

# NOTICE OF PREPARATION ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

1005 O'BRIEN DRIVE AND 1320 WILLOW ROAD  
CITY OF MENLO PARK



June 2, 2023

**To:** State Clearinghouse  
State Responsible Agencies  
State Trustee Agencies  
Other Public Agencies  
Interested Parties and Organizations

**From:** Chris Turner  
Associate Planner  
City of Menlo Park  
701 Laurel Street  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

**Subject:** Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report for the 1005 O'Brien Drive and 1320 Willow Road Life Sciences Project

**Lead Agency:** City of Menlo Park

**Project Title:** 1005 O'Brien Drive and 1320 Willow Road Life Sciences Project

**Project Area:** City of Menlo Park

## Purpose of Notice and Public Review Period

The City of Menlo Park (City) is the lead agency for the 1005 O'Brien Drive and 1320 Willow Road Life Sciences Project (Proposed Project). Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), upon deciding to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), the City, as lead agency, must issue a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to inform trustee and responsible agencies and the public of the decision to undertake preparation of an EIR. The purpose of the NOP is to provide information describing the Proposed Project and its potential environmental effects to those who may wish to comment regarding the scope and content of the information to be considered in the EIR. Agencies should comment on such information as it relates to their statutory responsibilities in connection with the Proposed Project. Agencies and the public are invited to provide comments on the scope and content of the environmental review, potential mitigation strategies, and Project alternatives.

The 30+-day comment period for this NOP is from Friday, June 2, 2023, through Wednesday, July 5, 2023. Written or emailed comments are due no later than 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 5, 2023. Verbal comments may be submitted at a public scoping meeting that will occur at the June 26, 2023, meeting of the City's Planning Commission.

## Project Location and Existing Conditions

The Project proposes to demolish the three existing onsite buildings; construct two Life Sciences/Research and Development (R&D) buildings and one parking structure; and develop approximately 59,344 square feet of open space, including landscaping, seating areas, and a sports court. The project site would include 31,535 square feet of publicly accessible open space. A lot merger and line adjustment are proposed to merge the existing three parcels that comprise the Project site into a single parcel and relocate the boundary between APN 055-421-190 and APN 055-421-060 to accommodate the proposed site layout and internal vehicular circulation. The Proposed Project would also include two back-up diesel-fueled generators for emergency use, one for each building.

The Project would be constructed in two phases. As shown in Figure 1, Phase 1 Construction, the first phase would occur in the western portion of the site and would include demolition of the buildings addressed as 985 O'Brien Drive and 1001 O'Brien Drive buildings (a total of approximately 40,586 square feet) as well as the eastern half of 1320 Willow Road (approximately 24,032 square feet); construction of a 154,381 square-foot, 5-story tall R&D building; construction of the first five levels of the parking structure in the northeast portion of the site; and development of 38,559 square feet of open space along the Project site's O'Brien Drive frontage and the northern site boundary. This phase would remove 10 existing trees within the site and plant 100 new trees. As shown in Figure 2, Phase 2 Construction, the second phase would occur in the western portion of the site, along the Willow Road frontage, and would include demolition of the remaining approximately 26,013 square feet of the existing building on this parcel; construction of a 73,617 square foot, 4-story tall R&D building; construction of two additional levels of the parking

structure; and development of 20,785 square feet of open space along the northern site boundary, including planting 45 new trees.

The detailed Proposed Project plan set is available for review at the City's website: [menlopark.gov/1005OBrien](http://menlopark.gov/1005OBrien). The Proposed Project would be developed using the bonus level of development allowed by the Zoning Ordinance, which provides for an increase in density, gross floor area, and/or height in exchange for the provision of community amenities. Development regulations for the LS District indicate a base level building height of 35 feet (up to 110 feet with Bonus Level designation), a maximum FAR of 55 percent for life science uses (up to 125 percent with Bonus Level designation), and a minimum open space requirement of 20 percent. The Project proposes to meet the open space requirement in part with publicly accessible open space, including a sports court, to be located in the northeast corner of the site. The Project proposes to utilize the bonus-level development provisions in exchange for payment of the City's in-lieu fee for community amenities.

### **Project Approvals**

The Proposed Project is anticipated to require the following actions, entitlements, and discretionary approvals from the City:

- Environmental Review
- Use Permit
- Architectural Control
- Lot Merger and Lot Line Adjustment
- Development Agreement
- Heritage Tree Removal Permits
- Community Amenity Approval
- Below-Market-Rate Housing In-Lieu Fee Approval
- Natural Gas Usage Approval

In addition, a Housing Needs Assessment and a Fiscal Impact Analysis will be prepared for informational purposes, as required by the 2017 Settlement Agreement between the cities of Menlo Park and East Palo Alto. Certification of the EIR and approval of all entitlements would be at the discretion of the City's Planning Commission.

### **Responsible and/or Reviewing Agencies**

The agencies listed below are expected to review the EIR to evaluate the Proposed Project with respect to the resources and infrastructure within their jurisdiction or control:

- Bay Area Air Quality Management District
- California Department of Transportation
- California Regional Water Quality Control Board/San Mateo Countywide Water Pollution Prevention Program
- City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County
- Menlo Park Fire Protection District
- Menlo Park Municipal Water
- Native American Heritage Commission
- Pacific Gas & Electric
- San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (if encroachment into the Hetch Hetchy aqueduct easement is necessary)
- San Mateo County Environmental Health Services Division
- San Mateo County Transportation Authority
- San Mateo County Water Pollution Prevention Program; and
- West Bay Sanitary District

### **Project Description**

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### **Probable Environmental Effects and Scope of the EIR**

The Project site is within the ConnectMenlo study area. ConnectMenlo updated the City's General Plan Land Use and Circulation Elements and rezoned the land in the M-2 Area (now referred to as the Bayfront Area). The ConnectMenlo EIR was prepared as a program EIR, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168, to evaluate the environmental effects of the City's General Plan, which is a long-range planning document. ConnectMenlo was approved on November 29, 2016. In addition, the City recently adopted an updated Housing Element, which is a component of the General Plan, and certified a Subsequent EIR for the Housing Element Update.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(c)(1) provides that when later activities within the scope of a planning document may have effects that were not examined in the program EIR, a new initial study must be prepared. Further, CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(d) sets out the procedures for simplifying the preparation of environmental documents through incorporating by reference the analyses and mitigation measures in the program EIR.

The Proposed Project is consistent with the land use and zoning designations established for the site under ConnectMenlo. An Initial Study has been prepared to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Project and determine what level of additional environmental review is appropriate. As outlined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(c), the Initial Study discloses the relevant impacts and mitigation measures covered in the ConnectMenlo EIR and determines whether the Proposed Project is within the parameters of the ConnectMenlo EIR and the Housing Element Update Subsequent EIR. The Initial Study is available for review online through the Project website listed above.

The analysis in the Initial Study demonstrates that the ConnectMenlo EIR and the Housing Element Update Subsequent EIR serve as adequate environmental analysis for some of the effects of the Proposed Project; these two program EIRs are incorporated in the Initial Study by reference, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15150, 15130, and 15183. A focused EIR will be prepared for potentially significant impacts that need further discussion and/or mitigation beyond that provided in the ConnectMenlo EIR and the Housing Element Update Subsequent EIR. Thus, a focused EIR will be prepared to evaluate the following topics:

- Air Quality
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Noise (construction and traffic noise)
- Population, Employment, and Housing
- Transportation/Traffic

Under the 2017 Settlement Agreement between the cities of Menlo Park and East Palo Alto, the City is required to prepare an EIR for Projects like this one that request bonus level development within the LS-B zoning district. The agreement establishes requirements for transportation impact analysis and mitigation and for preparation of a Housing Needs Assessment, both of which will be included in the EIR.

### Environmental Resources With no Adverse Impacts

The Proposed Project is anticipated to result in no environmental effects in the following areas:

- Agricultural or Forestry Resources
- Mineral Resources
- Wildfire

The Project site is fully developed in an urbanized area and located between SR 84 and US 101. As such, there are no agricultural, forestry, or mineral resources on or adjacent to the site and the Proposed Project would have no adverse effects associated with such resources. Further, wildfires are not a concern because there are no areas of substantial vegetation in proximity to the Project site and there are no mapped Fire Hazard Severity Zones near the site. A detailed analysis of these topics will not be included in the EIR.

### Environmental Resources With Less Than Significant Effects

As demonstrated in the Initial Study, the Proposed Project is not anticipated to result in significant environmental effects in the following areas:

- |                                   |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Aesthetics/Light and Glare      | • Land Use and Planning              |
| • Biological Resources            | • Noise (airport and airstrip noise) |
| • Cultural Resources              | • Public Services                    |
| • Energy                          | • Recreation                         |
| • Geology and Soils               | • Tribal Cultural Resources          |
| • Hazards and Hazardous Materials | • Utilities and Service Systems      |
| • Hydrology and Water Quality     | • Wildfire                           |

### Alternatives

Based on the significance conclusions determined in the EIR, alternatives to the Proposed Project that may be capable of reducing any identified impacts will be analyzed. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(e) requires the evaluation of a No-Project Alternative. Other alternatives may be considered during preparation of the EIR and will comply with the CEQA Guidelines, which call for a “range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project.” The EIR will discuss the process by which alternatives are identified, including consideration of any feasible alternatives that are suggested during the scoping process.

### Public Scoping Meeting and EIR Process

The City of Menlo Park is hosting a public hearing in a teleconference meeting (virtual and in Menlo Park City Council Chambers located at 751 Laurel St., Menlo Park, California) for the EIR scoping session during the NOP public comment period on **June 26, 2023**, during a regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting beginning at **7:00 p.m.** or as near as possible thereafter via a virtual meeting.

The meeting link would be available with publication of the Planning Commission agenda and staff report on the City’s website at [menlopark.gov/agenda](http://menlopark.gov/agenda), not less than 72 hours in advance of the meeting.

Trustee and responsible agencies, as well as members of the public, are invited to attend to learn more about the Proposed Project and to provide input on the scope and content of the EIR through public comment. The scoping process is designed to enable the City to determine the scope and content of the EIR at an early stage. This includes identifying the full range of actions involved in approving, constructing, and operating the Project; identifying potentially significant environmental effects, alternatives, and mitigation measures to be analyzed in the EIR; and eliminating from inclusion in the EIR any environmental resource areas where significant impacts are not expected.

Following the close of the NOP comment period, a Draft EIR will be prepared that will consider all NOP comments. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15105(a), the Draft EIR will be released for public review and comment for a required minimum 45-day review period. Following the close of the 45-day minimum public review period, the City will prepare a Final EIR, which will include responses to all substantive comments received on the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR and Final EIR and will be considered by the Planning Commission in considering whether to certify the EIR and approve, conditionally approve, or deny the Project.

**Submittal of Comments**

Comments regarding the appropriate scope of analysis and content in the EIR are invited from all interested parties. Please submit comments to the City no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday, July 5, 2023. However, we would appreciate your response at the earliest possible date. Please send your written comments to Christopher Turner at the physical or email address shown below with "1005 O'Brien Drive and 1320 Willow Road Project EIR" as the subject. Emailed comments are preferred.

If you have any questions regarding the proposed Project or the process, please contact Chris Turner at the contact information listed below.

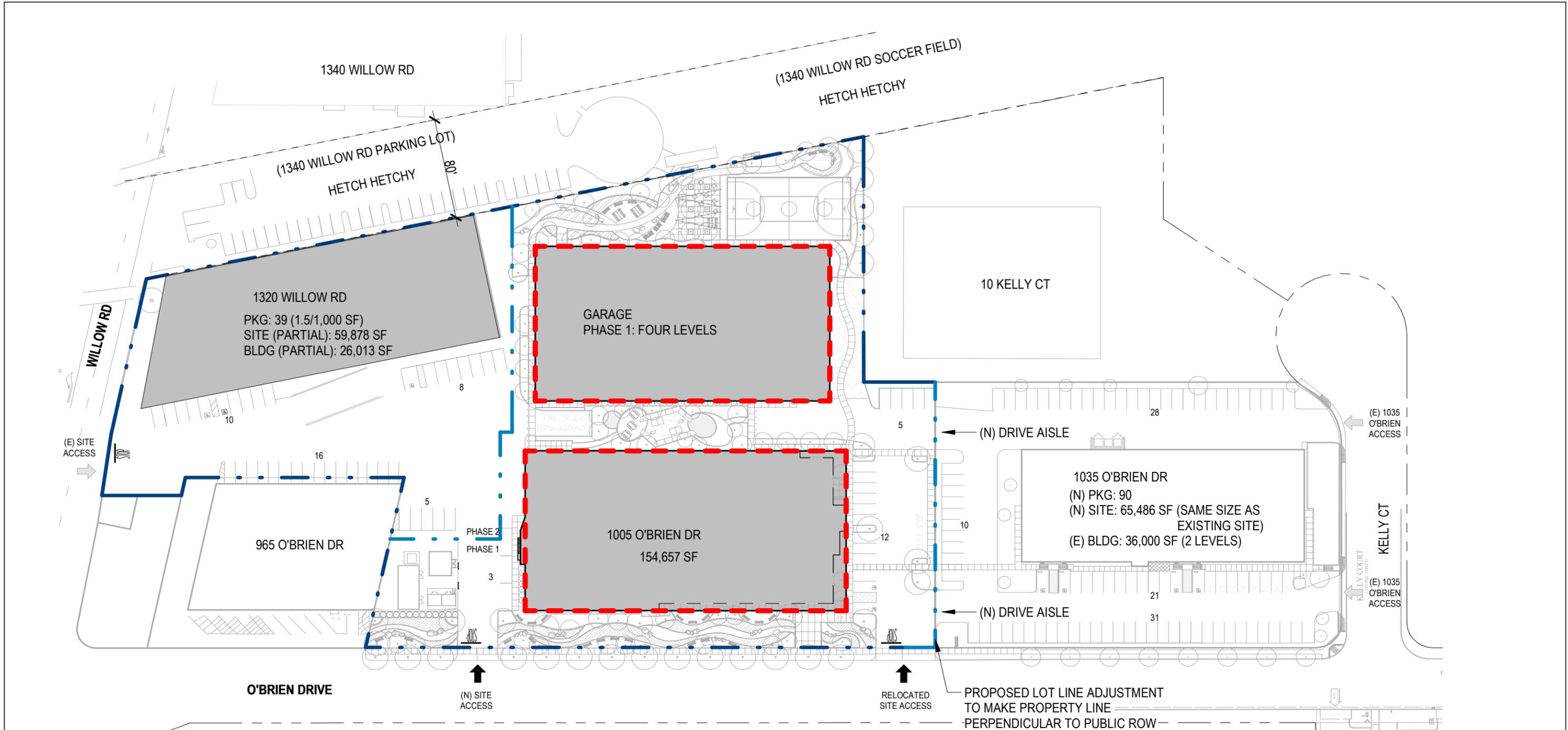
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Please visit the project webpage [menlopark.gov/1005OBrien](http://menlopark.gov/1005OBrien) to stay informed about the project and to sign up for the email list.

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Chris Turner  
City of Menlo Park

June 2, 2023



**1 PHASE 1**  
1" = 80'-0"

PHASE 1 SITE: 123,738 SF

- · · — EXISTING PROPERTY LINES
- · — LOT LINE ADJUSTMENT DURING PHASE 1
- - - - - PHASE 1 BUILDINGS



SOURCE: DES, 2022



FIGURE 1

Phase 1 Construction  
1005 O'Brien Drive and 1320 Willow Road Life Science Project

