

Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration
**La Paloma Road to Robleda Road
Off-Road Pathway**



Prepared by



In Consultation with



December 2020

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SECTION 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE INITIAL STUDY

The Town of Los Altos Hills, as the Lead Agency, has prepared this Initial Study for the La Paloma Road to Robleda Road Off-Road Pathway in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations §15000 et. seq.) and the regulations and policies of the Town of Los Altos Hills, California.

The project proposes to construct a pedestrian pathway connecting an existing pathway ending at the southern corner of the property at 13310 La Paloma Road to the existing pathway along Robleda Road. This Initial Study evaluates the environmental impacts that might reasonably be anticipated to result from implementation of the proposed project.

1.2 PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

Publication of this Initial Study marks the beginning of a 30-day public review and comment period. During this period, the Initial Study will be available to local, state, and federal agencies and to interested organizations and individuals for review. Written comments concerning the environmental review contained in this Initial Study during the 30-day public review period should be sent to:

Town of Los Altos Hills
Steve Padovan, Principal Planner
26379 Fremont Road
Los Altos Hills, CA 94022
spadovan@losaltoshills.ca.gov

1.3 CONSIDERATION OF THE INITIAL STUDY AND PROJECT

Following the conclusion of the public review period, the Town of Los Altos Hills will consider the adoption of the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the project at a regularly scheduled meeting. The Town shall consider the Initial Study/MND together with any comments received during the public review process. Upon adoption of the MND, the Town may proceed with project approval actions.

1.4 NOTICE OF DETERMINATION

If the project is approved, the Town of Los Altos Hills will file a Notice of Determination (NOD), which will be available for public inspection and posted within 24 hours of receipt at the County Clerk's Office for 30 days. The filing of the NOD starts a 30-day statute of limitations on court challenges to the approval under CEQA (CEQA Guidelines Section 15075(g)).

SECTION 2.0 PROJECT INFORMATION

2.1 PROJECT TITLE

La Paloma Road to Robleda Road Off-Road Pathway (SP19-005)

2.2 LEAD AGENCY CONTACT

Town of Los Altos Hills
Zachary Dahl, Planning and Building Director
26379 Fremont Road
Los Altos Hills, CA 94022
zdahl@losaltoshills.ca.gov

2.3 PROJECT APPLICANT

Town of Los Altos Hills

2.4 PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed pathway would be located west of Robleda Road and north of Atherton Court within an existing 20-foot wide path and equestrian easement. An informal footpath (not established by the Town) currently exists along the general alignment of the proposed pathway. Regional and vicinity maps of the project site are shown in Figure 2.4-1 and Figure 2.4-2, respectively. An aerial photograph of the project area is shown in Figure 2.4-3.

2.5 ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER

The pathway project is located on the following Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs): 175-36-047 (13310 La Paloma Road), 175-36-020 (13643 Wildcrest Drive), 175-37-034 (12933 Atherton Court), and 175-37-033 (12940 Atherton Court). The pathway project is directly adjacent to the following APNs: 175-36-021 (13581 Wildcrest Drive) and 175-36-024 (13303 Wildcrest Drive).

2.6 GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION AND ZONING DISTRICT

The pathway project is located on parcels having that have a *Residential (R)* and *Open Space Conservation Area (OSCA)* land use designation and zoned for *Residential-Agricultural (R-A)* use.

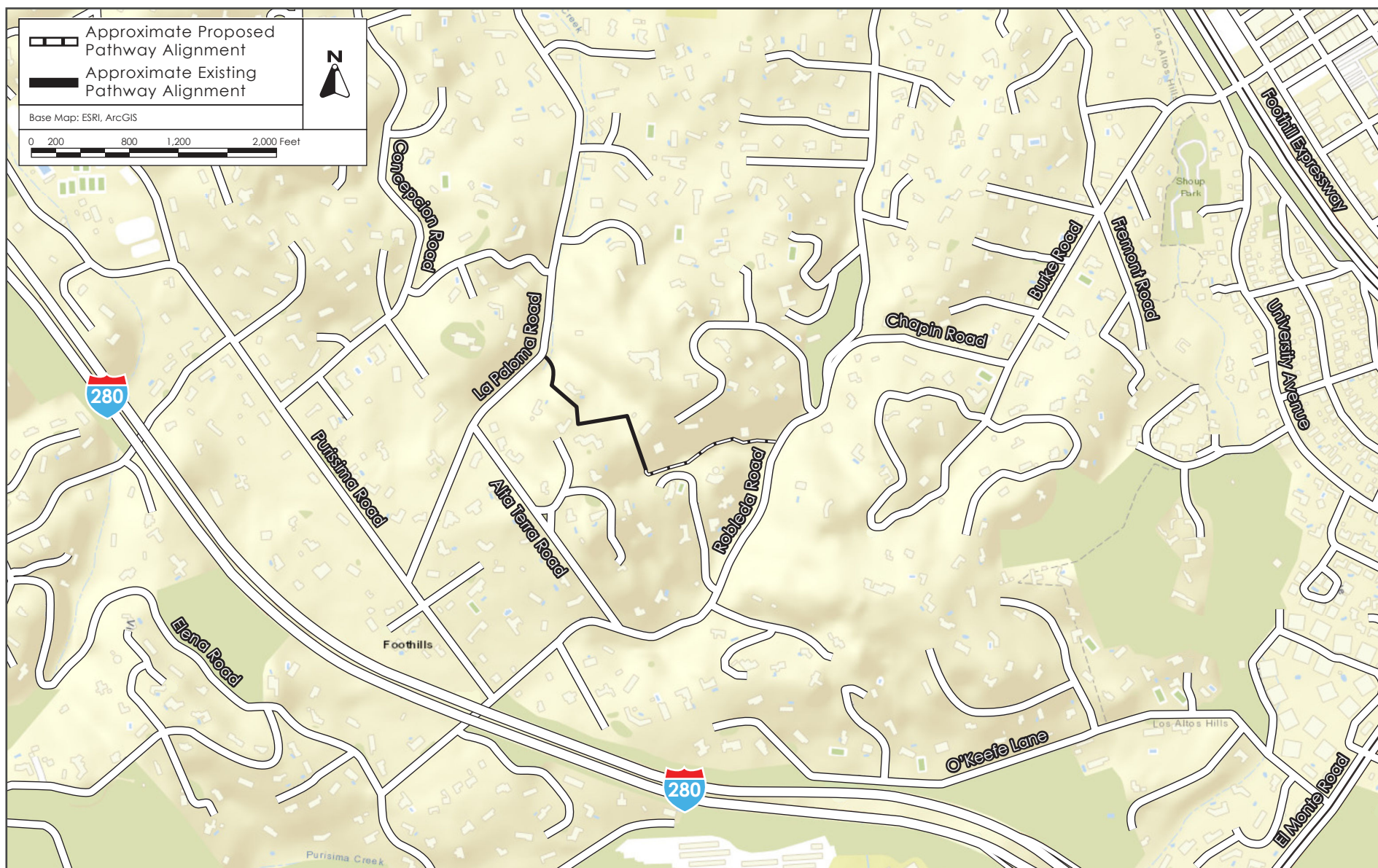
2.7 PROJECT-RELATED APPROVALS, AGREEMENTS, AND PERMITS

The proposed trail is a capital improvement project located within recorded easements to be constructed by the Town of Los Altos Hills. As such, there are no encroachment or building permits issued by the Town for the project. Once the Mitigated Negative Declaration is adopted by the City Council, the project will be included in the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Capital Improvement budget. If funded, the Town will prepare the construction documents and obtain the necessary approvals/permits from applicable Federal, State and/or regional agencies. Once all required approvals and permits are obtained, the Town will publish a notice to solicit bids on the construction of the project. A qualified bidder will be selected from the bids and construction will commence accordingly.



REGIONAL MAP

FIGURE 2.4-1



VICINITY MAP

FIGURE 2.4-2



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH AND SURROUNDING LAND USES

FIGURE 2.4-3

SECTION 3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project proposes to construct a native (compacted dirt) pathway connecting an existing pathway ending at the southern corner of the property at 13310 La Paloma Road to the existing pathway along Robleda Road. The proposed pathway would be approximately 3-4 feet wide and 1,000 feet in length. The pathway would be constructed within an existing 20-foot wide path and equestrian easement located west of Robleda Road and north of Atherton Court. The conceptual layout for the proposed pathway is shown on Figure 3.1-1 and the Town's native path standard detail is shown on Figure 3.1-2.

3.1.1 Pathway Improvements

The proposed pathway includes construction of several physical improvements, including retaining walls, two pedestrian bridges, and a staircase in order to facilitate pathway construction and pedestrian access and travel on the proposed pathway. The alignment of the pathway is designed to avoid the existing riparian areas along the intermittent drainage channel and to avoid any construction within the drainage channel banks.

The retaining walls will be placed along the path for slope stabilization purposes. The retaining walls would be less than three feet in height and located on the upslope side of the proposed path (non-channel side) along the steepest sections of the pathway on the eastern end of the alignment near Robleda Road. The Town's path retaining wall standard detail is shown on Figure 3.1-3

The two pedestrian bridges would be constructed at the eastern and western ends of the alignment where the proposed pathway crosses the intermittent drainage channel. The bridges would be clear span (i.e., no bridge footings would be placed within drainage channel banks and no fill is proposed for areas below the ordinary high-water line of the intermittent drainage channel).

A pedestrian staircase leading down to the proposed pathway from Robleda Road would be constructed at the eastern end of the alignment, connecting the proposed pathway to the existing pathway along Robleda Road.

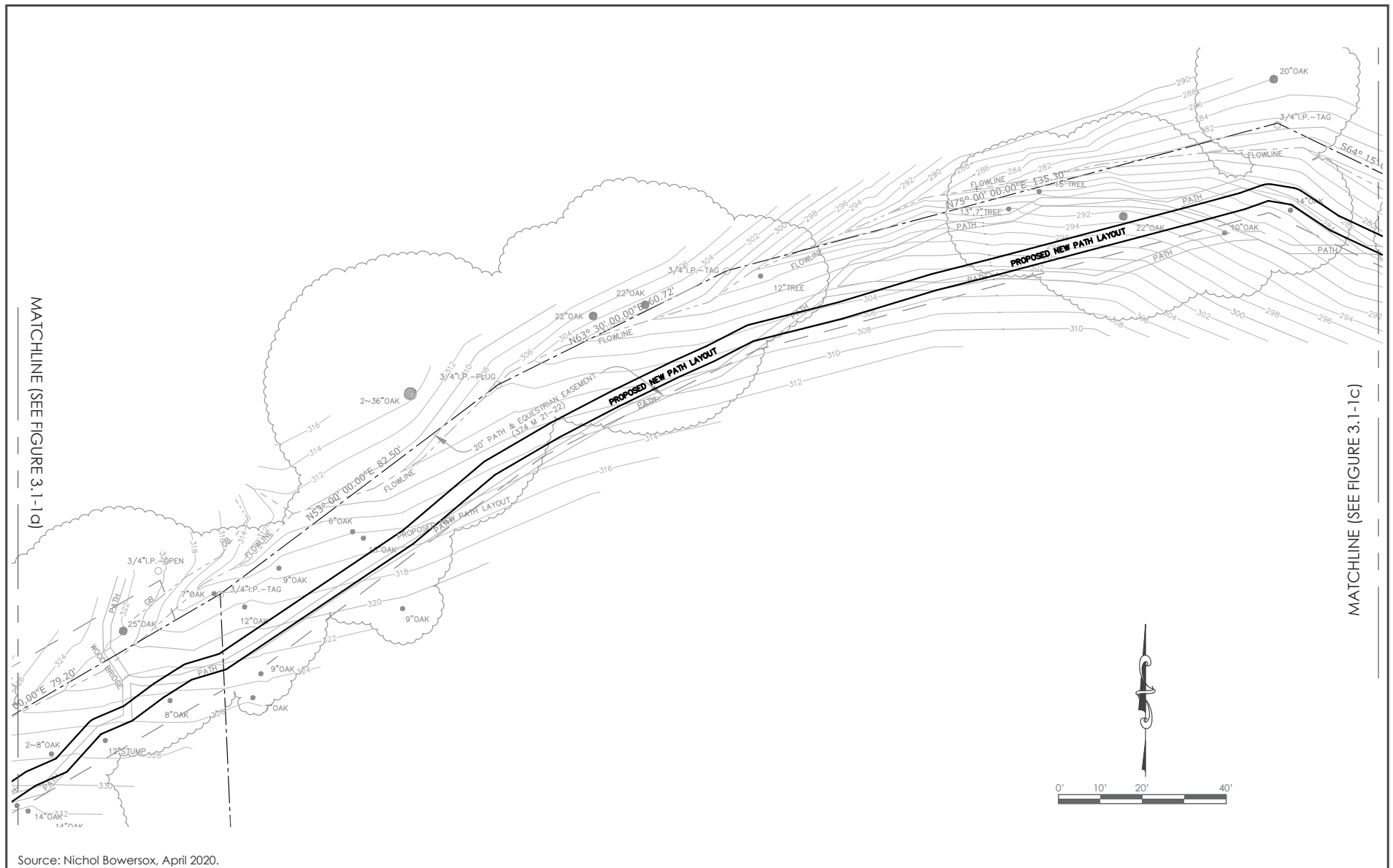
3.1.2 Construction

The project would involve some grading for pathway leveling and construction of the retaining walls, bridges, and a staircase, and a small amount of brush and native plant removal. No export of soils is anticipated, and no trees would be removed. Construction is anticipated to occur over the course of three months beginning in Summer 2021. Construction would be completed primarily by laborers using a variety of hand tools (McLeods, shovels, pruning shears, etc.) and power tools (air or electric hammers and compaction equipment) typically used in trail construction. Small diesel-powered utility loaders and excavators would also be employed to cut the slope and move soil. A larger backhoe may be required to construct the pedestrian staircase and/or pedestrian bridge at the east end of the alignment.



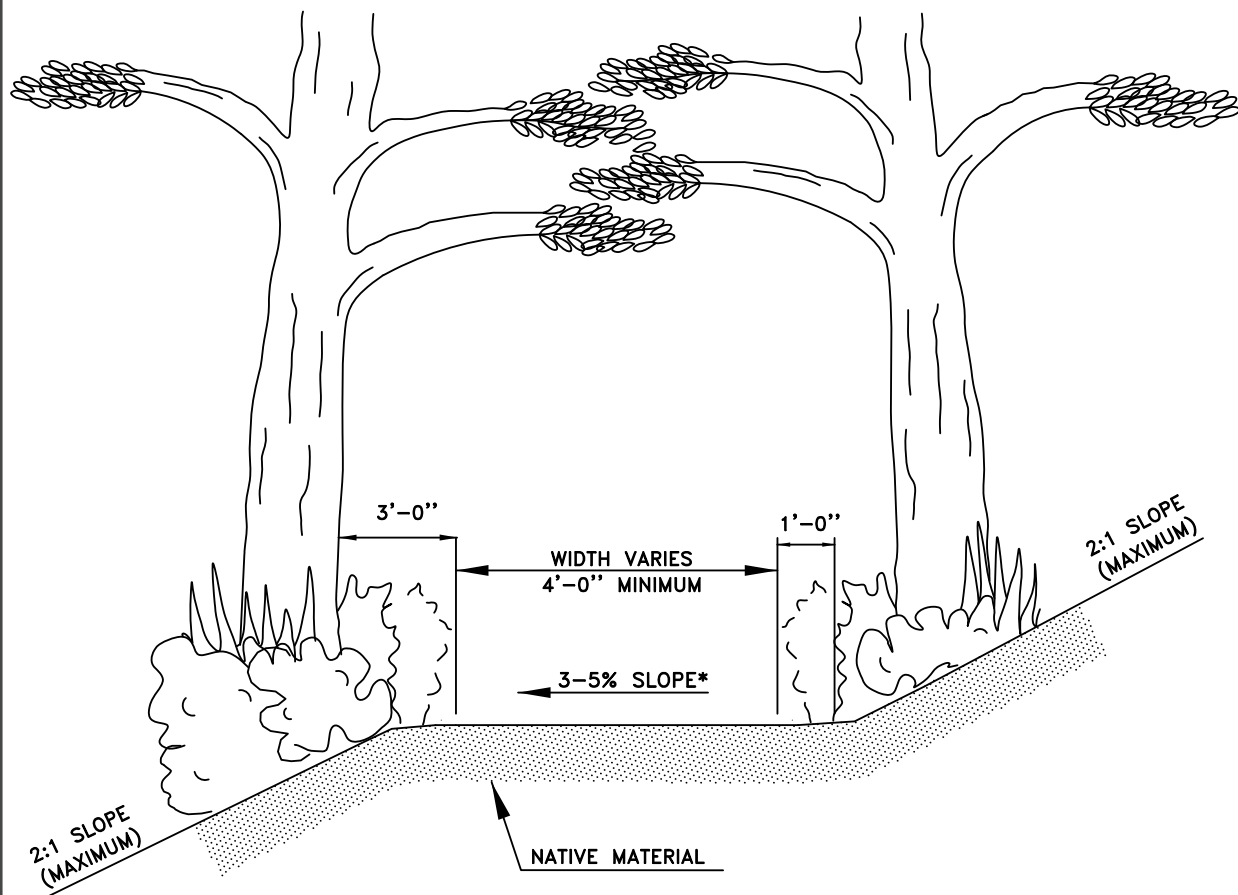
NATIVE PATHWAY CONCEPTUAL LAYOUT

FIGURE 3.1-1a



NATIVE PATHWAY CONCEPTUAL LAYOUT

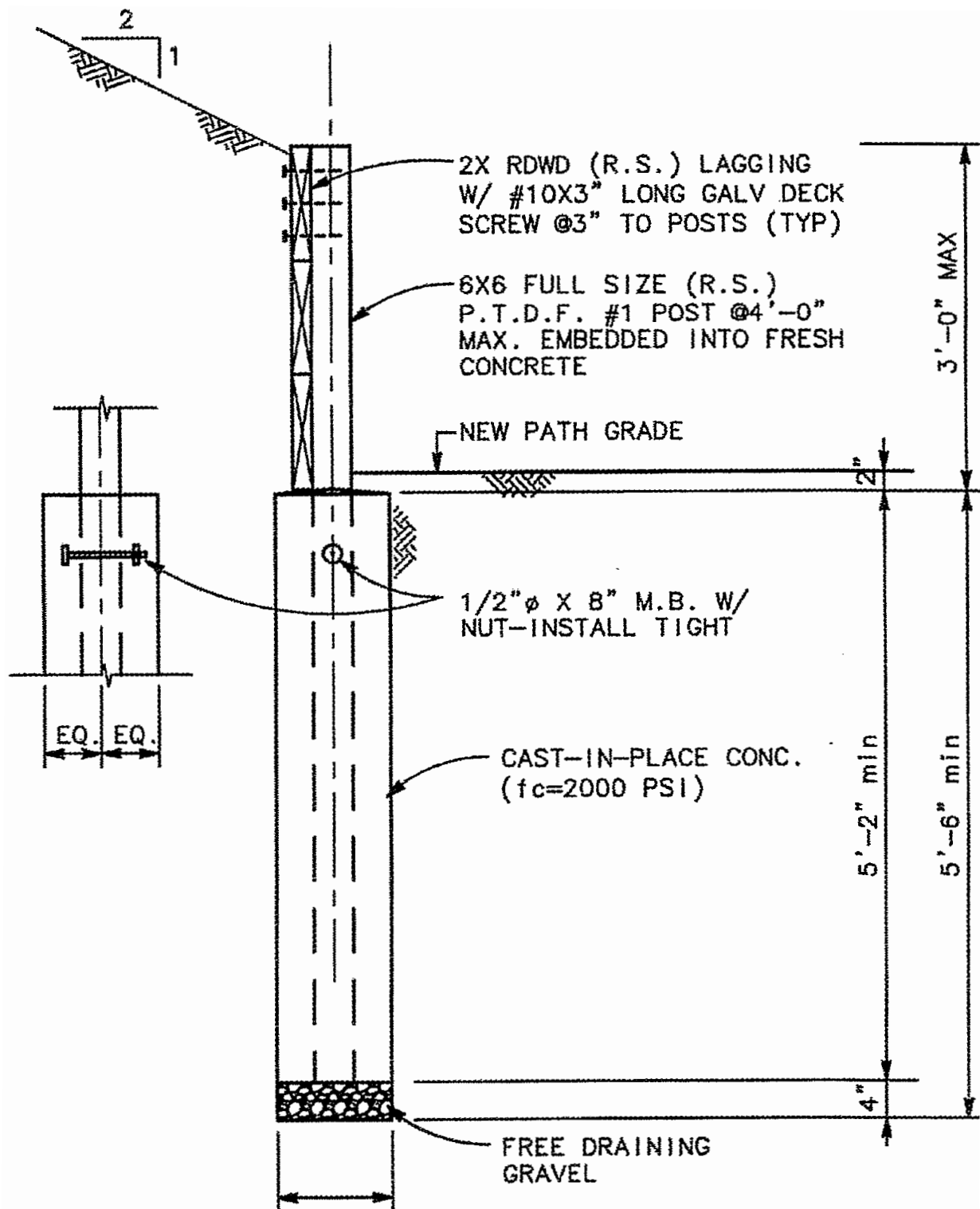
FIGURE 3.1-1b



NOTES:

1. NATIVE MATERIAL SHALL BE COMPACTED TO 85% RELATIVE COMPACTION.
2. IRRIGATION SYSTEMS SHALL NOT BE LOCATED CLOSER THAN 3 FEET TO A PATHWAY. NO IRRIGATION WATER MAY BE DIRECTED TOWARD OR ON THE PATHWAY.
3. TREES AND SHRUBS SHALL NOT BE PLANTED CLOSER THAN 3 FEET TO A PATHWAY. GROUND COVER MAY NOT BE PLANTED CLOSER THAN 1 FEET FROM A PATHWAY.
- *4. 5% MAXIMUM CROSS SLOPE UNLESS OTHERWISE APPROVED BY THE CITY ENGINEER. PATHWAY CROSS SLOPES SHALL ALLOW FOR PROPER DRAINAGE ACROSS THE PATH. CROSS SLOPES SHALL NOT IMPEDE NATURAL DRAINAGE.
5. UTILITY BOXES, SERVICE METERS, MANHOLES, MAIL BOXES, FIRE HYDRANTS AND ALL OTHER OBSTRUCTIONS SHALL NOT BE ALLOWED WITHIN THE PATHWAY. PATHWAYS MAY MEANDER AROUND EXISTING UTILITY POLES, FIRE HYDRANTS, AND MAIL BOXES WHERE FEASIBLE.
6. MAXIMUM 20% LONGITUDINAL SLOPE UNLESS OTHERWISE APPROVED BY THE CITY ENGINEER.
7. SEE STANDARD DETAIL 21 FOR WATER BAR INSTALLATION. NOTE: NATIVE PATHWAYS DO NOT CONTAIN CURBS OR HEADER BOARDS. WATER BARS SHALL BE PLACED 1 PER 3 FEET OF VERTICAL ELEVATION CHANGE.

Source: Town of Los Altos Hills, April 27, 2020.



Source: Town of Los Altos Hills, August 12, 2015.

RETAINING WALL STANDARD DETAIL

FIGURE 3.1-3

SECTION 4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, CHECKLIST, AND IMPACT DISCUSSION

This section presents the discussion of impacts related to the following environmental subjects in their respective subsections:

4.1	Aesthetics	4.12	Mineral Resources
4.2	Agriculture and Forestry Resources	4.13	Noise
4.3	Air Quality	4.14	Population and Housing
4.4	Biological Resources	4.15	Public Services
4.5	Cultural Resources	4.16	Recreation
4.6	Energy	4.17	Transportation
4.7	Geology and Soils	4.18	Tribal Cultural Resources
4.8	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	4.19	Utilities and Service Systems
4.9	Hazards and Hazardous Materials	4.20	Wildfire
4.10	Hydrology and Water Quality	4.21	Mandatory Findings of Significance
4.11	Land Use and Planning		

The discussion for each environmental subject includes the following subsections:

- **Environmental Setting** – This subsection 1) provides a brief overview of relevant plans, policies, and regulations that compose the regulatory framework for the project and 2) describes the existing, physical environmental conditions at the project site and in the surrounding area, as relevant.
- **Impact Discussion** – This subsection 1) includes the recommended checklist questions from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines to assess impacts and 2) discusses the project’s impact on the environmental subject as related to the checklist questions. For potentially significant impacts, feasible mitigation measures are identified. “Mitigation measures” are measures that will minimize, avoid, or eliminate a significant impact (CEQA Guidelines Section 15370). Each impact is numbered to correspond to the checklist question being answered. For example, Impact BIO-1 answers the first checklist question in the Biological Resources section. Mitigation measures are also numbered to correspond to the impact they address. For example, MM BIO-1.3 refers to the third mitigation measure for the first impact in the Biological Resources section.

4.1 AESTHETICS

4.1.1 Environmental Setting

4.1.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

State

Streets and Highway Code Sections 260 through 263

The California Scenic Highway Program (Streets and Highway Code, Sections 260 through 263) is managed by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The program is intended to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through special conservation treatment.

In Santa Clara County, the one state-designated scenic highway is State Route (SR) 9 from the Santa Cruz County line to the Los Gatos Town Limit. Eligible State Scenic Highways (not officially designated) include: SR 17 from the Santa Cruz County line to SR 9, SR 35 from Santa Cruz County line to SR 9, Interstate 280 from the San Mateo County line to SR 17, and the entire length of SR 152 within the County.

Local

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating aesthetic impacts resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
LU Policy 1.1	Uses of land shall be consistent with the semi-rural atmosphere of the community, minimize disturbance to natural terrain, minimize removal of the natural vegetation, and create the maximum compatibility of development with the natural environment through site design and landscaping.
CSR Policy 3.2	Recognize the semi-rural setting of Los Altos Hills in applying the complete streets concept. Pedestrian facilities may include roadway shoulders and unpaved paths and bicycle facilities may include unpaved paths, roadway shoulders, shared roadways and bike lanes where appropriate.
CSR Program 3.1	Consider Complete Streets guidelines in the planning, design, and approval of street, roadway and pathway projects.
CSR Policy 7.2	Ensure that the design of pedestrian improvements is consistent with the semi-rural character of the Town.
CON Policy 6.3	Minimize the removal of vegetation and require replanting to maintain soil stability, prevent erosion, and retain the aesthetic quality of the community.
CON Policy 11.3	Conserve the natural character of the planning area in any land development project.

Policies and Programs	Description
CON Policy 11.4	Ensure that the scale of building, the siting of development, the design and the materials of construction are harmonious with the natural setting.
OSR Policy 1.4	Preserve the natural beauty and minimize disturbance of the natural terrain and vegetation.
OSR Policy 1.7	To the extent possible, link open spaces together visually and physically to form a system of open spaces.
PE Policy 1.4	All paths shall be located and designed to preserve the beauty and natural character of the area and to safeguard the user.
PE Policy 3.7	Off-road paths shall be maintained in as natural a state as possible, except that installed surfaces may be acceptable when paths serve as connectors to schools or neighborhoods, or where special use or topography make it necessary.
PE Policy 4.9	Site development authorities shall be sensitive to path location and design. This is especially the case for the off-road paths. The location shall be sensitive to the privacy of future residents whenever a parcel is subdivided, or a lot is developed. All paths shall be located and designed to preserve the beauty and natural character of the area and to safeguard the user. Particular care shall be given to retaining trees and vegetative cover and to minimize grading and erosion.

4.1.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

The proposed pathway would be constructed within the boundaries of an existing 20-foot-wide path and equestrian easement located within an area developed with low-density single-family residences. The easement follows an intermittent drainage channel within a riparian corridor and exhibits a natural setting. An informal footpath currently exists along the general alignment of the proposed pathway. The proposed alignment is separated from the surrounding residences by steep hillsides, woodlands, and riparian vegetation. Photos of the proposed alignment are shown on the following pages.

The Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan identifies the Monte Bello, Kaiser, Neary, and Ewing Hill ridges as scenic vistas, and the nearest designated state scenic highway is SR 9 from the Santa Cruz County line to the Los Gatos Town Limit. The proposed pathway alignment is not located along the designated scenic ridges and is not visible from a designated state scenic highway. Public views of the proposed pathway alignment are limited due to the topography and tree cover.



Photo 1: West end of the proposed pathway alignment leading down from 13310 La Paloma Road.



Photo 2: View of proposed pathway alignment and existing informal footpath. An existing residence can be seen in the upper left corner of the photo.



Photo 3: View of the existing drainage channel along the proposed pathway alignment.



Photo 4: East end of the proposed pathway alignment and staircase location leading up to Robleda Road.

4.1.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:				
1) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☐	☒
2) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☐	☒
3) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? ¹ If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
4) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact AES-1: The project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. (No Impact)

The Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan identifies the Monte Bello, Kaiser, Neary, and Ewing Hill ridges as scenic vistas. The proposed pathway is not located along these designated vistas, and views of the proposed pathway from these scenic vistas would be extremely limited due to the topography and tree cover. Therefore, the proposed pedestrian pathway would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. **(No Impact)**

Impact AES-2: The project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway. (No Impact)

The nearest designated state scenic highway is SR 9 from the Santa Cruz County line to the Los Gatos Town Limit. The proposed pathway would not be visible from a designated state scenic highway. **(No Impact)**

¹ Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points.

Impact AES-3: The project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings. (Less than Significant Impact)

Construction of the proposed compacted dirt native pathway would not remove any existing trees and would only require a small amount of grading and vegetation removal. The minimal amount of grading is consistent with Los Altos Hills policies that protect the natural terrain and vegetation, along with maintaining soil stability and minimizing erosion within planning areas. The design and scale of the proposed pedestrian improvements would be consistent with the existing terrain and development, and the materials used in their construction would be primarily wood, which is compatible with the undeveloped and semi-rural character of the site. Lastly, the location of the proposed pathway is shown on the Town's Master Path Plan and the alignment within the existing 20-foot easement was confirmed by the City Council in May 2020 during the update of the Master Path Plan. In addition, the proposed pathway is consistent with General Plan policies directing the construction of off-road paths that link open spaces and neighborhoods together within Los Altos Hills. For these reasons, the proposed pedestrian pathway would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality or public views of the site, nor would it conflict with Los Altos Hills policies governing scenic quality. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact AES-4: The project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. (No Impact)

The proposed project does not involve the installation of any new sources of light or reflective materials and, therefore, would not create any new sources of substantial light or glare. **(No Impact)**

4.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

4.2.1 Environmental Setting

4.2.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

State

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) assesses the location, quality, and quantity of agricultural land and conversion of these lands over time. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and irrigation status. The best quality land is called Prime Farmland. In CEQA analyses, the FMMP classifications and published county maps are used, in part, to identify whether agricultural resources that could be affected are present on-site or in the project area.²

California Land Conservation Act

The California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act) enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners to restrict parcels of land to agricultural or related open space uses. In return, landowners receive lower property tax assessments. In CEQA analyses, identification of properties that are under a Williamson Act contract is used to also identify sites that may contain agricultural resources or are zoned for agricultural uses.³

Fire and Resource Assessment Program

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) identifies forest land, timberland, and lands zoned for timberland production that can (or do) support forestry resources.⁴ Programs such as CAL FIRE's Fire and Resource Assessment Program are used to identify whether forest land, timberland, or timberland production areas that could be affected are located on or adjacent to a project site.⁵

4.2.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

The Santa Clara County Important Farmland 2016 map designates the project area as Urban and Built-Up Land. Urban and Built-up Land is defined as land that is occupied by structures with a building density of at least six structures per 10-acre parcel. There are no areas designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance in the project vicinity.

² California Department of Conservation. "Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program." Accessed October 21, 2020. <http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/Pages/Index.aspx>.

³ California Department of Conservation. "Williamson Act." <http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/lca>.

⁴ Forest Land is land that can support 10 percent native tree cover and allows for management of forest resources (California Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)); Timberland is land not owned by the federal government or designated as experimental forest land that is available for, and capable of, growing trees to produce lumber and other products, including Christmas trees (California Public Resources Code Section 4526); and Timberland Production is land used for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses (Government Code Section 51104(g)).

⁵ California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. "Fire and Resource Assessment Program." Accessed October 21, 2020. <http://frap.fire.ca.gov/>.

The project area is zoned *Residential-Agricultural (R-A)* which allows for single-family homes and agricultural uses. The project area is currently developed with low-density single-family residences and is not used for agriculture, forest land, or timberland. In addition, the project area is designated Urban and Built-up Land (not farmland) on the Santa Clara County Williamson Act 2015/2016 map and there are no Williamson Act contracts on any of the affected properties.

4.2.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
2) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☒	☐
3) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?	☐	☐	☐	☒
4) Result in a loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
5) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact AG-1: The project would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use. (No Impact)

The area within and adjacent to the proposed pedestrian pathway is designated as Urban and Built-Up Land on the Santa Clara County Important Farmland 2016 Map. There are no lands designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance in the project area. **(No Impact)**

Impact AG-2: The project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract. (Less than Significant Impact)

The project area and the affected properties are designated Urban and Built-up Land on the Santa Clara County Williamson Act 2015/2016 map and are not part of a Williamson Act contract with the Town. While the area within and adjacent to the proposed pedestrian pathway is zoned *Residential-Agricultural (R-A)*, the project area is developed with low-density single-family residences, there are no agricultural uses on the properties affected by the project and construction of a pathway would not limit the use of property for future agricultural uses. For these reasons, the proposed pedestrian pathway would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or Williamson Act contracts. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact AG-3: The project would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production. (No Impact)

The area within and adjacent to the proposed pedestrian pathway is zoned *Residential-Agricultural (R-A)* and is developed with low-density single-family residences. The project alignment does not contain forest land or timberland and is not zoned Timberland Production. For these reasons, the proposed pedestrian pathway would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production. **(No Impact)**

Impact AG-4: The project would not result in a loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. (No Impact)

The project area is zoned *Residential-Agricultural (R-A)* and is developed with low-density single-family residences. The project area is not forest land. For these reasons, the proposed pedestrian pathway would not result in a loss or conversion of forest land. **(No Impact)**

Impact AG-5: The project would not involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. (No Impact)

The project area is zoned *Residential-Agricultural (R-A)* and is developed with low-density single-family residences. The project area is not used as farmland or forest land and the proposed pedestrian pathway is compatible with agriculture and forest uses. For these reasons, the proposed pedestrian pathway would not involve other changes in the existing environment that could result in conversion of Farmland or forest land. **(No Impact)**

4.3 AIR QUALITY

4.3.1 Environmental Setting

4.3.1.1 *Background Information*

Criteria Pollutants

Air quality in the Bay Area is assessed related to six common air pollutants (referred to as criteria pollutants), including ground-level ozone (O₃), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), particulate matter (PM), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur oxides (SO_x), and lead.⁶ Criteria pollutants are regulated because they result in health effects. An overview of the sources of criteria pollutants and their associated health are summarized in Table 4.3-1. The most commonly regulated criteria pollutants in the Bay Area are discussed further below.

Table 4.3-1: Health Effects of Air Pollutants		
Pollutants	Sources	Primary Effects
Ozone (O ₃)	Atmospheric reaction of organic gases with nitrogen oxides in sunlight	• Aggravation of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases • Irritation of eyes • Cardiopulmonary function impairment
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO ₂)	Motor vehicle exhaust, high temperature stationary combustion, atmospheric reactions	• Aggravation of respiratory illness • Reduced visibility
Fine Particulate Matter (PM _{2.5}) and Coarse Particulate Matter (PM ₁₀)	Stationary combustion of solid fuels, construction activities, industrial processes, atmospheric chemical reactions	• Reduced lung function, especially in children • Aggravation of respiratory and cardiorespiratory diseases • Increased cough and chest discomfort • Reduced visibility
Toxic Air Contaminants (TACs)	Cars and trucks, especially diesel-fueled; industrial sources, such as chrome platers; dry cleaners and service stations; building materials and products	• Cancer • Chronic eye, lung, or skin irritation • Neurological and reproductive disorders

High O₃ levels are caused by the cumulative emissions of reactive organic gases (ROG) and NO_x. These precursor pollutants react under certain meteorological conditions to form high O₃ levels. Controlling the emissions of these precursor pollutants is the focus of the Bay Area's attempts to reduce O₃ levels. The highest O₃ levels in the Bay Area occur in the eastern and southern inland valleys that are downwind of air pollutant sources.

PM is a problematic air pollutant of the Bay Area. PM is assessed and measured in terms of respirable particulate matter or particles that have a diameter of 10 micrometers or less (PM₁₀) and

⁶ The area has attained both state and federal ambient air quality standards for CO. The project does not include substantial new emissions of sulfur dioxide or lead. These criteria pollutants are not discussed further.

fine particulate matter where particles have a diameter of 2.5 micrometers or less (PM_{2.5}). Elevated concentrations of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} are the result of both region-wide emissions and localized emissions.

Toxic Air Contaminants

TACs are a broad class of compounds known to have health effects. They include but are not limited to criteria pollutants. TACs are found in ambient air, especially in urban areas, and are caused by industry, agriculture, diesel fuel combustion, and commercial operations (e.g., dry cleaners). TACs are typically found in low concentrations, even near their source (e.g., diesel particulate matter [DPM] near a freeway).

Diesel exhaust is the predominant TAC in urban air and is estimated to represent about three-quarters of the cancer risk from TACs. Diesel exhaust is a complex mixture of gases, vapors, and fine particles. Medium- and heavy-duty diesel trucks represent the bulk of DPM emissions from California highways. The majority of DPM is small enough to be inhaled into the lungs. Most inhaled particles are subsequently exhaled, but some deposit on the lung surface or are deposited in the deepest regions of the lungs (most susceptible to injury).⁷ Chemicals in diesel exhaust, such as benzene and formaldehyde, have been previously identified as TACs by the California Air Resources Board (CARB).

Sensitive Receptors

Some groups of people are more affected by air pollution than others. CARB has identified the following persons who are most likely to be affected by air pollution: children under 16, the elderly over 65, athletes, and people with cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases. These groups are classified as sensitive receptors. Locations that may contain a high concentration of these sensitive population groups include residential areas, hospitals, daycare facilities, elder care facilities, and elementary schools.

4.3.1.2 *Regulatory Framework*

Federal and State

Clean Air Act

At the federal level, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for overseeing implementation of the Clean Air Act and its subsequent amendments. The federal Clean Air Act requires the EPA to set national ambient air quality standards for the six common criteria pollutants (discussed previously), including PM, O₃, CO, SO_x, NO_x, and lead.

CARB is the state agency that regulates mobile sources throughout the state and oversees implementation of the state air quality laws and regulations, including the California Clean Air Act. The EPA and the CARB have adopted ambient air quality standards establishing permissible levels of these pollutants to protect public health and the climate. Violations of ambient air quality standards are based on air pollutant monitoring data and are determined for each air pollutant.

⁷ California Air Resources Board. "Overview: Diesel Exhaust and Health." Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.arb.ca.gov/research/diesel/diesel-health.htm>.

Attainment status for a pollutant means that a given air district meets the standard set by the EPA and/or CARB.

Risk Reduction Plan

To address the issue of diesel emissions in the state, CARB developed the Risk Reduction Plan to Reduce Particulate Matter Emissions from Diesel-Fueled Engines and Vehicles. In addition to requiring more stringent emission standards for new on-road and off-road mobile sources and stationary diesel-fueled engines to reduce particulate matter emissions by 90 percent, the plan involves application of emission control strategies to existing diesel vehicles and equipment to reduce DPM (in addition to other pollutants). Implementation of this plan, in conjunction with stringent federal and CARB-adopted emission limits for diesel fueled vehicles and equipment (including off-road equipment), will significantly reduce emissions of DPM and NO_x.

Regional

2017 Clean Air Plan

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) is the agency primarily responsible for assuring that the federal and state ambient air quality standards are maintained in the San Francisco Bay Area. Regional air quality management districts, such as BAAQMD, must prepare air quality plans specifying how state and federal air quality standards will be met. BAAQMD's most recently adopted plan is the Bay Area 2017 Clean Air Plan (2017 CAP). The 2017 CAP focuses on two related BAAQMD goals: protecting public health and protecting the climate. To protect public health, the 2017 CAP describes how BAAQMD will continue its progress toward attaining state and federal air quality standards and eliminating health risk disparities from exposure to air pollution among Bay Area communities. To protect the climate, the 2017 CAP includes control measures designed to reduce emissions of methane and other super-greenhouse gases (GHGs) that are potent climate pollutants in the near-term, and to decrease emissions of carbon dioxide by reducing fossil fuel combustion.⁸

CEQA Air Quality Guidelines

The BAAQMD CEQA Air Quality Guidelines are intended to serve as a guide for those who prepare or evaluate air quality impact analyses for projects and plans in the San Francisco Bay Area. Jurisdictions in the San Francisco Bay Area Air Basin utilize the thresholds and methodology for assessing air quality impacts developed by BAAQMD within their CEQA Air Quality Guidelines. The guidelines include information on legal requirements, BAAQMD rules, methods of analyzing impacts, and recommended mitigation measures.

⁸ BAAQMD. *Final 2017 Clean Air Plan*. April 19, 2017. <http://www.baaqmd.gov/plans-and-climate/air-quality-plans/current-plans>.

Local

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating air quality impacts resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
CON Policy 4.1	Support regional, state, and federal programs that improve air quality in the Bay Area.
CON Program 4.3	Monitor construction and grading activities to control dust.

4.3.1.3 Existing Conditions

The Bay Area is considered a non-attainment area for ground-level O₃ and PM_{2.5} under both the federal Clean Air Act and state Clean Air Act. The area is also considered non-attainment for PM₁₀ under the state act, but not the federal act. The area has attained both state and federal ambient air quality standards for CO. As part of an effort to attain and maintain ambient air quality standards for O₃, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5}. BAAQMD has established thresholds of significance for these air pollutants and their precursors, which apply to both construction period and operational period impacts.

4.3.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
2) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?	☐	☐	☒	☐
3) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	☒	☐
4) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Note: Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the determinations.

Impact AIR-1: The project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan. (No Impact)

The adopted Bay Area 2017 Clean Air Plan contains policies and strategies that have the goal of reducing the emissions of air pollutants and bringing the region into compliance with the Clean Air Act. Such policies and strategies include the construction of facilities that promote pedestrian modes of travel usage, thereby reducing trips made by motor vehicles. The proposed pedestrian pathway project is consistent with the CAP's transportation control measures because it would facilitate pedestrian (i.e., non-motorized) travel. **(No Impact)**

Impact AIR-2: The project would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard. (Less than Significant Impact)

Construction Emissions

Construction activities would temporarily affect local air quality. Construction activities typically associated with trail construction, including construction vehicle traffic, wind blowing over exposed earth, and grading, grubbing, and digging would generate exhaust emissions and fugitive particulate matter emissions that affect local and regional air quality. Construction activities are also a source of organic gas emissions. Construction activities would temporarily affect local air quality; however, construction of the proposed pathway would not require substantial excavation and, thus, would not result in a significant criteria pollutant air quality impacts with implementation of basic construction measures.

Standard Permit Condition: The project would implement the following BAAQMD Basic Construction Measures⁹ during all phases of construction to control dust and exhaust at the project alignment.

- Cover stockpiles of debris, soil, sand, and any other materials that can be windblown. Trucks transporting these materials will be covered.
- All visible mud or dirt track-out onto adjacent public roads will be removed using wet power vacuum street sweepers at least once per day or as often as necessary to keep them free of dust and debris associated with site construction. The use of dry power sweeping is prohibited.
- Subsequent to clearing, grading, or excavating, exposed portions of the site will be watered, landscaped, treated with soil stabilizers, or covered as soon as possible. Hydroseed or apply (non-toxic) soil stabilizers to inactive construction areas and previously graded areas inactive for 10 days or more.
- Replanting of vegetation in disturbed areas as soon as possible after completion of construction.

⁹ Bay Area Air Quality Management District, *California Environmental Quality Act Air Quality Guidelines*. May 2017.

- Idling times will be minimized either by shutting equipment off when not in use or reducing the maximum idling time to five minutes. Clear signage will be provided for construction workers at all access points.
- All construction equipment will be maintained and properly tuned in accordance with manufacturer's specifications. All equipment will be checked by a certified mechanic and determined to be running in proper condition prior to operation.
- Post a publicly visible sign with the telephone number and person to contact at the Town of Los Altos Hill regarding dust complaints. This person will respond and take corrective action within 48 hours. The BAAQMD's phone number will also be visible to ensure compliance with applicable regulations.

With implementation of the Standard Permit Conditions listed above, criteria pollutant emissions during project construction would be less than significant. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Operational Emissions

The project proposes to construct a compacted dirt pathway and pedestrian improvements that would link the existing pathway segments at 13310 La Paloma Road and Robleda Road. Once completed, the project would improve pedestrian access within the Town. As an alternative mode of transportation that results in fewer motorized vehicles on the roadway, operation of the proposed pedestrian pathway would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of criteria pollutants. **(No Impact)**

Impact AIR-3: The project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. (Less than Significant Impact)

Project Construction

Construction equipment and heavy-duty truck traffic generates diesel exhaust, which is a known TAC. Construction of the proposed pedestrian pathway is not anticipated to generate heavy-duty truck traffic or involve large heavy equipment with diesel engines (bulldozers, pavers, etc.), besides the limited use of gasoline or diesel generators to power electrical equipment (if necessary), small diesel or gasoline-powered utility loaders and excavators, and brief use of a larger backhoe or mobile crane to install the pedestrian bridge and staircase at Robleda Road. Construction would be completed primarily by laborers using a variety of hand and power tools typically used in trail construction and little or no export of materials is anticipated. Additionally, because of the linear and separated nature of the pedestrian pathway, no particular receptor would be exposed to construction over the entire duration of the project. Given that construction of the proposed project would not require substantial grading or excavation activities and would be completed relatively quickly, construction TACs would not result in human health risks. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Project Operation

Sensitive receptors in the project area include the adjacent single-family residences. The proposed pathway would be exclusively limited to pedestrian use and pathway users would walk to/from the pathway as there are no parking areas and very limited off-street parking in the vicinity of the trailheads. For these reasons, operation of the proposed pedestrian pathway would not generate

harmful emissions that would impact sensitive receptors in the project area. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact AIR-4: The project would not result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people. (No Impact)

Common sources of odors include wastewater treatment plants, transfer stations, coffee roasters, painting/coating operations, etc. The proposed pedestrian pathway would not introduce permanent new sources of odor. **(No Impact)**

4.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The discussion in this section is based in part on the Wetland Delineation Report and Biological Evaluation Report prepared by Live Oak Associates, Inc. (Live Oak), dated October 15, 2020. The reports are included in this Initial Study as Appendices A and B, respectively.

4.4.1 Environmental Setting

4.4.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

Federal and State

Endangered Species Act

Individual plant and animal species listed as rare, threatened, or endangered under state and federal Endangered Species Acts are considered special-status species. Federal and state endangered species legislation has provided the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) with a mechanism for conserving and protecting plant and animal species of limited distribution and/or low or declining populations. Permits may be required from both the USFWS and CDFW if activities associated with a proposed project would result in the take of a species listed as threatened or endangered. To “take” a listed species, as defined by the State of California, is “to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill” these species. Take is more broadly defined by the federal Endangered Species Act to include harm of a listed species.

In addition to species listed under state and federal Endangered Species Acts, Sections 15380(b) and (c) of the CEQA Guidelines provide that all potential rare or sensitive species, or habitats capable of supporting rare species, must be considered as part of the environmental review process. These may include plant species listed by the California Native Plant Society and CDFW-listed Species of Special Concern.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) prohibits killing, capture, possession, or trade of migratory birds except in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior. Hunting and poaching are also prohibited. The taking and killing of birds resulting from an activity is not prohibited by the MBTA when the underlying purpose of that activity is not to take birds.¹⁰ Nesting birds are considered special-status species and are protected by the USFWS. The CDFW also protects migratory and nesting birds under California Fish and Game Code Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3800. The CDFW defines taking as causing abandonment and/or loss of reproductive efforts through disturbance.

¹⁰ United States Department of the Interior. “Memorandum M-37050. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act Does Not Prohibit Incidental Take.” Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/m-37050.pdf>.

Sensitive Habitat Regulations

Wetland and riparian habitats are considered sensitive habitats under CEQA. They are also afforded protection under applicable federal, state, and local regulations, and are generally subject to regulation by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), CDFW, and/or the USFWS under provisions of the federal Clean Water Act (e.g., Sections 303, 304, 404) and State of California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act.

Fish and Game Code Section 1602

Streambeds and banks, as well as associated riparian habitat, are regulated by the CDFW per Section 1602 of the Fish and Game Code. Work within the bed or banks of a stream or the adjacent riparian habitat requires a Streambed Alteration Agreement from the CDFW.

Regional and Local

Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan

The Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (Habitat Plan) covers approximately 520,000 acres, or approximately 62 percent of Santa Clara County. It was developed and adopted through a partnership between Santa Clara County, the Cities of San José, Morgan Hill, and Gilroy, Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water), Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), USFWS, and CDFW. The Habitat Plan is intended to promote the recovery of endangered species and enhance ecological diversity and function, while accommodating planned growth in southern Santa Clara County. The Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency is responsible for implementing the plan.

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating impacts to biological resources resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
LU Policy 1.1	Uses of land shall be consistent with the semi-rural atmosphere of the community, minimize disturbance to natural terrain, minimize removal of the natural vegetation, and create the maximum compatibility of development with the natural environment through site design and landscaping.
CON Policy 1.1	Avoid fencing, piping, and channelization of creeks when flood control and public safety can be achieved through measures that preserve the natural environment and habitat of the creek.
CON Policy 1.3	Preserve the integrity of riparian corridors as unique and environmentally sensitive resources.
CON Program 1.2	Continue to require open space easements along creeks and riparian corridors to ensure that these areas remain in their natural condition.

Policies and Programs	Description
CON Program 1.3	Continue to comply with the requirements of CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) for proposed development that might impact creeks and riparian corridors. Other relevant local, state and federal agencies including the Santa Clara Valley Water District, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are consulted as appropriate.
CON Policy 2.1	Minimize disturbance of the natural terrain and vegetation.
CON Policy 2.2	Preserve and protect native and naturalized plants, with special attention to preservation of unique, rare or endangered species and plant communities such as oak woodlands.
CON Policy 2.3	Preserve and protect Heritage Trees, including native oaks and other significant trees, on public and private property.
CON Program 2.2	Continue to require the replacement of any Heritage Oaks or other significant trees that are removed under special permit or as part of approved development projects.
CON Program 3.2	Inventory wildlife habitat areas and the suite of animals in those areas.
CON Policy 5.1	Keep or restore major drainage courses in their natural condition insofar as possible because of their importance in supplying major vegetation, land forms and wildlife habitat, and storm drainage.
CON Policy 6.3	Minimize the removal of vegetation and require replanting to maintain soil stability, prevent erosion, and retain the aesthetic quality of the community.
CON Program 6.1	Protect and preserve native plant communities next to creeks to help prevent erosion.
CON Policy 11.2	Ensure that in the planning, development and use of land, environmental impact is not overlooked, conservation actions are considered, and such evaluations and actions are sufficiently comprehensive and consistent with established guidelines.
CON Policy 11.5	Ensure that development projects are designed to conserve the natural slope, preserve existing native vegetation, limit invasive species, and conserve natural drainage channels and swales.
HE Policy 1C	Protect areas with exceptional natural value.
OSR Policy 1.2	Protect and maintain those areas necessary to the integrity of natural resources and processes, with special emphasis on, but not limited to, the groundwater recharge and drainage system, open spaces vital for wildlife habitat, open spaces suitable for agriculture, and other areas of major or unique ecological significance.
OSR Policy 1.4	Preserve the natural beauty and minimize disturbance of the natural terrain and vegetation.
PE Policy 4.9	Site development authorities shall be sensitive to path location and design. This is especially the case for the off-road paths. The location shall be sensitive to the privacy of future residents whenever a parcel is subdivided, or a lot is developed. All paths shall be located and designed to preserve the beauty and

Policies and Programs	Description
	natural character of the area and to safeguard the user. Particular care shall be given to retaining trees and vegetative cover and to minimize grading and erosion.

Town of Los Altos Hills Municipal Code

The Town of Los Altos Hills Municipal Code includes several ordinances related to the removal of trees. Title 5, Chapter 8 “View and Sunlight Obstruction from Trees” defines a protected tree as any tree that has been deemed by the Town to be a heritage tree, and a heritage oak as any tree of “the genus Quercus, including, but not limited to, Valley Oak, California Live Oak, Black Oak, and Blue Oak that has a trunk or multiple trunk thirty-six inches in circumference (approximately twelve (12) inches) in diameter) at a point four (4) feet above the root crown.” Under Title 12, Chapter 2 “Trees, Shrubs and Plants”, a tree removal permit must be obtained prior to removal of any heritage oak. Compensation for tree removal may include the planting of up to five trees for each heritage oak removed.

Los Altos Hills Resolution 26-07

The Santa Clara Valley Water Resources Protection Collaborative Guidelines and Standards for Land Use Near Streams, which the Town of Los Altos Hills formally adopted in 2007 (LAH Resolution 26-07) defines a set of best practices critical to protecting streamside properties, as well as a stream’s ability to convey drainage water, recharge groundwater, and provide habitat for wildlife. The Guidelines and Standards address slope stability protection, establishment and protection of riparian buffers and define terms, such as, streams, channels, watercourses, top of bank, toe of bank, and streamside protection areas.

4.4.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

The proposed project would occur within a riparian corridor that runs parallel to an intermittent drainage channel. The pathway alignment and surrounding area includes mixed-oak woodland (primarily coast live oak) and riparian vegetation that supports a variety of animal and plant species.

Biotic Habitats

Two biotic habitats were identified by Live Oak Associates through a field survey and wetland delineation of the proposed pathway alignment conducted on August 13, 2020; these habitats are discussed in greater detail below.

Coast Live Oak Riparian Woodland and Forest

The proposed pathway alignment is within a larger coast live oak riparian woodland and forest habitat that also includes a number of other species of trees including valley oak, California bay, California buckeye, and elderberry. A number of non-native trees, shrubs, and grasses are present as well. Native understory species include poison oak, wild rose, bracken fern, gooseberry, snowberry, and pink honeysuckle.

Coast live oak riparian woodland and forest habitat supports a variety of wildlife species, including the San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat. Nests of the San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat were observed on-site, and this species increases the suitability of the area for amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals of the site such as Pacific chorus frogs, western fence lizards, alligator lizards, sharp-tailed snake, and mice. Avian species occurring in this habitat include woodpeckers such as the acorn woodpecker and other birds that frequent the tree canopy such as the white-breasted nuthatch, chestnut-backed chickadee, dark-eyed junco, and bushtit. Virginia opossums and raccoons likely forage onsite and coyotes were observed on the site during the August 2020 site visit.

Intermittent Drainage Channel

Approximately 927 linear feet of an intermittent drainage channel runs parallel to the proposed pathway alignment, which intersects the channel at the eastern and western ends of the alignment. Riparian vegetation is present on the channel banks, including poison oak, sedges, tall flat sedge, rushes, pennyroyal, and stinging nettle.

The intermittent drainage channel is capable of supporting a similar range of wildlife as the coast live oak riparian woodland and forest habitat. Frogs, including the Pacific chorus frog and California red-legged frog may also use the channel for breeding and migration.

Special-Status Species

Several species of plants and animals within the state of California have low populations, limited distributions, or both. Such species may be considered “rare” and are vulnerable to extirpation as the state’s human population grows and the habitats these species occupy are converted to agricultural and urban uses. A sizable number of native plants and animals have been formally designated as threatened or endangered under state and federal endangered species legislation. Others have been designated as “candidates” for such listing. Still others have been designated as “species of special concern” by the CDFW. The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) has developed its own set of lists of native plants considered rare, threatened, or endangered. Collectively, these plants and animals are referred to as “special-status species.”

Potential occurrence of special-status species along the proposed alignment was evaluated during Live Oak’s field survey and through a review of published accounts for all of the relevant special-status plant and animal species with the potential to occur in the project area.

Special-Status Plants

No serpentine or alkaline soils are present on-site and, therefore, plant species adapted to serpentine or alkaline conditions are considered absent from the site. No vernal pools, coniferous trees, chaparral, or coastal scrub is present. Therefore, plants associated with these habitats are also considered absent. No habitat is present on-site that is suitable for special-status moss and lichen species.

Three special-status species were identified with the potential to occur on-site, specifically the California androsace, the California bottle-brush grass, and the Davidson’s bush-mallow. However, no special-status plants were identified during Live Oak’s field survey.

Special-Status Wildlife

Of the twenty-four special-status animal species known to occur in the region, only five of these species have the potential to occur on the site, including the California red-legged frog, white-tailed kite, pallid bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, and San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat; nests of the latter were observed onsite during the August 2020 site visit.

4.4.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) or United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)?	☐	☒	☐	☐
2) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS?	☐	☐	☒	☐
3) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	☐	☐	☐	☒
4) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	☐	☐	☒	☐
5) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☒	☐
6) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact BIO-1: **The project would not have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS. (Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

Special-Status Plants

As discussed under Section 4.4.1.2 Existing Conditions, three special-status plant species have the potential to occur within the proposed pathway alignment: the California androsace, the California bottle-brush grass, and the Davidson's bush-mallow.

California androsace

The coast live oak riparian woodland and forest habitat present on-site provides only marginally suitable habitat for this species. Additionally, the disturbance created by the existing informal footpath and the presence of non-native trees, shrubs, and grasses make it unlikely that the species will occur on-site. The closest documented occurrence is 5.5 miles to the northwest of the proposed pathway.

California bottle-brush grass

The coast live oak riparian woodland and forest habitat present on-site provides only marginally suitable habitat for this species considering the site's proximity to disturbed and developed areas. The closest documented occurrence is seven miles to the northwest of the proposed pathway.

Davidson's bush-mallow

The pathway alignment provides poor habitat for this species due to its proximity to disturbance or developed areas. The last documented occurrence of this species was in 1936 located approximately two miles southwest of the proposed pathway.

Since the pathway alignment provides only poor to marginal habitat for these three special-status plants, and no specimens were observed during the August 2020 site visit, the proposed pathway would not have an adverse effect on any special-status plants. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Special-Status Bats

Both the pallid bat and Townsend's big-eared bat have the potential to occur within the pathway alignment. While these two species may forage on and over the pathway, there is no suitable roosting habitat in the form of hollow trees. Therefore, impacts to special-status bats and their habitat would be less than significant. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

San Francisco Dusky-Footed Woodrat

Several San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat nests were observed on and adjacent to the pathway alignment during the August 2020 field survey. The breeding/nesting season for this species is February through September. If any active nests are present when project construction occurs,

construction activities could result in harm or mortality to this species, or in nest abandonment. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

Impact BIO-1.1: Construction of the proposed project could have a substantial adverse effect on San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat if active nests are present during project construction. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

Mitigation Measures: The following measures will reduce impacts on individual San Francisco dusky-footed woodrats to a less than significant level.

MM BIO-1.1: A qualified biologist will conduct a pre-construction survey for San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat nests no more than 30 days and no less than 14 days prior to the onset of construction activities. This survey timing allows for the scheduling of and deconstruction of any woodrat nests which need deconstructing. The survey will encompass all construction zones and surrounding lands within 50 feet.

MM BIO-1.2: Identified nests will be avoided. If avoidance is not possible, the nest(s) will be manually deconstructed by a qualified biologist when helpless young are not present, typically during the non-breeding season (October through January).

MM BIO-1.3: If it is determined during the pre-construction survey that young may be present, a suitable buffer depending on the timing within the breeding season (ranging from 15-50 feet) will be established around the nest and maintained during construction until the young are independent and have successfully moved from the nest on their own.

Implementation of MM BIO-1.1 through MM BIO-1.2 would prevent the death and displacement of San Francisco dusky-footed woodrats by deconstructing nests during the non-breeding season (October through January) when young woodrats are not present. If it is determined that nests with young woodrats may be present during the pre-construction survey, MM BIO-1.3 would ensure that construction buffer are maintained until young woodrats have left the nest. Accordingly, with implementation of the above mitigation measures, impacts to the San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat would be less than significant. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

California Red-Legged Frog

Downstream portions of the intermittent drainage channel within the project area appear to hold water year-round, which provides suitable aquatic habitat for California red-legged frog (CRLF). However, as discussed in Section 4.10 Hydrology and Water Quality under Impact HYD-1 and Impact HYD-3, the project would have a less than significant impact on water quality and would not result in a significant impact to the existing drainage channel. Therefore, the project would not result in a substantial impact to the aquatic habitat present on-site.

The project area may also support CRLF breeding habitat. With the exception of the two clear span pedestrian bridges, the proposed pathway occurs outside of suitable CRLF breeding habitat. The

downstream bridge location has the potential to support CRLF as it is located near the confluence of two drainage channels and is close to the portion of the drainage channel which appears to be perennially aquatic; this location also provides more suitable habitat along the banks. The proposed pedestrian bridges are designed to span the entire drainage channel with no support structures within the channel itself. However, due to the proximity of the project to potentially suitable breeding habitat for the CRLF, project construction mitigation measures are necessary in order to minimize impacts to individual CRLF. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

Impact BIO-1.2: Construction of the downstream pedestrian bridge may have a significant impact on individual CRLF if present during project construction.

Mitigation Measures: The following measures are designed to avoid and minimize impacts to CRLF and would reduce impacts on CRLF to a less than significant level.

MM BIO-1.4: No portion of the bridge or bridge construction shall occur within the intermittent drainage channel. The bridges shall be built off-site to minimize impacts to riparian areas and installed during the first phase of construction to provide access to the central portion of the trail without disturbing the drainage channel.)

MM BIO-1.5: A qualified biologist will survey the entire reach, banks, and surrounding uplands of this intermittent channel within the project site as well as the reaches immediately up- and downstream of the project area. The pre-construction survey will occur the morning prior to initiation of work. If CRLF are observed within the work area, they will be allowed to move out of the work area on their own before the project can commence.

MM BIO-1.6: Immediately following the pre-construction surveys and a determination that CRLF are not present in the work zone, a wildlife exclusion fence will be installed and maintained around or along the work zone to prevent CRLF from moving into the area.

MM BIO-1.7: A qualified biologist or trained project personnel will survey the site each day prior to the start of work to ensure that CRLF are not present within the work zone.

MM BIO-1.8: All workers associated with project construction activities will attend a training to be conducted by a qualified biologist. The training will include instruction on CRLF identification, project-specific avoidance and minimization measures, and steps to be taken if CRLF are encountered on the project site.

Implementation of MM BIO-1.4 through MM BIO-1.8 would ensure no CRLF are present during construction activities and, therefore, no CRLF would be harmed, injured, or killed by construction activities. Accordingly, with implementation of these mitigation measures, the project would not have a substantial adverse effect on CRLF. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

Special-Status Birds

Trees and other vegetation within and adjacent to the site provide potential nesting habitat for migratory birds and birds of prey including, but not limited to, the white-tailed kite. If a migratory bird or other bird of prey were to nest on or adjacent to the site prior to or during proposed construction activities, such activities could result in the abandonment of active nests or direct mortality or other harm to these birds. Although no trees are planned for removal, project construction could adversely affect the nesting success of migratory birds and other birds of prey without proper mitigation of the impacts. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

Impact BIO-1.3: Construction activities could result in nest abandonment or the death, injury, or harm of white-tailed kite, birds of prey, and nesting and migratory birds if present on-site.

Mitigation Measures: The project will be required to implement the following mitigation measures to reduce impacts to white-tailed kite, raptors, migratory birds, and nesting birds to a less than significant level.

MM BIO-1.9: Vegetation removal and construction activities will occur during the non-breeding season (September 1 through January 31). If it is not possible to avoid vegetation removal during the breeding season (February 1 through August 31), preconstruction surveys will be conducted by a qualified biologist no more than 14 days prior to the start of any such activities.

The preconstruction survey will include all trees, shrubs, or other areas of potential nesting habitat within the project footprint and within 250 feet for raptors and 50 feet for other birds where practicable and legal access allows. If the target species are deemed absent from the area, then no mitigations are required, and construction can commence immediately.

MM BIO-1.10: If nesting raptors or migratory birds are detected during the survey, a suitable disturbance-free buffer will be established around all active nests. The precise dimension of the buffer would be determined at that time and may vary depending on factors such as location, species, topography, and line of sight to the construction area, and may be up to 250 feet. The buffer area(s) will be enclosed with temporary fencing, and equipment and workers will not enter the enclosed buffer areas. Buffers will remain in place until it has been confirmed by a qualified biologist that all chicks have fledged and are independent of their parents.

With implementation of MM BIO-1.9 and MM BIO-1.10, death, displacement, and nest abandonment of white-tailed kite and other protected birds would be prevented by completing vegetation removal and construction activities when no birds are present, or by protecting these species during construction through the use of disturbance-free buffers. Accordingly, with implementation of these mitigation measures, impacts to special-status birds would be less than significant. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

Impact BIO-2: The project would not have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the CDFW or USFWS. (Less than Significant Impact)

Intermittent Drainage Channel

The intermittent drainage channel is subject to regulation by the USACE, RWQCB, and CDFW. With the exception of the two pedestrian bridges, the proposed pathway and pedestrian improvements will be located outside the channel (approximately 10-15 feet away from the channel bed). Construction of the two bridges is proposed to occur above the ordinary high-water line of the intermittent drainage channel. Bridge footings will be located beyond the channel banks to avoid impacts to jurisdictional waters and riparian habitat. Additionally, as discussed under Impact HYD-1 and Impact HYD-3, the project would have a less than significant impact on water quality and would not result in a significant impact to the existing drainage channel. For these reasons, the project would not result in a substantial impact to the intermittent drainage channel habitat. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Coast Live Oak Riparian Woodland and Forest

While a small amount of brush and native plant removal would occur, no trees within the coast live oak riparian woodland and forest would be removed. Additionally, the proposed construction of an off-road pathway would not drastically alter the function or utility of the on-site riparian habitat as no construction is proposed within the riparian zone other than the lower drainage channel crossing. Wildlife would likely continue to use the riparian habitat for daily movements. In addition, impacts to riparian habitat that have occurred due to the construction of the informal pathway will be substantially reduced as the proposed trail is located further from the drainage channel. Since significant portions of the new pathway are located in areas that were previously disturbed by the existing informal pathway, no riparian trees are being removed and riparian habitat function and utility will not be affected. Therefore, the proposed project would have no significant adverse impacts on the coast live oak riparian woodland and forest habitat. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact BIO-3: The project would not have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means. (No Impact)

Wetlands are defined as those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas. Wetlands are characterized by the presence of plants adapted to saturated soils (hydrophytic vegetation), soils that have developed anaerobically (hydric soils), and inundated areas or saturated soils (wetland hydrology).

The project alignment was surveyed for hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetland hydrology by Live Oak, Associates in August 2020. While areas along the project alignment met the criteria for hydric soils and wetland hydrology, they did not meet the hydrophytic vegetation criteria, as the

channel bed was largely devoid of vegetation. Accordingly, as no wetlands are present within the project alignment and the proposed bridge footings are located outside of the drainage channel, the project would not impact state or federally protected wetlands under the Clean Water Act. **(No Impact)**

Impact BIO-4: The project would not interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites. (Less than Significant Impact)

Wildlife likely use the intermittent drainage channel and coast live oak riparian woodland and forest habitats along the pathway alignment to disperse throughout their home range; however, the alignment does not fall within any regional migratory corridor. Movements on and across the site are expected to consist of normal movements associated with an individual animal's home range or territory, or animals dispersing from their birth place.

Pathway construction may result in increased interactions between wildlife and people in this area and may impact how or when native wildlife uses this area. As people are actively using the existing foot trail and the site is surrounded by low-density residential housing, wildlife is expected to use this site in a similar manner after construction. Wildlife species presently utilizing this area are expected to continue moving through the area in a similar fashion after the proposed pedestrian pathway is built. Therefore, the proposed project would have a less than significant impact on movements of native wildlife within the region. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact BIO-5: The project would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance. (Less than Significant Impact)

As discussed under Section 4.4.1.1 Regulatory Framework, local policies and ordinances are outlined in the Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan and Municipal Code that are intended to protect biological resources, including wildlife, vegetation, riparian corridors, streams and trees. Potential impacts to wildlife, vegetation, riparian corridors and streams have been addressed throughout this Initial Study and have been found to be less than significant with mitigation, and the project does not propose to remove any trees. Additionally, in the unexpected event that trees would need to be removed, the project would be required to obtain a tree removal permit and associated compensation measures. Accordingly, the project would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact BIO-6: The project would not conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan. (No Impact)

The proposed pathway is within an open space conservation area as designated on the Town's Land Use Map. There are no adopted Habitat Conservation Plans or Natural Community Conservation Plans that encompass the project area. Therefore, the project would not conflict with the provisions

of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan. **(No Impact)**

4.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

4.5.1 Environmental Setting

4.5.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

National Historic Preservation Act

Federal protection is legislated by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) and the Archaeological Resource Protection Act of 1979. These laws maintain processes for determination of the effects on historical properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Section 106 of the NHPA and related regulations (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 800) constitute the primary federal regulatory framework guiding cultural resources investigations and require consideration of effects on properties that are listed or eligible for listing in the NRHP. Impacts to properties listed in the NRHP must be evaluated under CEQA.

California Register of Historical Resources

The California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) is administered by the State Office of Historic Preservation and encourages protection of resources of architectural, historical, archeological, and cultural significance. The CRHR identifies historic resources for state and local planning purposes and affords protections under CEQA. Under Public Resources Code Section 5024.1(c), a resource may be eligible for listing in the CRHR if it meets any of the NRHP criteria.¹¹

Historical resources eligible for listing in the CRHR must meet the significance criteria described previously and retain enough of their historic character or appearance to be recognizable as historical resources and to convey the reasons for their significance. A resource that has lost its historic character or appearance may still have sufficient integrity for the CRHR if it maintains the potential to yield significant scientific or historical information or specific data.

The concept of integrity is essential to identifying the important physical characteristics of historical resources and, therefore, in evaluating adverse changes to them. Integrity is defined as “the authenticity of a historical resource’s physical identity evidenced by the survival of characteristics that existed during the resource’s period of significance.” The processes of determining integrity are similar for both the CRHR and NRHP and use the same seven variables or aspects to define integrity that are used to evaluate a resource’s eligibility for listing. These seven characteristics include 1) location, 2) design, 3) setting, 4) materials, 5) workmanship, 6) feeling, and 7) association.

California Native American Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Sites Act

The California Native American Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Sites Act applies to both state and private lands. The act requires that upon discovery of human remains, construction or excavation activity must cease, and the county coroner be notified.

¹¹ California Office of Historic Preservation. “CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a)(3) and California Office of Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Series #6.” Accessed October 21, 2020.
<http://www.ohp.parks.ca.gov/pages/1069/files/technical%20assistance%20bulletin%206%202011%20update.pdf>.

Public Resources Code Sections 5097 and 5097.98

Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines specifies procedures to be used in the event of an unexpected discovery of Native American human remains on non-federal land. These procedures are outlined in Public Resources Code Sections 5097 and 5097.98. These codes protect such remains from disturbance, vandalism, and inadvertent destruction, establish procedures to be implemented if Native American skeletal remains are discovered during construction of a project, and establish the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) as the authority to resolve disputes regarding disposition of such remains.

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98, in the event of human remains discovery, no further disturbance is allowed until the county coroner has made the necessary findings regarding the origin and disposition of the remains. If the remains are of a Native American, the county coroner must notify the NAHC. The NAHC then notifies those persons most likely to be related to the Native American remains. The code section also stipulates the procedures that the descendants may follow for treating or disposing of the remains and associated grave goods.

4.5.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

Historic Resources

The proposed pathway alignment and adjacent properties do not appear on any local, state, or federal list of historic or architecturally significant structures and/or sites, landmarks, or points of interest. There are no historic resources/structures located within the proposed pathway alignment.

Archaeological Resources

The proposed pathway alignment runs parallel to an intermittent drainage that is part of the larger Adobe Creek watershed. Stormwater from the project alignment enters the intermittent drainage channel, which flows northward into Adobe Creek before ultimately emptying into the San Francisco Bay estuary system. Settlements of the Ohlone/Costanoan Native Americans, the earliest known residents of the San Francisco Bay Area region, were most often located adjacent to historic streams and natural springs in Los Altos Hills and the larger San Francisco Bay Area region. Several archaeological sites have been recorded downstream along Adobe Creek, and the Santa Clara Valley is an archaeological sensitive area for subsurface archaeological resources.

4.5.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	☒
2) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐
3) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Impact CUL-1: The project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5. (No Impact)

There are no historical resources present pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5, as the proposed pathway alignment and adjacent residences are not listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, or the local registry of historic resources reflected in Appendix A of the Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan. **(No Impact)**

Impact CUL-2: The project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5. (Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)

Although there are no known archaeological sites within or adjacent to the proposed pathway alignment, the alignment is located along an intermittent drainage channel within the Adobe Creek watershed. Due to the project's proximity to this waterway, as well as the historic presence of Ohlone Native Americans in Los Altos Hills and archaeological sites along Adobe Creek, there could be archaeological resources in the project area. Therefore, while project-related grading and excavation during construction is very minimal, unknown archaeological resources could be uncovered during project construction. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

Impact CUL-2.1: Construction of the proposed project could impact unknown archaeological resources, if present on-site.

Mitigation Measures: Implementation of the following mitigation measures would ensure that potential impacts to buried archaeological resources remain at a less than significant level:

MM CUL-2.1: *Worker Training.* Prior to ground-disturbing activities, a qualified archaeologist or qualified Native American tribal representative shall provide appropriate cultural sensitivity training to all contractors and employees

involved in project ground disturbing activities. The training will include handouts to be given to new workers as needed.

MM CUL-2.2: *Halt Construction and Evaluate Resource.* In the event that prehistoric or historic resources are encountered during excavation and/or grading of the site, all activity within a 50-foot radius of the find shall stop, the Planning and Building Director shall be notified, and an archaeologist designated by the Town shall assess the find and make appropriate recommendations, if warranted. Recommendations could include avoidance, if feasible, preservation in place, or collection, recordation, and analysis of any significant cultural materials. Construction within a radius specified by the archaeologist shall not recommence until the assessment is complete. A report of findings documenting any data recovery would be submitted to the Planning and Building Director.

With the implementation of these mitigation measures, impacts to buried archaeological resources would be less than significant. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

Impact CUL-3: **The project would not disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries. (Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

Human remains have the potential to be discovered during construction. If human remains were unearthed during project construction, damage to or destruction of culturally significant human remains would be a potentially significant impact. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

Impact CUL-3.1: Construction of the proposed project could result in significant impacts to undiscovered human remains, if present on-site.

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of the following mitigation measures would ensure that potential impacts to undiscovered human remains is at a less than significant level.

MM CUL-3.1: *Human Remains.* If human remains are discovered during pathway construction, all ground-disturbing activity within 100 feet of the remains shall be halted and the Town of Los Altos Hills Planning and Building Director and the Santa Clara County Coroner shall be notified immediately, according to Section 5097.98 of the State Public Resources Code and Section 7050.5 of California's Health and Safety Code. If the remains are determined by the County coroner to be Native American, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) shall be notified within 24 hours, and the guidelines of the NAHC shall be adhered to in the treatment and disposition of the remains. The project sponsor shall also retain a professional archaeologist with Native American burial experience to conduct a field investigation of the specific site and consult with the Most Likely Descendant, if any, identified by the NAHC. As necessary, the archaeologist may provide professional assistance

to the Most Likely Descendant, including the excavation and removal of the human remains. The Town of Los Altos Hills shall be responsible for approval of recommended mitigation as it deems appropriate, taking account of the provisions of State law, as set forth in CEQA Guidelines section 15064.5(e) and Public Resources Code section 5097.98. Implementation of the approved mitigation shall be verified by the Planning and Building Director, before resuming ground-disturbing activities within 100 feet of where the remains were discovered.

By applying this measure, potentially significant impacts related to the destruction of human remains would be mitigated to a less than significant level. **(Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

4.6 ENERGY

4.6.1 Environmental Setting

4.6.1.1 *Existing Conditions*

The community-owned Silicon Valley Clean Energy (SVCE) is the electricity provider for the Town of Los Altos Hills.¹² SVCE sources the electricity and the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) delivers it to customers over their existing utility lines. Customers are automatically enrolled in the GreenStart plan and can upgrade to the GreenPrime plan. Both options are considered 100 percent GHG-emission free.

There are no existing sources of electricity to utilize for construction of the project. Therefore, all electrical power used in the construction of the trail will be provided by gasoline or diesel generators.

4.6.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
2) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Impact EN-1:	The project would not result in a potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation. (Less than Significant Impact)			

Construction of the proposed pathway would consume a relatively small amount of energy. Construction would require energy for the manufacture and transportation of building materials, site preparation, and pathway construction. Once constructed, there are no elements of the proposed project that would consume energy except for energy required to maintain the trail.

Additionally, the proposed pathway would reduce vehicle trips and associated energy use by providing a pedestrian connection between local residential, recreational, and public facility uses. For these reasons, construction and operation of the proposed pedestrian pathway would not result in a significant environmental impact due to the wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

¹² Silicon Valley Clean Energy. "Frequently Asked Questions." Accessed August 21, 2020.
<https://www.svcleanenergy.org/faqs>.

Impact EN-2: The project would not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. (Less than Significant Impact)

The proposed pedestrian pathway would reduce vehicle trips and associated energy use by providing a pedestrian connection between residential, recreational, and public facility uses. Therefore, the project would not conflict with a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. **(No Impact)**

4.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

4.7.1 Environmental Setting

4.7.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

State

Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act

The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act was passed following the 1971 San Fernando earthquake. The act regulates development in California near known active faults due to hazards associated with surface fault ruptures. Alquist-Priolo maps are distributed to affected cities, counties, and state agencies for their use in planning and controlling new construction. Areas within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone require special studies to evaluate the potential for surface rupture to ensure that no structures intended for human occupancy are constructed across an active fault.

Seismic Hazards Mapping Act

The Seismic Hazards Mapping Act (SHMA) was passed in 1990 following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. The SHMA directs the California Geological Survey (CGS) to identify and map areas prone to liquefaction, earthquake-induced landslides, and amplified ground shaking. CGS has completed seismic hazard mapping for the portions of California most susceptible to liquefaction, landslides, and ground shaking, including the central San Francisco Bay Area. The SHMA requires that agencies only approve projects in seismic hazard zones following site-specific geotechnical reports to determine if the seismic hazard is present and identify measures to reduce earthquake-related hazards.

California Building Standards Code

The CBC prescribes standards for constructing safe buildings and structures. The CBC contains provisions for earthquake safety based on factors including occupancy type, soil and rock profile, ground strength, and distance to seismic sources. The CBC requires that a site-specific geotechnical report be prepared for most development projects to evaluate seismic and geologic conditions such as surface fault ruptures, ground shaking, liquefaction, differential settlement, lateral spreading, expansive soils, and slope stability. The CBC is updated every three years.

California Division of Occupational Safety and Health Regulations

Excavation, shoring, and trenching activities during construction are subject to occupational safety standards for stabilization by the California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) under Title 8 of the California Code of Regulations and Excavation Rules. These regulations minimize the potential for instability and collapse that could injure construction workers on the site.

Public Resources Code Section 5097.5

Paleontological resources are the fossilized remains of organisms from prehistoric environments found in geologic strata. They range from mammoth and dinosaur bones to impressions of ancient animals and plants, trace remains, and microfossils. These are valued for the information they yield about the history of the earth and its past ecological settings. California Public Resources Code Section 5097.5 specifies that unauthorized removal of a paleontological resource is a misdemeanor. Under the CEQA Guidelines, a project would have a significant impact on paleontological resources if it would disturb or destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature.

Local

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating geology and soil impacts resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
LU Policy 2.5	Steep slopes, canyons and ravines generally in excess of 30% slope, as well as natural swales and drainage channels, and geologic hazard areas within areas designated for residential development shall be left undisturbed and preserved in their natural condition to the maximum extent feasible.
LU Program 2.2	Limit grading on hillsides to the minimum extent necessary to accommodate structures. Structures should be located so that they are consistent with slope contours and compatible with the terrain.
LU Program 2.5	Protect the public safety and minimize the risk of damage from natural hazards by requiring site-specific geologic investigations of proposed building sites.
CSR Policy 11.5	Drainage shall minimize flooding and erosion impacts on adjacent private properties.
CON Policy 6.3	Minimize the removal of vegetation and require replanting to maintain soil stability, prevent erosion, and retain the aesthetic quality of the community.
CON Program 6.1	Protect and preserve native plant communities next to creeks to help prevent erosion.
CON Program 6.2	Continue to require erosion control measures on construction sites.
CON Policy 11.2	Ensure that in the planning, development and use of land, environmental impact is not overlooked, conservation actions are considered, and such evaluations and actions are sufficiently comprehensive and consistent with established guidelines.
SAF Policy 1.2	Unstable terrain, active fault traces, water channels, flood plains, excessively steep slopes and other areas determined hazardous to public welfare and safety shall not be developed unless unobtrusive corrective measures can assure public safety.

Policies and Programs	Description
SAF Policy 1.3	The geologic and soils conditions of proposed development sites shall be analyzed to ensure land stability and foundation bearing capabilities.
SAF Policy 2.1	Reduce the potential effects of seismic and other geologic hazards, including slope instability.
SAF Program 2.3	Ensure that proper erosion and sedimentation control measures are undertaken for all development projects.
PE Policy 4.9	Site development authorities shall be sensitive to path location and design. This is especially the case for the off-road paths. The location shall be sensitive to the privacy of future residents whenever a parcel is subdivided or a lot is developed. All paths shall be located and designed to preserve the beauty and natural character of the area and to safeguard the user. Particular care shall be given to retaining trees and vegetative cover and to minimize grading and erosion.
PE Policy 4.20	Trails and paths shall be permitted uses in open space and conservation easements. These trails shall be constructed and maintained to minimize the environmental impact upon the area.

Town of Los Altos Hills Municipal Code

Title 10, Chapter 2, Site Development of the Town of Los Altos Hills Municipal Code sets forth general provisions, permitting requirements, grading regulations, and specific elements for development within the Town’s jurisdictions. Specific elements relevant to the proposed pathway include:

- **10-2.602 General policies(i):** Slopes in excess of fifteen (15) percent adjacent to a pathway shall contain soil retentive landscaping, rockery, netting, or other devices approved by the Town Engineer to reduce potential damage to the path or injury to users of the path from landslide, soil creep, or erosion.
- **10-2.802 Landscape policies(a):** Erosion. Landscaping shall be required to control erosion, retard soil creep, and reduce the potential for landslides.

Title 9, Chapter 1, also requires that design-level geological and soil reports (“geotechnical report”) be prepared for any proposed developments unless said requirement is waived by the Town Engineer.

4.7.1.2 Existing Conditions

Regional Geology

The Town of Los Altos Hills is within the Coast Ranges geomorphic province formed by the Franciscan, Merced, and Colma assemblages, an area characterized by a series of northwest-trending mountain ranges that have been folded and faulted by tectonic activity. The project alignment is located in the broad, north-south trending, alluvial-filled Santa Clara Valley. The Santa Clara Valley was formed when sediments derived from the surrounding mountain ranges were exposed by tectonic uplift and regression of the inland seas which previously inundated the area.

Project Alignment

Soils underlying the project alignment are comprised of 90 percent litterr loam and 10 percent minlum loam with 15 to 30 percent slopes.¹³ Litterr and minlum loam are very deep, well-drained soils that formed in alluvium from mixed rock sources. Litterr and minlum loam are primarily sand and a smaller amount of clay (35 to 45 percent) and rock fragments, mostly gravel (2 to 15 percent). Soils underlying the project alignment are slightly to moderately expansive.^{14,15}

Seismicity and Seismic Hazards

The proposed pathway is located in the San Francisco Bay Area, which is recognized as one of the most seismically active regions in the United States. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that there is a 62 percent probability that at least one earthquake of magnitude 6.7 or greater will occur in the San Francisco Bay region before 2032. There is a 21 percent chance of it occurring on the San Andreas Fault, which would more directly affect the project alignment. While the effects of a major earthquake would be widespread, the effects would be most intense on lands with steeper slopes and weak soils.

The Town is traversed by three fault lines, all of which are considered to be potentially active:

- Monte Vista Fault, approximately 0.65 mile southwest of the project alignment, which meanders from the northwest quadrant to the southeast quadrant of the Town.
- Altamont Fault, approximately 1 mile southwest of the project alignment, which runs parallel to the Berrocal Fault to the north.
- Berrocal Fault, approximately 1.25 miles southwest of the project alignment, which runs from the western Town border to the southeastern tip of the Town boundaries.

Additionally, there are three major fault lines within Santa Clara County that are known to be currently active and could endanger the stability of hillsides in Los Altos Hills:

- San Andreas Fault, approximately 4 miles west of the project alignment, located along the west coast.
- Hayward Fault, approximately 14 miles northeast of the project alignment, running along the eastern shore of the San Francisco Bay
- Calaveras Fault, approximately 19 miles east of the project alignment, further inland.

During a major earthquake on a segment of one of the nearby faults, strong to very strong ground shaking is expected to occur in the project area. The ground shaking intensity felt at the trail alignment would depend on the size of the earthquake (magnitude), the distance from the site to the fault source, the directivity (focusing of earthquake energy along the fault in the direction of the rupture), and the site-specific soil conditions.

¹³ United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. *Custom Soil Resource Report for Santa Clara Area, California, Western Part*. Generated August 10, 2020.

¹⁴ United States Department of Agriculture. *National Cooperative Soil Survey – Litterr Series*. November 2009.

¹⁵ United States Department of Agriculture. *National Cooperative Soil Survey – Minlum Series*. November 2009.

Per the Town's Geotechnical and Seismic Hazard Zones study, the project alignment is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Fault Zone or geologic hazard zone.^{16 17}

Paleontological Resources

The project alignment is within the Santa Clara Formation (Qsc) of the Franciscan complex, which was formed during the early to late Pleistocene age of the Neogene period, and has a high sensitivity for paleontological resources.¹⁸ At a regional level, the project alignment is within the La Honda stratigraphic area, which has approximately eight historic fossil collection sites, including two approximately 4,000 feet due west of the project alignment along Deer Creek. The project alignment itself has no recorded fossil occurrences or rock outcroppings where paleontological resources are more likely to be present.¹⁹

4.7.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
– Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault (refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
– Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☐	☒
– Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☒	☐
– Landslides?	☐	☐	☒	☐
2) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☐	☒	☐
3) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?	☐	☐	☒	☐

¹⁶ California Geological Survey. "Earthquake Zones of Required Investigation".

<https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/EQZApp/app/>. Accessed August 10, 2020.

¹⁷ Cotton, Shires & Associates, Inc. *Geotechnical and Seismic Hazard Zones, Los Altos Hills, CA*. March 2009.

¹⁸ Dibblee, T.W., and Minch, J.A. *Geologic map of the Mindego Hill quadrangle, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz Counties, California*. 2007.

¹⁹ Macrostrat. "Macrostrat Geologic Map". <https://macrostrat.org/map/#/z=12.4/x=122.0934/y=37.3760/bedrock/lines/>. Accessed August 10, 2020.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
4) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in the current California Building Code, creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☒	☐
5) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	☐	☐	☐	☒
6) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geological feature?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Impact GEO-1: **The project would not directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault; strong seismic ground shaking; seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction; or landslides. (Less than Significant Impact)**

Fault Rupture

The project alignment is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone and no active faults are known to cross the alignment, making fault rupture at the site unlikely. **(No Impact)**

Seismic Ground Shaking

In the event of a major earthquake on one of the region's active faults, strong ground shaking at the project alignment would likely occur, but no new structures or facilities designed for human occupancy are included in the project. Further, the pedestrian bridges and staircase would be designed in compliance with state and local seismic safety standards and codes. Therefore, there would be no substantial risk of loss of life or property expected from seismic ground shaking at the site. **(No Impact)**

Liquefaction, Lateral Spreading and Landslides

The project alignment is not located within a geologic hazard zone.²⁰ Lateral spreading, which is commonly associated with liquefaction, typically occurs as a form of horizontal displacement of relatively flat-lying soil toward an open or "free" face such as an open body of water, channel, or excavation. Lateral spread presents a significant hazard to the integrity of structures. Because the soils on-site are unlikely to liquefy, the risk of lateral spreading is low. Further, per Town standard building permit requirements, the project would be designed and constructed in accordance with a

²⁰ Cotton, Shires & Associates, Inc. *Geotechnical and Seismic Hazard Zones, Los Altos Hills, CA*. March 2009.

soils report and engineered drawings to be completed for the project. For these reasons, the proposed pedestrian pathway would not result in liquefaction, lateral spreading, or landslides. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact GEO-2: The project would not result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil. (Less than Significant Impact)

Construction of the project would disturb the ground and expose soils, thereby increasing the potential for wind- and water-related erosion and sedimentation along the alignment until the completion of construction and ground disturbance is stabilized. Development along the project alignment could result in significant amounts of soil erosion if managed improperly. Title 10, Chapter 2, of Town of Los Altos Hills's Municipal Code outlines procedures to be followed to prevent significant soil erosion during construction activities. Additionally, as discussed in Section 4.10 Hydrology and Water Quality of this Initial Study, the proposed project would conform with standard measures to reduce erosion (based on RWQCB recommendations) as a condition of project approval. With implementation of Los Altos Hills and RWQCB erosion control measures, the project would not result in substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact GEO-3: The project would not be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse. (Less than Significant Impact)

As discussed under Section 4.7.1.2 Existing Conditions and Impact GEO-1, the project alignment is not located in a geologic hazard zone. Further, per Town standard building permit requirements, the project would be designed and constructed in accordance with a soils report and engineered drawings to be completed for the project. For these reasons, the proposed pedestrian pathway would not result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact GEO-4: The project would not be located on expansive soil, as defined in the current California Building Code, creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property. (Less than Significant Impact)

Soils along the project alignment are moderately expansive. Expansive soils have a high shrink-swell potential and can impact the structural integrity of improvements. Expansive soils swell when the water content is increased and shrink when it decreases. This shrink-swell action could result in structural instability of the proposed pedestrian improvements (i.e., retaining walls, bridges, and staircase). Per Town standard building permit requirements, the project would be designed and constructed in accordance with a soils report and engineered drawings to be completed for the project, which would address any issues related to expansive soils. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact GEO-5: **The project would not have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater. (No Impact)**

The project proposes the construction of a compacted dirt pathway with two pedestrian bridges, a pedestrian staircase, and retaining walls. No septic systems would be constructed or used; therefore, no impacts related to septic systems would occur. **(No Impact)**

Impact GEO-6: **The project would not directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geological feature. (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

Per United States Geological Survey (USGS) records, there are no known paleontological resources or unique geological features present at the project site. Since no rock outcroppings are present, and project construction would only disturb the top layer of soil along the project alignment. The risk of encountering and destroying paleontological resources during construction is considered low. Paleontological resources have, however, been discovered in the project vicinity at nearby Deer Creek, approximately 4,000 feet due east of the project site. Additionally, the project site is located on Santa Clara Formation soils within the La Honda stratigraphic area, which has a high sensitivity for paleontological resources.

Although the likelihood of encountering paleontological resources during project construction activities is low, the small amount of project-related grading and excavation during construction could result in a potentially significant impact if any unknown subsurface paleontological resources were discovered. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

Impact GEO-6.1: Construction of the proposed project could result in impacts to unknown paleontological resources if present on-site.

Mitigation Measures: Implementation of the following mitigation measures would ensure that potential impacts to buried paleontological resources remain at a less than significant level.

MM GEO-6.1: *Worker Training.* A qualified paleontologist will develop a Worker's Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP) to train the construction crew on the legal requirements for preserving fossil resources as well as procedures to follow in the event of a fossil discovery. This training program will be given to the crew before ground-disturbing work commences and will include handouts to be given to new workers as needed.

MM GEO-6.2: *Halt Construction and Evaluate Resource.* In the event that a paleontological resource (fossilized invertebrate, vertebrate, plan or micro-fossil) is found during construction, excavation within 50 feet of the find shall be temporarily halted or diverted until the discovery is evaluated. Upon discovery, the Planning and Building Director shall be notified immediately and a qualified paleontologist shall be retained to document and assess the discovery in

accordance with Society of Vertebrate Paleontology's 2010 Standard Procedures for the Assessment and Mitigation of Adverse Impacts to Paleontological Resources, and determine procedures to be followed before construction is allowed to resume at the location of the find. If determined to be significant, the paleontologist will prepare an excavation plan for mitigating the Project's impact on the resource, including preparation, identification, cataloging, and curation of any salvaged specimens.

With the implementation of these mitigation measures, impacts to buried paleontological resources would be less than significant. **(Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

4.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

4.8.1 Environmental Setting

4.8.1.1 *Background Information*

Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere, GHGs, regulate the earth's temperature. This phenomenon, known as the greenhouse effect, is responsible for maintaining a habitable climate. In GHG emission inventories, the weight of each gas is multiplied by its global warming potential (GWP) and is measured in units of CO₂ equivalents (CO₂e). The most common GHGs are carbon dioxide (CO₂) and water vapor but there are also several others, most importantly methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆). These are released into the earth's atmosphere through a variety of natural processes and human activities.

4.8.1.2 *Regulatory Framework*

State

Assembly Bill 32

Under the California Global Warming Solutions Act, also known as AB 32, CARB established a statewide GHG emissions cap for 2020, adopted mandatory reporting rules for significant sources of GHGs, and adopted a comprehensive plan, known as the Climate Change Scoping Plan, identifying how emission reductions would be achieved from significant GHG sources.

In 2016, SB 32 was signed into law, amending the California Global Warming Solution Act. SB 32, and accompanying Executive Order B-30-15, require CARB to ensure that statewide GHG emissions are reduced to 40 percent below the 1990 level by 2030. CARB updated its Climate Change Scoping Plan in December of 2017 to express the 2030 statewide target in terms of million metric tons of CO₂E (MMTCO₂e). Based on the emissions reductions directed by SB 32, the annual 2030 statewide target emissions level for California is 260 MMTCO₂e.

Regional and Local

2017 Clean Air Plan

To protect the climate, the 2017 CAP (prepared by BAAQMD) includes control measures designed to reduce emissions of methane and other super-GHGs that are potent climate pollutants in the near-term, and to decrease emissions of carbon dioxide by reducing fossil fuel combustion.

CEQA Air Quality Guidelines

The BAAQMD CEQA Air Quality Guidelines are intended to serve as a guide for those who prepare or evaluate air quality impact analyses for projects and plans in the San Francisco Bay Area. The jurisdictions in the San Francisco Bay Area Air Basin utilize the thresholds and methodology for assessing GHG impacts developed by BAAQMD within the CEQA Air Quality Guidelines. The guidelines include information on legal requirements, BAAQMD rules, methods of analyzing impacts, and recommended mitigation measures.

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating impacts resulting from greenhouse gas emissions of planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
CON Policy 4.1	Support regional, state, and federal programs that improve air quality in the Bay Area.

4.8.1.3 *Existing Conditions*

Unlike emissions of criteria and toxic air pollutants, which have regional and local impacts, emissions of GHGs have a broader, global impact. Global warming is a process whereby GHGs accumulating in the upper atmosphere contribute to an increase in the temperature of the earth and changes in weather patterns.

4.8.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Generate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
2) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of GHGs?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact GHG-1: The project would not generate GHG emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment. (Less than Significant Impact)

Construction Emissions

There are no established thresholds of significance for construction GHG emissions. BAAQMD does, however, encourage the analysis of GHG construction emissions when possible.

Construction of the proposed pathway would generate GHG emissions due to the operation of construction equipment, on-site power generators, and worker trips to and from the project. The proposed pathway would not require substantial grading or excavation or the import/export of large soil volumes or building materials. Therefore, GHG emissions during construction would be relatively low and short in duration. For these reasons, construction of the proposed pathway would not generate GHG emissions that may have a significant impact on the environment. **(Less Than Significant Impact)**

Operational Emissions

Use of the proposed pedestrian pathway would not generate GHG emissions. The proposed pathway would reduce vehicle trips and associated GHG emissions by providing a pedestrian connection with local residential, recreational, and public facility uses. Maintenance of the pathway by Town workers would involve only small amounts of GHG emissions related to the use of power tools to clear brush and soils. Therefore, operation of the proposed pathway would not generate GHG emissions that may have a significant impact on the environment. **(No Impact)**

Impact GHG-2: The project would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of GHGs. (No Impact)

As discussed under GHG-1 above, project construction would not generate substantial GHG emissions. Operation of the proposed pathway be consistent with the Town's General Plan and the BAAQMD 2017 CAP since the project would reduce vehicle trips and associated GHG emissions by providing a pedestrian connection between local residential, recreational, and public facility uses. For these reasons, the proposed project would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions. **(No Impact)**

4.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

4.9.1 Environmental Setting

4.9.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

Overview

The storage, use, generation, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials and waste are highly regulated under federal and state laws. In California, the EPA has granted most enforcement authority over federal hazardous materials regulations to the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA). In turn, local agencies have been granted responsibility for implementation and enforcement of many hazardous materials regulations under the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) program.

Worker health and safety and public safety are key issues when dealing with hazardous materials. Proper handling and disposal of hazardous material is vital if it is disturbed during project construction. Cal/OSHA enforces state worker health and safety regulations related to construction activities. Regulations include exposure limits, requirements for protective clothing, and training requirements to prevent exposure to hazardous materials. Cal/OSHA also enforces occupational health and safety regulations specific to lead and asbestos investigations and abatement.

State

Government Code Section 65962.5

Section 65962.5 of the Government Code requires CalEPA to develop and update a list of hazardous waste and substances sites, known as the Cortese List. The Cortese List is used by state and local agencies and developers to comply with CEQA requirements. The Cortese List includes hazardous substance release sites identified by the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB).²¹

Local

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating impacts of hazards and hazardous materials resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
CON Policy 6.2	Ensure the proper use, storage and disposal of toxic chemicals to prevent soil contamination.

²¹ California Environmental Protection Agency. "Cortese List Data Resources." Accessed May 28, 2020. <https://calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/>.

Policies and Programs	Description
CON Program 6.3	Reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides on Town-owned properties to the extent possible.

4.9.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

The project alignment has not been previously developed and as such there are no prior historical uses associated with the project alignment. The project vicinity was historically used as agricultural land up until 1991, prior to the development of the low-density single-family residential uses present today.²²

A review of readily available regulatory databases did not identify any active or closed hazardous materials cleanup cases within the proposed pathway alignment. One closed leaking underground storage tank (LUST) cleanup site from 1989 was identified within a quarter mile of the project alignment. The potential contaminant of concern was heating or fuel oil, and the leak was stopped as of October 1989.²³

4.9.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☒	☐
2) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
3) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	☒
4) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒

²² Google. Google Earth Pro. Date range: May 2, 1953 to October 29, 1991.

²³ State Water Resources Control Board. "Geotracker". <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/map/>. Accessed August 11, 2020.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
5) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
6) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
7) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact HAZ-1: The project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. (Less than Significant Impact)

Construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed pathway would not result in hazardous materials routinely being transported, used, or disposed of in quantities that would result in a significant hazard to the public. Project construction would use hazardous materials, including fuels, oils, and other building materials. During construction, these materials would be stored and used in relatively small quantities in compliance with local and state safety requirements. Operation of the proposed pathway may include the use of maintenance and landscaping chemicals in small quantities. The limited use of hazardous materials under the proposed project would not pose a significant risk to the public or environment. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact HAZ-2: The project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. (Less than Significant Impact)

Construction

Project construction would use hazardous materials, including fuels, oils, and other construction materials. These materials would be stored and used in relatively small quantities, in compliance with local and state safety requirements. Therefore, project construction would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Operation

Operation of the proposed pathway would not require the use of hazardous materials. Therefore, project operation would not cause a hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably

foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Agricultural Chemicals

As described above, areas in the vicinity of the project site were previously used for agricultural purposes (mostly apricot orchards) prior to development of the existing single-family residential uses in the 1960s. It is reasonable to assume that pesticides and other agricultural chemicals may have been used as part of the normal agricultural operations. However, a review of historic aerial photos from the 1950s shows that the drainage was not plowed or planted with orchard trees and the riparian woodland in the canyon remained essentially intact. Therefore, it appears very unlikely that the project area received any direct application of pesticides or herbicides. Furthermore, commercial application of agricultural chemicals has not occurred since construction of the surrounding residences over 50 years ago. Based on these conditions, the minor grading and soil disturbance associated with the proposed project is not anticipated to create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact HAZ-3: The project would not emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school. (No Impact)

There are no schools within one-quarter mile of the project site, and the proposed pathway would not emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste. **(No Impact)**

Impact HAZ-4: The project would not be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, create a significant hazard to the public or the environment. (No Impact)

The project alignment is not located on the California Environmental Protection Agency Cortese List, compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. **(No Impact)**

Impact HAZ-5: The project would not be located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport. The project would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area. (No Impact)

The project alignment is not located within an airport land use plan. The nearest airports are Moffett Federal Airfield, approximately 5.1 miles northeast of the project site, and Palo Alto Airport, approximately 5.9 miles north of the project site. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not result in safety hazard impacts related to airport activities. **(No Impact)**

Impact HAZ-6: The project would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. (Less than Significant Impact)

During construction of the proposed pathway, construction workers and equipment would be shuttled to the site from the Town's parking lot at Purissima Park, located approximately 1.5 miles northwest of the project site at 27500 Purissima Road in Los Altos Hills. At no point would construction require the complete closure of surrounding roadways, including La Paloma Road, Robleda Road or other private roadways. If necessary, the brief use of a larger backhoe at the termination point of the proposed pathway at Robleda Road would require the closing of one lane, and standard traffic control measures would be used to allow for continued two-way vehicle travel along Robleda Road.

In addition, the proposed pathway, if constructed, would allow for pedestrian ingress and egress during an emergency. Based on the above, the project would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact HAZ-7: The project would not expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires. (No Impact)

The Town of Los Altos Hills is a Local Responsibility Area (LRA) in the CAL FIRE *Santa Clara* Administrative Unit and contains no very high fire hazard severity zones (VHFHSZs).²⁴ As the project would not construct housing or other buildings, no people or structures would be exposed, directly or indirectly, to wildland fires. **(No Impact)**

²⁴ California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. *Fire Hazard Severity Zone Viewer*. Date accessed January 10, 2020. <https://egis.fire.ca.gov/FHSZ/>

4.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

4.10.1 Environmental Setting

4.10.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

Overview

The federal Clean Water Act and California's Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act are the primary laws related to water quality in California. Regulations set forth by the EPA and the SWRCB have been developed to fulfill the requirements of this legislation. EPA regulations include the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program, which controls sources that discharge pollutants into the waters of the United States (e.g., streams, lakes, bays, etc.). These regulations are implemented at the regional level by the Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs). The project site is within the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Bay RWQCB.

Federal and State

National Flood Insurance Program

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) established the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to reduce impacts of flooding on private and public properties. The program provides subsidized flood insurance to communities that comply with FEMA regulations protecting development in floodplains. As part of the program, FEMA publishes Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) that identify Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs). An SFHA is an area that would be inundated by the one-percent annual chance flood, which is also referred to as the base flood or 100-year flood.

Regional and Local

San Francisco Bay Basin Plan

The San Francisco Bay RWQCB regulates water quality in accordance with the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay Basin (Basin Plan). The Basin Plan lists the beneficial uses that the San Francisco Bay RWQCB has identified for local aquifers, streams, marshes, rivers, and the San Francisco Bay, as well as the water quality objectives and criteria that must be met to protect these uses. The San Francisco Bay RWQCB implements the Basin Plan by issuing and enforcing waste discharge requirements, including permits for nonpoint sources such as the urban runoff discharged by a city's stormwater drainage system. The Basin Plan also describes watershed management programs and water quality attainment strategies.

Water Resources Protection Ordinance and District Well Ordinance

The Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water) operates as the flood control agency for Santa Clara County. Their stewardship also includes creek restoration, pollution prevention efforts, and groundwater recharge. Permits for well construction and destruction work, most exploratory boring for groundwater exploration, and projects within Valley Water property or easements are required under Valley Water's Water Resources Protection Ordinance and District Well Ordinance.

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating hydrology and water quality impacts resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
LU Policy 2.9	The Town shall encourage the installation of drought-tolerant landscaping and other methods of reducing water use for landscaping.
CSR Policy 2.1	Provide adequate space in public right-of-ways to accommodate semirural roadways, pathways, utilities, drainage, and vegetative buffers.
CSR Policy 11.1	Drainage design should be generally compatible with semi-rural roadways, developed to complement existing drainage patterns, and consistent with “Guidelines and Standards for Land Use Near Streams” adopted by the Town in 2007.
CSR Policy 11.3	The drainage system shall not burden the natural waterways with road pollutants and silt.
CSR Policy 11.4	Drainage shall not create safety hazards for pedestrians, equestrians, or bicyclists, or damage to adjacent properties.
CSR Policy 11.5	Drainage shall minimize flooding and erosion impacts on adjacent private properties.
CSR Policy 11.6	Open Space easements should be used to preserve natural waterways and avoid excessive drainage structures.
CON Program 1.3	Continue to comply with the requirements of CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) for proposed development that might impact creeks and riparian corridors. Other relevant local, state and federal agencies including the Santa Clara Valley Water District, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are consulted as appropriate.
CON Policy 3.1	Maintain and protect creeks and riparian corridors for wildlife that use this resource for food, shelter, migration and breeding.
CON Policy 5.1	Keep or restore major drainage courses in their natural condition insofar as possible because of their importance in supplying major vegetation, land forms and wildlife habitat, and storm drainage.
CON Policy 5.5	Reduce non-point source pollution in urban runoff.
CON Program 5.2	In the planning, environmental impact review, and completion of all land development or land alteration projects, direct particular attention toward the protection of the natural water system.
CON Program 5.6	Actively participate in programs such as the Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program to improve the quality of stormwater runoff.
CON Program 5.7	Continue to implement the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Ordinance.
CON Program 5.9	Continue to limit the amount of impervious surface in new development to reduce urban runoff into storm drains, creeks and the San Francisco Bay.

Policies and Programs	Description
CON Policy 11.5	Ensure that development projects are designed to conserve the natural slope, preserve existing native vegetation, limit invasive species, and conserve natural drainage channels and swales.
HE Policy 1F	Require storm water drainage and erosion control systems to be designed to maintain, to the greatest extent possible, existing water drainage patterns, containment of storm water run-off and protection of existing downstream lands from flooding and flooding related hazards.
SAF Program 2.3	Ensure that proper erosion and sedimentation control measures are undertaken for all development projects.
SAF Program 3.2	Continue to limit the amount of runoff in site development projects.
OSR Policy 1.2	Protect and maintain those areas necessary to the integrity of natural resources and processes, with special emphasis on, but not limited to, the groundwater recharge and drainage system, open spaces vital for wildlife habitat, open spaces suitable for agriculture, and other areas of major or unique ecological significance.

4.10.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

Hydrology and Drainage

The storm drainage system in Los Altos Hills consists of a combination of dirt and paved ditches, cross culverts, and underground pipes. Stormwater collected by ditches flows downhill to culverts, pipes, or creeks, which ultimately carry stormwater flows to the San Francisco Bay.

The proposed pathway alignment runs parallel to an intermittent drainage that is part of the larger Adobe Creek watershed. Stormwater from the project alignment enters the intermittent drainage channel, which flows northward into Adobe Creek before ultimately emptying into the San Francisco Bay estuary system.

Groundwater

Groundwater in the Los Altos Hills planning area is contained in both shallow and deep aquifers formed in the alluvial deposits of streams running from the foothills to the San Francisco Bay. Groundwater recharge occurs naturally, through rainfall and streambed infiltration. In the past, wells have supplied water for local agricultural production and to Town residents, but currently most water is supplied by public utilities companies.

Water Quality

The proposed project alignment is within the riparian corridor of the intermittent drainage channel present at the project site. The Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan identifies the preservation of healthy riparian corridors as a critical element in maintaining creek stability and water quality. Healthy riparian vegetation adjacent to watercourses stabilizes streambanks, absorbs water, and filters pollutants.

Flood and Dam Inundation Hazards

The proposed pathway alignment is located outside of the limits of the 100-year floodplain. 100-year flood discharges in the project area are contained within the banks of the intermittent drainage channel, which is designated as being within a Special Flood Hazard Area, Zone A. The proposed pathway is not within a Special Flood Hazard Area.²⁵

The nearest dam is the Felt Lake Dam, approximately 3 miles northwest of the project site. Based on Dam Breach Inundation Maps prepared by the California Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD), the project alignment is not at risk of flooding due to dam failure or breach.²⁶

Seiches, Tsunamis, and Mudflows

A seiche is defined as a standing wave generated by rapid displacement of water within an enclosed body of water (such as a reservoir, lake, or bay) due to an earthquake that triggers land movement within the water body or land sliding into or beneath the water body. There are no large water bodies near the project alignment. The nearest enclosed body of water is Boronda Lake, approximately 2.5 miles east of the project alignment.

A tsunami is a large tidal wave caused by an underwater earthquake or volcanic eruption. Tsunamis affecting the Bay Area can result from off-shore earthquakes within the Bay Area. Tsunami inundation maps for Santa Clara County show that the project site is not within a tsunami inundation area.²⁷

4.10.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
2) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☐	☒

²⁵ Federal Emergency Management Agency. *Flood Insurance Rate Map, Community Panel No. 06085C0185H*. Map. Effective Date: May 18, 2009. <https://msc.fema.gov/portal/home>

²⁶ California Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD). "Dam Breach Inundation Map Web Publisher". Accessed September 3, 2020. https://fmds.water.ca.gov/webgis/?appid=dam_prototype_v2

²⁷ California Geological Survey. *Santa Clara County Tsunami Inundation Maps*. Accessed September 3, 2020. <https://www.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/tsunami/maps/santa-clara>

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
3) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:	☐	☐	☒	☐
– result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;	☐	☐	☒	☐
– substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site;	☐	☐	☒	☐
– create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	☐	☐	☒	☐
– impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☒	☐
4) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	☐	☐	☐	☒
5) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Impact HYD-1: The project would not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality. (Less than Significant Impact)

The water quality of streams, creeks, ponds, and other surface water bodies can be greatly affected by pollution carried in contaminated surface runoff. Pollutants from unidentified sources, known as non-point source pollutants, are washed from streets, construction sites, parking lots, and other exposed surfaces into storm drains and water basins. Urban stormwater runoff often contains contaminants such as oil and grease, plant and animal debris (e.g., leaves, dust, animal feces, etc.), pesticides, litter, and heavy metals. In sufficient concentration, these pollutants have been found to adversely affect the aquatic habitats to which they drain.

Construction Impacts

Construction activities, such as grading and excavation, have the potential to result in temporary impacts to surface water quality in adjacent waterways. When disturbance to the soil occurs, sediments may be dislodged and discharged into the storm drainage system after surface runoff flows across the site. The proposed project would disturb approximately 2,880 square feet of soil, which is below the one-acre threshold requiring compliance with the Construction General Permit.

The project would be required to comply with Municipal Code provisions regarding drainage and erosion control, as well as stormwater runoff and pollution. The Town of Los Altos Hills is also a participant in the Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program (SCVURPPP) and, under the General Plan Conservation Policies, the following standard permitting conditions would be required.

Standard Permitting Conditions: Best management practices to prevent stormwater pollution and minimize potential sedimentation shall be applied to project construction, including but not limited to the following:

- Burlap bags filled with drain rock shall be installed around storm drains to route sediment and other debris away from the drains.
- Earthmoving or other dust-producing activities shall be suspended during periods of high winds.
- All exposed or disturbed soil surfaces shall be watered at least twice daily to control dust as necessary.
- Stockpiles of soil or other materials that can be blown by the wind shall be watered or covered.
- All trucks hauling soil, sand, and other loose materials shall be covered and all trucks shall maintain at least two feet of freeboard.
- Vegetation in disturbed areas shall be replanted as quickly as possible.

Construction of the proposed project, with implementation of the above measures in accordance with the Town's Municipal Code and General Plan policies, would not result in significant construction-related water quality impacts. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Post-Construction Impacts

The proposed pathway would install a minor amount of impervious surface in the form of retaining walls, a wood pedestrian staircase and two wood pedestrian bridges. The amount of impervious surface proposed would be well below the 10,000 square foot impervious surface threshold of the San Francisco RWQCB that would require the project to design and construct stormwater controls to treat post-construction stormwater runoff. Additionally, the project would be used solely by pedestrians and designed to avoid erosion. For these reasons, the proposed project would have a less than significant impact on post-construction water quality. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact HYD-2: **The project would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin. (No Impact)**

The project alignment is adjacent to an intermittent drainage channel, and stormwater flows collected along the project alignment possibly contribute to groundwater recharge of the shallow and deep aquifers formed in the alluvial deposits of streams running from the foothills to the San Francisco Bay.

The proposed pathway would be composed entirely of compacted dirt, which would allow infiltration and minimize runoff while largely preserving existing flow patterns at the project site. Project-related grading and excavation would only disturb the top layer of soil along the project alignment. Therefore, groundwater is not expected to be encountered during construction or operation of the project. For these reasons, the proposed project would not decrease groundwater supplies and would not interfere with groundwater recharge. **(No Impact)**

Impact HYD-3: **The project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site; substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site; create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or impede or redirect flood flows. (Less than Significant Impact)**

The proposed pathway alignment would be constructed using compacted dirt and several low retaining walls and involves the construction of a pedestrian staircase and two pedestrian bridges. As discussed under Impact HYD-2, the proposed pathway would continue to allow stormwater infiltration while minimizing runoff and does not include a significant amount of impervious surface or other elements that would substantially change the existing drainage pattern at the project site. The project would be required to manage erosion during construction in accordance with the Town's Municipal Code (refer to Impact GEO-2).

According to the Flood Rate Insurance Maps prepared by FEMA, 100-year flood discharges are contained within the banks of the intermittent drainage channel at the eastern end of the pathway alignment. In order to determine the top of bank of the drainage channel, Live Oak Associates, Inc., the biological consultants on this project, staked the location of the top of bank on the streambed. Based on the location of the staked channel, the span of the easterly pedestrian bridge has been increased so that no portion of the bridge footings are located in the streambed channel. Similar to other existing bridges located along pathways in the Town, the two to three of freeboard would be provided between drainage channel top of bank and the proposed bridge. For these reasons, the new bridge will not result in an impact to 100-year flood discharges on the intermittent drainage channel. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact HYD-4: **The project would not risk release of pollutants due to project inundation in flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones. (No Impact)**

Operation of the proposed pedestrian pathway would not use or store hazardous materials and the pathway is not located within a 100-year floodplain or subject to seiche or tsunami hazards. Therefore, there is no risk of pollutants being released due to project inundation. **(No Impact)**

Impact HYD-5: The project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan. (Less than Significant Impact)

As discussed under HYD-1 above, the proposed project would implement best management practices to reduce and avoid water quality impacts during construction and would not result in post-construction water quality impacts. The project does not propose dewatering or excavation below the groundwater table. For these reasons, the project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

4.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING

4.11.1 Environmental Setting

4.11.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

Local

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating land use and planning impacts resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
LU Policy 1.1	Uses of land shall be consistent with the semi-rural atmosphere of the community, minimize disturbance to natural terrain, minimize removal of the natural vegetation, and create the maximum compatibility of development with the natural environment through site design and landscaping.
CSR Policy 1.1	The circulation system should be compatible with the semi-rural nature of the community, a system that makes the community relatively impermeable to vehicular through traffic and open and safe to those on foot, bicycle and horseback.
CSR Policy 1.2	The Town should develop and maintain corridors for travel for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians and equestrians through Town in which the user can enjoy and view the natural environment and open spaces that provide a buffer from adjacent land uses. These corridors should include pathways proposed or existing in the Pathways Element.
CSR Policy 3.2	Recognize the semi-rural setting of Los Altos Hills in applying the complete streets concept. Pedestrian facilities may include roadway shoulders and unpaved paths and bicycle facilities may include unpaved paths, roadway shoulders, shared roadways and bike lanes where appropriate.
CSR Policy 3.3	Provide routes for walking or bicycling to school that are designed to encourage safety and are in keeping with the Town's semi-rural character.
CSR Program 3.1	Consider Complete Streets guidelines in the planning, design, and approval of street, roadway and pathway projects.
CSR Policy 6.3	The Town shall support connections to schools with local bikeways and paths that are designed in a manner to encourage safety.
CSR Policy 7.2	Ensure that the design of pedestrian improvements is consistent with the semi-rural character of the Town.
CON Policy 11.2	Ensure that in the planning, development and use of land, environmental impact is not overlooked, conservation actions are considered, and such evaluations and actions are sufficiently comprehensive and consistent with established guidelines.

Policies and Programs	Description
OSR Policy 1.8	Ensure that land uses and structures are compatible with the general open space quality of the planning area.
PE Policy 3.1	Off-road paths shall be located on private property on easements that have been dedicated to the Town, or over public lands. They shall provide connections between neighborhoods and provide direct routes to schools and open space. Cul-de-sacs should have off-road paths that connect the end of the street to adjoining neighborhoods whenever possible.
PE Policy 3.3	Off-road paths shall be a permitted use in conservation and open space easements, and should be reflected as such in the language of the easement agreement at the time of dedication.
PE Policy 3.8	Off-road paths shall be located along or as close to property lines as possible.
PE Policy 4.9	Site development authorities shall be sensitive to path location and design. This is especially the case for the off-road paths. The location shall be sensitive to the privacy of future residents whenever a parcel is subdivided or a lot is developed. All paths shall be located and designed to preserve the beauty and natural character of the area and to safeguard the user. Particular care shall be given to retaining trees and vegetative cover and to minimize grading and erosion.
PE Policy 4.10	Typically, off-road paths shall be located along property lines, when topography permits. Fencing along paths may sometimes be appropriate to protect privacy, so long as it does not intrude into easements or right-of-way.
PE Policy 4.20	Trails and paths shall be permitted uses in open space and conservation easements. These trails shall be constructed and maintained to minimize the environmental impact upon the area.

4.11.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

The proposed pathway would be constructed within the boundaries of an existing 20-foot wide path and equestrian easement located in an area developed with low-density single-family residences. The proposed alignment is separated from the surrounding residences by steep hillsides and vegetation. The alignment follows alongside an intermittent drainage channel within a riparian corridor. Existing pedestrian pathways are located at each end of the proposed alignment. An informal footpath was established along the alignment. Although posted by the Town as not being open for public use, there is occasional pedestrian use of the informal footpath.

4.11.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☒
2) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact LU-1: The project would not physically divide an established community. (No Impact)

Examples of projects that have the potential to physically divide an established community include new freeways and highways, major arterial streets, and railroad lines. Consistent with the Town's Master Path Plan, the project proposes to construct a compacted dirt native pathway and associated improvements that would link the existing off-road pathway on the 13310 La Paloma Road property with the roadside pathway on Robleda Road. The proposed project would not physically divide an established community. **(No Impact)**

Impact LU-2: The project would not cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect. (No Impact)

The proposed pathway alignment is identified in the Town's Master Path Plan (May 2020). The proposed pathway would be consistent with General Plan policies directing the construction of off-road paths within existing pathway and emergency access easements to connect neighborhoods and provide direct routes to schools and open space.

Project consistency with other plans and policies is discussed in the respective sections of this Initial Study. For example, project consistency with Town of Los Altos Hills policies adopted for the purpose of avoiding biological impacts is discussed in Section 4.4 Biological Resources. For these reasons, the proposed pathway connection would not cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect. **(No Impact)**

4.12 MINERAL RESOURCES

4.12.1 Environmental Setting

4.12.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

State

Surface Mining and Reclamation Act

The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) was enacted by the California legislature in 1975 to address the need for a continuing supply of mineral resources, and to prevent or minimize the negative impacts of surface mining to public health, property, and the environment. As mandated under SMARA, the State Geologist has designated mineral land classifications in order to help identify and protect mineral resources in areas within the state subject to urban expansion or other irreversible land uses which would preclude mineral extraction. SMARA also allowed the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB), after receiving classification information from the State Geologist, to designate lands containing mineral deposits of regional or statewide significance.

Local

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating impacts to mineral resources resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
CON Policy 7.1	In the context of the local physical situation, the extraction of rock, sand, gravel and mineral resources shall be permitted only when compatible with goals for maintaining a quality environment.
CON Policy 7.2	Minimize all potentially adverse environmental impacts from extraction and transport of mineral resources, including, but not limited to: • Nuisances such as dust, odor, debris, and noise. • Disruption and damage to natural features, such as ground cover, topography, drainage, habitat, groundwater, and related issues. • Increased traffic volumes and damage to road surfaces.

4.12.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

There are lands within Los Altos Hills that are classified by the SMGB as MRZ-2.²⁸ Per USGS records, there are no known mineral resources or mines present on or near the project alignment.²⁹

²⁸ California Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology. *Mineral Land Classification: Aggregate Materials in the San Francisco-Monterey Bay Area*. 1987.

²⁹ United States Geological Survey. "Mineral Resources Online Spatial Data". <https://mrdata.usgs.gov/general/map-us.html>. Accessed August 11, 2020.

4.12.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	☐	☐	☐	☒
2) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Impact MIN-1:	The project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and residents of the state. (No Impact)			
Impact MIN-2:	The project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan. (No Impact)			

The project alignment is not located in an area with known mineral resources or mines. Therefore, the project would not result in the loss of a known mineral resource or mineral resource recovery site. **(No Impact)**

4.13 NOISE

4.13.1 Environmental Setting

4.13.1.1 *Background Information*

Noise

Factors that influence sound as it is perceived by the human ear, include the actual level of sound, period of exposure, frequencies involved, and fluctuation in the noise level during exposure. Noise is measured on a decibel scale, which serves as an index of loudness. The zero on the decibel scale is based on the lowest sound level that the healthy, unimpaired human ear can detect. Each 10 decibel increase in sound level is perceived as approximately a doubling of loudness. Because the human ear cannot hear all pitches or frequencies, sound levels are frequently adjusted or weighted to correspond to human hearing. This adjusted unit is known as the A-weighted decibel, or dBA.

Since excessive noise levels can adversely affect human activities and human health, federal, state, and local governmental agencies have set forth criteria or planning goals to minimize or avoid these effects. Noise guidelines are generally expressed using one of several noise averaging methods, including L_{eq} , DNL, or CNEL.³⁰ These descriptors are used to measure a location's overall noise exposure, given that there are times when noise levels are higher (e.g., when a jet is taking off from an airport or when a leaf blower is operating) and times when noise levels are lower (e.g., during lulls in traffic flows on freeways or in the middle of the night). L_{max} is the maximum A-weighted noise level during a measurement period.

Vibration

Ground vibration consists of rapidly fluctuating motions or waves with an average motion of zero. Vibration amplitude can be quantified using Peak Particle Velocity (PPV), which is defined as the maximum instantaneous positive or negative peak of the vibration wave. PPV has been routinely used to measure and assess ground-borne construction vibration. Studies have shown that the threshold of perception for average persons is in the range of 0.008 to 0.012 inches/second (in/sec) PPV.

4.13.1.2 *Regulatory Framework*

Local

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating noise and vibration impacts resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

³⁰ L_{eq} is a measurement of average energy level intensity of noise over a given period of time. Day-Night Level (DNL) is a 24-hour average of noise levels, with a 10 dB penalty applied to noise occurring between 10:00 PM and 7:00 AM. Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) includes an additional five dB applied to noise occurring between 7:00 PM and 10:00 PM. Where traffic noise predominates, the CNEL and DNL are typically within two dBA of the peak-hour L_{eq} .

Policies and Programs	Description
NOI Policy 1.1	Noise levels shall be compatible with the Town's semi-rural atmosphere and consistent with Town standards.
NOI Policy 1.2	All appropriate methods for reduction of noise at the source (i.e. automobile, aircraft, etc.) shall be supported.
NOI Policy 1.4	Noise generated by construction equipment shall be attenuated to the maximum extent possible. Hours of construction activity shall be regulated to minimize the impact of noise on surrounding residential properties.
NOI Program 1.2	Continue to restrict the hours of non-emergency grading and construction activities to specified days of the week and times of day to minimize noise impacts on neighboring residents and other sensitive land uses.
NOI Policy 2.5	The potential for new development to generate noise levels higher than Town standards shall be evaluated, and significant impacts shall be appropriately mitigated.
NOI Program 2.2	Utilize the Land Use and Noise Compatibility Guidelines as a basis for determining the compatibility of land uses.
NOI Program 2.4	Require the mitigation of all significant noise impacts as a condition of project approval.

Town of Los Altos Hills Municipal Code

Regulations pertaining to permitted noise levels and operational hours associated with construction as well as acceptable noise levels from stationary sources are provided in the Town of Los Altos Hills Municipal Code. Specifically, Section 5-2.02 regulates noise sources in accordance with the following standards shown in Table 4.13-1.

Table 4.13-1: Exterior Noise Level Standards³¹		
Noise Sources	Exterior Noise Level Standards	
	Daytime	Nighttime
Animals	50	40
Farm tractor	82	40
Farm equipment	65	40
Fixed noise source	50	40
Machines, tools or appliance	50	40
Motor vehicle repairing, rebuilding, modernizing and testing	82	40
Persons	50	40
Powered model vehicle	60	40
Sound-producing or amplifying device	50	40

Outside construction and repair work is prohibited between the hours of 5:30 p.m. of one day and 8:00 a.m. of the next succeeding day on any Monday through Saturday, or at any time on any Sunday, or at any time on any public holiday by Municipal Code Section 5-6.02.

In accordance with Municipal Code Section 10-2.403, all grading operations shall be carried on between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, unless the Town Engineer finds evidence that an emergency exists that imperils the public safety, in which event they may direct the work to proceed during such other hours as may be necessary for the duration of the emergency. No grading operations shall be carried on any day designated by resolution of the City Council to be recognized and celebrated as a public holiday by the employees of the Town of Los Altos Hills.

4.13.1.3 *Existing Conditions*

The proposed pathway alignment would be situated along the northern property lines of 12933 and 12940 Atherton Court and would range between approximately 75 feet to 150 feet or more from surrounding residences. According to the Los Altos Hills General Plan, present and future noise levels at the project site are below 55 dBA CNEL.

³¹ When the source is on public property, measurements shall be made fifty (50) feet from the source or at the private property line, whichever is closer.

4.13.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project result in:				
1) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	☐	☐	☒	☐
2) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐
3) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒

4.13.2.1 *Thresholds of Significance*

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines states that a project would normally be considered to result in significant noise impacts if noise levels exceed standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance. Based on the existing noise environment and applicable noise standards and policies for the proposed project (refer to Section 4.13.1), a significant operational noise impact would result if exterior daytime noise levels exceeded 50 dBA, or if nighttime exterior noise levels exceeded 40 dBA as measured at the private property line.³²

Temporary noise associated with construction is exempt from the exterior noise level limits established in Section 5-2.02 of the Town Municipal Code. Construction noise in the Town of Los Altos Hills is instead regulated by enforcement of the hours of construction outlined in Section 5-6.02, which permits noise associated with the transportation or delivery of any materials, tools or equipment to or from the site of any construction project, or the unloading or use of such materials, tools or equipment at such site between the hours 8:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. excepting Sundays and public holidays. Per General Plan Policy NOI 1.4, construction equipment shall be attenuated to the maximum extent possible.

The Town of Los Altos Hills does not specify a construction vibration limit. For structural damage, the California Department of Transportation recommends a vibration limit of 0.5 in/sec PPV for residential structures which would be applicable to the properties within the vicinity of the site.

³² Per the Town of Los Altos Hills Municipal Code (Section 5-2.02), “daytime” is the period from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on weekdays, and 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on weekends and Town Holidays. “Nighttime” is the period from 7:00 p.m. to the beginning of “daytime,” Pacific Standard Time or Daylight Saving Time. “Nighttime” shall begin at 10:00 p.m. for persons and sound-producing or amplifying devices.

Impact NOI-1: The project would not result in generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies. (Less than Significant Impact)

Construction Noise

Project construction would generate short-term noise at adjacent residential uses. The major noise generating activities associated with project construction would include grading, construction of retaining walls, and construction of the pedestrian staircase and bridges. Noise levels are expected to be highest during grading activities and construction of the pedestrian improvements. Typical hourly average construction-generated noise levels are about 81 to 89 dBA measured at a distance of 50 feet from the construction area during busy construction periods.

Construction-generated noise levels drop off at a rate of about six dBA per doubling of distance between the source and receptor. The only residential areas that could be affected by construction noise are the single-family residences adjacent to the project alignment. Since the project is linear, construction would continue along the alignment and would not occur at one location for the entire construction duration. Construction of the project is anticipated to include limited use of small diesel-powered utility loaders and excavators and brief use of a larger backhoe. Since the project would be constructed primarily with a variety of hand tools (pick-axe, McLeod, shovel, pruning shear, etc.) and power tools (air or electric hammers, chisels, spades and compaction equipment), project construction-generated noise levels would be expected to be lower than typical construction-generated noise levels.

Impacts associated with project-generated construction noise would be temporary in nature and attenuated to the maximum extent possible in accordance with the standard permit measures outlined below.

Standard Permit Conditions: The project proposes to implement the following standard measures to reduce short-term construction noise impacts along the entire project alignment, as applicable.

- Construction activities shall be limited to the hours between 8:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday, with no construction to occur on Sundays and public holidays.
- Locate stationary noise-generating equipment, such as air compressors or portable power generators, as far as possible from sensitive receptors as feasible. If they must be located near receptors, adequate muffling (with enclosures where feasible and appropriate) shall be used to reduce noise levels at the adjacent sensitive receptors. Any enclosure opening or venting shall face away from sensitive receptors;
- Utilize “quiet” air compressors and other stationary noise sources where technology exists.
- Construction staging areas shall be established at locations that will create the greatest distance between the construction-related noise sources and noise-sensitive receptors nearest the project site during all project construction;
- Locate material stockpiles, as well as maintenance/equipment staging and parking areas, as far as feasible from residential receptors;

- Control noise from construction workers' radios to a point where they are not audible at existing residences bordering the project site;
- A detailed construction schedule for major noise-generating construction activities shall be prepared that identifies a procedure for coordination with adjacent residential land uses so that construction activities can be scheduled to minimize noise disturbance;
- Designate a "disturbance coordinator" who shall be responsible for responding to any complaints about construction noise. The disturbance coordinator shall determine the cause of the noise complaint (e.g., bad muffler, etc.) and shall require that reasonable measures be implemented to correct the problem. Conspicuously post a telephone number for the disturbance coordinator at the construction site and include it in the notice sent to neighbors regarding the construction schedule.

Implementation of the controls outlined above would reduce construction noise levels emanating from the site in order to minimize disruption and annoyance. With implementation of these controls and recognizing that construction duration would be temporary in nature and no particular receptor would be exposed to construction over the entire duration of the project, the increase in ambient noise levels due to project construction would be less than significant. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Operational Noise

When the source of noise originates from public property, Section 5-2.02 of the Town's Municipal Code directs exterior noise level standards to be applied 50 feet from the source or at the private property line, whichever is closer. As outlined in Table 4.13-1, the exterior noise level standard for people and animals, the anticipated users of the proposed pathway, is 50 dBA.

Activities expected along the proposed pathway would include walking and jogging. Noise levels generated by activity along the pathway would be minimal. Typical noise levels generated by people talking or laughing would range from 50 to 55 dBA at 20 feet. The loudest noise source, a person shouting, would typically range from 65 to 70 dBA at 20 feet. Typical hourly average noise levels along the proposed pathway are expected to be less than 45 dBA L_{eq} at 20 feet. For every doubling of distance, the sound level reduces by six dBA. Therefore, at 50 feet, typical hourly average noise levels would be less than 39 dBA L_{eq} . For these reasons, the proposed pathway would not exceed the exterior noise level standards set for by the Town of Los Altos Hills. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact NOI-2: The project would not result in generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels. (Less than Significant Impact)

Vibration may occur as a result of various project-related construction activities, specifically those associated with installation of retaining walls and the pedestrian bridge and staircase supports. Construction activities would also include earthwork such as grading, grubbing, digging, and compacting. Pile driving, which can cause excessive vibration, would not be required.

For structural damage, the California Department of Transportation recommends a vibration limit of 0.5 in/sec PPV for residential structures. The project site is approximately 75 feet to 150 feet from the surrounding residences. The proposed pathway would be constructed with vibration-generating

equipment, such as air/electric hammers and compacting equipment (i.e. diesel-powered vibraplates), which at this distance would not exceed the vibration limits for residential structures established by the California Department of Transportation. As such, vibration-related impacts are anticipated to be minimal. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact NOI-3: **The project would not be located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport. The project would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels. (No Impact)**

The Town of Los Altos Hills has no commercial, military, or general aviation airports. The nearest airports are Moffett Federal Airfield, approximately 5.1 miles northeast of the project site, and Palo Alto Airport, approximately 5.9 miles north of the project site. The project site is not within the aircraft noise contours of these airports. Noise from aircraft would not substantially increase ambient noise levels at the project alignment and would have no impact on the proposed project. **(No Impact)**

4.14 POPULATION AND HOUSING

4.14.1 Environmental Setting

4.14.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

State

Housing-Element Law

State requirements mandating that housing be included as an element of each jurisdiction's general plan is known as housing-element law. The Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA) is the state-mandated process to identify the total number of housing units (by affordability level) that each jurisdiction must accommodate in its housing element. California housing-element law requires cities to: 1) zone adequate lands to accommodate its RHNA; 2) produce an inventory of sites that can accommodate its share of the RHNA; 3) identify governmental and non-governmental constraints to residential development; 4) develop strategies and a work plan to mitigate or eliminate those constraints; and 5) adopt a housing element and update it on a regular basis.³³ The Town of Los Altos Hills Housing Element and related land use policies were last updated in April 2015.

Regional and Local

Plan Bay Area 2040

Plan Bay Area 2040 is a long-range transportation, land-use, and housing plan intended support a growing economy, provide more housing and transportation choices, and reduce transportation-related pollution and GHG emissions in the Bay Area. Plan Bay Area 2040 promotes compact, mixed-use residential and commercial neighborhoods near transit, particularly within identified Priority Development Areas (PDAs).³⁴

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) allocates regional housing needs to each city and county within the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, based on statewide goals. ABAG also develops forecasts for population, households, and economic activity in the Bay Area. ABAG, MTC, and local jurisdiction planning staff created the Regional Forecast of Jobs, Population, and Housing, which is an integrated land use and transportation plan through the year 2040 (upon which Plan Bay Area 2040 is based).

³³ California Department of Housing and Community Development. "Regional Housing Needs Allocation and Housing Elements" Accessed August 12, 2020. <http://hcd.ca.gov/community-development/housing-element/index.shtml>.

³⁴ Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission. "Project Mapper." <http://projectmapper.planbayarea.org/>.

4.14.1.2 Existing Conditions

According to the California Department of Finance, the Town of Los Altos Hills had a population of 8,413 as of January 1, 2020, a 0.1 percent increase from the previous year.³⁵ The ABAG projects the Town's population will be 8,650 by 2040.³⁶

There is no housing within the proposed pathway alignment.

4.14.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
2) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact POP-1: **The project would not induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure). (No Impact)**

The proposed pedestrian pathway would serve existing residents within the Town of Los Altos Hills. The pathway would not directly or indirectly result in job or population growth. **(No Impact)**

Impact POP-2: **The project would not displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. (No Impact)**

The proposed pedestrian pathway, which would be constructed within an undeveloped 20-foot wide path and equestrian easement, would not displace existing housing or people. **(No Impact)**

³⁵ California Department of Finance. "E-1 Population Estimates for Cities, Counties, and the State – January 1, 2019 and 2020." <http://www.dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/Estimates/E-1/>. Accessed August 12, 2020.

³⁶ Association of Bay Area Governments. *Projections 2040, A Companion to Plan Bay Area 2040*. November 2018.

4.15 PUBLIC SERVICES

4.15.1 Environmental Setting

4.15.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating impacts to public services resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
PE Policy 1.2	Pathways shall serve to provide access to and from neighborhoods in the event of an emergency.
PE Policy 1.5	Except for connections to regional trail and bikeway networks, Town paths shall be designed primarily for local circulation and recreational use.
PE Policy 3.1	Off-road paths shall be located on private property on easements that have been dedicated to the Town, or over public lands. They shall provide connections between neighborhoods and provide direct routes to schools and open space. Cul-de-sacs should have off-road paths that connect the end of the street to adjoining neighborhoods whenever possible.
PE Policy 3.7	Off-road paths shall be maintained in as natural a state as possible, except that installed surfaces may be acceptable when paths serve as connectors to schools or neighborhoods, or where special use or topography make it necessary.
PE Policy 4.13	Class 1 off-road paths shall have sign posts at their entrance to help residents locate them and feel free to use them.

Town of Los Altos Hills Master Path Plan

The Town of Los Altos Hills Master Path Plan (MPP) is included within the Pathways Element of the Los Altos Hills General Plan. It shows the ultimate “build-out” of the Town’s pathways system and guides the acquisition of pathway easements throughout the entire community as new development is proposed and capital projects are prioritized. The MPP was most recently updated in May 2020.

4.15.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

Fire Protection Services

The Los Altos Hills County Fire Protection District is a separate public agency, distinct from the Town, that contracts with the Santa Clara County Fire Department for the provision of fire protection, suppression and safety services. The district owns and operates the El Monte Fire Station near Foothill Community College, which is approximately 1.4 miles south of the project site.

Police Protection Services

The Town contracts with the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department for police protection services. The Sheriff's Department typically provides one or two patrol cars at all times, which is adequate because Los Altos Hills is a low-crime community. In the event of emergencies, however, the Town has access to the full resources of the County Sheriff. The Town also has a public safety officer on staff and provides a substation at the Heritage House next to Town Hall for the use of the County Sheriff, which is approximately 1.6 miles north of the project site.

Schools

The Town of Los Altos Hills contains several public and private schools, including Foothill Community College located just west of Interstate Highway 280 (I-280) at El Monte Road, approximately 3,000 feet south of the project site. The Town of Los Altos Hills is served by four public school districts:

- Los Altos School District (K-8)
- Palo Alto Unified School District (K-12)
- Mountain View–Los Altos Union High School District (9-12)
- Foothill Community College District

Enrollment in these districts, particularly at the elementary school level, has been increasing slowly over the past few years and is projected to continue to do so. Reports from the district indicate that there is concern about potential over-crowding in the future if development continues to occur in the areas served by the districts. Gardner-Bullis School, renovated and reopened in 2008, is the only public elementary school within Town limits.

There are also three private schools in the Los Altos Hills planning area. These include St. Nicholas School (K-8), Pinewood High School and the Waldorf School.

Parks

Town-owned parks and open spaces include Byrne Preserve, Juan Prado Mesa Preserve, Murietta Ridge Preserve, O'Keefe Lane Preserve, Rhus Ridge Preserve, Central Drive Preserve, Saddle Mountain Preserve, Purissima Park, and Edith Park.

The community's extensive system of roadside and off-road paths also provide recreational opportunities by encouraging walking, running, bicycling and equestrian activities.

Public Facilities

Town-owned public and recreational facilities include the Parks and Recreation Center, (approximately one mile north of the project site), the Westwind Community Barn (approximately 1.5 miles west of the project site), and the Purissima Playing Fields and Riding Arena (approximately 4,750 feet northwest of the project site).

4.15.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
1) Fire Protection?	☐	☐	☒	☐
2) Police Protection?	☐	☐	☒	☐
3) Schools?	☐	☐	☐	☒
4) Parks?	☐	☐	☒	☐
5) Other Public Facilities?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Impact PS-1: **The project would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for fire protection services. (Less than Significant Impact)**

The proposed pathway and pedestrian improvements would be constructed in conformance with state and local fire codes and allow for use as an emergency egress in case of a wildland fire. The project would not change the physical characteristics of the site in a way that would substantially increase fire risk. No new fire protection facilities would be required as a result of the project; therefore, the project would have a less than significant impact on fire protection services. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact PS-2: **The project would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for police protection services. (Less than Significant Impact)**

The proposed project could result in a small incremental increase in the need for emergency services, including police protection services. Any reported incidents would be similar to those that occur on existing pathways, roadways and at neighborhood parks in the Town. Use of the pathway as a result of project implementation would not require the construction of additional police facilities; therefore,

the project would have a less than significant impact on police protection services. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact PS-3:	The project would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for schools. (No Impact)
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The project would not increase the population of the Town of Los Altos Hills and, therefore, would not increase the demand for schools. **(No Impact)**

Impact PS-4:	The project would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for parks. (Less than Significant Impact)
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The proposed project may increase use of nearby community parks and amenities due to improved access to these facilities. It is not anticipated that the increase in use would exceed the capacity of the existing facilities such that new facilities would need to be constructed. Therefore, the project would not result in a significant impact to parks. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact PS-5:	The project would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for other public facilities. (Less than Significant Impact)
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The proposed project may increase the use of public facilities, including those at nearby parks, due to improved access to these facilities. It is not anticipated that the increase in use would exceed the capacity of the existing facilities such that new facilities would need to be constructed. Therefore, the project would not result in a significant impact to other public facilities. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

4.16 RECREATION

4.16.1 Environmental Setting

4.16.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

State

Government Code Section 66477

The Quimby Act (included within Government Code Section 66477) requires local governments to set aside parkland and open space for recreational purposes. It provides provisions for the dedication of parkland and/or payment of fees in lieu of parkland dedication to help mitigate the impacts from new residential developments. The Quimby Act authorizes local governments to establish ordinances requiring developers of new residential subdivisions to dedicate parks, pay a fee in lieu of parkland dedication, or perform a combination of the two.

Regional and Local

Countywide Trails Master Plan

The Santa Clara County Trails Master Plan Update is a regional trails plan approved by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. It provides a framework for implementing the County's vision of providing a contiguous trail network that connects cities to one another, cities to the county's regional open space resources, County parks to other County parks, and the northern and southern urbanized regions of the County. The plan identifies regional trail routes, sub-regional trail routes, connector trail routes, and historic trails.

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating impacts to recreational facilities resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
CSR Policy 1.2	The Town should develop and maintain corridors for travel for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians and equestrians through Town in which the user can enjoy and view the natural environment and open spaces that provide a buffer from adjacent land uses. These corridors should include pathways proposed or existing in the Pathways Element.
PE Policy 1.1	All residents of the Town shall have immediate access adjacent to or across the street from their residence to a pathway or pathways, for safe and convenient pedestrian and other non-vehicular travel along Town roads and to schools and community facilities, and for recreational enjoyment of the natural amenities of the community.
PE Policy 1.5	Except for connections to regional trail and bikeway networks, Town paths shall be designed primarily for local circulation and recreational use.

Town of Los Altos Hills Master Path Plan

The Town of Los Altos Hills Master Path Plan (MPP) is included within the Pathways Element of the Los Altos Hills General Plan. It shows the ultimate ‘build-out’ of the Town’s pathways system and guides the acquisition of pathway easements throughout the entire community. The MPP was most recently updated in May 2020.

4.16.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

Town-owned parks and open spaces include Byrne Preserve, Juan Prado Mesa Preserve, Murietta Ridge Preserve, O’Keefe Lane Preserve, Rhus Ridge Preserve, Central Drive Preserve, Saddle Mountain Preserve, Purissima Park, and Edith Park.

The community’s extensive system of roadside and off-road paths also provide recreational opportunities. There is an existing pathway that terminates at 13310 La Paloma Road on the western end of the proposed pathway alignment and an existing roadside pathway along Robleda Road on the eastern end of the proposed pathway alignment. An informal path exists along the proposed alignment where pedestrians have been traversing the gap between the existing pathways to the west and east.

4.16.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
1) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	☐	☐	☒	☐
2) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact REC-1: The project would not increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated. (Less than Significant Impact)

The project proposes to construct a compacted dirt pathway and pedestrian improvements that would link the existing pathway segments at 13310 La Paloma Road and Robleda Road. The project would improve pedestrian access to the Town's pathways network and to other parks and recreational facilities within the Town. This may result in an increase in the use of parks and recreational facilities. The incremental increase in use of these parks and recreational facilities would not result in substantial or accelerated physical deterioration of these facilities. **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact REC-2: The project does not include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment. (No Impact)

The proposed pedestrian pathway would expand the Town's pathways network and improve non-motorized connections to existing recreational facilities within the community. This pathway was already designated on the Town's MPP and no adverse physical effects on the environment are anticipated. **(No Impact)**

4.17 TRANSPORTATION

4.17.1 Environmental Setting

4.17.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

State

Regional Transportation Plan

MTC is the transportation planning, coordinating, and financing agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, including Santa Clara County. MTC is charged with regularly updating the Regional Transportation Plan, a comprehensive blueprint for the development of mass transit, highway, airport, seaport, railroad, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities in the region. MTC and ABAG adopted Plan Bay Area 2040 in July 2017, which includes a Regional Transportation Plan to guide regional transportation investment for revenues from federal, state, regional and local sources through 2040.

Senate Bill 743

SB 743 establishes criteria for determining the significance of transportation impacts using a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) metric intended to promote the reduction of GHG emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses. Specifically, SB 743 requires analysis of VMT in determining the significance of transportation impacts. Local jurisdictions were required by Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to implement a VMT policy by July 1, 2020.

Regional

Congestion Management Program

VTA oversees the Congestion Management Program (CMP), which is aimed at reducing regional traffic congestion. The relevant state legislation requires that urbanized counties in California prepare a CMP in order to obtain each county's share of gas tax revenues. State legislation requires that each CMP define traffic LOS standards, transit service standards, a trip reduction and transportation demand management plan, a land use impact analysis program, and a capital improvement element. VTA has review responsibility for proposed development projects that are expected to affect CMP-designated intersections.

Local

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating transportation impacts resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
CSR Policy 1.1	The circulation system should be compatible with the semi-rural nature of the community, a system that makes the community relatively impermeable to vehicular through traffic and open and safe to those on foot, bicycle and horseback.
CSR Policy 1.2	The Town should develop and maintain corridors for travel for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians and equestrians through Town in which the user can enjoy and view the natural environment and open spaces that provide a buffer from adjacent land uses. These corridors should include pathways proposed or existing in the Pathways Element.
CSR Policy 3.2	Recognize the semi-rural setting of Los Altos Hills in applying the complete streets concept. Pedestrian facilities may include roadway shoulders and unpaved paths and bicycle facilities may include unpaved paths, roadway shoulders, shared roadways and bike lanes where appropriate.
CSR Policy 3.3	Provide routes for walking or bicycling to school that are designed to encourage safety and are in keeping with the Town's semi-rural character.
CSR Program 3.1	Consider Complete Streets guidelines in the planning, design, and approval of street, roadway and pathway projects.
CSR Policy 6.3	The Town shall support connections to schools with local bikeways and paths that are designed in a manner to encourage safety
PE Policy 1.1	All residents of the Town shall have immediate access adjacent to or across the street from their residence to a pathway or pathways, for safe and convenient pedestrian and other non-vehicular travel along Town roads and to schools and community facilities, and for recreational enjoyment of the natural amenities of the community.
PE Policy 1.2	Pathways shall serve to provide access to and from neighborhoods in the event of an emergency.
PE Policy 1.3	Pathways shall be separated from the roadway pavement wherever possible and meander where necessary to accommodate topography, trees and landscaping.
PE Policy 1.5	Except for connections to regional trail and bikeway networks, Town paths shall be designed primarily for local circulation and recreational use.
PE Policy 3.1	Off-road paths shall be located on private property on easements that have been dedicated to the Town, or over public lands. They shall provide connections between neighborhoods and provide direct routes to schools and open space. Cul-de-sacs should have off-road paths that connect the end of the street to adjoining neighborhoods whenever possible.
PE Policy 3.7	Off-road paths shall be maintained in as natural a state as possible, except that installed surfaces may be acceptable when paths serve as connectors to schools or neighborhoods, or where special use or topography make it necessary.
PE Policy 4.13	Class 1 off-road paths shall have sign posts at their entrance to help residents locate them and feel free to use them.

Town of Los Altos Hills Pathway Master Plan

The Town of Los Altos Hills Master Path Plan (MPP) is included within the Pathways Element of the Los Altos Hills General Plan. It shows the ultimate “build-out” of the Town’s pathways system and guides the acquisition of pathway easements throughout the entire community. The MPP was most recently updated in May 2020.

4.17.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

Roadway Network

Regional access to the project alignment is principally provided by the Junipero Serra Freeway (I-280) which is an eight-lane freeway aligned in a north-south direction in the vicinity of the site. Site access to and from I-280 is provided via Page Mill Expressway or El Monte Road. Local access to the project area is provided via Elena Road to Purissima Road or Foothill Expressway to Burke Road to Chapin Road, while direct access to the project area is provided via La Paloma Road and Robleda Road.

Pedestrian Facilities

Pedestrian facilities in the project area consist primarily of roadside paths made of compacted base rock or quarry fines. There is an existing natural earth pathway that starts adjacent to the driveway of 13310 La Paloma Road and terminates as the southerly corner of the property which is the westerly end of the proposed pathway alignment. An existing roadside pathway along Robleda Road defines the east end of the proposed pathway alignment. An unauthorized path exists along the proposed alignment where pedestrians have been traversing the gap between the existing pathways to the west and east. The existing pathway segments connect to the Town’s larger pathway network and nearby park and recreational facilities, including:

- Town Hall Parks and Recreation offices, (approximately one mile north of the project site)
- Purissima Playing Fields and Riding Arena (approximately 4,750 feet northwest of the project site)
- Edith Park (approximately 4,000 feet northeast of the project site)
- Shoup Park in the City of Los Altos (approximately 3,500 feet northeast of the project site)
- O’Keefe Lane Open Space Preserve (approximately 3,250 feet southeast of the project site)

Transit Services

Feeder buses and shuttle systems to the Bay Area’s overall mass transit network (Caltrain, SamTrans, VTA, BART, etc.) provide only limited service to Los Altos Hills. The nearest transit service to the project site is a local bus service provided by VTA to Foothill College (approximately 3,000 feet south of the project site) via lines along El Monte Road.

4.17.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒
2) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
3) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
4) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact TRN-1: The project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian facilities. (No Impact)

The proposed pedestrian pathway is included in and consistent with the Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan Pathway Element and Master Path Plan. The proposed pathway would reduce vehicle trips and improve the Town's circulation system by providing a pedestrian connection to the Town's pathway network which leads to local recreational, public, and residential uses. For these reasons, the project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian facilities. **(No Impact)**

Impact TRN-2: The project would not conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b). (Less than Significant Impact)

CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) states that transportation projects that reduce, or have no impact on, vehicle miles traveled should be presumed to cause a less than significant transportation impact. The project consists of the construction of a pathway that would connect to the Town's larger pathway network and would be expected to increase pedestrian travel within the project area, reducing vehicle miles traveled. Therefore, the project would not conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b). **(Less than Significant Impact)**

Impact TRN-3: The project would not substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment). (No Impact)

The proposed pathway would be approximately 1,000 feet long and 3-4 feet wide with a moderate gradient and the proposed alignment would run roughly parallel the existing east/west drainage channel. The proposed pedestrian improvements include two pedestrian bridges, a staircase, and several low retaining walls. The bridges would allow for pedestrians to safely traverse the existing intermittent drainage channel. The staircase would be installed at the east end of the project alignment and would enable pedestrians to connect to the existing roadside pathway on Robleda Road.

Being that the project only involves a natural, off-road (native) pedestrian path, there are no design elements or features that would impact road safety or farm equipment. Therefore, the project would not substantially increase hazards due either to a geometric design feature or an incompatible use. **(No Impact)**

Impact TRN-4: The project would not result in inadequate emergency access. (Less than Significant Impact)

During construction of the proposed pathway, construction workers and equipment would be shuttled to the site from the Town's parking lot at Purissima Park, located approximately 1.5 miles northwest of the project site at 27500 Purissima Road in Los Altos Hills. At no point would construction require the complete closing of surrounding roadways, including La Paloma Road, Robleda Road and other private roadways. If necessary, the brief use of a backhoe at Robleda Road would require the closing of one lane, and standard traffic control measures would be used to allow for continued two-way vehicle travel along Robleda Road.

In addition, consistent with the General Plan, the proposed pathway shall serve to provide access to and from neighborhoods in the event of an emergency. Based on the above, the project would not result in inadequate emergency access. **(No Impact)**

4.18 TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

4.18.1 Environmental Setting

4.18.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

State

Assembly Bill 52

AB 52, effective July 2015, established a new category of resources for consideration by public agencies called Tribal Cultural Resources (TCRs). AB 52 requires lead agencies to provide notice of projects to tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area if the tribes have requested to be notified. Where a project may have a significant impact on a tribal cultural resource, consultation is required until the parties agree to measures to mitigate or avoid a significant effect on a tribal cultural resource or until it is concluded that mutual agreement cannot be reached.

Under AB 52, TCRs are defined as follows:

- Sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that are also either:
 - Included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the California Register of Historic Resources, or
 - Included in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k).
- A resource determined by the lead agency to be a TCR.

4.18.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

The proposed pathway alignment runs parallel to an intermittent drainage channel within the Adobe Creek watershed. Settlements of the Ohlone/Costanoan Native Americans, the earliest known residents of the San Francisco Bay Area region, were most often located adjacent to historic streams and natural springs in Los Altos Hills and the larger San Francisco Bay Area region. Several archaeological sites have been recorded downstream of the proposed trail alignment along Adobe Creek, and the Santa Clara Valley is an archaeological sensitive area for subsurface cultural resources. The Town of Los Altos Hills has not received requests for notification and consultation from Native American tribes pursuant to AB 52.

4.18.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, or cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:				
1) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k)?	☐	☒	☐	☐
2) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1? In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	☐	☒	☐	☐
Impact TCR-1:	The project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource that is listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k). (Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)			
Impact TCR-2:	The project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource that is determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. (Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)			

No Native American tribes have formally requested to be put on the Town's notification list for projects undergoing review pursuant to AB 52, and no known tribal cultural resources are associated with the project alignment. However, due to the historic presence of Ohlone Native Americans in Los Altos Hills and archaeological sites along Adobe Creek, and the project's proximity to an intermittent drainage channel within the Adobe Creek watershed, there is a potential for unknown cultural resources (e.g., possible tribal resources) to be uncovered during project construction earthwork activities. In the event that an inadvertent discovery of a tribal cultural resource is made, mitigation

measures MM CUL-2.2 and MM CUL-3.1 will be implemented, as stated in Section 4.5 Cultural Resources of this Initial Study. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

4.19 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

4.19.1 Environmental Setting

4.19.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

State

State Water Code

Pursuant to the State Water Code, water suppliers providing water for municipal purposes to more than 3,000 customers or supplying more than 3,000 acre-feet (approximately 980 million gallons) of water annually must prepare and adopt an urban water management plan (UWMP) and update it every five years. As part of a UWMP, water agencies are required to evaluate and describe their water resource supplies and projected needs over a 20-year planning horizon, water conservation, water service reliability, water recycling, opportunities for water transfers, and contingency plans for drought events.

Assembly Bill 939

The California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989, or AB 939, established the Integrated Waste Management Board, required the implementation of integrated waste management plans, and mandated that local jurisdictions divert at least 50 percent of solid waste generated (from 1990 levels), beginning January 1, 2000, and divert at least 75 percent by 2010. Projects that would have an adverse effect on waste diversion goals are required to include waste diversion mitigation measures.

Assembly Bill 341

AB 341 sets forth the requirements of the statewide mandatory commercial recycling program. Businesses that generate four or more cubic yards of garbage per week and multi-family dwellings with five or more units in California are required to recycle. AB 341 sets a statewide goal for 75 percent disposal reduction by the year 2020.

Senate Bill 1383

SB 1383 establishes targets to achieve a 50 percent reduction in the level of the statewide disposal of organic waste from the 2014 level by 2020 and a 75 percent reduction by 2025. The bill grants CalRecycle the regulatory authority required to achieve the organic waste disposal reduction targets and establishes an additional target that at least 20 percent of currently disposed edible food is recovered for human consumption by 2025.

Local

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating impacts to utilities and service systems resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
LU Policy 2.9	The Town shall encourage the installation of drought-tolerant landscaping and other methods of reducing water use for landscaping.
CSR Policy 11.2	Concrete channels and other drainage facilities that accelerate runoff shall be discouraged.
CSR Policy 11.6	Open Space easements should be used to preserve natural waterways and avoid excessive drainage structures.
CON Policy 1.2	Work with the Santa Clara Valley Water District and other relevant regional agencies to enhance riparian corridors and provide adequate flood control by use of low impact restoration strategies.
CON Policy 5.1	Keep or restore major drainage courses in their natural condition insofar as possible because of their importance in supplying major vegetation, land forms and wildlife habitat, and storm drainage.
CON Program 5.9	Continue to limit the amount of impervious surface in new development to reduce urban runoff into storm drains, creeks and the San Francisco Bay.
CON Policy 11.5	Ensure that development projects are designed to conserve the natural slope, preserve existing native vegetation, limit invasive species, and conserve natural drainage channels and swales.
HE Policy 1F	Require storm water drainage and erosion control systems to be designed to maintain, to the greatest extent possible, existing water drainage patterns, containment of storm water run-off and protection of existing downstream lands from flooding and flooding related hazards.
SAF Program 3.2	Continue to limit the amount of runoff in site development projects.
OSR Policy 1.2	Protect and maintain those areas necessary to the integrity of natural resources and processes, with special emphasis on, but not limited to, the groundwater recharge and drainage system, open spaces vital for wildlife habitat, open spaces suitable for agriculture, and other areas of major or unique ecological significance.

4.19.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

Water Service

Water service to Los Altos Hills is provided by two water suppliers: Purissima Hills Water District and the California Water Service Company (Cal Water). Purissima Hills presently obtains all of its water from San Francisco's Hetch Hetchy system and currently is exceeding its supply assurance by 25-35 percent. Capacity limitations in the Hetch Hetchy system may be reached in six to eight years, or sooner in times of drought. Cal Water obtains the water supplied to Los Altos Hills from the Santa Clara Valley Water District via pipelines from the Santa Clara Valley Water District's Rincoñada treatment plant and from company-owned wells. During the dry season, the plant and pipelines are at capacity. According to Purissima Hills Water District, over two-thirds of the water used each year is for the irrigation of landscaping.

The project alignment, which is an undeveloped 20-foot wide path and equestrian easement, currently does not generate demand for water services.

Sanitary Sewer/Wastewater Treatment

The Town straddles two drainage basins, including the Palo Alto Basin to the north and the Los Altos Basin to the south. Sewage collected by the Town's existing system is conveyed to sewer trunk lines owned by the cities of Los Altos or Palo Alto. The wastewater from all three communities eventually drains into the Palo Alto wastewater treatment plant for treatment and disposal.

The project alignment currently does not generate wastewater, and there are no sanitary sewer lines or septic tanks present.

Storm Drainage

The Town's storm drainage system consists of a combination of roadside drainage ways, cross culverts, and underground pipes. Stormwater in Los Altos Hills initially flows over land, following the natural contours of the terrain to roadside flow routes. Some of these are paved with asphalt concrete, but most roadside flow routes are dirt ditches, which help preserve the natural, semi-rural feel of the community. Stormwater in the roadside flow routes travels downhill to culverts, pipes or creeks that eventually carry the runoff to the San Francisco Bay.

There are no impervious surfaces within the project alignment. The alignment runs parallel to an intermittent drainage that is part of the larger Adobe Creek watershed. Stormwater from the project alignment enters the intermittent drainage channel, which flows northward into Adobe Creek before ultimately emptying into the San Francisco Bay estuary system.

Solid Waste

GreenWaste Recovery provides residential and commercial garbage and curbside recycling services to the residents of Los Altos Hills.

The project alignment does not generate solid waste.

4.19.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
1) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☐	☒

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
2) Have insufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	☐	☐	☐	☒
3) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it does not have adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	☐	☐	☐	☒
4) Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	☐	☐	☐	☒
5) Be noncompliant with federal, state, or local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Impact UTL-1: The project would not require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects. (No Impact)

The project is limited to the construction of a compacted dirt pathway and pedestrian improvements including two bridges, a staircase, and several low retaining walls. The only water usage associated with the proposed project would be small amounts required for construction. As the project would not generate wastewater or use electric power, natural gas, or telecommunication facilities, no relocation or expansion of treatment plants or energy facilities would be required. **(No Impact)**

Impact UTL-2: The project would not have insufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years. (No Impact)

The project would not include features, such as landscaping, that would require water or water services. The project would not result in insufficient water supplies available during normal, dry, and multiple dry years. **(No Impact)**

Impact UTL-3: The project would not result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it does not have adequate capacity to serve the project’s projected demand in addition to the provider’s existing commitments. (No Impact)

The proposed project does not include any permanent facilities or bathrooms that would generate wastewater, and, therefore, there would be no impact on the wastewater treatment provider’s capacity. **(No Impact)**

Impact UTL-4: The project would not generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals. (No Impact)

The proposed project would generate a small amount of construction debris. Following construction, the project would generate solid waste from trail cleaning and maintenance activities. The solid waste generated would be disposed in accordance with Town requirements and would not exceed the capacity of local infrastructure or impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals. **(No Impact)**

Impact UTL-5: The project would comply with federal, state, or local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste. (No Impact)

As discussed under Impact UTL-4, all waste generated by the proposed project during construction and operation would be disposed in accordance with Town requirements. Thus, the project would not be noncompliant with federal, state, or local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste. **(No Impact)**

4.20 WILDFIRE

4.20.1 Environmental Setting

4.20.1.1 *Regulatory Framework*

Local

Town of Los Altos Hills General Plan

Various policies in the Los Altos Hills General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating wildfire impacts resulting from planned development within the Town, including the following:

Policies and Programs	Description
HE Policy 8X	Reduce prevalence of invasive, non-native plant species that may contribute to wild land fire.

4.20.1.2 *Existing Conditions*

The Town of Los Altos Hills is a Local Responsibility Area (LRA) in the CAL FIRE *Santa Clara* Administrative Unit and contains no very high fire hazard severity zones (VHFHSZs).³⁷ The nearest VHFHSZ is located over two miles south of the project alignment.

4.20.2 Impact Discussion

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:				
1) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒
2) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	☐	☐	☐	☒
3) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines, or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒

³⁷ California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. *Fire Hazard Severity Zone Viewer*. Date accessed September 30, 2020. <https://egis.fire.ca.gov/FHSZ/>

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:				
4) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	☐	☐	☐	☒

The project site is not located in or near lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, the proposed path will remove dead vegetation in the immediate area of the path, and the pathway could provide an alternative emergency pedestrian egress for properties immediately adjacent to the path in case of a wildland fire. Therefore, the project would not result in wildfire impacts. **(No Impact)**

4.21

MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
1) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	☐	☒	☐	☐
2) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)	☐	☒	☐	☐
3) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Impact MFS-1: **The project does not have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory. (Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

As discussed in prior sections of this Initial Study, the proposed project would not degrade the quality of the environment, substantially affect biological resources, or eliminate important examples of California history or prehistory with implementation of the identified best management practices and mitigation measures.

Implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in Section 4.4 Biological Resources, (MM BIO-1.1 through MM BIO-1.10) would reduce potential impacts to special-status wildlife as a result of construction activities to a less than significant level. As discussed in Section 4.5 Cultural Resources and Section 4.6 Geology and Soils, the project would conduct worker training for archaeological and paleontological resources (MM CUL-2.1 and MM GEO-6.1); any subsurface resources discovered would be subject evaluation and, if necessary, a treatment plan (MM CUL-2.2 and MM GEO-6.2)

that would reduce impacts to cultural and paleontological resources to a less than significant level
(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)

Impact MFS-2: The project does not have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable. (Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)

This Initial Study evaluates the environmental impacts of the proposed La Paloma Road to Robleda Road Off-Road Pathway project and takes into account other past, pending, and probable future projects whose impacts could combine to produce cumulative impacts. Under Section 15065(a)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines, a lead agency shall find that a project may have a significant effect on the environment where there is substantial evidence that the project has potential environmental effects “that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable.” As defined in Section 15065(a)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines, cumulatively considerable means “that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.” Using this definition, a project that has no impact in a given impact category cannot have a cumulatively considerable contribution because its contribution is zero.

The project would result in no impacts related to agricultural and forestry resources, land use and planning, mineral resources, population and housing, and wildfire. Therefore, the project would not contribute to significant cumulative impacts to these resources.

There are no other projects proposed or that would be under construction in the same general area as the proposed project. Therefore, short-term, construction related impacts of the project (e.g., dust, potential soil contamination, noise and vibration, nesting bird disturbance, and water quality) would not combine with the impacts of other projects and would not be cumulatively considerable. Furthermore, mitigation measures, best management practices, and standard permitting conditions are included in the project to reduce construction-related impacts to a less than significant level.

Additionally, as there are no other projects within the same general area as the proposed project, the project’s less than significant impacts to environmental areas where any cumulative impacts would be limited to the surrounding area (aesthetics, geology and soils, noise and vibration, and transportation) can be considered not cumulatively considerable.

In general, an individual project’s impact on broader resources including air quality, energy, and GHG emissions are evaluated at a cumulative level. That is, if a project results in a significant impact to air quality, energy, and GHGs, the project would be considered to have a significant cumulative impact to those resources. As discussed in Sections 4.3 Air Quality, 4.6 Energy, and 4.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions, the project would not result in significant impacts to those resources with the implementation of identified standard permit conditions and best management practices. For this reason, the project would not result in significant cumulative impacts to those resources.

As discussed under Impact MFS-1, with implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in Sections 4.4 and 4.5, potentially significant impacts to biological and cultural resources would be reduced to a less than significant level, and therefore not cumulatively considerable. Potential

localized and cumulative impacts to paleontological resources would be addressed by mitigation measures (MM GEO-6.1 through MM GEO 6.2) described in Section 4.7 Geology and Soils. The proposed pedestrian bridges will be designed with clear spans that do not impede or redirect flood flows, thereby ensuring the project would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts downstream.

With implementation of the measures discussed above, the proposed pedestrian pathway project would not result in any cumulatively significant impacts. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

Impact MFS-3: The project does not have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly. (Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)

Consistent with Section 15065(a)(4) of the CEQA Guidelines, a lead agency shall find that a project may have a significant effect on the environment where there is substantial evidence that the project has the potential to cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly. Under this standard, a change to the physical environment that might otherwise be minor must be treated as significant if people would be significantly affected. This factor relates to adverse changes to the environment of human beings generally, and not to effects on particular individuals. While changes to the environment that could indirectly affect human beings would be represented by all of the designated CEQA issue areas, those that could directly affect human beings include construction air quality, hazardous materials, and noise. Implementation of conditions of approval, best management practices, and mitigation measures (including MM BIO-1.1 through MM BIO-1.10, MM CUL-2.1, MM CUL-2.2, MM CUL-3.1, MM GEO-6.1, and MM GEO-6.2), and adherence to the Town's General Plan and Municipal Code, and state and federal regulations described in this document would avoid significant impacts. No other direct or indirect adverse effects on human beings have been identified. **(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)**

SECTION 5.0 REFERENCES

The analysis in this Initial Study is based on the professional judgement and expertise of the environmental specialists preparing this document, based upon review of the site, surrounding conditions, site plans, and the following references:

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SECTION 6.0 LEAD AGENCY AND CONSULTANTS

6.1 LEAD AGENCY

Town of Los Altos Hills

Zachary Dahl, Planning and Building Director

Steve Padovan, Principal Planner

6.2 CONSULTANTS

David J. Powers & Associates, Inc.

Environmental Consultants and Planners

Demetri Loukas, Principal Project Manager

Matthew Moore, Associate Project Manager

Ryan Osako, Draftsperson and Graphic Artist

Live Oak Associates, Inc.

Biological Consultants

Rick Hopkins, Ph.D., Principal/Senior Wildlife Ecologist

Arren Allegretti, Ph.D., Senior Project Manager and Plant & Wetland Ecologist

Katrina Krakow, M.S., Project Manager/Staff Ecologist

SECTION 7.0 ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

2017 CAP	Bay Area 2017 Clean Air Plan
AB	Assembly Bill
ABAG	Association of Bay Area Governments
ACM	asbestos-containing material
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APN	Assessor's Parcel Number
ARS	Accelerated Response System
BAAQMD	Bay Area Air Quality Management District
Btu	British thermal unit
CalARP	California Accidental Release Program
CalEPA	California Environmental Protection Agency
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CALGreen	California Green Building Standards Code
Cal/OSHA	California Division of Occupational Safety and Health
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CAP	Clean Air Plan
CARB	California Air Resources Board
CBC	California Building Standards Code
CCR	California Code of Regulations
C&D	construction and debris
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CEC	California Energy Commission
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CFC	chlorofluorocarbon
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CGS	California Geological Survey
CH ₄	methane
CIDH	cast-in-drilled-hole
CMP	Congestion Management Program
CNDDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
CNEL	Community Noise Equivalent Level
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CO	carbon monoxide

CO ₂	carbon dioxide
CO ₂ e	carbon dioxide equivalent
CRHR	California Register of Historical Resources
CUPA	Certified Unified Program Agency
dB	decibel
dBA	A-weighted sound level
DDT	dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane
DNL	Day-Night Level
DPM	diesel particulate matter
DTSC	Department of Toxic Substances Control
EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Environmental Site Assessment
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FAR	Federal Aviation Regulations
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
FMMP	Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GHG	greenhouse gas
GWh	gigawatt hour
Habitat Plan	Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan
HDPE	high-density polyethylene
HFC	hydrofluorocarbon
HSP	health and safety plan
LED	light emitting diode
L _{eq}	Noise Equivalent Level
LID	Low Impact Development
Live Oak Associates Inc.	Live Oak
L _{max}	Maximum Sound Level
LOS	Level of Service
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MLD	Most Likely Descendant
MMTCO ₂ e	million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent
MND	Mitigated Negative Declaration

MRP	Municipal Regional Permit
msl	mean sea level
MTC	Metropolitan Transportation Commission
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
N ₂ O	nitrous oxide
NO ₂	nitrogen dioxide
NOD	Notice of Determination
NOI	Notice of Intent
NO _x	nitrogen oxide
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
O ₃	ozone
OGFC	open-graded friction course
OPR	Office of Planning and Research
PCE	perchloroethylene
PDA	Priority Development Area
PFC	perfluorocarbon
PG&E	Pacific Gas and Electric Company
PM	particulate matter
PM ₁₀	coarse particulate matter
PM _{2.5}	fine particulate matter
PPV	peak particle velocity
PV	photovoltaic
RHNA	Regional Housing Need Allocation
ROG	reactive organic gas
RRFB	rectangular rapid flash beacon
RWF	Regional Wastewater Facility
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SB	Senate Bill
SCCDEH	Santa Clara County Department of Environmental Health
SCS	Sustainable Communities Strategy
SF ₆	sulfur hexafluoride
SFHA	Special Flood Hazard Area

SHMA	Seismic Hazards Mapping Act
SLF	Sacred Land Files
SMARA	Surface Mining and Reclamation Act
SMGB	State Mining and Geology Board
SMP	Site Management Plan
SO _x	sulfur oxide
SR	State Route
SVCE	Silicon Valley Clean Energy
SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
TAC	toxic air contaminant
TCM	transportation control measure
TCR	Tribal Cultural Resource
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
UWMP	urban water management plan
Valley Water	Santa Clara Valley Water District
VdB	vibration velocity level
VMT	vehicle miles traveled
VOC	volatile organic compound
VTa	Santa Clara Valley Transit Authority
Williamson Act	California Land Conservation Act