



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Council Meeting Date: August 27, 2013
Staff Report #: 13-150

Agenda Item #: I-5

INFORMATION ITEM: Initiation of the General Plan Update

This is an information item and does not require Council action.

BACKGROUND

On March 26, 2013, the City Council adopted goals for calendar year 2013. One goal is related to the General Plan and reads as follows:

Initiate work on the update of the General Plan (Council Goal #4):

The City's General Plan (specifically the Land Use and Circulation Elements) was last updated in 1994 and includes outdated land use and traffic projections to the year 2010. The City Council has asked staff to put into place a process and related funding to comprehensively update the Plan. The update would focus on the Land Use and Circulation Elements and would include a geographic focus on the M-2 zoning area, plus other areas of the City aside from the El Camino Real and Downtown areas. Topics that will be part of the discussion would include items such as Complete Streets and a Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy.

On June 11, 2013, with adoption of the FY2013-2014 Budget, the Council appropriated resources to initiate the General Plan Update.

ANALYSIS

What is the General Plan?

The General Plan is a legal document, required by state law, which serves as the City of Menlo Park's "constitution" for development and the use of its land. It is a comprehensive, long-range document, providing guidance for the physical development of the City, and of any land outside its boundaries but within its designated "sphere of influence." The California Government Code requires every city and county to adopt a comprehensive General Plan and defines specific purposes and content requirements for General Plans. A General Plan must cover the following seven elements (or topics): land use, circulation (transportation), housing, open space, conservation, noise and safety.

Menlo Park's current General Plan elements, available on the City [website](#), are comprised of three documents as follows:

- Land Use and Circulation Elements, adopted in 1994 with amendments through May 2013;
- Housing Element (2007-2014 planning period), adopted in May 2013; and
- Open Space/Conservation, Noise and Safety Element, adopted in May 2013.

Work to update the Housing Element for the 2014-2022 planning period is underway and expected to be completed prior to embarking on the substance of the General Plan update.

In addition, State law allows jurisdictions to include optional elements that may be important to a specific community. Examples include historic preservation, urban design, and/or economic development.

All City actions related to land use, development, transportation and infrastructure need to be consistent with the General Plan. The General Plan establishes goals, policies, programs plus land use and circulation designations and standards. The Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance and other chapters of the City's Municipal Code all serve to implement the General Plan. The Capital Improvement Plan and Comprehensive Bicycle Development Plan are examples of other tools for implementing community infrastructure needs identified in the General Plan.

Why Does the General Plan Need to be Updated?

The Council has identified the need for the City to focus on the M-2 (General Industrial Zoning District) to explore opportunities to streamline processes and increase revenue potential. The M-2 Area generally located between US101 and the San Francisco Bay has historically been a strong source of revenue for the City and provides an opportunity for continued revenue if planned for appropriately. Aside from development projects in the pipeline (i.e., pending and approved projects), the M-2 area has the potential for approximately 1 million square feet of net new development potential under the existing land use intensities of the General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. This development potential is above and beyond what was analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report for the 1994 General Plan and EIRs prepared for individual development projects such as Menlo Gateway, Facebook, etc. Given a combination of General Plan policies, Zoning Ordinance requirements, City-adopted Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines, and the California Environmental Quality Act, most requests for new development require case-by-case review by the Planning Commission (and sometimes the City Council) and oftentimes require the preparation of an EIR to address significant and unavoidable traffic impacts based on the City-established standards and noise, air quality and greenhouse gas impacts. Therefore, updating the General Plan provides the appropriate venue to deal with this "change area" of the City in a comprehensive rather than project-by-project basis and achieve efficiencies in the review process.

Other reasons for updating the General Plan include the following:

- State law provides Guidance that the General Plan should be updated every 10 years. (The Land Use and Circulation Elements have not been comprehensive updated in 20 years);
- Issues that were relevant in the 1990s are no longer relevant (i.e., the extension of Sand Hill Road to El Camino Real), while topics which are potentially relevant (i.e., High Speed Rail, Caltrain electrification, Dumbarton Rail Corridor) are not referenced in the Land Use and Circulation Elements; and
- The elimination of Redevelopment Agencies.

Initial Givens for the General Plan Update

Consistent with the City's Community Engagement Model, staff has developed a set of "givens" or principles that would guide the overall development of the General Plan. Unless directed otherwise by the City Council, staff will use the principles listed below for the future work on the General Plan.

- Community outreach and engagement will be an integral and robust component of the process to develop the plan;
- Focus will be given to the M-2 (General Industrial) zoning district, especially the appropriateness of land uses, development standards, review procedures, etc.;
- Throughout development of the General Plan, pursue opportunities to establish goals and policies that will support streamlining of the development review process where appropriate;
- Inclusion of new concepts and strategies to address emerging needs, including Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Complete Streets;
- Land use and traffic projections for potential growth would be to the Year 2040 for general consistency with other local and regional plans; (e.g., Urban Water Management Plan, City/Council Association of Governments (C/CAG) Traffic Model, etc.);
- Development of the General Plan will be informed by a full environmental review and Fiscal Impact Analysis; and
- General Plan will comply with State law.

Basic Steps and Timeline

The update of the General Plan will involve multiple phases including work program definition, consultant selection, data collection and analysis, visioning, plan preparation, environmental and fiscal review, and extensive public participation. Upon adoption of the updated General Plan, the work effort would focus on high priority implementation programs identified in the Plan.

At a minimum, the update of the General Plan will take three years from initiation to adoption given the need for visioning, environmental review, etc. The update of the 1994 Land Use and Circulation Elements took six years to complete. The preparation of the El Camino Real Downtown Specific Plan took five years from initiation to adoption. In order

to complete the General Plan Update in less than four years, the community, Council and staff will need to share this goal and work closely together.

Establishing the Work Program

By early September 2013, staff intends to issue a request for qualifications (RFQ) to firms that would provide expertise in a variety of disciplines to assist in the update of the General Plan. On a concurrent track, staff intends to reach out to the Council and City Commissions on a draft work program/request for proposal (RFP). Staff is now tentatively scheduled to present an overview of the General Plan Update to Council on September 24, 2013. The following summarizes the target meeting dates for staff presentations to City commissions which have a charge/mission related to the physical development of the City:

Commission	Meeting Date
Recreation	Wednesday, September 25
Housing	Wednesday, October 2
Bicycle	Monday, October 14
Transportation	Wednesday, October 16
Environmental Quality	Wednesday, October 23
Planning	Monday, October 28

In addition, staff intends to coordinate a session with the Chamber of Commerce and owners of substantial property in the M-2 area (i.e., Bohannon, ProLogis, Tarlton, TE Connectivity, and Facebook).

Staff will present information and seek input from the commissions on items such as the following:

- Givens or principles for preparation of the General Plan;
- Report out on status of current Land Use and Circulation Goals, Policies and Programs;
- Provide resources, opportunities for educational series on topics like multi-modal level of service, examples of best practices/recently adopted General Plans, and a summary of lessons learned from past Menlo Park planning experience;
- Provide a listing of existing policy documents and background material that is currently available (e.g., Urban Water Management Plan, Climate Action Plan, etc.);
- Options for communicating with and engaging the community, including branding; and
- Whether there is a strong desire for any optional Elements (e.g., neighborhood character, health, etc.) or specific topic or geographic areas on which to focus.

At the November 12, 2013 Council meeting, staff intends to present a work plan/RFP, which incorporates input from the Commissions, for Council consideration. The work program will include a recommendation or options related to community outreach and the potential formation of an outreach and oversight committee, steering committee, task

force or some other type of body. Staff will report on the results of the RFQ and recommend a select set of firms to receive the RFP to be issued shortly following the November 12 Council meeting. In addition, staff will recommend a process, including a timeline, for screening the proposals and selecting the consultant team.

IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES

The proposed work program would require both staff resources dedicated to the project, as well consultant services. The Council has budgeted \$2,000,000 for Fiscal Year 2013-14 for the General Plan Update. A total of 3.5 full-time equivalent staff from Community Development and Public Works is allocated to the General Plan Update and the Housing Element. Dependent on the scope of the work program, additional funding may be necessary in future years.

POLICY ISSUES

The General Plan update process will consider a number of policy issues.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The General Plan update is subject to CEQA and an EIR will be prepared at the appropriate time in the process.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting, with this agenda item being listed. In addition, the City sent an email update to subscribers of the Planning Division project pages. A project page for the General Plan update will be created. This page will provide up-to-date information about the project, allowing interested parties to stay informed of its progress and allow users to sign up for automatic email bulletins, notifying them when content is updated or meetings are scheduled.

ATTACHMENT

- A. Generalized Land Use Map
- B. Circulation Map

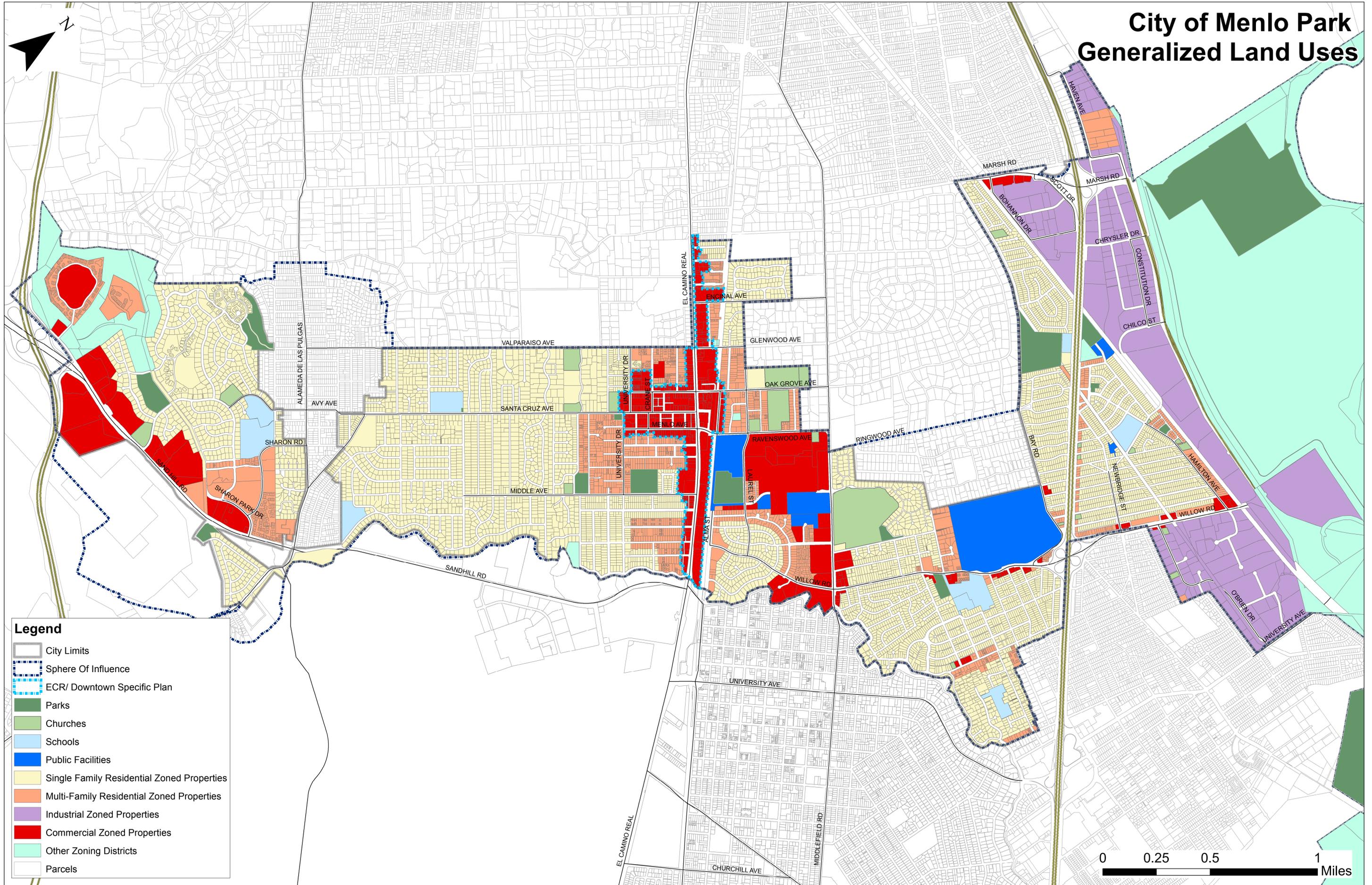
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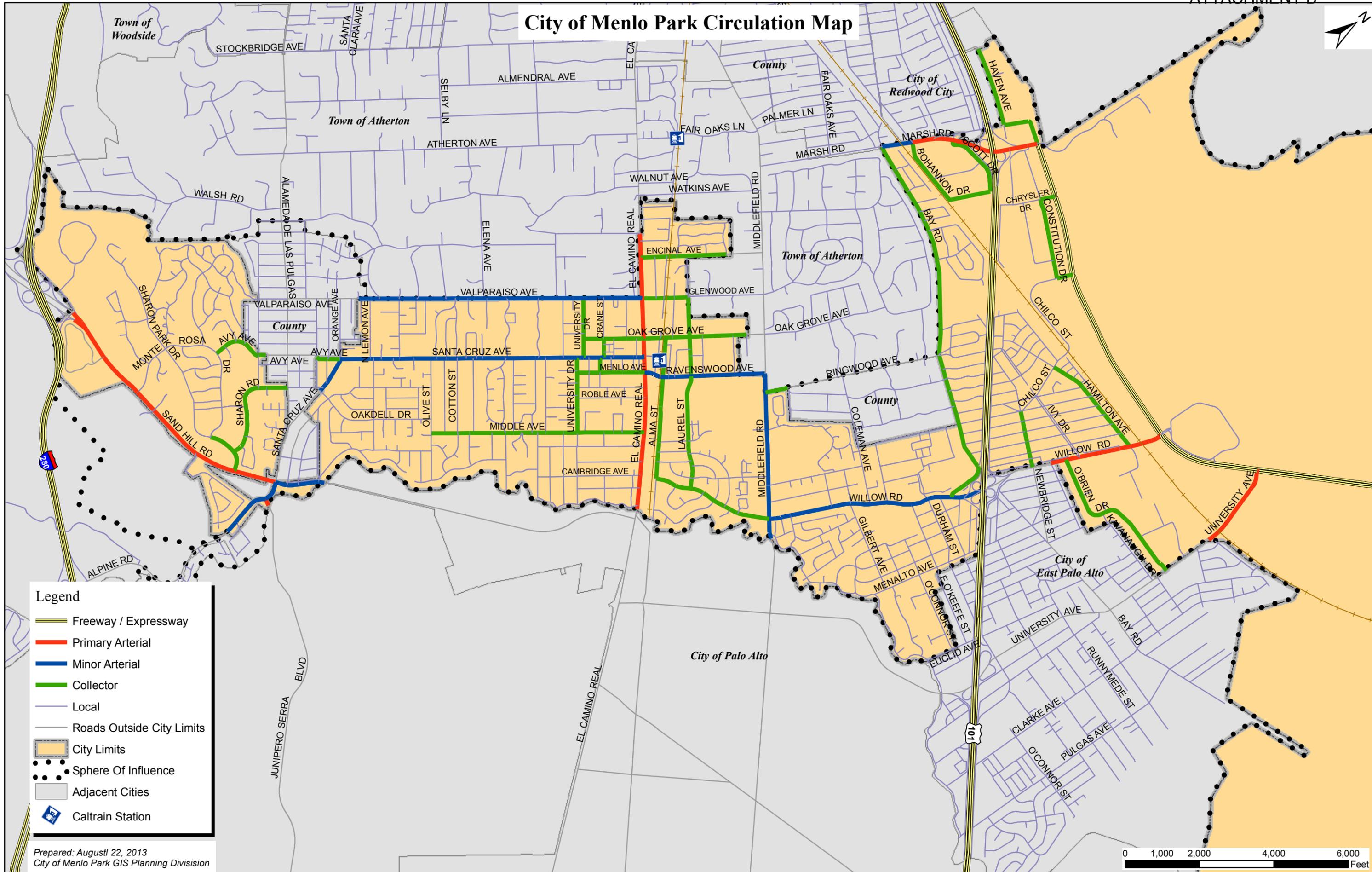
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City of Menlo Park Generalized Land Uses



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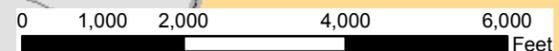
City of Menlo Park Circulation Map



Legend

- Freeway / Expressway
- Primary Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector
- Local
- Roads Outside City Limits
- City Limits
- Sphere Of Influence
- Adjacent Cities
- Caltrain Station

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 City of Menlo Park GIS Planning Division



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