

## EAST PALO ALTO WATERFRONT PROJECT | City Pre-Application

July 31, 2020



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### Beginnings

Emerson Collective is a social change organization that uses a broad range of tools including philanthropy, impact investing, and policy solutions to create the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Emerson Collective is not a traditional real estate developer. We believe that development can be a powerful tool. It can lift the people and voices of a community, ensuring all benefit. Emerson Collective is committed to responsible development.

**Our interest** in the East Palo Alto (“EPA”) Waterfront is grounded in a history of working with the community and a long-term commitment to its future.

**Our vision** is to create a joyous space that advances community wellbeing, health and resiliency. While facilitating economic security and entrepreneurship for East Palo Alto residents, the project will also serve as a place to learn, gather, shop, play and celebrate.

**Our intention** is to support a thriving and inclusive community, with a focus on job creation, attainable housing, environmental innovation in concert with the Bay, and ongoing community engagement.

#### Our guiding principles:

- **Co-Create with the Community** – People-driven process from the beginning and the outcome should benefit existing residents.
- **Nature is necessary** – Community rooted in health, sustainability and our natural environment.
- **Public gathering places for all people** – Public spaces that welcome all people and serve a variety of purposes.
- **Pathways to economic opportunity** – Create jobs for local residents and opportunities to incubate, accelerate and support local businesses and entrepreneurship.
- **Attainable housing counters displacement** – Build more attainable housing to help ensure current residents can afford to live in their neighborhoods.
- **Multi-modal transportation makes travel easier** – Identify new and more ways to move through EPA and with less friction.
- **Celebrate and connect cultures** – Celebrate our history and interconnect the rich cultures that make up EPA.

Emerson Collective has been an active partner in East Palo Alto through its work with College Track, which was co-founded in 1997 by Emerson Collective Founder and President Laurene Powell Jobs. The major challenges for college graduates returning to East Palo Alto were minimal job prospects and a limited path to home-ownership which the Ravenswood Specific Plan (“Ravenswood SP”) had been designed to address. In consultation with the city, Emerson Collective addressed the challenge of fractured property ownership by securing land within the Ravenswood Business District, unifying ownership with intention of using the land to support the community in advancing the future vision of a thriving East Palo Alto.

In 2019, Emerson Collective opened Bloomhouse as a way to ensure we were rooted in the community and able to connect everyday with residents, city staff and leaders. The space houses the Bloomhouse offices, but the majority is intended to be used for community gatherings, celebrations and other events. We view Bloomhouse as a first step in activating the overall EPA Waterfront site.

The next step is the Center for Economic Mobility in partnership with JobTrain. This project, which is in the planning application phase, will create a new hub for innovation and opportunity to allow residents to not only find jobs but to find a pathway towards long term economic security. The building will house an expanded JobTrain program in addition to ancillary support services, a community college campus, and a conduit to jobs in EPA and the surrounding area.



## Community-Centered Framework

### **COMMUNITY COLLABORATION:** A GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR THE VISION OF THE EPA WATERFRONT

**50+ Community engagements**

**Year-round community programs and activations**

**Proposed Site Area: 52 Acres**

**Proposed Buildable Area: 16 Acres**

**Proposed Community GSF: 40,000**

The EPA Waterfront site was inspired by and co-created with the many diverse voices of the East Palo Alto community through a series of individual, small and large conversations. The key design elements, for the 52 Acre site, come directly from these conversations with residents, covering numerous topics such as mobility, wetland restoration, job creation, healthier living and cultural celebration.

The site plan framework is envisioned as a flexible network of radial pathways which invite visitors into the neighborhood while organizing diverse programmed uses such as office space, retail, and R&D. The pathways culminate at the waterfront to form a central gathering space for the community. The central open space can become a place where all can gather and celebrate their diverse backgrounds, form new relationships with nature and experience the Bay. The central open space is framed on the south-west by the buildings and community activities and expands to the north and east through trails and the Bay's wetlands.

### *Culture*

East Palo Alto was built on the notion of self-determination and a long history of Civil Rights actions. It has also been a cultural hub within the Bay Area where cultural preservation and celebration have been foundational. Much of this cultural identity has evolved as demographics have changed and pressures from surrounding areas have caused displacement. In the spirit of the City's founding, the Project will use community engagement and art to promote an equitable process that values diversity and encourages civic engagement. The EPA Waterfront will be programmed with such things as art commissions, culturally stamped sidewalks, gardens, playgrounds and benches, as well as community workshops, events and festivals.

At the heart of the Cultural Program is a formal archival project that will be community-owned and housed within East Palo Alto. In partnership with the community, we will create a digital archive of the history of East Palo Alto that serves as a tribute to the people of the past, present and future. Beginning with the Ohlone people, the archive will include intellectual, physical, and media elements recording places, traditions, events and individuals who collectively built and shaped East Palo Alto. Launching Fall 2020, an Advisory Council of EPA leaders representing the diversity of the community will guide the project and each of its phases. The EPA Waterfront Project will serve as a vessel and platform for community engagement and a signature history installation or experience such as an outdoor history museum, sculpture garden or walking experience. The EPA Waterfront will also provide an intentional space for cross-cultural exchange and cultural preservation. The experience will be designed to celebrate the historical and contemporary contributions of East Palo Alto with the city and the world.

### *Wellness & Vitality*

Collective actualization is not possible without the health, wellness and vitality of a community. We believe in a holistic approach to wellness - communal healing, nutrition, education & advocacy. Tying personal and physical wellness to the water and land, builds upon EPA's unique history of agriculture and self-sufficiency and even more so, the tradition of the Ohlone. Extending our commitment to the ecological habitat and its biodiversity, Education & Advocacy workshops will focus on strategies to address climate change, food sovereignty, sustainable energy and green transportation. Communal Healing & Wellness workshops will integrate the wellness traditions of multi-ethnic East Palo Alto with basic principles of self-care, nutrition, chronic illness, generational trauma, mindfulness and stress management.



## **OPEN SPACE:** A PLACE FOR GATHERING, HEALING AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCY

**Proposed Open Space GSF: 36 Acres**

**Central Open Space: 4 Acres**

**Recreational Open Space: 5 Acres**

**Streetscape: 11 Acres**

**Wetlands: 16 Acres**

The open spaces and parks of the EPA Waterfront are inspired by cultural history, as well as by meaningful community input gathered over the past many months. As a result, we believe the open spaces and parks will become collective spaces appreciated by all; places where groups large and small can come together and share in a communal experience. Like all great public spaces around the world, the open spaces of the EPA Waterfront will support a variety of activities, uses, and programs that will evolve throughout the year. The open spaces and parks of the EPA Waterfront are more than just beautification; they are a dynamic, living network of spaces for the community that significantly contribute to environmental health, physical wellbeing and social connectedness. Here, the residents of EPA have already imagined a number of uses beyond markets and festivals such as concerts, outdoor movies, skating rinks, theatre, all with the beauty of the Bay as a backdrop.

We are inspired by the community, and we are also inspired by nature. The physical form of the project and open spaces takes the form of a flower 'bloom'. In this way, there is a strong 'center' that draws people in and fosters a shared sense of ownership and experience. At the same time, the design radiates outward, with the green and public character of the center influencing the quality of streets, buildings and neighborhood connections. The 'bloom' is inspiration for the parks' designs, but it is also a metaphor for the project's aspirations to create a broad and positive impact for the community.

### *Connecting to Nature*

The central open space will be a lush and diverse place with gardens that serve as an anchor to the converging framework, bringing the community together in a highly productive and captivating landscape with views to the Bay and connecting people to the wetlands. The site's expansive access to the Ravenswood Preserve creates a unique opportunity to invite EPA's residents to experience the natural waterfront. Sports fields and other recreational programs voiced by the community will be placed at the site's perimeter lots, welcoming residents.

### *Climate Resiliency*

The new waterfront transition zones address sea level rise while re-establishing a relationship with natural systems and improving the surrounding environment and ecology for everyone to enjoy. The design of the waterfront anticipates sea level rise and incorporates a variety of techniques to protect the site from flooding; some focused on providing access like seating terraces, walking trails, nature-play spaces and boardwalks, and some focused on nature and ecology; like soft embankments, wetland terraces and expanded marshlands. The waterfront improvements result in informal and casual gathering places in nature, with both landscapes that offer infinite horizons as well as more intimate spaces for quiet reflection.

## **MIXED USE: ACCESSIBLE HOUSING, RETAIL & PATHWAYS TO ECONOMIC MOBILITY**

**Proposed Office GSF: 750,000**

**Proposed R&D GSF: 550,000**

**Proposed Active Frontage GSF: 50,000**

**Proposed Residential GSF: 260,000 / 260 Residential Units**

### *Learning & Making*

The framework provides for a flexible mix of programs, with a focus on job creation through new office space, innovation & learning through research and development, making & distribution through micro-retail, and community serving programs such as JobTrain, helping create an equitable future.

### *Dynamic Retail*

Across all periods of history and throughout all cultures, it is undisputed that food has brought people & families together, and the EPA Waterfront will continue this tradition. The site's central open space is envisioned to have several uses such as a local farmer's markets, the host of varying cultural & culinary festivals, and support activities throughout the day and into the evening. From morning cafes, lunch time food courts, to evening 'knife and fork' restaurants, the EPA Waterfront will offer a unique food experience. Culinary offerings can be rounded out with local business ranging from beauty, apparel & accessories and other neighborhood services.

### *Attainable Housing*

An urgent need for housing and particularly affordable housing, has been expressed loud and clear by EPA's residents. The EPA Waterfront frames housing as an extension to the University Village neighborhood, connecting it to the central open space and the Bay. The housing will promote healthy living habits placing it directly adjacent to recreational open spaces, shared streets linked to the Bay trail, and productive community gardens & open markets at the central gathering space. Housing will ensure activity in the new neighborhood after work hours, and will facilitate new habits of working from home, by placing it in a mixed-use neighborhood. The amenities of a typical residential environment can blend with those of a more commercial nature.

## *A Neighborly Presence*

The building envelopes play a key role in not only housing a meaningful mix of programs, but also framing the streets, and shaping the skyline. The building heights are naturally lower towards the University Village's single-family homes, and gradually increase to meet the neighboring 2020 Bay development before subsequently stepping back down towards the Bay to offer more access to waterfront views. Through minimum setbacks, sky-planes, and maximum heights and building areas, the envelopes can provide a flexible zone for future architecture. This ensures the physical manifestation reflects the diverse mix of users and uses in the EPA Waterfront. The street setbacks will widen the sidewalks and hold active street-wall definitions. The sky-plane or upper setback definitions will ensure ample daylight in the streets.

## **MOBILITY: CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE STREETSCAPES**

**Proposed Streetscape: 11 Acres**

**Proposed Parking Stalls: 4,300**

Creating an inviting streetscape that inspires creativity is key for a community to thrive. The neighborhood connects homes with workplaces, fosters learning and activity, and creates opportunities for the exchange of ideas through chance encounters. Traffic congestion is a serious concern in the neighborhood both limiting the mobility of residents and a contributing factor in many local chronic health issues. To address this concern, the EPA Waterfront site is designed with street calming measures as a basis of the design. Vehicular traffic is limited within the neighborhood and in addition, the site adopts the 2013 Specific Plan's Loop Road and Connector Streets which will reduce cut through traffic within the adjacent University Village.

The community's desire for 'less cars' and more walkable, bike-friendly streets shaped the project's smaller streets and converging blocks, creating more porosity at the ground level. The site envisions a 'car free' future with more walkable connections, safer bike paths, less car lanes, and altogether more intimate and inviting environments which prioritizes pedestrians.

To mitigate vehicular traffic within the site, parking is located at the perimeter of the neighborhood along the Loop Road and Connector Streets. This limits vehicular traffic within the neighborhood core to local drop-off and service only and creates a network of shared streets where bikes and pedestrians are a priority. In addition, the site is also able to accommodate future expansions of public transit by connecting to a potential future bus route along Pulgas Avenue through the heart of the site to Purdue Avenue and the future Loop Road. By reducing cut through traffic off Purdue Avenue and Stevens Avenue, the EPA Waterfront can serve as an extension of the University Village, strengthening its neighborly connections to the Bay.

Through these many design ideas, such as mixed use, shared streets, a central open space, and community programming, the EPA waterfront will create a safe, active, and inviting space. Community members can find places to walk, bike, take lunch breaks, go for evening strolls, walk their dogs, or gather together to celebrate the rich culture and diversity of East Palo Alto.

