



City of East Palo Alto Ravenswood Business District / 4 Corners Specific Plan Update

Community Workshop #1 Summary (May 27, 2021)

Workshop Overview

The City of East Palo Alto hosted its first community workshop for the Ravenswood Business District (RBD) / 4 Corners Specific Plan Update on Thursday, May 27, 2021 from 6:30pm to 9:00pm. The focus of this workshop was to introduce the EPA community and other stakeholders to the project, provide an overview of the topics and challenges that would be engaged as part of the plan update, and most importantly offer a platform and opportunity for the public to share feedback, perspective, and insight.

In adherence with local public health mandates, this workshop was held virtually with participants logging in to an online Zoom meeting, or dialing in by phone to the Zoom meeting. Spanish interpretation services were made available during the meeting, and recordings and digital copies of the workshop materials were later posted on the project website, hosted by the City of East Palo Alto Planning Department.

*To learn more about the project, including upcoming meetings and other outreach opportunities, please visit the [**Ravenswood Business District / 4 Corners Specific Plan Update website**](#). The video recording and a copy of the presentation slides shown during this workshop are available on the website. A copy of the presentation and video recording in Spanish are also online. [*Para leer los comentarios del taller en español, consulte el apéndice al final.*](#)*

Maximum concurrent attendance for the workshop was approximately **90 attendees**, though 153 individuals pre-registered via Zoom (participants were encouraged to register prior to the event). Notable attendees included:

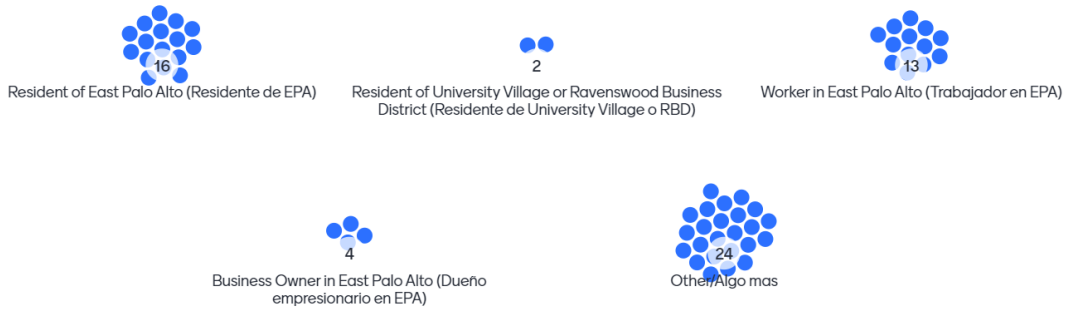
- Mayor and Councilmember Carlos Romero;
 - Members of the Specific Plan Update project team, including Raimi + Associates who hosted and managed the workshop; and
 - Key staff from the City of East Palo Alto, including Amy Chen (Director of Community & Economic Development), and Elena Lee (Planning Division Manager)
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A voluntary polling activity was conducted at the start of the workshop to generate a more detailed profile of the attendees. Polling was hosted by Mentimeter, and workshop attendees were encouraged to participate using personal devices. These questions drew an average of 53 respondents (out of approximately 90 attendees):

- More than half of the workshop participants live or work in the City
- One-third of participants have lived or worked in the City for more than ten years
- Three-quarters of participants had heard of the Specific Plan before

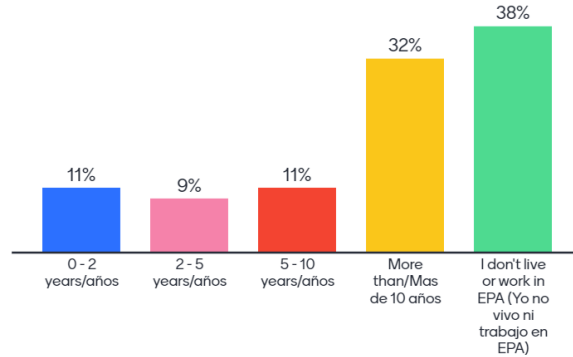
How would you describe yourself? Select all that apply ¿Como se describiría? Seleccione todos que aplican

Mentimeter



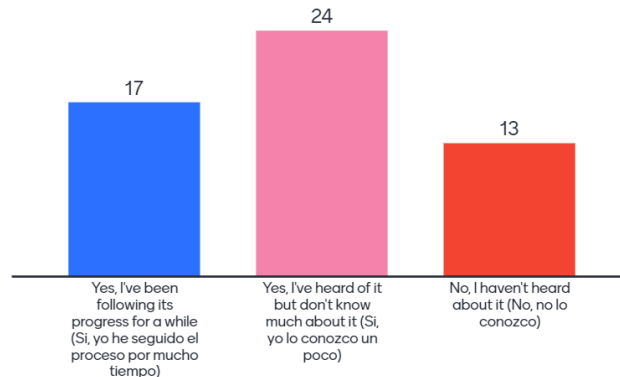
How long have you lived or worked in East Palo Alto? ¿Cuánto tiempo ha vivido en East Palo Alto?

Mentimeter



Are you familiar with the RBD Specific Plan? ¿Usted conoce el plano específico del RBD?

Mentimeter



Meeting Agenda

The workshop began a formal presentation by the consultant team (led by Raimi + Associates), followed by several interactive conversations including a large group Q&A session, and smaller group conversations in breakout groups.

(6:30p) Welcome & Introduction by Mayor Romero

(6:40p) Overview Presentation

(7:20p) Question & Answer

(7:45p) Small Breakout Group Conversations

(8:30p) Report Back and Group Discussion

(8:50p) Conclusion & Next Steps

Workshop Summary

Outreach & Noticing

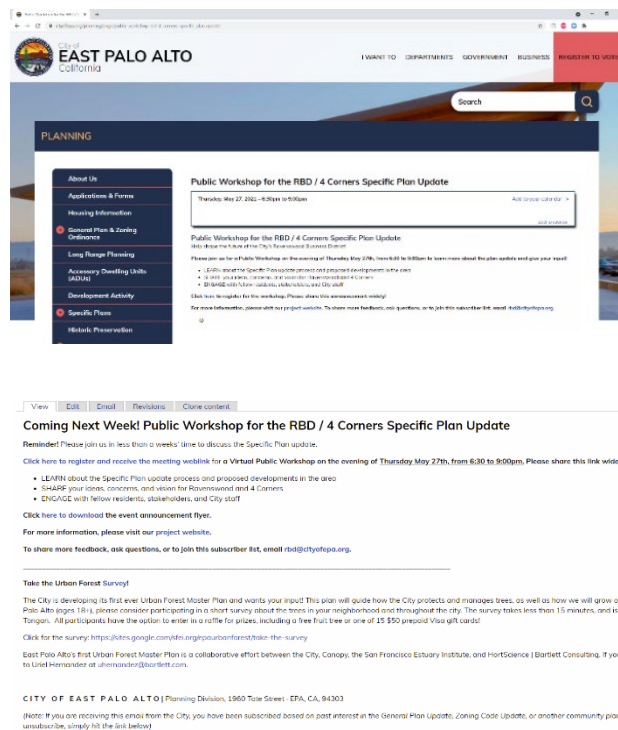
Public noticing for the workshop began in early May 2021. A digital flyer for the workshop was circulated by members of the project team and staff, including:

- Via email as a newsletter blast to a large database of community members
- On the City calendar and website
- On City of East Palo Alto social media sites
- To business owners, organizations, and schools in and around RBD / 4 Corners
- “East Palo Alto Neighbors” Facebook page

In addition to digital noticing, a printed advertisement was featured in the May 14, 2021 edition of the *Redwood City Daily News*, a local publication that circulates newspapers throughout the County of San Mateo. The City of East Palo Alto and many other local jurisdictions have used the *Daily News* in the past for noticing.

Finally, the project team has been conducting ongoing smaller group discussions with local organizations and community groups such as YUCA, as well as businesses currently located in the RBD and regional non-profits. Recipients of the flyer were encouraged to circulate the event through respective internal networks and mailing lists.

At the meeting, certain residents noted that they wished to see greater representation from the local community (approximately less than half were residents). These residents requested additional expanded noticing for future events and suggested that local organizations should feature more prominently in engagement and public participation efforts.



Presentation Highlights & Key Takeaways

Raimi + Associates, project lead for the Specific Plan Update, took the audience through an overview presentation that covered a range of topics including:

- A recap of the 2013 Specific Plan, including the vision, project goals, and development assumptions;
- Description of the update objectives – to complete a *targeted* amendment to the 2013 Plan by carrying over its vision and goals into the updated document;
- Highlights of changes in the Plan area and City of East Palo Alto more broadly, including demographic shifts, housing, economic context, transportation conditions, and hazards;
- A summary of the major proposed developments in the RBD / 4 Corners area; and
- Major topics and themes that the update will address, including design principles, community benefits, and the impacts and benefits of potential development.

A key takeaway from the presentation was that this project is a direct response to the significant changes that the City has experienced since the original plan's adoption, coupled with the collection of newly proposed development projects that could have significant impacts on the area from a design, economic, and environmental perspective. A copy of the full presentation is available on the project website, in both English and Spanish.

Breakout Groups & Discussion

Following the formal presentation, attendees were divided into five smaller groups, each group facilitated by staff or members of the project team (one of these groups was exclusively Spanish-speaking). These breakout groups were not recorded to maintain participant anonymity. Feedback was collected using an interactive digital white board called Miro – copies are available below in the [Appendix](#).

The purpose of these discussions was to provide an opportunity for community members and stakeholders to react and respond to topics introduced during the presentation, and most importantly share their own insights regarding the Specific Plan Update and how development in the area might result in changes throughout the City. To guide the conversation, breakout groups were provided with three key questions:

1. What are the challenges and what are your concerns about new development in RBD?
2. How should this place look and feel in the future?
3. What are key community benefits that you want the City to prioritize from new development?

Several key themes emerged from these discussions:

- Traffic is inarguably the greatest concern for residents, given their experience with current traffic
- Desire to see all projects work/plan together for the betterment of the City and the RBD area
- Strong support for affordable housing that is accessible to those living in EPA and any steps to prevent displacement of current residents
- Interest in building a place that the community has a real ownership stake in, over the long term
- Concern over the complex interface between new development and the shoreline/open space
- Sense that current proposals are not totally in line with what the community would like to ultimately see
- Strong interest in projects providing spaces that can serve residents of various ages and needs (makerspace, start-up space, training spaces, local organization offices, youth development, etc.)

Key community comments are summarized below.

Question #1: Top Impacts/Challenges

Transportation & Traffic

- Access points in and out of Ravenswood are limited, causing issues for local residents and workers especially during AM and PM rush hour
- Access to Highway 101 and the Dumbarton Bridge cause significant congestion along University Ave
- Concerns that traffic and parking issues along major roads like Bay Rd or University Ave will overflow into smaller neighborhood streets, especially as workers try to access local employment centers
- Potential safety concerns, as access for public safety vehicles like fire or police may be hindered
- Factor existing traffic patterns into the current plans
- Possible new road off Dumbarton Bridge could ease local traffic onto University Ave

Displacement & Gentrification

- Vulnerable members of the community could be more negatively impacted by development than others, including low-income families and young adults
- Fear that long-standing, low-income residents may have to move out due to housing costs going up
- The proposed developments don't "fit" the EPA community

Natural Open Space and Impacts to Marshes

- Critical to protect the existing marshland, especially as a natural means to address sea level rise
- Protect the native species that inhabit natural areas along the water, especially as it relates to building heights, shadows, and materials
- Involve other jurisdictions in regulating habitat, irrespective of regulatory boundaries

Flooding and Sea Level Rise

- Unclear what the plan or design is for the shoreline and levee; how will developments protect themselves
- Both flooding and ground water intrusion are major concerns

Housing Affordability

- New housing should accommodate people who work in jobs generated by new development, especially service-oriented jobs
- Preference for below-market-rate opportunities, for both rental and ownership

Topic #2: Vision & Placemaking

- Bay Road should be positioned as more than just a thoroughfare for cars: new, diverse commercial developments could generate revenue for the city and encourage people to stop
- Need a more compact pedestrian network throughout the area that facilitates community interaction
- All new development needs to orient itself so it welcomes in the greater EPA community

Topic #3: Community Benefits

- Strong desire for long-term, quality jobs that uplift EPA residents (especially middle-income wages)
- On-site community facilities could include: work space for students, play areas for all ages, libraries, museum/cultural center, dog park
- Designated office space or funding for local organizations and businesses should be included
- The area is in need of improved infrastructure including roads and utilities such as water
- Benefits could extend beyond physical interventions to include programs such as financial literacy courses, youth academy, free Wi-Fi, public health initiatives, etc.
- Community benefits must also be considered from a city-wide perspective (not just immediate plan area)
- Redundancies in community benefits should be avoided: transparent communication and coordination across the various developers is key
- Developers should prioritize working with local organizations throughout the approval/planning process

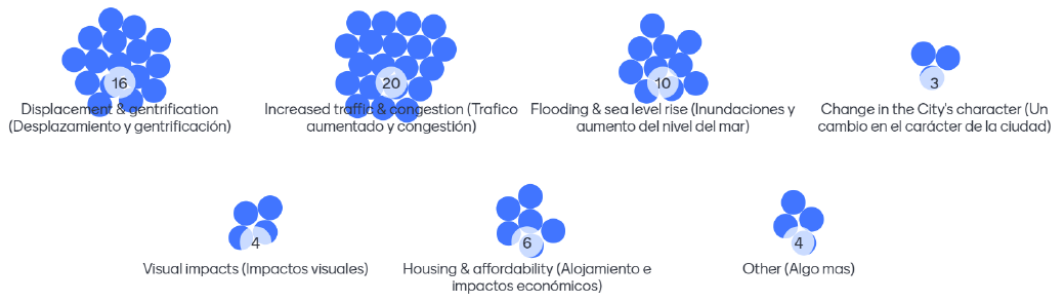
Final Polling

Coming out of the individual breakout groups, one final polling exercise was conducted. Results included:

- Top concerns were **1) traffic & congestion**, **2) displacement**, and **3) flooding & sea level rise**
- Top desired benefits were **1) Open space & parks**, **2) Affordable housing**, and **3) Quality jobs for residents**
- Respondents were split on the question of whether additional development would be desirable assuming it provided substantial benefits (with a slight lean towards no)

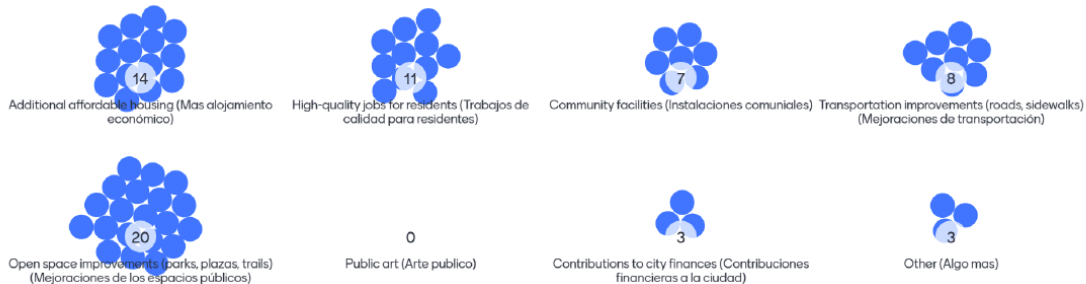
What are your concerns with future development in RBD? (Top 2) ¿Que son sus preocupaciones sobre el desarrollo futuro del RBD? (Seleccione 2)

Mentimeter



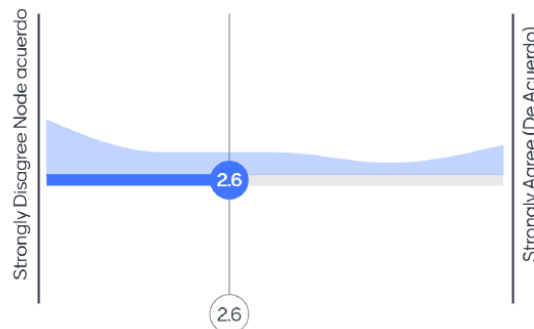
What are the most important community benefits? (Top 2) ¿Que son los beneficios comuniales más importantes? (Seleccione 2)

Mentimeter



Would you accept more development if it gave more community benefits? Estaría dispuesto aceptar más desarrollo si resulta en más beneficios comuniales?

Mentimeter



Appendix

Breakout Group 1 Board

Topic 1: Challenges & Concerns

What are your concerns about new development in the RBD / 4 Corners area?

Traffic (ingress/egress)

- Prior to pandemic, rush hour (evening) traffic at University/Lincoln trying to access Dumbarton, 101
- Residents can't get in/out of community during peak hours
- Traffic will flow into residential streets from main thoroughfares to access employment centers
- It's impossible to hold down multiple jobs/maintain a schedule that requires going in/out of city multiple times per day
- Safety issue - emergency vehicle access

Displacement

- Impacts entire community, including young people/students

Projects don't meet needs of community

- These proposed projects are adding to existing challenges. It's possible to build projects in conjunction with the community so that it better fits community need
- Engage with organizations (like Nuestra Casa)
- Example: tiny homes (with key amenities, e.g. charging stations, water, etc.); financial literacy courses

Sea level rise

- This is a marsh area - significant potential for environmental damage
- Need to protect/preserve this area (for the benefit of residents as well) that is already dealing with adapting to sea level rise; speaks for lowering the commercial sq ft limit

Development should also benefit young people in East Palo Alto

- Need spaces for study, wifi access
- Play spaces for people of all ages

Community engagement on RBD needs to engage the community

- Opportunity to compensate/employ East Palo Alto residents with expertise in the community
- Many attendees only heard about the event the day before
- Need to engage local organizations to ensure that we are reaching people

Topic 2: Vision + Placemaking

How should this place look and feel in the future?

Bay Rd. needs to be a street, not a "strode," i.e. a road that is trying to be a street but is more like a thoroughfare

There needs to be commercial development that leads to more than just traffic going through, but stopping and spending money in the city.

This requires a balance of offices/commercial, retail, etc. This includes restaurants.

The type of development (office, retail, etc.) needs to encourage foot traffic, safety, etc.

Need to provide housing that accommodates the people who will work in the jobs generated by the new development - including service jobs generated

Job creation needs to actual create resident employment opportunities - inclusive commercial development

- Qualified residents have faced challenges with big employers (i.e. Amazon) in the past

Office space/funding for East Palo Alto community organizations should be part of new development

Office spaces for East Palo Alto-based entrepreneurs

Topic 3: Community Benefits

What are the key community benefits from RBD development that the City should prioritize?

See reference to "young people in EPA " above

We need to coordinate community benefits

- Are different developers working together to not duplicate efforts and what they are promising on each of their projects?
- And what are the checks and balances after they start building? Who will hold them responsible for keeping promises down the line?

Transportation management plan

- Coordinated across jurisdictions and developers

City-wide needs should be part of the discussion; not just amenities in the vicinity of the project

Office space/funding for East Palo Alto community organizations should be part of new development

Local preference for BMR homeownership opportunities (or downpayment assistance programs)

Office spaces for East Palo Alto-based entrepreneurs

Breakout Group 2 Board

Topic 1: Challenges & Concerns

What are your concerns about new development in the RBD / 4 Corners area?

Proposing 4m sq ft, according to EIT, tech companies, this avg 3 trips per day = 100k trips a day during rush hour, just with these four projects it will jam our streets. Makes it unlivable. Why haven't we talked about the existing traffic.

Traffic always comes up. Developers should lobby to get a road off the Dumbarton Bridge?

Sea level rise and habitat squeeze. Could there be adjustments in this plan, movement of these wetlands to keep the biodiversity up?

adaptation to climate change and sea level rise

Nothing in the plan that looks at the shoreline. Do we have a plan for where the levee is going to sit. Natural protection against sea level rise is needed.

Concerns about housing affordability and traffic. Going into the Facebook area and through the city.

Overall the community, in particular low income community that doesn't own their own homes, have to consider moving out of the community. The community who has been here for decades is disappearing.

The plan should already have housing and affordable housing. For the environmental side, I hope there is a horizontal levee. My priority is about low income families.

There is a bay area wide plan to protect and expand the marshlands. EPA can nip

We can agree all the challenges, only covers one species. Only from the human point of view. 100s to 1000s of species. The interaction is important, community benefits of other species.

Scope of this process, is the potential about increasing the amount of development, not about changing the specifics of the specific plan? Issues with traffic.

What issues do you think will arise with an increased amount of development?

Topic 2: Vision + Placemaking

How should this place look and feel in the future?

A part of placemaking is a healthy community, connection with nature. One thing that is not healthy is traffic, and comes with air pollution, effects our personal health of human beings and animal populations. Hoping we have standards and not just guidelines. Looking at migration is important, not allowing roads to cut off animals migration routes.

Neighbors to the open space reserve. The placemaking factor is to capture the magnificent open space amenities, connectivity, access to the open space, shoreline, trails, etc. As we think about the height, setbacks, etc., to think about the open space. Also remember noise and light pollution. Maybe doesn't work with the bird species.

SF Bay Partnership has says we can't take jurisdictional limits to impact animals, because they can't just adapt to the human made boundaries or move species. We need to involve other judica.

Made clarification the Foster City sea wall. That we should work with nature.

Not in favor of any projects that go beyond the allowed height

Less ability to access the open space because the buildings will be blocking the visibility. Creating lots of pollution. Vision for RBD: Turn it back into uses compatible with homes. Data centers at the most.

Hopeful people like Jane will continue to work with developers, support our needs to treasure the nature we have. I am happy a lot of work has been done and continuous, benefits to the community, and creating/maintaining existing roads to finance funds coming from development.

the design needs more cut-throughs/paths that keeps space between buildings for casual meet-ups, linear park/walkways.

i worry about the neighborhood adjacent to the projects and the blocked views they'll have of the bay

Ordinary citizen/ people get lost in the shuffle.

Topic 3: Community Benefits

What are the key community benefits from RBD development that the City should prioritize?

- Libraries+1,
- affordable housing+3,
- vibrant youth/family/community centers, environmental edu+1,
- things that flow into one another,
- ecosystem integrity (old trees with new),
- art museums/cultural,
- preserve history,
- high quality open space+2,
- clean up problems/pollution,
- lessen traffic,
- prepare and improve safety (natural disasters),
- internet/broadband connectivity,
- safe bike access/walking trails+1

Breakout Group 3 Board

Topic 1: Challenges & Concerns

What are your concerns about new development in the RBD / 4 Corners area?

Housing in the projects	maybe a tax benefit briefly, EPA struggling for resources, it is a difficult issue. Will completely change character of the area	large developers move into underserved communities, it never works well.	TRansportation issues	displacement and change of character to the City and its residents	Traffic is a big concern, the amount generated is a big concern
a bulk of the commuters can be reduced and EPA can dictate the terms. Can dictate real good affordable housing. Look at the jobs-housing situation across Palo Alto and EPA together.	If there is that much development, how does this development address sea level rise and concerns of that levee or wall on the wildlife.	Ground water rise and sea level rise needs to be addressed, it is a serious problem.	1. if this is for EPA residents, focus should be on affordable housing.	issues around potential jobs.	its important to name that there is contaminated land there which limits how much housing can even go in the RBD area.
2. Climate change and its impact. Sea level rise, ill advised to pursue the development	Attended first meeting with Bloomhouse (waterfront) community meeting. Outdoor area, dog park, nature friendly community areas. now the proposal shows 2 blocks of housing. jobs for the local residents, they are not being heard. the proposal should reflect that.	Housing front: Concern - need to be thought through carefully - indirect potential for displacement given that there is a lot of job creation and the housing stock is not prepared to absorb the housing demand. Big risk for indirect displacement is a big concern	most people participating tonight are not EPA residents, something to consider.	the art and utility along the Bayshore, it is a rich resource. The Bay trail is not the sense of neighborhood community gathering space, people along the bay share activities. Unique natural asset is the open space. Concerns with proposal is to bring the residents to the bay for a community. Should be passive recreation along the bay.	

Topic 2: Vision + Placemaking

How should this place look and feel in the future?

Amenities for residents	dog park, community involvement, ask the community. A flyer an hour before this meeting. Ideally, not to have 4/5/6/ story in my backyard. I want it to be preserved. Community uses for recreation. Till Bloomhouse cut it off. Feels taken away but don't want big businesses and traffic.	Four specific projects: breakouts for specific plan, is this within the four projects or assign a vision for something new, so we can think of addressing direct / indirect displacement. What is the scope of this conversation? Possibilities? Are we confined to the projects presented? Ans: Proposed projects, council has not approved any other than 2020 bay road.	Dog parks. Grocery store / restaurants. investment to improve the local schools.	refer to something in the past - how does it feel? Westside - Whiskey Gulch - when you walked out, you were engaged great people, feel like a real human community. It was run down, but it had a sense of community, EPA has never been able to recreate. University ave is a highway! Create a place where you can feel the sense of neighborhood. People who owned places lived there, local feel.
It can be a big picture vision and also what you think about these projects? How to get more community residents involved in this process.	There is no existing housing, this is vacant land. Displacement pressure with existing homes vs. housing availability.	We are looking at the Specific Plan? what do you want in the Specific Plan?	City will work with community groups to reach more people, if you have specific groups to reach out, let us know.	Pulling apart the concepts of planning and projects. Scale clarity for planning work in the City of EPA.
Any development, if any, definitely want something Green . Factoring in walkable, pedestrian friendly, connection Add a 3rd to walkability!	Yes! I would like EPA to continue to feel like a community. This current proposals make the area feel like a business district.	Character different from large corporate parks. USES the Bay trails in cities, something pleasant about open space around Bay Trails and it is good emotionally.	Referencing to Santana Row: although busy, its actual roads are very walkable road. Create pedestrian areas.	Facebook proposed underground tunnel to add increased transit connectivity could be cool even if it is a tad realistic

Topic 3: Community Benefits

What are the key community benefits from RBD development that the City should prioritize?

Jobs. But jobs that are actual good fits for East Palo Alto's population profile. That means considering land uses that will allow for "good fit" industries	walkable community	Mixed use retail, jumpstart for financial health and facility assistance.	Also neighborhood serving retail. If possible, with ways to give a first shot to local entrepreneurs and small business owners	resilience to flooding
fearful if current waterfront development goes through, fear of displacement. Big supporter of affordable housing or section 8 housing.	pedestrian friendly	other different options : affordable housing	look, feel, wildlife, freshwater wetland assets and benefits to those	smaller homes, beauty of the Bay, not big buildings
Seal point like dog park and walk path with kid playground	Jobs. But jobs that are actual good fits for East Palo Alto's population profile. That means considering land uses that will allow for "good fit" industries	walkability, maybe connect to the bay trail	diversity of housing, more than that - not market rate - support long term residents and locals.	EPA continue to feel like a community. Current proposals makes it feel like a business district

Breakout Group 4 Board (Spanish-speaking)

Tema 1: Retos y Preocupaciones

¿Cuáles son sus preocupaciones sobre el desarrollo nuevo en el área de RBD/ 4 esquinas?

Como hablar de parques e industrias cuando no hay agua para los residentes. Esto es un desplazamiento disfrazado. / How can you talk about parks and industry when there is no water for residents? This is displacement in disguise.	Como prepararse para el crecimiento del nivel del mar - Esto debe ser prioridad / How we can prepare for rising sea levels—This should be our top priority.	Pueden eliminar lo que fue aprobado para area industrial? / Can you take away approvals in industrial areas?	Reunion no fue anunciada debidamente. Falta de representacion / The meeting was not announced properly. There is a lack of representation	Impacto ambiental de los proyectos en esta area / Environmental impact of the projects in this area
Companias han prometido trabajos para lacominidad pero terminan siendo para personas fuera de la comunidad / Companies/businesses have promised jobs for people in the community but those jobs end up going to people outside of the community	Programas de entrenamiento y educacion para mejores trabajos para los residentes / Training and education programs for better jobs for residents	Problemas de asma mas trafico va a causar problemas de salud / Complications with asthma, more traffic will cause more health problems	Los proyectos que estan siendo considerados fueron considerados en lel total del area? / Were the current projects being considered here being considered in the entire area?	Como las familias de bajos recursos y lacominidad y los intereses de lacominidad van a ser protegidos / How low-income families, the community, and community interests will be protected

Tema 2: Metas y Placemaking

¿Como debería aparecer y sentir este lugar en el futuro?

Protejer esta areas y mantenerlas como areas verdes y construir levis.
/ Protect these areas as green spaces and construct levis

La vision es hacer mas inversion en resolver los problemas actuales en vez de pensar en aprobar mas proyectos. / The goal should be to have more investment in resolving the current problems instead of focusing on approving more projects

La ciudad debe dar prioridad a ofrecer mas agua potable de alta calidad. Necesitamos mas parques y areas para arboles / The city should prioritize offering more high quality drinking water. We need more parks and areas for trees (green spaces?)

Mejorar la infraestructura de distribucion de agua
/ Improve the water distribution infrastructure

Por que estan proponiendo laboratorios e investigacion? Necesitamos mas espacios verdes / Why are you proposing research laboratories? We need more green spaces.

Tema 3: Beneficios Comuniales

¿Que son los beneficios comunales más importantes del desarrollo del RBD que la ciudad debería prioridad?

Medidas para mejorar la salud de los residentes
/ Measures to improve the health of residents

Vivienda para personas de bajos recursos - Incrementar el area disponible para mas vivienda asequible / Low Income housing. Increase the available area for more affordable housing

Mejorar la seguridad en las calles (niveles de crimen)
/ Improve street/neighborhood safety (crime levels)

Definir bajos ingresos de acuerdo con los ingresos reales de los residentes de EPA / Define low income based on the actual income of residents in EPA

Mejores oportunidades de educacion para los niños de EPA
/ Better educational opportunities for children living in EPA

¿Hemos faltado algunos beneficios comunales importantes?