



# EAST PALO ALTO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE DRAFT POLICY APPROACHES WORKSHOP CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONNECTION



## Description of Issue

Civic engagement and connection are important so residents can have a say in policies and activities that affect them. They are also important for building trust and connection between the community and the City. In East Palo Alto, attending public events and meetings can be challenging, especially for working families. East Palo Alto residents have expressed that activities and events feel alienating and not relevant to them if information is not available in their primary language. Residents also raised a lack of easily understandable information as a hindrance to engagement. Power dynamics can affect engagement and interactions due to differences in status or privilege, such as between people of different races and ethnicities, income levels, and/or educational attainment.

## Summary of Current City Policies

- Expanding inclusivity in public engagement, including hosting open meetings, language translation, and culturally sensitive outreach. In the Willow-Woodland neighborhood, this includes creating an advisory committee for long-range planning processes.
- Requiring sponsors of major development and infrastructure projects to engage the community about the project consistent with the City's Outreach Policy.
- Ensuring City-sponsored social service programs are provided for all racial and ethnic groups in the city.
- Providing resources to support participation by families, such as by providing childcare at programs and events.
- Improving the distribution of publicly accessible venues where public meetings and information is available, including by establishing new community centers in the Willow-Woodland neighborhood.
- Continuing to implement the City's Community Engagement Policy, which clarifies outreach requirements for planning and development activities.
- Encouraging a cross-section of the community in the appointment of Commissions and other appointed and advisory bodies.
- Providing regular communications to the community about General Plan implementation, housing issues, and other planning-related activities.

## Draft Policy Approaches

**Goal: Empower residents to have a strong voice in City decisions that affect their lives.**

### Draft Policy Approaches

Expanding translation, interpretation, and accessibility of materials and meetings for decisions that affect disadvantaged communities, including tailoring translation and interpretation to the predominant languages spoken in the affected community, providing a variety of ways to participate, and scheduling, formatting, and locating meetings to maximize convenience for residents.
Providing additional resources and support, such as compensation, transportation, child care, and meals, to residents to attend and participate in City meetings and events that affect disadvantaged communities.
Expanding use of technology to improve access to and distribution of information while maintaining information access for people without computers or internet through such media as multi-lingual flyers.
Making clear, transparent, and easy-to-understand information about City progress on policy planning, actions, and activities readily available to all City residents in languages spoken by affected communities.
Building positive relationships between residents, businesses, and City officials.
Expanding partnerships with local community-based organizations to build residents' capacity for participation and advocacy.

### Draft Implementing Actions

Developing an equitable community engagement toolkit that supports all City departments and provides strategies to address different power dynamics.
Establishing a simple, direct way for residents to easily communicate with City government and receive information, such as alerts.
Partnering with local nonprofits or youth groups to establish a community-facing and user-friendly online portal that provides access to environmental data, such as real-time or regular updated information on air quality, groundwater levels, soil contamination status, and toxic site remediation updates.
Establishing advisory bodies to the City Council that are dedicated to environmental justice and equitable community engagement.
Annually reporting the progress made on the implementation of the Environmental Justice Element.

## Do You Have Any Suggestions?



# EAST PALO ALTO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE DRAFT POLICY APPROACHES WORKSHOP

## ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS AND HEALTH: CONTAMINATION



### Description of Issue

Pollution from industrial sources contaminating soil, groundwater, and air is a significant issue in East Palo Alto. Many of these sites, including the old Romic site and Cooley Landing, existed before the City's incorporation in 1983. There are locations in East Palo Alto where hazardous waste is generated, particularly in the area north of Bay Road, which can further contaminate soil and groundwater.

### Summary of Current City Policies

- Prohibiting new uses and developments that would emit toxic waste except necessary services, and prohibiting industrial and manufacturing uses in the Willow-Woodland neighborhood.
- Cleaning up and restoring contaminated sites.
- Including the community in decisions about contaminated site clean-up and restoration.
- Regulating how hazardous materials and waste are disposed.
- Requiring soil testing on sites exposed to chemical releases and requiring a clean-up and restoration strategy if contamination is found.
- Working with other agencies to reduce concentrations of pollutants.
- Preventing illegal dumping, removing illegal dump sites, and implementing regular trash clean-up events throughout the city.

### Draft Policy Approaches

**Goal: Safely and systemically address toxics, legacy pollutants, and hazardous materials.**

#### Draft Policy Approaches

Continuing to coordinate with other agencies to pursue clean-up and restoration of contaminated sites, prioritizing clean-up efforts in disadvantaged communities.
Providing more information and updates to community members about contamination and pollution threats and programs.
Requiring applicants and developers of projects involving hazardous materials and waste to provide clear information in plain language about potential hazards to community members.
Requiring applicants and developers of projects involving hazardous materials and waste in areas at risk from sea level rise, flooding, or tsunami to prepare plans to prevent contamination from inundation, sea level rise, or groundwater rise.
Requiring developers of projects involving hazardous materials and waste to provide funds to guarantee site clean-up and restoration.
Providing equitable inspection and enforcement of hazardous materials and waste regulations throughout the city, especially in disadvantaged communities.

#### Draft Implementing Actions

*Working with State and regional agencies to identify areas at risk from contamination from inundation, sea level rise, or groundwater rise and developing a plan to reduce risks to the community.*

### Do You Have Any Suggestions?



# EAST PALO ALTO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE DRAFT POLICY APPROACHES WORKSHOP

## SAFE AND SANITARY HOMES



### Description of Issue

Many homes in East Palo Alto are aging and have issues with mold and pests and may have toxic materials that can pose serious health risks, which have been raised as a top concern by residents. Mold and pests create unsanitary conditions and indoor pollution and can contribute to health issues like asthma. Exposure to lead in homes can negatively impact maternal health and early childhood development. Homes and buildings constructed before 1989 are likely to contain asbestos, a known cancer-causing material. Asbestos can also trigger asthma episodes and other respiratory symptoms. East Palo Alto residents of multifamily buildings have expressed exposure to second-hand smoke from other units as a concern. Another issue raised by residents was the inefficiency of their homes and buildings to retain heat and use energy.

### Summary of Current City Policies

- Establishing home repair programs to address mold, pests, and other safety issues and rehabilitation needs.
- Strengthening enforcement of code violations and other tools to improve housing safety and improve neighborhood conditions.
- Continuing to regularly update the Building Code to promote healthy housing.
- Prohibiting smoking in publicly accessible spaces of multi-family buildings and in other public spaces.

### Draft Policy Approaches

**Goal:** All housing supports healthy residents.

#### Draft Policy Approaches

Prompting and incentivizing owners of substandard housing units in disadvantaged communities to repair and rehabilitate their buildings.
Promoting building design principles that support healthy living conditions, such as through cross-ventilation, enhanced air and physical circulation, and use of healthy building materials.
Supporting voluntary removal of natural gas infrastructure and appliances from homes and replacement with electric appliances.
Proactively and equitably enforcing health and safety codes for residential buildings.
Promoting programs and services to help people quit smoking.
Encouraging building designs that reduce second-hand smoke exposure.

#### Draft Implementing Actions

Expanding financial assistance and education programs to help residents identify and address indoor air quality and mold issues, prioritizing outreach and implementation in disadvantaged communities.
Expanding programs for affordable home weatherization and retrofit programs, such as seismic, air filtration, and energy efficiency retrofits, prioritizing outreach and implementation in disadvantaged communities.
Developing incentives and other strategies to remove lead and asbestos in older homes, prioritizing outreach and implementation in disadvantaged communities.
Developing programs to offer assistance to perform ADA modifications for low-income households.

### Do You Have Any Suggestions?



# EAST PALO ALTO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE DRAFT POLICY APPROACHES WORKSHOP

## RESOURCES FOR UNHOUSED PEOPLE



Image Source: WeHOPE

### Description of Issue

Unhoused people are an extremely vulnerable group who have to rely on public spaces and amenities to live day to day. They often face challenges around mental health, exposure to the elements, lack of food, and lack of support. East Palo Alto residents have identified the need to provide resources and shelters for unhoused people as a priority. The latest one-day homeless count for San Mateo County in 2024 shows a homeless population at a disproportionately higher rate in East Palo Alto than across San Mateo County.

### Summary of Current City Policies

- Providing homeless services, including prevention, mental health services, and necessary facilities.
- Providing and facilitating temporary housing, emergency shelters, single-room occupancy (SROs), and transitional housing.
- Exploring options for long-term solutions for RV parking.
- Incorporating special housing needs in affordable housing developments, such as accommodating large households, people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, and people with disabilities.
- Coordinating with San Mateo County and local organizations to implement continuum of care strategies and provide support for unhoused people.

### Draft Policy Approaches

**Goal: Safely and systemically address toxics, legacy pollutants, and hazardous materials.**

#### Draft Policy Approaches

- Expanding emergency housing, low-barrier navigation centers (shelters focused on helping unhoused people quickly obtain permanent housing), transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing.
- Working with local and regional agencies and organizations to provide and increase services and facilities for unhoused people, including mental health services.

#### Draft Implementing Actions

- Expanding existing and developing new programs to provide safe places to park RVs overnight with supportive resources, such as showers and laundry service.
- Providing information about shelter and food assistance programs via the range of the City's communication tools.

### Do You Have Any Suggestions?



# EAST PALO ALTO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE DRAFT POLICY APPROACHES WORKSHOP

## AFFORDABILITY, GENTRIFICATION, AND DISPLACEMENT



### Description of Issue

Housing affordability is a significant issue in East Palo Alto and a complex topic that is affected by the housing market, availability of affordable housing, and income levels, among other factors. Housing is considered “cost-burdened” when the cost of housing is greater than 30 percent of a household’s income. Affordability, gentrification, and risks of displacement are top concerns raised by East Palo Alto residents. Many people have expressed the need for more affordable housing options in East Palo Alto. Current residents, especially low-income residents and residents of color, are at risk of displacement due to rising housing costs or potential climate-related events that could damage or destroy existing homes.

### Summary of Current City Policies

- Expanding and prioritizing the development of affordable housing, including through requirements that new developments include affordable units.
- Creating incentives for the construction of duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and other “missing middle” housing, as well as accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- Identifying public lands for potential affordable housing development.
- Identifying ways to reduce the cost of housing construction and support affordable housing development.
- Requiring one-to-one replacement of affordable housing supply where new development would replace existing units.
- Requiring development proposals to meet anti-displacement goals, including by requiring that existing tenants displaced by new development be able to return to a unit at the same level of affordability as the prior unit.
- Supporting housing for special needs populations, such as large households, people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, and people with disabilities.
- Connecting job creation to housing development at the appropriate affordability levels.
- Implementing and advancing various actions of the Housing Element through the 5-year Affordable Housing Strategy.
- Maintaining the City’s Rent Stabilization Ordinance, which protects residents from unreasonable rent increases and arbitrary, discriminatory, or retaliatory evictions.
- Entering into agreements with community organizations to serve the community and provide anti-displacement services.

### Draft Policy Approaches

**Goal: Prevent displacement and preserve affordable housing.**

#### Draft Policy Approaches

Prioritizing preservation of existing housing as an important supply of affordable housing.
Promoting and prioritizing the development of 100-percent affordable housing within the city.
Supporting the establishment of alternative affordable housing models as potential long-term strategies for affordability and anti-displacement.
Improving residents’ social and economic capital to avoid displacement and support their ability to remain in the city.

#### Draft Implementing Actions

Expanding tenant protections.
Developing and maintaining an anti-displacement strategy, prioritizing implementation in disadvantaged communities.
Exploring alternative affordable housing models to help residents overcome past exclusionary practices and build intergenerational wealth, such as collaborating with community land trusts.
Expanding the City’s programs that help first-time homebuyers by providing more information and assistance, prioritizing outreach in disadvantaged communities.

### Do You Have Any Suggestions?



# EAST PALO ALTO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE DRAFT POLICY APPROACHES WORKSHOP

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, RECREATION, AND PARKS



### Description of Issue

Many residents rely on parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities to be physically active. Expanding and improving these types of facilities to ensure they are nearby, safe, and welcoming, as well as ensuring there are safe ways to walk or bike to them, can help promote physical activity and community health. East Palo Alto residents have expressed the need to prioritize improving and maintaining the City’s parks, including park amenities, lighting, and accessibility. Residents also note the need to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke in parks. Finally, residents would like the City to pursue opportunities to create more parks.

### Summary of Current City Policies

- Maintaining a minimum park standard of 3 acres per 1,000 residents and a goal for locating park facilities within a ¼-mile walking distance of all residents.
- Adding 79 acres of parkland, prioritized for the underserved neighborhoods of Weeks, Kavanaugh, and Willow-Woodland.
- Encouraging City-created and private/non-profit recreation and exercise spaces, such as basketball and tennis courts.
- Studying opportunities to fund the YMCA to provide residents with access to low-cost recreational programming and potential “free days.”
- Creating shared-use agreements with school districts to use school grounds as parks and recreational facilities.
- Supporting completion of the San Francisco Bay Trail and increasing access and filling gaps in the City trail network.
- Prohibiting smoking in parks and open spaces.

### Draft Policy Approaches

**Goal: Create a parks and recreation system that encourages physical activity, promotes healthy living, and reduces chronic illnesses.**

#### Draft Policy Approaches

Refining the City’s park walkability goal to provide a walking distance standard based on the type of park.
Improving and maintaining existing parks, trails, and open space facilities, prioritizing improvements to parks in disadvantaged communities.
Improving access to existing parks, trails, and open space facilities, prioritizing improvements to parks in disadvantaged communities.
Continuing to engage community members on specific park and recreation facility needs.
Prioritizing and promoting recreational activity programs and opportunities in disadvantaged communities.
Encouraging expansion of recreational facilities and gyms in the city.
Working with school districts and community organizations to provide after-school fitness and education programs for children.
Providing adequate lighting for all parks, trails, sidewalks, and open spaces, prioritizing improvements in disadvantaged communities.
Expanding tree coverage and shading in and along parks, trails, sidewalks, and open spaces across the city, prioritizing plantings in disadvantaged communities.
Strengthening enforcement of the City’s smoke-free ordinances in parks and open spaces.

#### Draft Implementing Actions

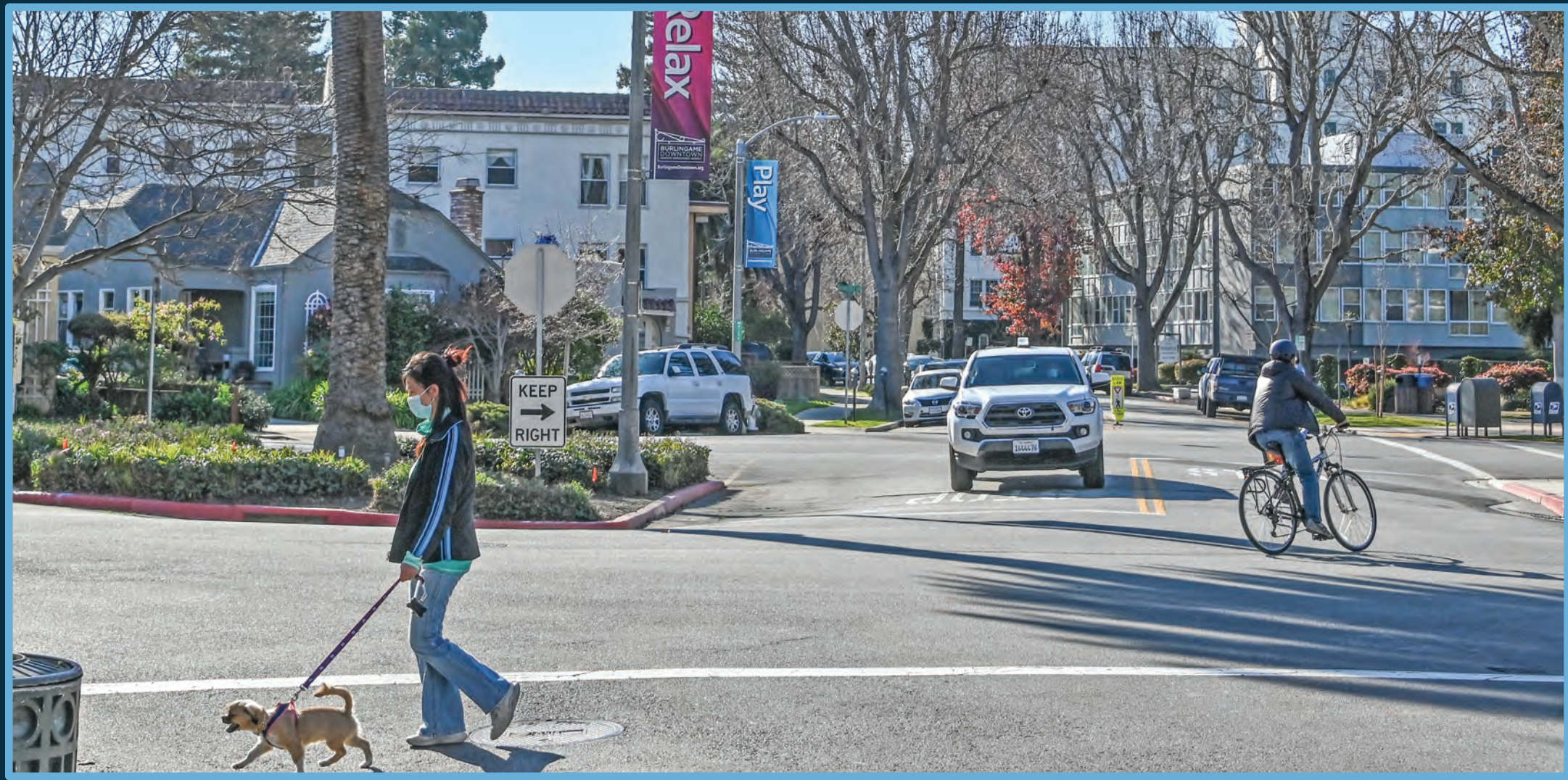
Developing and maintaining up-to-date maps showing walking distances to public parks.
---

### Do You Have Any Suggestions?



# EAST PALO ALTO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE DRAFT POLICY APPROACHES WORKSHOP

## IMPROVING ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION



### Description of Issue

Traveling alone by car remains the dominant transportation mode for most East Palo Alto residents. According to the City’s 2017 Bicycle Master Plan, residents own cars at a much lower rate than the countywide average, but are almost as likely to use a car to get to work and are less likely to take transit because there aren’t convenient alternatives to the car. East Palo Alto residents have expressed that transit service is not conveniently timed or placed for easy access, coupled with incomplete sidewalk and bicycle networks. Poor east-west transit connectivity and limited bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure discourages traveling through these other means.

### Summary of Current City Policies

- Implementing the City’s Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program and coordinating the San Mateo County TDM program, both of which aim to reduce traffic by promoting alternative modes of travel.
- Identifying and implementing new connections within neighborhoods and to neighboring cities and areas.
- Discouraging auto-oriented uses along key corridors.
- Prioritizing improvements to the bicycle and pedestrian networks.
- Adopting a transportation impact fee for new development to fund multi-modal transportation improvements.
- Providing subsidized bike sharing programs and low-cost or free bicycle ownership.
- Working with local schools and employers to promote bicycle commuting.
- Improving streetscapes with more lighting, tree plantings, and sidewalk improvements, especially in the Kavanaugh and University Village neighborhoods.
- Reducing heat islands (areas that can get hotter because of concentrated concrete and hardscape), including by expanding the urban forest and increasing tree shading.
- Working with regional agencies to expand transit service and transit stop amenities.
- Pursuing a local shuttle service to link employment areas with major transit stops.
- Expanding affordable transit options for seniors and people with disabilities, including discounted transit passes, focusing on neighborhoods with high concentrations of elderly residents.
- Supporting and expanding educational resources and outreach about safe and active transportation that represent the preferred languages and cultures of residents.

### Draft Policy Approaches

**Goal: Provide safe and convenient alternatives to vehicle travel that support community health through physical activity and cleaner air.**

#### Draft Policy Approaches

Filling gaps in the pedestrian network and repairing sidewalks, prioritizing improvements in disadvantaged communities.
Building more bicycle lanes and completing the bicycle network, prioritizing improvements in disadvantaged communities.
Expanding facilities and services for e-scooters and other types of “micromobility” devices.
Encouraging walkability and safety by streamlining traffic safety improvements that reducing speeding.
Strengthening enforcement of requirements for landlords and employers to provide commute alternatives per the City’s TDM Program.
Working with transit providers to improve and expand transit service, including by increasing bus frequency, serving more areas of the city, improving east-west transit access, and increasing hours, prioritizing improvements in disadvantaged communities.

#### Draft Implementing Actions

Identifying and addressing neighborhood-specific traffic safety issues, prioritizing installation of traffic safety measures and pedestrian, bicycle, and transit amenities in disadvantaged communities.
Exploring additional options to provide small bus services and “microtransit.”
Working with regional agencies to develop “safe routes to transit” guidance.

### Do You Have Any Suggestions?



# EAST PALO ALTO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE DRAFT POLICY APPROACHES WORKSHOP

## IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTHY AND AFFORDABLE FOOD



### Description of Issue

Access to healthy and affordable fresh food is important for community and personal health. Areas that lack supermarkets and access to fresh groceries are called “food deserts”, where people may end up purchasing unhealthy options, such as fast food and processed food, because healthy options aren’t readily available. The higher cost of healthy food can also be a barrier that affects people’s ability to make healthy food choices. East Palo Alto residents have expressed strong support for new grocery stores, farmers’ markets, and community gardens as ways to increase access to affordable and healthy food in East Palo Alto, as well as more information on food assistance programs.

### Summary of Current City Policies

- Encouraging healthy eating habits through programs and regulations.
- Promoting healthy food in school cafeterias and vending machines.
- Pursuing high-quality, full-service grocery stores and healthy food purveyors throughout the city.
- Providing financial incentives to healthy food outlets and farmers’ markets.
- Working with corner stores to carry healthy food options.
- Supporting community gardens and urban agriculture.
- Establishing demonstration gardens and educational materials to encourage home, community, and school gardens and edible landscapes.
- Avoiding concentrations of fast-food restaurants and liquor stores.
- Requiring the Planning Commission to consider proximity to sensitive uses, such as residential areas and schools, when reviewing proposed locations of alcohol licenses.

### Draft Policy Approaches

**Goal: Improve access to healthy food for all East Palo Alto residents.**

#### Draft Policy Approaches

Working with farmers’ markets to increase their frequency and expand to new locations, prioritizing expanded farmers markets in disadvantaged communities.
Working with community organizations to expand access to healthy and affordable food in disadvantaged communities.
Encouraging all new residential development to incorporate community gardens into the project design.
Promoting information about cash aid programs that help residents purchase food and groceries, such as CalFresh.

#### Draft Implementing Actions

Establishing training and small business development programs related to urban agriculture, food distribution, and healthy food entrepreneurship to build community-led food economy opportunities.
Developing incentives and financial initiatives to attract new supermarkets and grocery stores to food deserts, particularly in disadvantaged communities.
Developing and maintaining a map of food deserts in the city, accounting for walking, micromobility, and transit access.
Amending the City of East Palo Development Code (Development Code) to allow urban farming as an interim use of land to facilitate access to healthy food while also providing a safe place for neighbors to gather and fostering a sense of community.
Amending the Development Code to allow limited on-site sales, processing, and other related activities for urban farms.
Amending the Development Code to require projects meeting certain criteria to incorporate community gardens into the project design.
Continuing to develop and implement food recovery programs in schools and food facilities to minimize food loss and increase donations to food banks.
Exploring ways to reduce fresh food prices and improve affordability.
Entering into agreements with community-based organizations to expand access to healthy and affordable food in disadvantaged communities, including with organizations already distributing food to communities.

### Do You Have Any Suggestions?