Slow Streets Program

City of Menlo Park
Public Works
Transportation Division
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INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of Menlo Park residents are concerned about vehicular traffic volumes and speeds on neighborhood streets. As a direct-action item of the Vision Zero Action Plan (VZAP) adopted by City Council in 2023, the Slow Streets Program (Program) provides a framework for the evaluation of resident-initiated safety concerns on neighborhood streets. The Program replaces the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) and establishes a data-driven and equitable process for assessing neighborhood street safety concerns, prioritization of projects, and implementation of appropriate traffic calming measures. Neighborhood streets eligible for traffic calming under the Program include Neighborhood Connectors, Local Access Roadways, and Bicycle Boulevards (Figure 1) as identified in the City's General Plan Circulation Element.

HISTORY

The Program is the successor to the NTMP, which was originally established in 2004 and reflected the City's commitment to enhance safety and livability in its neighborhoods. The NTMP was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, the City adopted the VZAP, which documents existing collision patterns, identifies high-risk locations, proposes targeted safety countermeasures, and establishes a clear commitment to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and severe injuries. The VZAP also serves as Menlo Park's Local Roadway Safety Plan (LRSP), thereby making the City eligible for certain federal safety funding programs.

City Council provided direction to update the NTMP to ensure consistency with the VZAP and to address several structural limitations. Specifically, City Council directed staff to address concerns that the petition-based process was not providing equitable access for all and the evaluation and implementation framework requiring substantial staff effort, often resulting in multi-year timelines to advance individual requests.

PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Program's goals and objectives are as follows:

Enhance Neighborhood Safety with Safe Speeds

- Design traffic calming measures using engineering best practices to encourage safe speeds on neighborhood streets.

Manage Traffic Patterns

- Implement traffic calming strategies that encourage safe speeds and maintain neighborhood circulation.

Promote Equitable and Data-Driven Implementation

- Ensure all neighborhoods in the city have equal access to the Program and its benefits.
- Use a data-driven process to objectively evaluate and prioritize projects.
- Account for the geographic distribution of project costs across City Council districts when advancing projects for implementation to support balanced project delivery over time.

Balance Public Safety and Emergency Access

- Minimize impacts on emergency response vehicles.

Support Community Engagement

- Provide a framework to solicit community's and residents' safety concerns.
- Report to City Council on evaluation results and implementation progress, including projects that do not meet eligibility or prioritization thresholds.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Program builds on the City's ongoing commitment to safer and more livable neighborhoods and Complete Streets. It establishes a set of guiding principles that ensure consistent implementation and alignment with the City's broader transportation priorities.

What Streets Are For:
The City adopted a Complete Streets Policy in 2013.

> WHEREAS, the term "Complete Streets" describes a comprehensive, integrated transportation network with infrastructure and design that allows safe and convenient travel along and across streets for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, persons with disabilities, motorists, movers of commercial goods, users and operators of public transportation, seniors, children, youth, and families, emergency vehicles, and freight – Resolution No. 6123

Menlo Park's neighborhood streets play a vital role in providing access to homes, schools, parks, and community destinations. Neighborhood streets are not intended for high traffic volumes and speeds; rather, they are designed for local access and circulation. The City's Transportation Master Plan and Complete Streets Policy guide the design of neighborhood streets to safely accommodate all modes within the available right-of-way, often providing dedicated space for pedestrians, vehicles, and bicycles. For example, there are sidewalks for pedestrians, travel lanes for vehicles, and shared or designated bike routes for cyclists. On very low-volume streets, people walking, biking, and driving may share space due to limited right-of-way or the absence of sidewalks. The City's Sidewalk Master Plan guides the expansion of the City's sidewalk network where segments are missing. Sidewalks are typically installed through frontage improvement requirements associated with development projects.

The California Vehicle Code establishes the legal framework defining streets as public assets primarily intended to support movement.

> Per California Vehicle Code Section 590, *"a street is a way or place of whatever nature, publicly maintained and open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel. 'Street' includes highway."* Additionally, Vehicle Code Section 530 states, *"a 'roadway' is that portion of a highway improved, designed, or ordinarily used for vehicular travel."*

The Program is consistent with the primary design and legal function of streets and is not intended to create shared streets.

Compatibility with City Plans and Policies: The Program must align with overall City transportation goals and objectives. These goals are established in key documents, including the City's General Plan Circulation Element, Transportation Master Plan, VZAP, Sidewalk Master Plan, Crosswalk Policy, and Complete Streets Policy. The Program supports General Plan Circulation Element Policy CIRC-1.3 Engineering by using data-driven findings to focus improvements on the most critical safety projects.

Compliance with Operational and Design Guidelines: Recommended traffic calming measures must comply with applicable operational and design guidelines. These include, but are not limited to, the

California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD), the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Traffic Engineering Handbook, Caltrans Traffic Manual and Caltrans Highway Design Manual (HDM), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, and the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
Community Engagement: Equitable public input is fundamental to the Program's success. The Program includes a structured and transparent process that enables public engagement while minimizing the time and effort required by community members.

Safe Speeds: Speed plays a critical role in determining the likelihood of survival in a traffic collision. Higher speeds are strongly linked to increasing crash frequency and severity. The Program focuses on the implementation of measures that ensure safe and appropriate speeds.

Balancing Neighborhood Safety and Citywide Traffic Flow: A well-connected street grid distributes traffic across multiple parallel routes and reduces congestion on individual corridors. Grid networks enhance system resiliency by providing redundant paths that maintain access for emergency response, transit, and local travel when incidents, construction, or closures occur. The Program enhances safety, comfort, and livability of neighborhood streets by maintaining efficient traffic flow and mobility access across the City's transportation network.

Multi-Modal Traffic Movements: The implementation of traffic calming measures through the Program must account for the travel needs of vehicles, public transit, pedestrians, and cyclists.

Cut-Through Trips: Cut-through trips are defined as "those which feature travel along a street classified as a Neighborhood Street as an alternative to a higher-classification street to access a destination that is not within the neighborhood in which the Neighborhood Street is located." This definition helps distinguish between cut-through traffic and local circulation. Traffic generated by residents, visitors, deliveries, and those accessing neighborhood destinations, such as parks, schools, and churches, is not considered cut-through traffic. These users represent intended neighborhood travel that the neighborhood street network is designed to accommodate. This definition is adapted from FHWA's Traffic Calming ePrimer (Module 8)[1].

The Program's traffic calming measures—such as speed humps and striping changes—are intended to reduce speeds, not to divert traffic or restrict access. While minor changes in routing behavior may occur, diversion typically happens only when a noticeably faster or more direct route exists. Traffic calming projects implemented under the Program will be designed to avoid significant new cut-through patterns that compromise the functionality of the neighborhood street. Projects must be designed to ensure that safety objectives are met while maintaining appropriate circulation and access for residents and services.

This Program is not intended to close or restrict access to neighborhood streets. If there is desire to divert traffic or restrict access, that type of request requires a more extensive assessment, including an analysis of how roadway users move through the area now and in the future, and City Council direction.

Warrant Analysis: At the discretion of the City, certain traffic control devices such as stop signs and traffic signals may be considered for installation when warrants are met. "Warrants" are standards set by the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD) that describe when a specific device may be needed to improve safety or traffic flow. These standards account for factors such as the number of vehicles and pedestrians that use an intersection, how often crashes occur, and whether visibility is limited. Meeting a warrant means that installing a device could be appropriate, but it does not automatically require

[1] https://highways.dot.gov/safety/speed-management/traffic-calming-eprimer/traffic-calming-eprimer-module-8

it. These guidelines, along with engineering judgment and site conditions, will be used to decide whether a new traffic control device, such as a stop sign or traffic signal, should be installed.

Maintenance: The Program prioritizes solutions that are durable with minimal upkeep to reduce potential long-term maintenance costs.

On-Street Parking: Some traffic calming measures may require the removal of on-street parking spaces. Parking loss at specific locations is evaluated alongside neighborhood support when establishing traffic calming measures. Parking removal must be approved by the Complete Streets Commission or City Council, as described in Menlo Park Municipal Code 11.24.026.

Funding: The Program prioritizes safety for all users by directing resources to locations demonstrating the greatest safety need, recognizing that not all requests can be accommodated. Large or more complex projects that exceed available budget will be considered by City Council through the Capital Improvement Plan process. State and federal grants may be sought to support project implementation. Funding availability will affect timing of project implementation.

Community Art as Traffic Calming Measures: Community art, such as neighborhood gateways, street painting, and signage not intended for traffic control, can offer important benefits, including a stronger sense of place and increased visibility of public space. However, studies such as the Bloomberg Philanthropies Asphalt Art Safety Study[2] and FHWA Vision Zero Implementation Toolkit[3], have shown that art alone is not an effective substitute for traffic calming measures. Art can complement these efforts, but it should not be relied upon as the primary tool for slowing traffic or improving safety. In the State of California, all traffic-control devices on public streets must conform to the CA MUTCD. Unauthorized regulatory, warning, or guidance signs are not permitted under the City's Sign Ordinance (Chapter 16.92) and are not part of the Program. The consideration of community art, in conjunction with other traffic calming measures, may be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, depending on available budget, staffing resources, and maintenance requirements.

PROGRAM PROCESS

The Program follows a process that ensures resident concerns are considered, evaluated, and addressed in a structured and consistent way. The process emphasizes data-driven decision-making—each request will be reviewed against objective criteria, scored using a point-based system, and prioritized for design and implementation according to measurable safety needs, available funding, and staff capacity.

1. Intake of Resident Information

The process is initiated when a resident submits a request regarding traffic safety concerns on a neighborhood street. While most requests originate from residents, the City may also consider requests from schools, senior centers, business owners, or other community-based organizations. If needed, staff may gather additional information to complete the intake.

2. Eligibility Review

City staff will review requests against established eligibility criteria. To qualify, streets must be a neighborhood street which is defined in this document and in the City's General Plan Circulation Element as

[2] Bloomberg Philanthropies (April 2022). Asphalt Art Safety Study. https://assets.bbhub.io/dotorg/sites/43/2022/04/Asphalt-Art-Safety-Study.pdf.
[3] FHWA (March 2024). Vision Zero Toolkit. https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2024-04/Vision%20Zero%20Toolkit%20508_0.pdf.

a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) designated local street. The term neighborhood street will be used throughout this document and is inclusive of local roads, neighborhood connectors, and bicycle boulevards. Only requests on neighborhood streets will proceed to the evaluation and prioritization phase.

Ineligible Projects and other Projects Not Implemented
Requests that are not eligible for the Program may be considered through other City processes. Staff will direct residents to the most appropriate City resource. Examples include:

- Arterials and Collectors – Safety concerns related to higher classification roadways are evaluated in accordance with the City's Transportation Master Plan and VZAP. Corridor-level improvements are implemented through the Capital Improvement Plan.
- Parking or Curbside Management – Concerns regarding residential parking, loading, or curb regulations are referred to staff for review under the City's Municipal Code 11.24.
- Other Service Requests – Maintenance issues such as potholes, signage repair, or vegetation trimming are forwarded to the City's maintenance service request system.

3. Evaluation and Prioritization

Eligible projects will be evaluated and prioritized in batches using a point-based system that measures the relative severity and frequency of safety issues on each street segment. Points will be assigned to each project based on objective criteria that provides a measurable indicator of safety conditions. The criteria consist of the following:

- **Speed** – Operating speeds are one of the strongest predictors of crash risk and injury severity.
- **Injury collisions** – These provide evidence of existing safety concerns.
- **Traffic volume** – Higher volumes, when combined with high speeds, increase the risk of collisions.
- **Proximity to community activity centers** – Locations in close proximity to community activity centers, such as schools, parks, and other community destinations, involve more vulnerable users.
- **Underserved communities** – Ensures alignment with the City's Environmental Justice Element and supports equitable investment across neighborhoods.

Eligible requests will be evaluated, scored, and prioritized based on the following point system:

- **Speed** – one point per mile per hour (mph) that the 85th percentile speed (weekday average of speeds from the past year of available data) exceeds the prima facie speed limit, which is 25 mph on neighborhood streets.
    - <u>Scoring Metric</u>
      The 85th percentile is the speed at or below which 85% of drivers are traveling under free-flow conditions. The 85th percentile speed captures the speed at or below which the vast majority of drivers travel. The value is calculated to include all speeds observed in the dataset for that street segment. Very fast or frequent speeding can increase the 85th percentile if those behaviors occur with regularity. Using this measurement allows all street segments to be compared with one metric in a standardized way that can account for both the frequency and the amount of speeding. This measure aligns closely with crash-risk relationships and is recognized by the Federal Highway Administration as a nationally accepted engineering standard widely applied in traffic studies.

      A prima facie speed limit is a default speed limit established by state law, the California Vehicle Code (CVC) §22352, that applies when no speed limit signs are posted.

    - <u>Threshold methodology</u>

This evaluation approach removes subjectivity by relying on a consistent, data-driven formula. It also provides increasing weight to higher speeds above the posted limit, acknowledging a higher potential safety risk as speeds increase.

- **Injury collisions** – two points per injury collision identified from the SafeTREC Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS) in the past three years of available data that occurs along the street segment.

- **Traffic volume** / **average daily traffic (ADT)** – one point per 500 vehicles (weekday average in the past year of available data) if the total volume exceeds 750 vehicles on the street segment.

ADT Range		Point
0	750	0
751	1250	1
1251	1750	2
1751	2250	3
2251	2750	4
2751	3250	5
3251	3750	6

  - Scoring Metric
    Volume data is collected over 24 hours, during periods of highest typical impact which is on weekdays, Mondays through Thursdays. To account for seasonal variations in travel patterns, the Program uses an average of one year of available historical data.

  - Threshold methodology
    The ADT threshold was established using the existing City of Menlo Park Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA) Guidelines used for assessing potential impacts to streets. The guideline states potentially significant impacts could be seen if a neighborhood street with 750–1,350 vehicles/per day has additional traffic volume added to it. This range of daily street segment volume of 750 vehicles per day was used to establish a scoring threshold for the Program to account for daily street segment volume. This volume threshold was also compared to third party travel data to confirm its appropriateness for neighborhood streets in the City. To determine the prioritization of each project, a step increase of 500 vehicles per day was used to score and rank the projects. The step increase of 500 vehicles per day is similar to the thresholds that are used in the TIA guidelines for analyzing traffic impacts on neighborhood streets.

- **Proximity to community activity centers** – One point is added if the street segment is adjacent to community activity center(s) which are defined as schools, parks, pedestrian/bike bridges and underpasses and public facilities, as defined by the City's General Plan Land Use Element (Figure 3), City's Safe Routes to Schools Citywide Map (Figure 4).

- **Underserved communities** – One point is added if the street segment is in an underserved community, as defined by the City's Environmental Justice Element.

Each criterion contributes to an overall score, with higher scores indicating greater safety concerns and a higher priority for improvement. Together, these criteria ensure that prioritization is data-driven, consistent, and focused on identifying the locations with the highest need and greatest potential for safety improvement.

The highest-ranking projects will be selected for design based on the available annual budget, expected project costs, and staff resources. In addition to score-based prioritization, staff will account for geographic distribution of projects across the City Council districts when advancing projects for implementation.

Projects that receive points for traffic speeds or collisions but are not implemented due to budgetary constraints will be carried over to the following batch's prioritization process. For future Program batches, the costs and locations of previously planned projects through this Program will be reviewed to guide project selection, ensuring an equitable distribution of project costs across City Council districts over time. While the annual implementation may not include projects in every City Council district, the multi-year planning approach will allow staff to strategically allocate, monitor, and balance program expenditures across City Council districts.

If the project receives points for speed and is along an emergency response route (Figure 2), it will require further study and coordination with the Menlo Park Fire Protection District. These emergency response route projects will be evaluated separately and may be recommended for implementation under the City's Capital Improvement Plan. Projects that do not receive points for traffic speeds or collision criteria will not be further evaluated or prioritized.

4. Design

Once prioritized, selected projects will proceed to the conceptual design phase, where City staff or consultants will develop and recommend traffic calming measures. Project designs will be developed based on engineering standards and the Vision Zero Countermeasure Toolbox. City staff will present the list of projects and the conceptual designs to the Complete Streets Commission and gather community feedback to inform the final design.

City staff will report each Program batch to the City Council, detailing the number of requests received, projects evaluated and prioritized, projects selected for design and implementation, and projected cost by project and district, and funding sources. The report will also include a summary of requests that do not meet Program thresholds.

5. Implementation

Projects may be advanced for implementation through the following delivery pathways, depending on project location, scale, and available budget.

- Program – Smaller-scale, quick build projects that can be implemented with limited design and resources, and do not require City Council review or approval and use Program capital funds.
- Street Maintenance Plan – Improvements may be included in the annual street resurfacing project depending on the project location.
- Capital Improvement Plan – Larger or more complex projects may be incorporated into the City's 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan as separate capital projects outside of the Program.

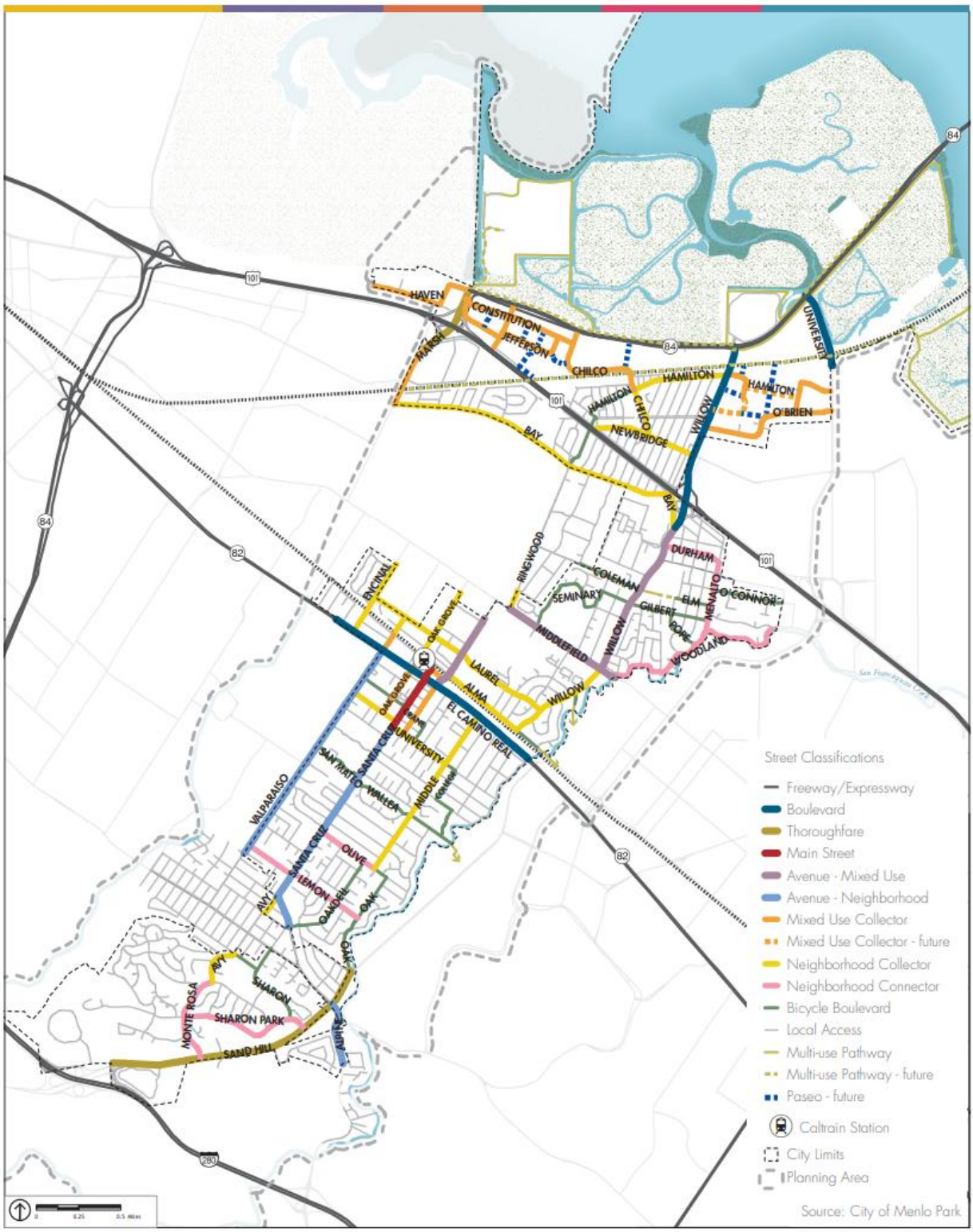

Figure 1: Street Classifications

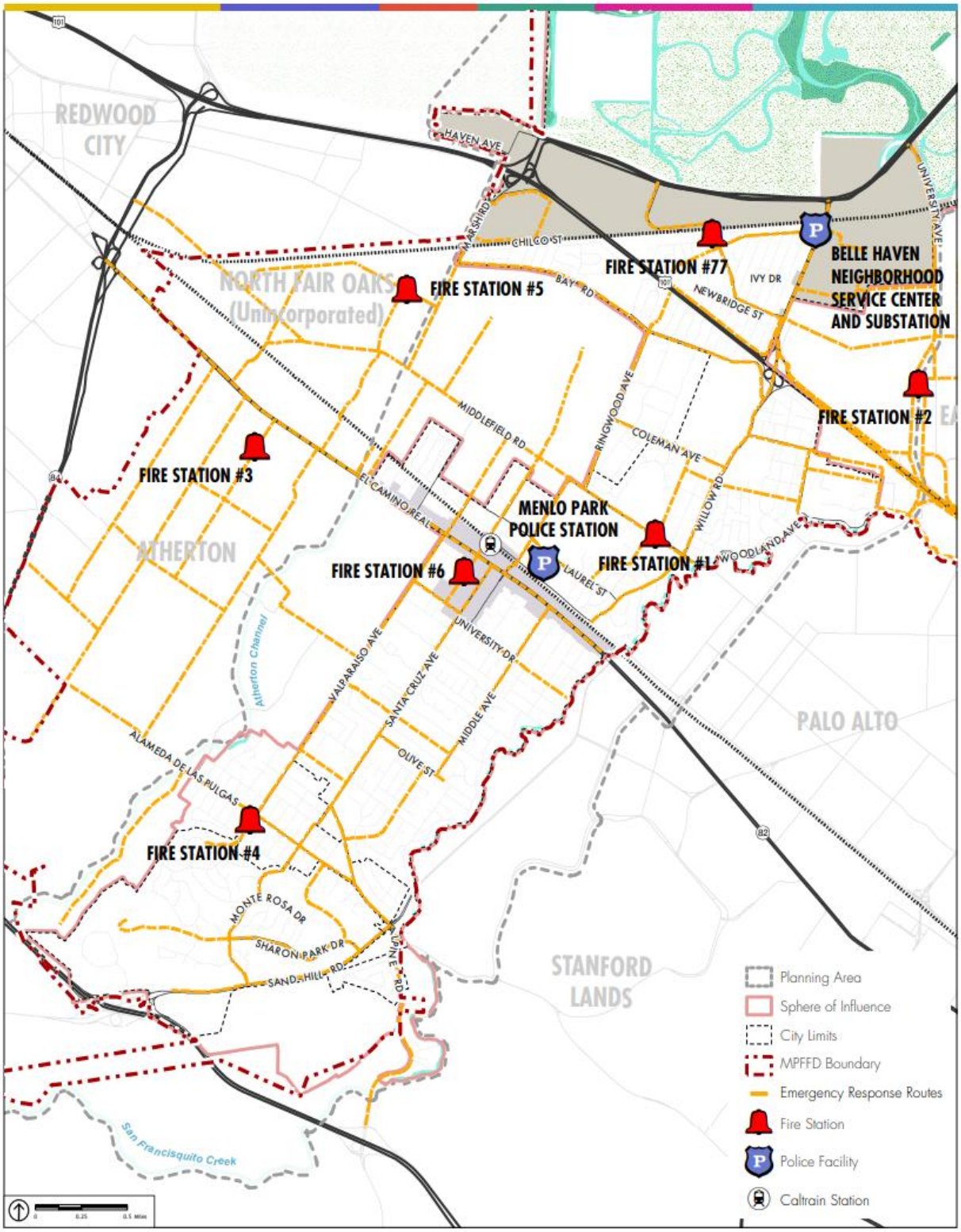

Figure 2: Emergency Response Routes

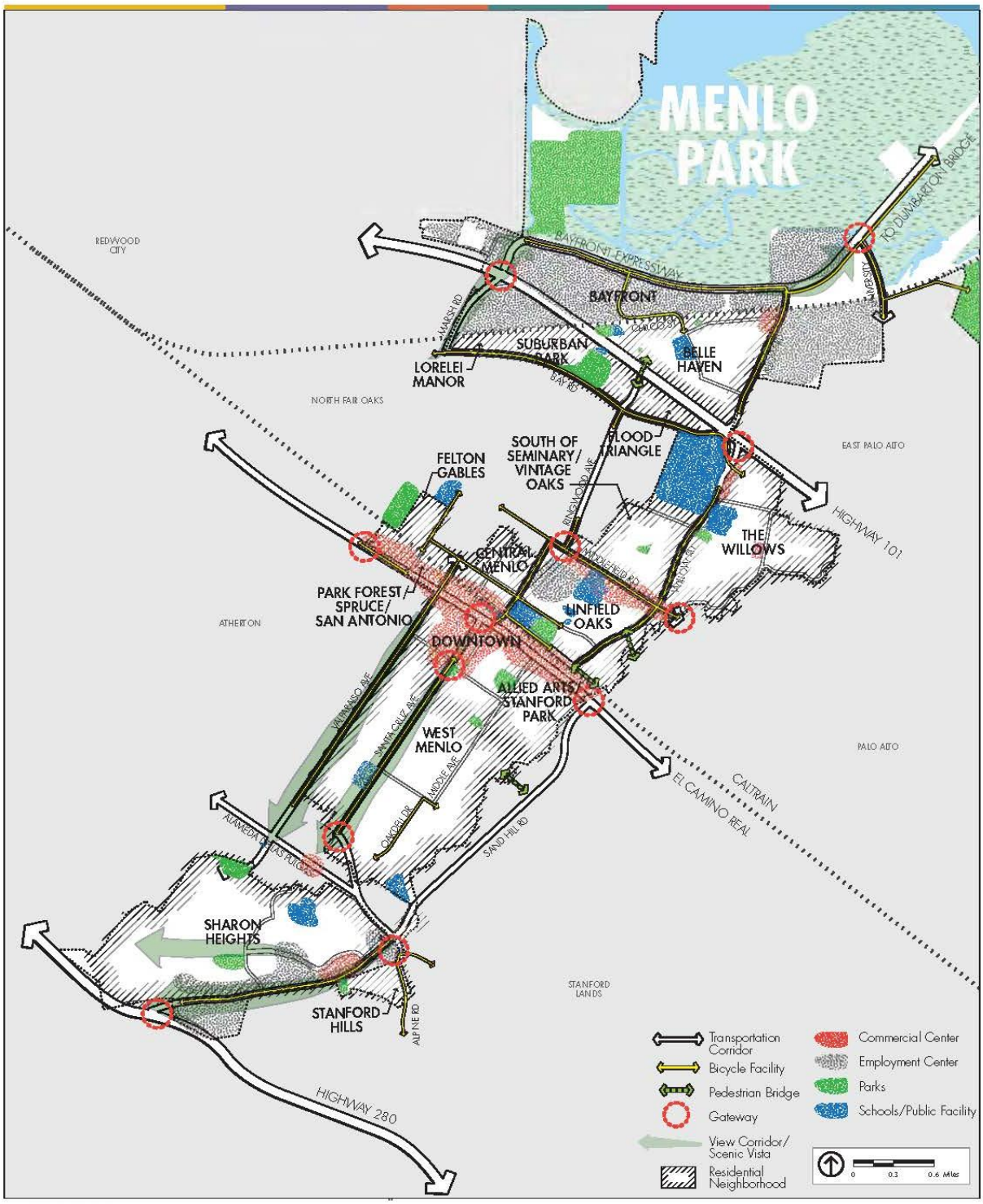

Figure 3: Community Features

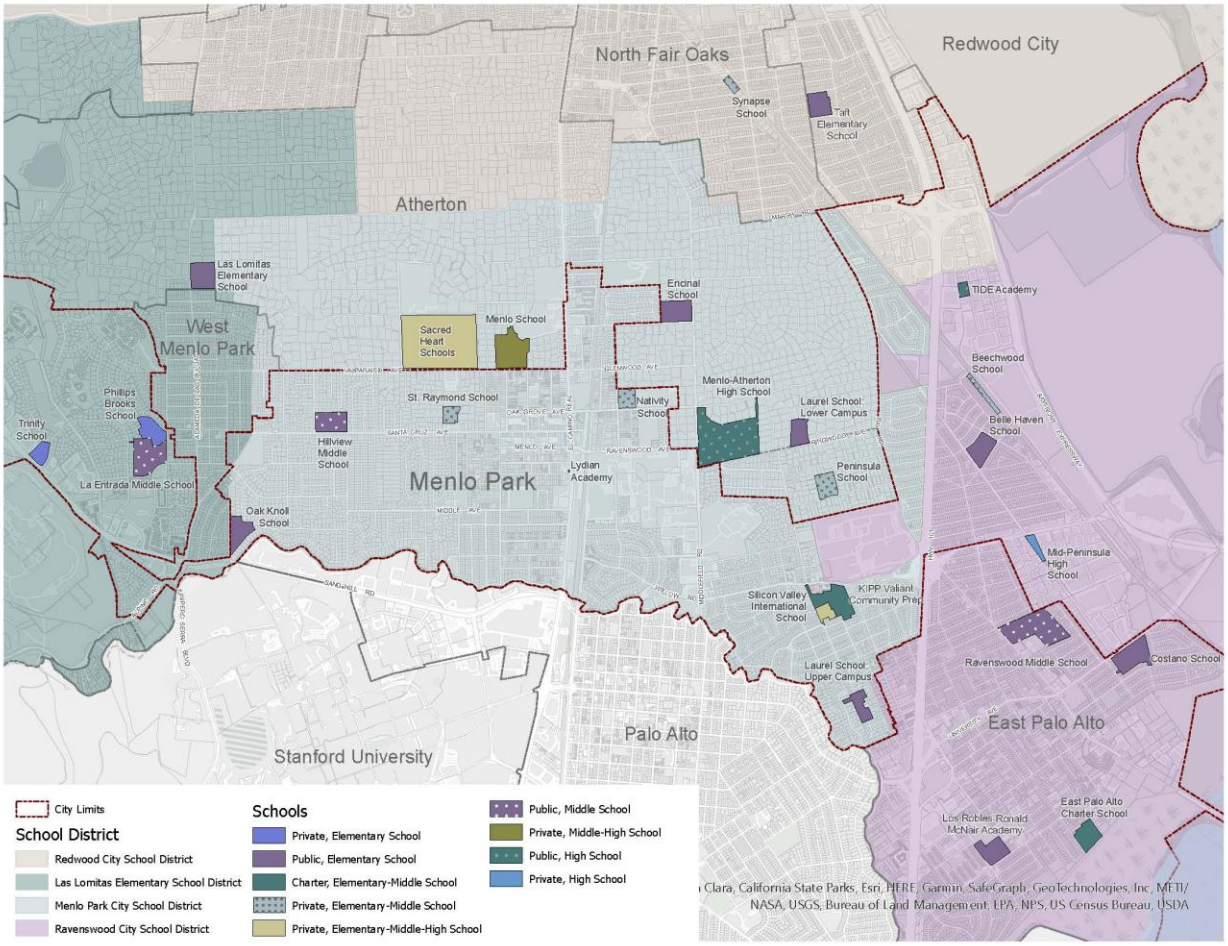

Figure 4: Safe Routes to Schools Citywide map

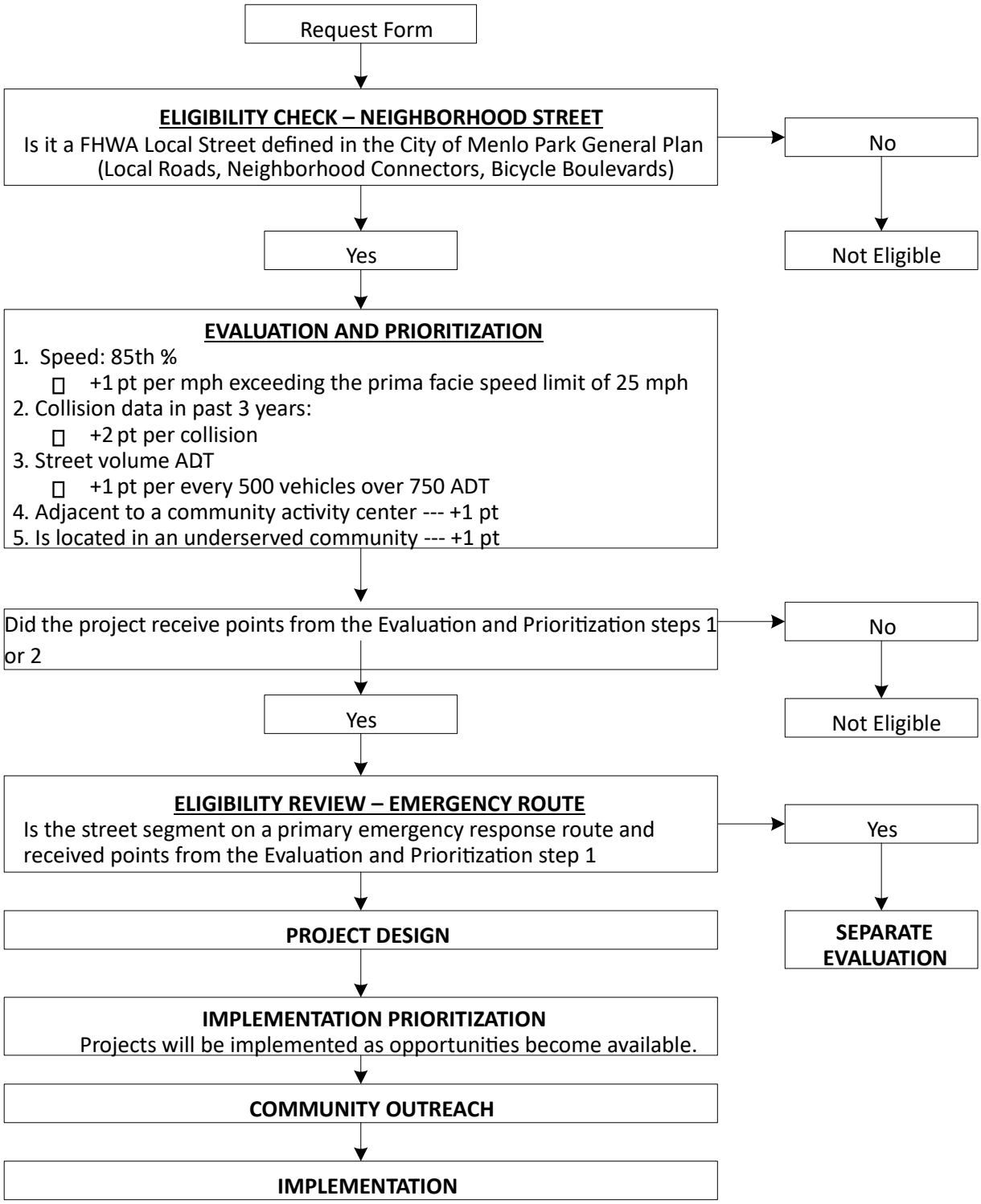

Figure 5: Program Process Chart

COUNTERMEASURE TOOLBOX

Program project designs will be developed based on engineering standards, the Vision Zero Countermeasure Toolbox, and available resources. The list below presents a subset of countermeasures drawn from Appendix D: Countermeasure Toolbox of the VZAP. These countermeasures have been identified as the most applicable to traffic calming measures for neighborhood streets. These include a range of measures to address issues related to speed, volume, and safety. Not all measures that may be acceptable are desirable in all situations. Many of the measures described herein may be used in combination with each other, and there may also be design variations of each measure. Selection of the appropriate tool is guided by engineering discretion, site context, and safety needs.

GEOMETRIC MODIFICATIONS
- Neighborhood Traffic Circle

OPERATION/WARNING
- All-Way Stop Control
- Lane Narrowing
- Advanced Stop Bar
- Curb Extensions

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE
- High-Visibility Continental Crosswalk
- Speed Hump or Speed Table
- Raised Median/Refuge Island
- Raised Crosswalk
- Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon
- Bicycle Boulevard

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

Street Classifications:

- Arterials: Serve as the primary routes for moving traffic efficiently over long distances. These roadways typically have higher speed limits ranging from 30 to 45 mph[4], and often carry an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) of 3,500[5] vehicles or more.

- Collectors: Serve to gather traffic from neighborhood streets and channel it towards the arterial network. Collectors balance access and mobility and often traverse residential or commercial areas. These roadways typically have speed limits ranging from 25 to 45 mph and often carry an ADT of 1,501 to 3,499 vehicles or more.

- Neighborhood Streets: Serve to provide direct access to residential properties and have the lowest traffic volumes and speeds. These roadways prioritize access over mobility, and speeds tend to be much lower, often around 25 mph, to ensure safety in neighborhoods where pedestrians and cyclists are common and often carry an ADT of 1,500 vehicles or less.

Speed:

- 85th percentile speed: When the data is sorted from lowest to highest, it represents the speed below which 85% of those observations fall. State law requires speed limits to be set at the nearest 5 mph increment to this value, with limited allowances to lower by an additional 5 mph for documented safety concerns or under the provisions of Assembly Bill 43. The 85th percentile speed is also an established engineering standard used in roadway design as outlined in the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD) and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

- Prima Facie speed limit: Under the California Vehicle Code (CVC §22352)[6], a prima facie speed limit is the default, presumed lawful speed limit that applies on certain types of roads or locations, even if no speed limit sign is posted. Standard Prima Facie Limits in California include 25 mph on neighborhood streets.

Underserved Community: The City's Environmental Justice Element (EJE) identifies Belle Haven and the Bayfront as underserved communities.

[4] Federal Highway Administration. (2025). Speed Limit Setting Handbook. https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/Speed-Limit-Setting-Handbook.pdf

[5] Caltrans. Roadway Classification. https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/traffic-ops-manual/glossary#LetterR

[6] California Vehicle Code. Section Number 22352. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=VEH&sectionNum=22352

APPENDIX B: REFEENCED PLANS AND POLICIES

City of Menlo Park Circulation Element:
https://www.menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/community-development/documents/general-plan/circulation-element-adopted-20161129.pdf

City of Menlo Park Vision Zero Action Plan:
https://www.menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/5/public-works/documents/transportation/transportation-projects/menlo-park-vision-zero-action-plan-final.pdf

City of Menlo Park Vision Zero Action Plan – Countermeasure Toolbox:
https://www.menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/3/public-works/documents/transportation/transportation-projects/menloparkvzap-countermeasuretoolbox.pdf

City of Menlo Park Transportation Master Plan:
https://www.menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/2/public-works/documents/transportation/transportation-projects/2020-transportation-master-plan.pdf

City of Menlo Park Environmental Justice Element:
https://www.menlopark.gov/Government/Departments/Community-Development/Planning/Comprehensive-planning/Environmental-Justice-EJ-Element

City of Menlo Park Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines
https://www.menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/2/public-works/documents/transportation/transportation-projects/tia-guidelines-modifications-approved.pdf

City of Menlo Park Citywide Crosswalk Policy
https://www.menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/public-works/documents/transportation/transportation-projects/citywide-crosswalk-policy-20160906.pdf

Office of Traffic Safety – Safe System Approach
https://www.ots.ca.gov/the-safe-system/

SafeTREC Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS):
https://safetrec.berkeley.edu/tools/transportation-injury-mapping-system-tims