidewalks tend to be fairly narrow at approximately seven feet. Along Santa Cruz Avenue, street furnishings are designed to serve pedestrians, but in some cases also create constraints by reducing the effective area for circulation and social interaction. Santa Cruz Avenue is identifiable by a tree-lined median, as well as varying types and sizes of trees planted irregularly in the sidewalks and planting areas. Other streets within the downtown, as well as the public parking plazas focus on function, whether for pedestrian access or parking. The El Camino Real streetscape includes narrow sidewalks of between five and 10 feet, narrowing in places down to a size that places pedestrians close to the street edge, making it an uncomfortable pedestrian experience. In addition, several intersections have been compromised by infrastructural elements that further restrict pedestrian access. Landscaping varies in design, quality and maturity with some areas such as between Roble and Ravenswood Avenues having mature street trees, and other areas having less or immature landscaping.

The Specific Plan establishes a network of new public open spaces linked by landscaped streets to address key objectives of the Specific Plan for the enhancement of public spaces and connectivity. Through the community workshops, the public supported a diversity of public spaces and the enhancement of east-west pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. Within the downtown, sidewalks would be widened and improved along Santa Cruz Avenue and a new south parking plaza pedestrian link added, as well as new public spaces, including pocket parks, the Chestnut Street connector, Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza, the Chestnut Street Paseo, and use of two of the public parking plazas for occasional special events.

Within the station area, the sidewalk improvements in the downtown would be carried through to the station area and enhanced with a new Civic Plaza at the train station. The Civic Plaza would be a destination and gathering place for travelers and visitors to Menlo Park and downtown. Specific Plan Guidelines D.3.01 through D.3.08 would promote the plaza's design to ensure it is visually linked to downtown and to areas to the east. In addition, Guidelines D.3.09 through D.3.11 would seek to enhance the existing Menlo Center plaza to provide a greater visual connection between that plaza and surrounding streets and open spaces. The Alma Street Civic Walk would be created to link the Civic Center with the station area, as envisioned in Guidelines D.3.12 through D.3.19. At the southern end of the station area, the Ravenswood

Gateway would be redesigned pursuant to Specific Plan Guidelines D.3.20 through D.3.25, which calls for a coordinated treatment with the Alma Street Walk, lighting, signage, and other pedestrian improvements. Combined, these new open spaces and design guidelines would announce the presence of the station area and strengthen its connection to both downtown and to surrounding neighborhoods.

The Plan's attention to pedestrian amenities would be continued along El Camino Real, with wider sidewalks, particularly along the east side of the street where sidewalks would be widened to 15 feet with a 10-foot minimum pedestrian zone and a minimum five-foot furnishing and landscaping zone. Pursuant to Specific Plan Design Guidelines D.4.01 through D.4.05, sidewalks would incorporate design criteria and a coordinated set of streetscape improvements to encourage walking and pedestrian activity. Pursuant to Guidelines D.4.06 through D.4.11, sidewalk extensions would be designed to shorten crossing time and incorporate streetscape elements and amenities to further pedestrian comfort and safety. These sidewalk improvements would not result in a significant impact to visual character. To the contrary, they would create a continual visual theme along the El Camino Real corridor.

Development pursuant to the Specific Plan would also result in open spaces along the east side of El Camino Real, south of the Station Area. The Burgess Park Linkage would create a seating and green space area that could also incorporate a pedestrian and bicycle linkage between Middle Avenue and Alma Street. Such an extension would continue the Middle Avenue view corridor eastward and provide a new public open space where none currently exists, pursuant to Specific Plan Guidelines D.4.12 through D.4.17.

These improvements would not result in adverse effects on the character of the area. To the contrary, they would encourage pedestrian activity on the sidewalks and create new spaces for public enjoyment that would complement the existing mixed use nature of the area.

Conclusion

Through the community workshops, a visual character for the Specific Plan area was defined in terms of both the built environment which includes building heights, massing and design, and the public open spaces such as parks, plazas, sidewalks and roadways. The Specific Plan acknowledges the need to address the community's desire for a more active and vibrant downtown, station area and El Camino Real corridor with mixed use infill projects, new community public spaces and new connections while also modulating the design of the new development to be sensitive to the existing small-town character.

As referenced in Section 4.1.2, *Regulatory Setting* above, the Menlo Park General Plan guides development and use of land in the City. Although the General Plan will be modified to incorporate the Specific Plan, the Plan is generally consistent with the existing goals and policies of the General Plan, which remain relevant and will be retained throughout the adoption of the Specific Plan. The Plan itself includes a discussion of the relationship between the General Plan and Specific Plan (Table G1 of the Specific Plan – El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan/City of Menlo Park General Plan Consistency Analysis).

Related to visual character, the General Plan includes goals and policies related to residential development, commercial development and open spaces. Regarding residential development, the General Plan encourages the quality and compatibility of new development with existing residential neighborhoods. The Specific Plan includes massing and design controls such as façade heights, upper level setbacks, building profiles, and rear setbacks of between 10 and 20 feet where new development would abut existing residential development to ensure that infill development will be compatible with existing residential uses. Regarding commercial development, the General Plan encourages the strengthening of downtown as a vital and competitive shopping area with a mix of uses and services while preserving the historic character and ensuring sufficient parking provided in an attractively designed manner. The Specific Plan would require massing controls in the downtown area to ensure that new development is compatible with existing development. Additionally, design guidelines are incorporated in the Specific Plan to mimic historic patterns of narrow storefronts with facades that help to active the street. The Plan also provides for a diversity of parking options that would provide sufficient parking for existing and future uses. Regarding open spaces, the General Plan encourages the provision of ample and diverse public open spaces and pedestrian facilities, and the provision of extensive landscaping in public and private developments. The Specific Plan adds significant new public spaces and enhances the pedestrian environment by creating wider sidewalks and new east-west connections. Additionally, open space in private developments is required by the Specific Plan. Although no private open space is required in the downtown area in order to maintain the strong street edge that currently exists, a minimum of 20 percent is required in areas adjacent to the downtown, a minimum of 30 percent is required in all remaining areas with the exception of the southeast side of El Camino Real where the requirement is 40 percent.

The Specific Plan would allow for changes in the built environment and public open spaces that would alter the visual character of the area. With reference to the built environment, although increased heights and intensities would be allowed, massing controls including façade height, upper level setbacks, building profiles and bulk limitations would lessen the visual effect of the increased heights while also creating a more defined street edge. The tallest buildings at 60 feet in height would be located within existing commercial corridors, furthest from existing single-family residential neighborhoods, and along street and railroad right-of-ways that provide substantial buffers due to the width of those right-of-ways. Rear setbacks are also required throughout the Plan area to provide further buffers between new development and existing neighborhoods. The Specific Plan includes encroachments for canopies, awnings and other projections and guidelines related to building ground floor, entry and frontage treatments for commercial development that reinforces existing storefront patterns in the Plan area and provides visual interest.

The Specific Plan would add to the number and diversity of public open spaces and improve connections between the downtown, station area, El Camino Real, and other areas of the city. Also, pursuant to Specific Plan Guidelines D.5.01 through D.5.14, a consistent and coordinate streetscape would be developed.

The changes to the Plan area would occur within the context of the existing urban environment and would continue to appear as a combination of an auto-oriented commercial corridor along El Camino Real and a more intimate, smaller-scale downtown village along Santa Cruz Avenue and surrounding streets. The Plan would not introduce new heights not already found in the Plan area and would not affect natural, undeveloped areas. With the increase in public open spaces and wider sidewalks, more consistent landscaping and streetscape treatments, massing controls and detailed building design guidelines, the Plan would ensure that visual character impacts are less than significant.

Mitigation: None required.

Impact AES-4: Implementation of the Specific Plan would not result in shading of outdoor recreation facilities, other public open spaces, historic buildings, or a substantial number of properties to an extent that would substantially affect, in an adverse manner, their use. (Less than Significant)

A shadow analysis of the proposed project was prepared to determine the extent of new shadows that would be cast in the project area by a conceptual composition of buildings constructed on opportunity sites identified in the Specific Plan and in accordance with Specific Plan height, bulk, and urban design controls.⁶ It also includes shadow cast by existing buildings. Shadow was evaluated for three times per day, at 9:00 a.m., noon, and 3:00 p.m., during the spring and fall equinoxes, when the sun is at its midpoint and shadows are midway through their progression between extremes; the summer solstice, when the sun is at its highest and shadows are shortest; and the winter solstice, when the sun is at its lowest and shadows are longest.⁷ The times and dates selected allow for analysis of a representative range of shadow impacts throughout the year. Although not every development parcel was simulated to maximum buildout (i.e., maximum height and bulk permitted), the shadow analysis provides a basis for informed analysis of impacts of possible development scenarios.

In developed Peninsula downtowns and arterial corridors, shade and shadows are common, both from existing buildings as well as trees. Although shadows can have adverse impacts in some situations, many types of active spaces (for example: small parks, restaurant outdoor seating areas, and shopping corridors covered by awnings) experience shadow yet remain vibrant and well-used. In fact, such areas may be improved by shadows during certain times, for example during warmer weather when direct sunlight can be uncomfortable for extended periods of time. The following sections discuss the potential shadow impacts on the use of public outdoor recreation facilities and other public open spaces, including sidewalks, on historic buildings, and

⁶ A copy of the shadow study figures is included as Appendix B of this document. The shadow study figures are shown for March, June and December. The March figures represent the spring and fall equinoxes as the shadows are the same during these times of the year. The June figures represent the summer solstice and the December figures represent the winter solstice.

⁷ For this analysis, Pacific Standard Time is used in December, and Pacific Daylight Time is used for March, June, and September.

on a substantial number of other properties. The discussion references the number of building stories to represent building heights. Although buildings with the same number of stories can have different heights as well as design features that create variation in shadows, the discussion uses 14 feet as the height of existing one-story buildings and 29 feet as the height of existing two-story buildings, consistent with commonly found heights in the Specific Plan area. Potential maximum building heights outlined in the Specific Plan are included in the discussion and shown in Figure 4.1-6. Also, the discussion assumes a street orientation with El Camino Real running north-south and Santa Cruz Avenue running east-west for purposes of describing the shadow directions (northward, southward, eastward and westward).

In general, there are limited new shadow impacts, none of which have the potential to significantly affect in an adverse manner the use of outdoor recreational areas, public open spaces, historical resources, or substantial numbers of other properties. Given the built character of the Plan area, most new shadow tends to overlap existing shadow as opposed to creating shadow where none previously existed. Additionally, the orientation of the street grid is offset from north by about 35 degrees (i.e., Santa Cruz Avenue and streets parallel run northeast-southwest, and El Camino Real and streets parallel run northwest-southeast) limiting the shadow cast over public sidewalks and streets. Furthermore, the Specific Plan itself includes design requirements that reduce shadow impacts. Requirements include façade height limits, additional setbacks above the façade height limits, and bulk restrictions that serve to limit the size of upper levels and the shadows cast by the buildings.

Public Open Spaces

Downtown

Within and adjacent to the downtown, the existing outdoor recreation facilities and public open spaces include Fremont Park, the sidewalks to the extent they are used for pedestrian activities and outdoor dining, and the public parking plazas to the extent they are used for events such as the Farmer's Market. Fremont Park does not receive shadow from buildings within the Plan area under existing conditions, and also would not receive shadow under the Specific Plan due to its orientation southwest of the Plan area.

Under existing conditions, sidewalks receive varying degree of shadow from the primarily one- and two-story buildings currently located in the downtown area. In general, the longest shadows are cast northward in the mornings and eastward in the afternoons. Lesser shadows are cast southward in the afternoon and westward on spring, fall and summer mornings. More detail on the shadows from existing buildings is discussed below for specific times of the day.

In the mornings, northward shadows are longest in the winter, ranging from approximately 55 feet for a one-story building to 100 feet for a two-story building, shorter in the spring and fall at approximately 27 feet for a one-story building and 50 feet for a two-story building, and shortest in the summer at approximately 12 feet for a one-story building and 25 feet for a two-story building. Eastward shadows are cast in the winter and range from approximately 15 feet for a one-story building to 27 feet for a two-story building. Westward shadows in the spring and fall

are approximately two feet for a one-story building and four feet for a two-story building and summer shadows are approximately six feet for a one-story building and 12 feet for a two-story building. No southward shadows are cast.

At noon, northward shadows are longest in the winter, ranging from approximately 15 feet for a one-story building to 30 feet for a two-story building, shorter in the spring and fall at approximately seven feet for a one-story building and 15 feet for a two-story building, and shortest in the summer at approximately two feet for a one-story building and five feet for a two-story building. Eastward shadows are also longest in the winter, ranging from approximately 22 feet for a one-story building to 45 feet for a two-story building, shorter in the spring and fall at approximately 10 feet for a one-story building and 18 feet for a two-story building, and shortest in the summer at approximately three feet for a one-story building and five feet for a two-story building. No westward or southward shadows are cast.

In the afternoon, no northward or westward shadows are cast. Eastward shadows are longest in the winter and range from approximately 48 feet for a one-story building to 97 feet for a two-story building. Eastward shadows are shorter in the spring and fall at approximately 18 feet for a one-story building and 35 feet for a two-story building, and shortest in the summer at approximately eight feet for a one-story building and 15 feet for a two-story building. Southward shadows are generally the same length at all times of the year and range from approximately eight feet for a one-story building to 13 feet for a two-story building.

The existing sidewalks in the downtown area are approximately seven feet in width. Given the shadows described above, existing one-story buildings shade much of the sidewalks. On the north side of Santa Cruz Avenue and parallel streets, sidewalks are shaded every afternoon. The south side of Santa Cruz Avenue and parallel streets experience shade every morning. The east side of the cross streets that run perpendicular to Santa Cruz Avenue are shaded on summer mornings by the approximately six to 12-foot shadows created by one- and two-story buildings and partially shaded on spring and fall mornings by two to four-foot shadows. The west side of the cross streets are shaded on winter mornings and every afternoon.

The Specific Plan would allow for increased heights of 38 feet compared to the currently allowed maximum heights of 30 feet within the area zoned C-3 (Central Commercial District) and 35 feet for areas north of Oak Grove Avenue, west of University Drive and south of Menlo Avenue. To help lessen the effects of the increased height, the new height limit would include a requirement for massing controls with a minimum 10-foot setback above a 30-foot façade height. In the central commercial area, the façade height would be equal to the current maximum height and in the areas adjacent to the commercial center the façade height would be lower than the currently allowed maximum height. The Specific Plan also allows for taller heights of 48 feet on two of the public parking plazas. Shadow impacts specific to the parking plazas are discussed below. The proposed 38-foot height limit would accommodate up to three-story tall buildings. However, as discussed in Impact AES-3, a third floor cannot be accommodated in the eight feet remaining between the 30-foot façade height and 38-foot maximum height. As a result, three-story tall buildings would likely have a lower façade height of approximately 25 feet to accommodate the

required upper level setback and a third floor. A two-story building would be able to use the full 30-foot maximum façade height. Due to the street grid orientation and given the required upper level setbacks, the shadows that would be cast by three-story tall buildings would be approximately double the height of existing one-story buildings but generally equivalent to existing two-story buildings. Shadows would most often overlap existing shadow and would not create additional shadow on sidewalks than occurs under existing conditions. In addition to allowing an increased building height, the Specific Plan includes guidelines for wider sidewalks along Santa Cruz Avenue (Guidelines D.2.01 and D.2.07 through D.2.10) and Chestnut and Crane Streets in the areas leading to the proposed pocket parks (Guideline D.2.52). Where feasible, sidewalks along Santa Cruz Avenue could be widened to include a building frontage zone, 12-foot wide pedestrian zone and five-foot wide furnishing zone. Sidewalks along Chestnut and Crane Streets could be widened to create an eight-foot wide pedestrian zone. As sidewalks are widened, more of the sidewalk would be exposed to sun than under existing conditions. For example, along Santa Cruz Avenue more of the sidewalk would be exposed to sun during the noontime in the spring, summer and fall where shadows would range from approximately two to seven feet from an existing one-story building and five to 15 feet for a taller building.

Under the Specific Plan, public parking plazas 1 and 3 would be allowed a maximum height of 48 feet with a required upper level setback on all sides of 10 feet minimum above a façade height of 38 feet to accommodate future potential structured parking (including an option for a mixed use parking garage/housing project in plaza 3). Potential new development on the public parking plazas would cast new northward shadows in the mornings of approximately 30 feet in the summer, 60 feet in the spring and fall, and 140 feet in the winter. The shadows would reduce throughout the day such that no shadow would be cast by mid afternoon. Eastward shadows would be cast primarily from noon through the afternoon, with maximum shadows of approximately 20 feet in the summer, 47 feet in the spring and fall, and 125 feet in the winter. There would be southward shadows of between 17 and 22 feet in mid afternoon and westward shadows of between five and 15 feet on summer, spring and fall mornings. The parking plazas are surrounded primarily by other buildings and not public open spaces. Additionally, any structured parking would be separated from the existing buildings by a minimum setback of 25 feet in order to accommodate circulation needs and provide an interface with the existing buildings. Given that the possible shadow that would be created by the development of structured parking would replace existing surface parking lots and new shadow would therefore be cast largely on spaces currently used for automobile parking and adjacent buildings, the new shadows would not substantially impact the use of the area for its primary purpose of parking. The impact of the development of structured parking or a parking/housing project on the Crane Street pocket park is discussed below.

Public parking plazas to the south of Santa Cruz Avenue would not experience new shadow to the extent that there would be reduced use of the plazas as a result of taller development on existing building sites. This is because most surrounding existing properties that have the potential to cast northward shadow on the plazas are currently developed at two-story building heights and, as discussed above, if redeveloped with three-story tall buildings with upper level setbacks, would cast shadow generally equivalent to the existing two-story tall buildings.

The Specific Plan would permit new development in several locations on the public parking plazas to the south of Santa Cruz Avenue where no buildings currently exist. One of the building sites is a proposed market place that would border Chestnut Street, adjacent to public parking plazas 6 and 7. The market place building is envisioned in the Specific Plan as being a small-scale open air or enclosed area. At most, the market place would be one story in height, casting eastward shadows onto parking plaza 7 in the afternoon of between 18 and 48 feet with the longest shadows occurring in winter. The new shadows would not reduce the desirability of the plazas for their primary use as parking areas. Westward shadows would be cast on parking plaza 6, the site of the Farmer's Market, of between two and six feet in the mornings. The small degree of shadow that would be cast would not impact the functionality of the Farmer's Market.

A second location where new buildings could be constructed on the existing parking plazas is along Evelyn Street, adjacent to parking plazas 4 and 5. These buildings are envisioned as three-story mixed use buildings. New three-story tall buildings with upper level setbacks would cast shadows eastward onto plaza 5 in the spring and fall of approximately 18 feet at noon extending to approximately 40 feet in the afternoon. In the summer, eastward shadows would be approximately three feet at noon extending to 15 feet in the afternoon and in winter the shadows would range from 27 feet in the morning to approximately 110 feet in the afternoon. Westward shadows are more limited with lengths of approximately two feet in the morning during spring and fall and approximately 12 feet in the morning during summer toward plaza 4. With the exception of the long shadows on winter afternoons, the new shadow cast on the parking plazas would be limited to the edges of the plazas on spring and fall afternoons and midday in winter. The new shadows that could be created would not reduce the desirability of the plazas for their primary use as parking areas. Additionally, winter afternoons are not an optimal time for special outdoor events, therefore the longer shadows at this time would not be a substantial deterrent to use of plaza 5 for special events.

The Specific Plan proposes new public open spaces including the Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza, Chestnut Street Paseo and market place, south parking plaza pedestrian link, flex space parking plazas 5 and 6, and pocket parks. The flex space parking plazas are discussed above in reference to the parking plazas south of Santa Cruz Avenue.

The Santa Cruz Avenue Central Plaza is adjacent to existing two-story-height buildings to the south and one-story-height buildings to the north. As noted earlier in the discussion, there would be a generally equivalent shadow with the replacement of two-story-height buildings with three-story tall buildings with upper level setbacks, but shadows would modestly increase in the afternoons from approximately eight feet to 13 feet if one-story-height buildings were replaced with three-story tall buildings with upper level setbacks. The modest increase in afternoon shadows would not substantially affect or preclude the use of the plaza and would provide additional shade on warm afternoons. The Specific Plan recognizes the desirability of shading during the summer to make public spaces more inviting.

The Chestnut Street Paseo and market place is adjacent to an existing two-story-height building to the east and a partial two-story height building to the west of Chestnut Street. Under the existing

conditions, Chestnut Street is partially shaded in the afternoon in spring, fall, and summer and in the mornings in the winter. The street is fully shaded during winter afternoons. A change from a two-story building height to a three-story building height with upper level setbacks would not create additional shadow impacts given that the shadows would be generally equivalent and the fact that the street is completely shaded during winter afternoons under existing conditions.

The south parking plaza pedestrian link is adjacent to both one-story- and two-story-height buildings, with the majority of the one-story-height buildings in the blocks between Crane Street and University Drive. As discussed earlier, the shadow from three-story tall buildings with upper level setbacks would be generally equivalent to the existing two-story height buildings. However, shadows would increase from approximately eight feet to 13 feet in the afternoons if the one-story-height buildings were to be replaced with three-story tall buildings with upper level setbacks. Given that the pedestrian sidewalks would be shaded under existing conditions, the increase in shadow is not a significant new constraint on the transitory use of the proposed pathway.

Two new pocket parks are also proposed in the Specific Plan along Chestnut and Crane Streets. Both pocket parks would be developed on sites with existing surface parking. Under existing conditions, both pocket parks would receive shade in the mornings up through early afternoon, with the amount of shade decreasing throughout the day, from adjacent two-story-height buildings. At its maximum, the amount of shade cast north varies from approximately 25 feet in the summer to over 100 feet in the winter. Specific to the Crane Street park, it would also receive shadow cast south in the afternoons of about 13 feet in length. As discussed earlier, new three-story tall development would cast generally equivalent shadows to the existing two-story-height buildings. However, both pocket parks would also be located adjacent to sites currently used for surface parking and on which new buildings are proposed. The Crane Street pocket park would be located east of public parking plaza 3. If the plaza were to be developed with structured parking or a structured parking/housing project, the park would receive shadow cast eastward of approximately 75 feet on winter afternoons, depending on the exact distance of the park in relation to the development. The Chestnut Street pocket park would be located to the east of public parking plaza 2. If the plaza were to be developed with a new three-story tall building with upper level setbacks, the park would receive additional shade cast eastward during the spring and fall of approximately 18 feet at noon extending to approximately 40 feet in the late afternoon, in summer of approximately 15 feet during late afternoons, and in winter of approximately 27 feet in the mornings extending throughout the day to approximately 110 feet by late afternoon. Although the proposed parks are partially shaded in the mornings under existing conditions, potentially taller development adjacent to each park would introduce shade in the afternoon. Both the existing and potential new shadow would be greatest in the winter, shading a majority of the parks. The inclusion of the proposed pocket parks helps to address one of the key objectives of the Specific Plan which is to provide plaza and park spaces. The Plan further defines the character of the pocket parks as being green and shaded with landscaping and seating areas. The partial shading of the parks throughout the year, would provide opportunities for both shady and sunny areas of the park, consistent with the objectives of the Specific Plan and would not adversely impact the use of the parks as places for respite and gathering.

Station Area

Within the station area, the Specific Plan allows heights of up to 60 feet, with required minimum setbacks of 10 feet above a façade maximum height of 45 feet. A height of 60 feet generally allows for four stories of commercial development or five stories if residential is included due to the lower ceiling heights in residential development.

Within the station area, the existing outdoor recreation facilities and public open spaces include Menlo Center Plaza and the sidewalks to the extent they are used for pedestrian activities and outdoor dining. The Plan also proposes improvements to outdoor public spaces including a Civic Plaza, Alma Street Civic Walk and Ravenswood Gateway. Shadow impacts on both existing and proposed public spaces are discussed in this section.

Under existing conditions, Menlo Center Plaza receives very little shadow, peaking with westward shadows of approximately 18 feet in the mornings during the summer from Menlo Center itself. Given the age of Menlo Center at approximately 20 years old, it is not anticipated that the site would be redeveloped in the short- or mid-term. The only other development envisioned in the Specific Plan that would have the potential to create shadow on Menlo Center Plaza would be a maximum height building directly across El Camino Real from the plaza which would cast eastward shadow of approximately 145 feet on winter afternoons, resulting in a partial shading on the portion of the plaza nearest El Camino Real. The shadow would not reach the plaza during other times of the year. In that sun would still reach the portions of the plaza on winter afternoons near the buildings, where outdoor seating is located, the additional shading would not adversely impact the usability of the plaza.

The Specific Plan proposes a new public plaza, Civic Plaza, to the northeast of the existing Menlo Center Plaza, at the eastern end of Santa Cruz Avenue. This location to the northeast places the plaza out of much of the range of the northward shadows cast by the Menlo Center buildings. The plaza would, however, receive some shadow from taller south-facing buildings. The redevelopment of the existing one-story-height buildings with four- to five-story-height buildings would create additional shadow, increasing from approximately eight feet in the afternoons to approximately 18 feet in the winter, 22 feet in the spring and fall and 27 feet in the summer. The inclusion of the proposed plaza helps to address key objectives of the Specific Plan to provide plaza space, activate the train station area, and improve pedestrian and bicycle connections. The partial shading of the plaza would provide opportunities for both shady and sunny areas and would not substantially affect or preclude use of the plaza as a transit and gathering center for the city. The Specific Plan recognizes the desirability of shading during the summer to make public spaces more inviting.

The primary sidewalks in the station area that receive shadow under existing conditions are along El Camino Real, Alma Street, and short segments of Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo/Ravenswood Avenues, and Oak Grove Avenue. With the exception of Menlo Center at approximately 46 feet in height, El Camino Real within the station area is primarily developed with one-story-height buildings and a few two-story-height buildings. El Camino Real receives shadow primarily from buildings on the west side of the street where existing one-story-height buildings create eastward

afternoon shadows ranging from eight feet in the summer to 18 feet in the spring and fall and 48 feet in the winter. Two-story heights create shadows generally double that of the one-story heights. The development of four- to five-story heights would increase afternoon eastward shadows to approximately 20 feet in the summer, 48 feet in the spring and fall and 145 feet in the winter. Winter mornings would also be shaded eastward approximately 15 feet by a one-story height building and 27 feet for a two-story or taller height building. Westward shadows occur only in spring, summer and fall mornings and generally range from two feet for a one-story height building to six feet for a taller building in the spring and fall and from approximately six to 18 feet in the summer. Given the width of the existing sidewalks at approximately seven feet, sidewalks are shaded throughout the year in the afternoon and on winter mornings on the west side of El Camino Real from the existing one-story buildings. The additional shade cast by taller buildings would not create further shading of these sidewalks than exists under current conditions. Westward shadows are limited to spring, fall and summer mornings and would increase with taller buildings. However, the shadows are fairly limited in length and would recede by noon. Sidewalks on the east side of El Camino Real may also receive some added shadow on winter afternoons from new taller buildings on the west side of El Camino Real. However, the sidewalks on the east side of El Camino Real would continue to receive partial to full sun on winter mornings, and from noon through the afternoon throughout the year.

Alma Street is similarly developed with mostly one-story buildings and one two-story building. Because of Alma Street's adjacency to the railroad right-of-way, there are no eastward shadows cast on Alma Street. Similar to El Camino Real, westward cast shadows are limited to shadows in spring, fall and summer mornings. As discussed above, these are generally shorter shadows of less than four feet in the spring and fall for one- and two-story heights and ranging from 6 feet for a one-story height to 12 feet for a two-story height in the summer. A four- to five-story height building would increase the shadows to approximately six feet in the spring and fall and 18 feet in the summer. The Specific Plan includes a proposed public improvement identified as the Alma Street Civic Walk. The improvement would increase the sidewalk along Alma Street to a minimum 15-foot width, thereby enhancing pedestrian circulation between the downtown, station area and Civic Center. The Specific Plan further calls for the walk to be tree-lined to create ample shade. The increased shadow from taller buildings would be consistent with the proposed character of the Alma Street Civic Walk and yet allow for sun on a portion of the sidewalk for most of the year. A second improvement identified in the Specific Plan is the Ravenswood Gateway which is connected to the Alma Street Civic Walk. The Gateway is intended to create a sense of gateway to both the Civic Center and downtown and, as such, spans Ravenswood Avenue with two small plazas on each side of the street. The Gateway is bordered by the tall one-story height of the Library to the south and a one-story tall building to the north. If the one-story tall building were to be replaced with a four- to-five-story tall building, southward afternoon shadows would increase from approximately eight feet to between 18 feet in the winter and 27 feet in the summer. The increase in afternoon shadow would not affect the intended use of the plazas as a pedestrian crossing and civic gateway.

Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo/Ravenswood Avenues and Oak Grove Avenue are primarily lined with one- and two-story-height buildings within the station area. The one exception is a three-

story height residential complex on Oak Grove Avenue east of El Camino Real. Existing shadow is similar to the downtown with the longest northward shadows ranging from approximately 12 to 55 feet for a one-story height to between 25 and 100 feet for a two-story height occurring on winter, spring and fall mornings and southward shadows ranging from eight to 13 feet in the afternoons. Under existing conditions, the sidewalks receive sun at noontime during the summer, but otherwise are generally shaded given the width of sidewalks at approximately seven feet. Proposed taller buildings would lengthen shadows, including shading more of the sidewalk at noontime in the summer. However, north facing sidewalks would continue to receive sun in the afternoon year round and south facing sidewalks would continue to receive sun in the mornings.

El Camino Real North and South of Downtown⁸

The Specific Plan proposes distinct height and design regulations for different segments of El Camino Real depending on the surrounding land use context. North of Oak Grove Avenue, the Plan proposes a height limit of 38 feet although there are different requirements for upper story setbacks along this segment. The portion of El Camino Real north of Encinal Avenue includes upper floor setbacks of 10 feet minimum above a façade height maximum of 30 feet in recognition of the location of the segment adjacent to primarily one- and two-story height single-family residences to the east. Existing buildings in this segment are a mix of one-story and two-story heights, with one three-story tall residential building. Similar to the downtown area, shadows cast by new three-story tall buildings with upper floor setbacks would be generally the same length as shadows cast by existing two-story tall buildings. However, there would be additional shadow generally equivalent to the existing two-story heights in cases where existing one-story buildings are replaced by three-story tall buildings with upper level setbacks. Public open spaces in this segment are the sidewalks, used mainly for pedestrian activities. The existing sidewalks are five to 10 feet in width and would be expanded to 15 feet in width under the Specific Plan. Westward shadows cast toward the sidewalk are fairly limited, occurring on spring, fall and summer mornings. The spring and fall shadows would increase from approximately two feet to four feet and summer shadows from approximately six feet to 12 feet. Under both existing and proposed conditions, the sidewalks would receive full to partial sun in the afternoons and most mornings. The most substantial shade would be experienced on summer mornings, but even this shadow is limited in duration, ending by noon. Given the limited amount of shadow cast westward, the use of the sidewalks for pedestrian activities would not be substantially limited.

Between Encinal Avenue and Oak Grove Avenue, the character of the surrounding properties changes to primarily two-story tall multiple-family residential uses. In response to this change, the Specific Plan does not require the upper level setbacks as in the segment to the north, but does include a 38-foot height limit. This represents a gradual increase in building heights from the northerly border of the city to the station area, where taller heights would be located in order to encourage greater activity near the downtown and transit center. Existing heights within the segment are a mix of one-story and two-story buildings. There are also two approved projects and

⁸ Existing heights along El Camino Real are limited to a maximum of 30 feet. However, certain areas along El Camino Real have greater existing height limits established by Planned Development (PD) zoning. Existing height limits are as follows: PD-1 is 56 feet, PD-2 is 49 feet, PD-4 is 46 feet, PD-6 is 33 feet (residential component), and PD-8 is 40 feet. The PD-6 and PD-8 have not yet been constructed.

one pending project within this segment that have not yet begun construction but would have heights of between 38 and 40 feet, generally compatible with the Specific Plan. As with the segment to the north, the public spaces are comprised of the sidewalks. Also similar to the segment to the north, westward shadows cast toward the sidewalks from buildings on the east side of El Camino Real are limited for both existing buildings and proposed taller development. Both the existing sidewalks and proposed wider sidewalks would receive either full or partial sun for most of the year. Eastward shadows cast on sidewalks from buildings located on the west side of El Camino Real would occur primarily from noon through the afternoon, with maximum shadows from one-story heights of approximately eight feet in summer, 18 feet in spring and fall and 48 feet in winter. Shadows from two-story heights would be approximately double those of one-story tall buildings. Shadows cast from three-story-height buildings with no upper floor setbacks would be approximately 20 feet in the summer, 47 feet in the spring and fall, and 125 feet in the winter. Under existing conditions, sidewalks are fully shaded from one- and two-story heights. New shadow from taller buildings would overlap existing shadow and extend further into the street. Given the approximately 100-foot width of El Camino Real, and with the exception of winter afternoons, shadows from taller buildings would not fully cross El Camino Real. Winter afternoon shadows may shade sidewalks located on the east side of El Camino Real. However, the sidewalks on the east side of El Camino Real would continue to receive partial to full sun on winter mornings, and from noon through the afternoon throughout the year.

The segments of El Camino Real to the south of the station area are treated differently on the west and east sides of the street. Along the west side, the Specific Plan recognizes the primarily residential nature of the adjacent properties, and therefore proposes height and design controls similar to the most northerly segment of El Camino Real. Heights are limited to 38 feet with a minimum 10-foot setback above a façade height of 30 feet. Existing buildings have a mix of one- and two-story heights. Impacts on the sidewalks from existing one-story height buildings would occur primarily from noon throughout the afternoon and range from approximately 10 feet at noon to 18 feet in the afternoon in the spring and fall, from approximately three feet at noon to eight feet in the afternoon in the summer and from 15 feet in the morning to 48 feet in the afternoon in the winter. The heights of two-story tall buildings are approximately double that of the one-story height buildings. The introduction of new three-story height buildings with upper level setbacks would increase the shading on the sidewalks in areas where one-story buildings would be replaced. As noted previously, shadows for two- and three-story heights with upper level setbacks are similar. Given the width of the existing sidewalks at five to 10 feet, the sidewalks are fully shaded in the afternoons under existing conditions. The Specific Plan proposes widening of the sidewalks to a minimum of 12 feet south of Live Oak Avenue, however sidewalks would still be shaded similar to existing conditions. The Plan acknowledges the benefits of shading in the summer to enhance the pedestrian experience. The sidewalks receive sun on spring, summer and fall mornings under existing conditions and would continue to receive sun if properties were to be redeveloped with taller buildings.

On the east side of El Camino Real, south of the station area, the Specific Plan allows for heights of 60 feet with minimum 10-foot setbacks above a façade maximum height of 45 feet, similar to the station area. Existing buildings include three- and four-story buildings up to 56 feet in height

at the northern and southern ends of the segment, with one-story heights and surface parking lots in the middle of the segment. Existing sidewalks are between five and 10 feet in width, although the Specific Plan proposes minimum widths of 15 feet. The greatest change in shadows would occur in the area of the segment dominated by one-story-height buildings and surface parking lots. However, due to the limited nature of westward shadows in general, the additional shading from four- to five-story height buildings with upper floor setbacks would not substantially limit use of the sidewalks for pedestrian activities or outdoor dining. Shadows occur in the mornings in the spring, summer and fall, receding by noon. The morning shadows would increase from approximately two feet to six feet in the spring and fall and from approximately six feet to 18 feet in the summer with the development of taller building. The sidewalks would continue to receive sun in the afternoons and partial sun most mornings. The Specific Plan also includes a design guideline (D.4.05) for the incorporation of street trees in sidewalks to provide additional shading for pedestrians.

Within this segment of El Camino Real, the Specific Plan envisions a new open space plaza with pedestrian and bicycle linkage to Burgess Park to the east. The Plan would require the plaza to be a minimum of 120 feet in width. Shadows cast northward and southward from new development that would border the plaza would have the potential to create shadow on the plaza. The Specific Plan does not require upper level setbacks for the sides of buildings that would front the open space plaza, thereby impacting the length of shadows. The longest northward shadows would occur in the mornings with shadows of approximately 95 feet in the spring and fall, 45 feet in the summer and approximately 223 feet in the winter. The shadows would reduce substantially by noon to approximately 33 feet in the spring and fall, 10 feet in the summer and 70 feet in the winter and would fully recede by the afternoon. Southward shadows occur in the late afternoon with lengths of approximately 23 feet in the spring and fall, 32 feet in the summer, and seven feet in the winter. Given the minimum width of the plaza at 120 feet, the plaza would have partial sun at all times of the year with the exception of winter mornings. If upper level setbacks of 10 feet were included along the sides of buildings facing the plaza, shadows on winter mornings would be reduced to approximately 210 feet, but still fully shade the plaza.

The Specific Plan also requires additional breaks in the building massing at approximately Cambridge Avenue and Roble Avenue as well as four additional breaks. The break near Cambridge Avenue would be required to be a minimum of 90 feet in width and other breaks a minimum of 50 feet in width. Although to a lesser degree, the Cambridge Avenue break would also receive partial sun throughout the year. The other narrower breaks would experience full shade in the mornings throughout the year, but have partial to full sun at other times. The Specific Plan defines the character of the plazas and building breaks as areas providing shade and seating for small informal gatherings. Guideline D.4.14 includes the provision of green space and shaded areas. The partial shading that would occur at most times of the year would be consistent with the character as defined by the Specific Plan and would provide access to both sun and shade for plaza users.

Historic Resources

As discussed in Section 4.4, *Cultural Resources*, several buildings in and immediately outside the Plan area are considered potentially historic resources for the purposes of CEQA because they are: (1) a resource in the California Register (including National Register sites such as the historic rail station); (2) a resource included in a local register of historical resources; (3) or substantial evidence in light of the whole record shows that they are important to local or California history. Buildings constructed pursuant to the controls of the Specific Plan could cast shadow on some of these historic resources at certain times of the year. New shadow on historic buildings is considered here to determine whether that shadow could detract from important characteristics that qualify one or more buildings as historical resources.

Downtown

Potentially historic resources within the downtown area are located along El Camino Real and include Doughty's Meat Market/Kate Taylor Interiors at 1162 El Camino Real, Martin J. McCarthy Groceries at 1170 El Camino Real, K.L. Plumbing/Guy Plumbing at 1265 El Camino Real, Both Electric at 1047 El Camino Real, and the Park Theater at 1275 El Camino Real. Doughty's Meat Market/Kate Taylor Interiors and Martin J. McCarthy Groceries are located on the east side of El Camino Real. The facades of the buildings experience relatively short westward shadows of less than four feet on spring and fall mornings and less than 12 feet on summer mornings as a result of the buildings themselves. This condition would not change as a result of the Specific Plan. However, the area across El Camino Real would allow for taller buildings with 60 feet in height and upper level setbacks above a façade height of 45 feet. New taller development on the west side of El Camino Real could create winter afternoon shadows of up to 145 feet which would have the potential to reach the facades of the historic buildings. Even with the winter shadows, the buildings would retain sunlight on their principal facades during the midday hours throughout the year and on afternoons with the exception of winter afternoons. The winter afternoon shadow that could be created with taller buildings would be similar to conditions in which some shadow typically falls on historic buildings in the afternoon. Therefore, character-defining features of these historic buildings would not be substantially altered, and the impact would be less than significant.

K.L. Plumbing/Guy Plumbing, Both Electric and the Park Theater are located on the west side of El Camino Real. All of the buildings are at least of a two-story height, with the Park Theater having additional height for its decorative center feature. The buildings themselves create eastward shadows in the afternoons that range from 15 feet to over 100 feet, with the shortest shadows in the summer and the longest shadows in the winter. The buildings also experience shadow on winter mornings of between approximately 45 and 57 feet. This condition would not change as a result of the Specific Plan. Westward shadows from taller buildings across El Camino Real would not reach the facades of the historic buildings. Although the building facades are currently shaded in the afternoons and on winter mornings, the buildings would retain the sun they currently experience on spring, summer and fall afternoons. Since there would be no additional shading as a result of the Specific Plan, the impact would be less than significant.

Station Area

Historic resources in the station area include the Menlo Park Caltrain Station at 1100 Merrill Street and the American Trust Company building at 1090 El Camino Real. The Caltrain station building is located to the east of existing two-story buildings along Merrill Street and to the west of one-story buildings along Alma Street. The buildings along Merrill Street cast eastward afternoon shadows that range from approximately 15 to 97 feet with the shortest shadows in the summer and the longest shadows in the winter. The existing buildings also cast winter morning shadows of approximately 27 feet. With approximately 70 feet of distance between the buildings located on Merrill Street and the Caltrain station building, the station receives eastward winter afternoon shadow under existing conditions. Under the Specific Plan, the buildings along Merrill Street would be allowed a height of 60 feet with upper level setbacks above a façade maximum height of 45 feet. The increased height would result in winter afternoon shadows of approximately 145 feet, shading more of the station building. However, the station would continue to receive sun at all other times of the year, similar to existing conditions. The one-story buildings along Alma Street cast westward shadows on spring, fall and summer mornings of less than six feet which would not reach the Caltrain station building. If the area along Alma Street were redeveloped with taller buildings as allowed in the Specific Plan, the shadows would increase to a maximum of approximately 18 feet on summer mornings, but would still not reach the Caltrain station building. The development of taller buildings allowed by the Specific Plan would not result in new shadow at times when no shadow is experienced. Since the station currently experiences winter afternoon shadow, the increased length of the shadow would have a limited impact on the defining features of the building, therefore would be less than significant.

The building at 1090 El Camino Real is a two-story building located to the northwest of Menlo Center. The building is currently partially shaded by northward morning shadows that range from approximately 35 feet in the summer to 70 feet at other times of the year. The majority of the shadow falls to the rear of the building given its location northwesterly of Menlo Center. Existing buildings located to the north, across Santa Cruz Avenue and to the west across El Camino Real are one- and two-stories in height and do not create shadows that reach the building. If properties in the surrounding areas were redeveloped with buildings to the maximum allowed height of 60 feet with upper level setbacks, eastward shadows would increase similar to the buildings adjacent to the Caltrain station building, resulting in winter afternoon shadows of approximately 145 feet that could potentially shade a portion of the front façade of the building. This would be the only additional shadow and would be for a short duration on winter afternoons, with limited impact on the defining features of the building. The impact would be less than significant.

El Camino Real North and South of Downtown

Historic resources along El Camino Real are focused south of the downtown and include the Oasis at 241 El Camino Real, the John Duff House at 849 El Camino Real, the Guild Theater at 949 El Camino Real, and Menlo Clock Works at 961 El Camino Real. All of the historic buildings are located on the west side of El Camino Real and therefore are impacted primarily by eastward shadows. Because all of the buildings are either two-stories in height or taller than average one-story buildings, the facades of the buildings are shaded in the afternoons by the buildings themselves. Although new development across El Camino Real could have heights of

up to 60 feet with upper floor setbacks, the westward shadows created by the taller buildings would not extend across El Camino Real. The Specific Plan would not result in new shadow on the facades of the buildings; therefore, the impact is less than significant.

Other Areas

There are historic buildings outside of the Specific Plan area but within proximity to the Plan area. These include the Barron-Latham-Hopkins Gate Lodge at 555 Ravenswood Avenue, the Bright Eagle Mansion at 1040 Noel Drive, the Church of the Nativity at 210 Oak Grove Avenue, the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church/Russian Orthodox Church at 1220 Crane Street, and Portola's Journey's End, at the intersection of East Creek Drive and Alma Street. The Barron-Latham-Hopkins Gate Lodge, Bright Eagle Mansion, and Church of the Nativity would not experience any shadow impacts due to the distance from the Plan area.

The Holy Trinity Episcopal/Russian Orthodox Church is located directly behind properties that front on Oak Grove Avenue and across the street from properties that front on Crane Street. The Oak Grove Avenue and Crane Street properties are within the Specific Plan area and would be allowed heights of 38 feet with an upper level setback above 30 feet. The existing buildings in this area are developed with two-story height buildings of approximately 30 feet and one three-story building at 718 Oak Grove Avenue, which is 35 feet tall. As noted previously, new three-story buildings with upper level setbacks would not create any greater shadow than the existing buildings; therefore, the potential impact of added shadow would be less than significant.

Portola's Journey's End is located east of the railroad right-of-way near the southern boundary of the city. The Stanford Park hotel is located west of the monument, within the Specific Plan area. Although the hotel site is not identified as an opportunity site in the Specific Plan, if buildings of up to 60 feet in height were developed on the site, shadows would increase from approximately 145 feet to 200 feet. However, the monument is located in an area that is fully shaded by trees; therefore, increased shadow would not create a greater impact on the monument.

Adjacent Properties

As new development occurs, existing properties both within and outside the Specific Plan area could receive new shadow. Since the longest shadows occur northward and eastward, this discussion focuses on those two directions. Southward shadows are relatively short at between approximately eight and 15 feet in the afternoon for existing one- and two-story buildings. With the redevelopment of properties with 60-foot tall buildings, there would be a modest increase of shadows up to approximately 30 feet on summer afternoons. At other times of the year or with shorter buildings, shadows would be less than 20 feet in length. Westward shadows are even more limited at less than six feet for a one-story-height building and less than 12 feet for a two-story-height building on summer mornings. With the redevelopment of properties with 60-foot tall buildings, there would be an increase of up to approximately six feet on spring and fall mornings and up to 20 feet on summer mornings. Given the relatively modest increases in shadows from taller buildings and buffers between buildings created by street and railroad right-

of-ways and required setbacks, southward or westward shadows would not create an impact on a substantial number of properties.

Downtown

Within the downtown area, potential shadow impacts to adjacent properties would most likely come from the development of new buildings where no building exists under current conditions, such as new development on the public parking plazas. This is in part because the development of new buildings to the maximum height allowed in the Specific Plan of 38 feet with upper level setbacks would create shadow generally equivalent to existing two-story-height buildings, with the new shadow overlapping existing shadow. Development on the public parking plazas would cast northward shadows of approximately 22 feet on summer mornings, 50 feet on spring and fall mornings and 140 feet on winter mornings. At all times of the year, shadows would substantially recede by noon and fully recede by the afternoon. Eastward shadows would occur in the afternoons and range from approximately 13 feet in the summer, to 37 feet in the spring and fall, and 110 feet in the winter. Shadows of approximately 25 feet would also fall on winter mornings. The reach of the shadows toward adjacent properties would be further reduced by the minimum 25-foot setbacks for the structures on plazas 1 and 3 and the street right-of-way on plaza 2. Although properties directly north of the new developments would receive shadow on spring, fall and winter mornings, the short duration of the shadow would not be expected to impact the commercial function of the properties. Eastward shadows have an even more limited impact since they are shorter and would fall on surface parking areas and a very limited number of commercial properties. The impact of shadows on public open spaces from the development of the parking plazas is discussed above, in the section on *Public Open Spaces*.

Station Area

With the exception of Menlo Center, the Specific Plan envisions the majority of the Station Area as an opportunity site for new development. The development of buildings up to 60 feet in height with upper level setbacks would cast shadows similar to the shadows in the downtown area, although the shadows would be longer. Northward morning shadows would range from approximately 35 feet in the summer, to 80 feet in the spring and fall, and 208 feet in the winter, fully receding by the afternoon. Eastward afternoon shadows would range from approximately 20 feet in the summer, to 48 feet in the spring and fall and 145 feet in the winter. As in the downtown area, the shadows would be of short duration and would not be expected to impact the commercial functions of the properties within the Station Area. Menlo Center would not be impacted by the extended shadows with the exception of partial shading on the plaza near the street on winter afternoons.

Properties to the east of the Alma Street opportunity sites are developed with two-story tall residential buildings. The majority of Alma Street is currently developed with one-story buildings which cast eastward afternoon shadows of approximately seven feet in the summer, 17 feet in the spring and fall, and 40 feet in the winter. One existing two-story tall building would cast shadows that are approximately double the length of the one-story shadows. These shadows would increase with redevelopment of the properties along Alma Street with 60-foot tall buildings with upper level setbacks along the rear of the buildings, facing the residential properties. Taller

buildings would cast eastward shadows in the afternoon of approximately 20 feet in the summer, 45 feet in the spring and fall and 120 feet in the winter. These are shorter than other eastward shadows due to the more exaggerated angle of Alma Street. The adjacent residential properties are further buffered from the shadows by the required 10-foot setback on the Specific Plan properties, 15- to 20-foot setbacks on the adjacent residential properties and the 20-foot Alma Lane right-of-way which runs between the two. This 45 to 50-foot buffer zone results in the adjacent properties only experiencing shadow of relatively short duration on winter afternoons. The adjacent properties would not receive additional shadow at other times of the year; therefore, the impact would be less than significant.

El Camino Real North and South of Downtown

North of downtown, the Specific Plan establishes height limits of 38 feet. For the most northerly segment, north of Encinal Avenue, development is also required to incorporate upper level setbacks above a 30-foot façade height in recognition of the segment's location adjacent to single-family residential development. The upper level setbacks are not included in the remaining segments north of downtown since the character of the adjacent land uses changes to primarily two-story tall multiple family development. The shadows that would be cast by new taller development that includes an upper level setback would be generally equivalent to existing two-story tall buildings. Shadows for taller buildings without an upper level setback would be approximately five to seven feet longer than if an upper level setback were included. Where existing one-story buildings are replaced by taller buildings with upper level setbacks, eastward shadows cast from buildings along the east side of El Camino Real toward the residential neighborhoods would increase from approximately eight to 16 feet on summer afternoons, from 18 to 40 feet on spring and fall afternoons, and from 48 feet to 118 feet on winter afternoons. Taller buildings without upper level setbacks would cast eastward shadow of approximately 20 feet on summer afternoons, 47 feet on spring and fall afternoons, and 125 feet on winter afternoons. The potential impact of the shadows is lessened by the inclusion of setbacks for redeveloped properties. In the most northerly segment, rear setbacks of 20 feet and interior side setbacks of between 10 and 25 feet are required. In other segments, setbacks range from seven to 25 feet depending on the location and design of individual projects. Additionally, the segments on the east side of El Camino Real between Oak Grove and Encinal Avenues are further separated from adjacent development by street right-of-way. The required setbacks and street right-of ways coupled with setbacks on adjacent residential properties would result in no added shadow on adjacent properties on summer afternoons. Adjacent properties would receive some added shadow on spring, fall and winter afternoons, but the shadows would not be substantially different than is currently experienced from two-story tall buildings. Westward shadows from taller buildings without upper level setbacks would be less than 15 feet on summer mornings and therefore would not cast shadow onto adjacent properties given the required 20-foot rear setbacks included in the Plan.

South of downtown, properties along the east side of El Camino Real are allowed heights of 60 feet with upper level setbacks above a façade height of 45 feet for the front and street corner sides. The Specific Plan does not require upper level setbacks on the rear (east side) of the buildings but does require a 20-foot rear setback. The railroad right-of-way and Alma Street are

located directly to the east of the Plan area, with the Civic Center/Burgess Park and multiple-family residential developments beyond. Eastward shadows would extend approximately 36 feet on summer afternoons, 76 feet on spring and fall afternoons and 200 feet on winter afternoons. There would also be winter morning shadow of approximately 28 feet. The railroad and street right-of-ways as well as the required setbacks would limit the amount of shadow received. The Alma Street right-of-way increases as one moves south from Ravenswood Avenue, with a width of 36 feet near Ravenswood Avenue increasing to approximately 100 feet along the residential portion of Alma Street. The railroad right-of-way also increases with approximately 80 feet of width near Ravenswood Avenue to 100 feet as it approaches the residential portion of the street. As such, approximately 65 feet of shadow would fall on the Civic Center near Ravenswood on winter afternoons. However, the portion of the Civic Center that would receive the shadow is primarily used for circulation and parking. As one moves south toward the playing fields, the shadow would decrease in length to approximately 30 feet having minimal impacts on the playing fields. The Civic Center would retain the opportunity for sun at all other times of the year. Given the approximately 200 feet of combined right-of-way and required 20-foot setbacks for buildings in the Specific Plan area, no shadow would reach the residential properties. The properties along the west side of El Camino Real would be allowed maximum heights of 38 feet with upper level setbacks. As noted earlier, westward shadows are limited to less than 12 feet on summer mornings and therefore would not cast shadow onto adjacent properties given the 20-foot rear setback required by the Specific Plan.

Conclusion

The Specific Plan area generally experiences the longest shadows cast northward in the mornings and eastward in the afternoons. Shorter shadows are cast southward in the afternoon and westward on spring, fall and summer mornings. The shadows from the existing primarily one- and two-story height buildings in the Plan area currently partially or fully shade many of the existing public open spaces, sidewalks and historic buildings. Shadows cast by new development envisioned in the Specific Plan would follow the same patterns as existing shadows and most often would overlap the existing shadows.

The Specific Plan includes height limitations and design controls that help to limit the creation of new shadow. Within the downtown area and for portions of El Camino Real, heights are limited to a maximum of 38 feet with upper level setbacks required above façade heights of 30 feet. This restriction results in shadows generally equivalent to existing two-story-height buildings. In areas where taller heights are allowed, such as public parking plazas 1 and 3, the Station Area and along the southeast segment of El Camino Real, adjacent parking areas, streets and the railroad right-of-way help to provide distance that buffers adjacent land uses from shadow impacts. The shadows that have the greatest potential for reaching other properties generally are for short duration during winter afternoons. This is a time of day when longer shadows are often experienced and are not unexpected.

Given the general orientation of the Specific Plan area and design controls included in the Specific Plan, new shadow as a result of the Plan would not substantially alter the pattern of shading that exists under current conditions, nor would it extend shadows to the extent that the

shadow would limit use of public open spaces, adversely impact a substantial number of properties, or diminish the defining characteristics of historic buildings. Additionally, the Specific Plan includes design guidelines that emphasize the need for completing the city's canopy of shaded sidewalks and public open spaces to enhance usability and enjoyment of the spaces. Therefore, shadow impacts of the proposed Specific Plan would be less than significant.

Mitigation: None required.

Impact AES-5: Construction of new buildings and street lighting within the Specific Plan area could increase light and glare. Adherence to the guidelines of the Specific Plan would reduce any light and glare impacts to less-than-significant levels. (Less than Significant)

Construction of new buildings within the Plan area could result in projects both larger and taller than existing buildings. These new buildings would include exterior and interior lighting. In addition, the Specific Plan includes several guidelines that promote additional lighting for pedestrian safety, decorative purposes, and integration of nighttime character. These Guidelines include D.2.02, D.2.06, D.2.47, D.2.53, D.3.05, D.3.14, D.3.23, D.5.01, D.5.16, and D.5.19. Although lighting would generally be similar to existing lighting in downtown Menlo Park, this lighting could increase levels of nighttime light and glare that could adversely affect nighttime views in the Plan area. The Specific Plan recommends the following guidelines:

- Lighting in parking garages should provide adequate security, but should be screened and controlled so as not to disturb surrounding properties. (E.3.6.12)
- Energy-efficient and color-balanced outdoor lighting, at the lowest lighting levels possible, are encouraged to provide for safe pedestrian and auto circulation. (E.3.8.4.12)
- Glare into dwelling units and light pollution into the night sky should be minimized by use of fixtures with low cut-off angles. (E.3.8.4.13)
- Improvements should use ENERGY STAR qualified fixtures to reduce a building's energy consumption. (E.3.8.4.14)
- Installation of high-efficiency lighting systems with advanced lighting control, including motion sensors tied to dimmable lighting controls. (E.3.8.4.15)

With implementation of the above Specific Plan guidelines at a project level, any nighttime light and glare impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Daytime glare is caused by light reflections from building material such as reflective glass and polished surfaces, and pavement. During daytime hours, the amount of glare depends on the intensity and direction of sunlight. Glare can create hazards to motorists and nuisances for pedestrians and other viewers. The Specific Plan places an emphasis on building features that would lessen the use of exterior surfaces that would create daytime glare beyond what is present from existing buildings. Guideline E.3.5.22 explicitly calls for the use of clear glass, not heavily

tinted or highly mirrored glass in retail frontages. Guideline E.3.8.03 calls for the use of louvered wall openings or other shading devices to regulate the amount of direct sunlight into the interiors of buildings. Guideline E.8.4.04 calls for buildings to incorporate arcades, trellises and appropriate tree plantings to screen and mitigate south and west sun exposures during summer. These guidelines not only help protect the interior of buildings from direct sun impacts, but also serve to reduce the potential for daytime glare from buildings. The Specific Plan also calls for the shading of sidewalks and other public open spaces through the retention of existing trees (Guidelines D.2.01, D.2.32, D.2.44, D.3.19, D.5.17, and D.5.20) and use of new tree and landscaping planting (Guidelines D.2.03, D.2.20, D.2.25, D.2.39, D.2.49, D.2.53, D.3.04, D.3.07, D.3.13, D.3.22, D.4.05, D.4.14, D.5.03, D.5.18, and D.6.06). With implementation of these guidelines at a project level, any daytime glare impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level. Chapter 4.3 Biological Resources of this EIR addresses potential impacts to migratory and breeding special-status birds through building collisions with regard to reflective windows.

Mitigation: None required.

Cumulative Impacts

Impact AES-6: Implementation of the Menlo Park El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan, in combination with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future plans and projects, would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts to aesthetic resources. (Less than Significant)

Geographic Scope

The cumulative aesthetic analysis encompasses all known past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects within the vicinity of the Plan area in which changes to the built form and visual character could contribute to cumulative aesthetic impacts. The geographic scope would include all properties within viewable distance of the Plan area, as well as areas within the existing view corridors to the east toward the Santa Cruz Mountains. Past projects are classified as projects already existing in the built environment. Present projects are classified as projects that are approved, under construction, or being tenanted. Future projects are classified as projects and plans in development or pending approval, described in Table 4-1, above.

Analysis

No new projects would be located directly within the Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Avenue, or Oak Grove Avenue view corridors toward the Santa Cruz Mountains to the extent that they would contribute to a change in views. In addition, cumulative projects are not located on designated state scenic highways and do not contain scenic resources. As stated under Impact AES-1, above, due to the flat topography, urbanized nature, and gentle curve of El Camino Real, mid- and long-range views are not available along the corridor. Short-range views could slightly change with construction of the cumulative projects within the Plan Area, including 1906 El Camino Real,

1706 El Camino Real, 1460 El Camino Real, 1300 El Camino Real, 580 Oak Grove Avenue, and 389 El Camino Real. These cumulative projects, in combination with other projects built pursuant to the Specific Plan, would further define the El Camino Real view corridor, as well as the Oak Grove Avenue view corridor. Views along the corridors would be of a more densely built urban environment, but no scenic views or vistas would be obscured. The cumulative impact to views would be less than significant.

Regarding visual character, the development of these cumulative projects would be substantially consistent with the building characteristics as outlined by the Specific Plan. Additionally, all of the projects would replace vacant or underutilized properties, one of the key objectives of the Specific Plan. The approved projects at 1906 and 1706 El Camino Real are two-story office buildings of approximately 30 feet in height inclusive of roof screening. The building at 1906 El Camino Real includes a recessed second floor and sun shading features, although both buildings have varying forms of articulation. Both buildings also include sidewalks and landscaping strips along street frontages. Both buildings are designed to be consistent with the City's existing General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. The buildings are located within the area of the Specific Plan that would allow for 38-foot heights with upper level setbacks above a 30-foot façade height, therefore are consistent with the heights allowed by the Specific Plan. Although both projects provide sidewalks and landscaping strips, the sidewalks would be of less width than would be required by the Specific Plan. Setbacks adjacent to the abutting residential properties would be a minimum of 65 feet, far exceeding the 20-foot requirement of the Specific Plan.

The approved project at 1460 El Camino Real is a mixed use development that includes commercial and residential components. The project is consistent with the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, making use of a Planned Development Permit to modify the development standards as allowed by the Zoning Ordinance. The project is designed as a two-story development with a height of 38 feet for the commercial portion and 33 feet for the residential portion. The commercial portion of the project insets the second floor into the roofline and both the commercial and residential portions of the project provide architectural articulation. The buildings also include sidewalks and landscaping along street frontages. The project is located in an area of the Specific Plan that would allow for 38-foot heights with no upper level setbacks or other massing controls, therefore the heights of the buildings would be consistent with the Specific Plan. Although the project provides sidewalks and landscaping adjacent to the building along El Camino Real, the sidewalks would be of less width than would be required by the Specific Plan.

The approved project at 1300 El Camino Real is a commercial mixed use project that is consistent with the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, making use of a Planned Development Permit to modify the development standards as allowed by the Zoning Ordinance. The project has a height of 40 feet and includes an upper level setback as well as architectural articulation. The project includes sidewalks and landscaping along street frontages. Similar to the 1460 El Camino Real project, it is located in an area of the Specific Plan that would allow for 38-foot heights with no upper level setbacks or other massing controls. The project as approved would be slightly taller than allowed by the Specific Plan, but not significantly taller. Although the project provides

sidewalks and landscaping adjacent to the building along El Camino Real, the sidewalks would be of less width than would be required by the Specific Plan.

The pending project at 580 Oak Grove Avenue is a 40-foot-tall, three-story mixed use development with residential and commercial components. The project would be consistent with the General Plan as it was previously amended for the project, but would require recession of the previous General Plan amendment and adoption of new General Plan and Zoning Ordinance amendments and a Planned Development Permit for final approval. As currently proposed, the project includes upper level setbacks along Oak Grove Avenue as well as sidewalks and trees. This project is also located in the area of the Specific Plan that would allow for 38-foot heights with no upper level setbacks or other massing controls. As proposed, the project would be slightly taller than allowed by the Specific Plan, but not significantly taller. Although the project provides sidewalks and landscaping adjacent to the building along Oak Grove Avenue, the sidewalks would be of less width than would be required by the Specific Plan.

The final project is a residential project located at 389 El Camino Real. The project is currently under review and its final design is not yet known. The project is located in an area of the Specific Plan that would allow for 38-foot heights with upper level massing controls above a façade height of 30 feet. It is the intent of the project to conform to the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, while making use of the State Density Bonus law which serves to allow for waivers from development standards to accommodate the higher number of affordable units allowed under the law. The initial design of the project would be compatible with the overall heights allowed by the Specific Plan but would not be consistent with requirements for massing, setbacks and sidewalk widths. As noted, the project is currently being redesigned and therefore, may be consistent with the Specific Plan as the project progresses through the approval process with the City.

The approved and pending developments are generally compatible with the intent and standards of the key design elements of the Specific Plan, if not fully consistent with all of its regulations and design guidelines. Although the projects would result in a more visually dense urban environment, the projects would support the Specific Plan's objectives related to the creation of more vibrancy through the infill of vacant and underutilized properties, more intensity of use near the downtown and transit center, and the creation of a stronger street edge to balance the width of El Camino Real while providing protections for abutting residential uses. Therefore, in combination with the Specific Plan, these projects would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts to view corridors, scenic resources, shadowing, visual character, or glare and lighting.

Mitigation: None required.