



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

FOR THE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING OF OCTOBER 5, 2009
AGENDA ITEM C1

PROJECT: EI Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan
APPLICANT: City of Menlo Park

BACKGROUND

Menlo Park is developing a long-term plan for the El Camino Real and Downtown areas. The completed visioning process (Phase I: 2007-2008) has led into the preparation of a Specific Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report (Phase II: 2009-2010). Environmental and fiscal reviews have been integrated into this process, so that potential benefits (such as tax revenue) and impacts (such as traffic) of different scenarios have been considered as the community develops the long-term plan. The completed Specific Plan will contain elements such as detailed land use regulations, design guidelines, infrastructure plans, and implementation measures. The Vision Plan, which was unanimously accepted by the City Council in 2008, serves as the foundation for the Specific Plan.

The Specific Plan process is being guided by the planning and architecture consulting firm Perkins+Will (“the consultant”), with the close assistance of City staff. The project is currently transitioning between Task 3 (“Development of Framework, Concept Plans, Programs and Guidelines”) and Task 4 (“Draft Specific Plan, Fiscal Impact Analysis, and Draft EIR”), having completed the project initiation, existing conditions analysis, and vision refinement tasks.

The key milestones for the earlier work were the three Community Workshops. At the first Community Workshop (April 16, 2009), the community looked beyond the Vision Plan goals to understand existing opportunities and constraints, and the inherent trade-offs (e.g., traffic/parking and pedestrian space) of new scenarios. Approximately 100 community members attended the first workshop. The second Community Workshop (June 18, 2009) involved the review of alternative plan elements (for example: land use mixes, vehicular/pedestrian/bicycle circulation details, and parking options), shown in advanced graphical formats such as 3D models and photomontages. Approximately 150 community members attended the second workshop. The third and final Community Workshop was held on September 17, 2009. At this workshop,

approximately 130 community members reviewed and provided comments on the “emerging plan,” which was based on input from the previous meetings. The results of this workshop are setting the stage for the draft version of the Specific Plan, with recommendations for land use, building character, and public improvements. Concurrently, the consultant and staff will prepare a thorough fiscal impact analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Report, which will be presented for full public review and comment in spring/summer 2010.

ANALYSIS

This meeting of the Planning Commission is one of three scheduled working sessions on the project that precede the Commission’s formal review of the Draft and Final Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The working sessions are intended to be regular ‘check-ins’ that allow the Commission to review the status of the project and to provide process feedback. The Commission’s sessions are complemented by similar meetings of the City Council, the most recent of which will take place on Tuesday, October 13.

This meeting will involve a presentation by the consultant consisting of the following topics:

1. Project Schedule
2. Reminder of Phase I Vision Plan – Process and Goals
3. Emerging Plan – Review of Community Meeting #3
4. Next Steps – Specific Plan and EIR
5. Comments from the Oversight/Outreach Committee

Hard copies of the presentation will be available at the meeting for the Planning Commission and the public, and an electronic version will be posted on the project web page after the meeting.

Staff recommends that the meeting follow the outlined procedure:

1. Consultant Presentation
2. Planning Commission Detail/Clarification-Type Questions of the Consultant and Staff
3. Public Comment
4. Planning Commission General Feedback

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Vision Plan (Phase I) was a planning study and as such was not a project requiring environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Specific Plan (Phase II) includes the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

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PUBLIC NOTICE & APPEAL PERIOD

Public notification was achieved by publishing a notice in the local newspaper and by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting. In addition, the City has prepared a project page for the proposal, which is available at the following address: <http://www.menlopark.org/specificplan>. This page provides up-to-date information about the project, allowing interested parties to stay informed of its progress. The page allows users to sign up for automatic email bulletins, notifying them when content is updated or meetings are scheduled. The project list currently has 871 subscribers.

ATTACHMENTS

None

EXHIBITS TO BE PROVIDED AT MEETING

Consultant Presentation

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