

City of Menlo Park
City Council Meeting of December 11, 2007
El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan
Agenda Item #F1

1. Project History
2. Council Action: Consideration of Consultant Review Committee Recommendation for the Charter and Composition of the Working Group
3. Correspondence
4. Conclusion

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Project History

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Project History

Public Meetings To Date

January 6, 2007 – City Council Retreat

February 12, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Study Session

March 20, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Regular Business

May 22, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Regular Business

June 19, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Regular Business

August 7, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Council Member Reports

September 25, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Regular Business

October 8, 2007 – Planning Commission Meeting: Regular Business

November 8, 2007 – Consultant Review Committee Meeting: Interviews

November 13, 2007 – Consultant Review Committee Meeting: Clarification

November 20, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Regular Business

December 4, 2007 – Consultant Review Committee Meeting: Refinement

December 11, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Regular Business

(Note: list does not include Council Member Reports for which memorandums were not published)

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El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Project History

January 6, 2007 – City Council Retreat

The Council identified a goal relating to the El Camino Real and Downtown areas, with the aim of increasing economic vitality and helping guide policy decisions on land use and transportation proposals.

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Project History

- February 12, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Study Session
- March 20, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Regular Business
- May 22, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Regular Business
- June 19, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Regular Business

The Council discussed various options for realizing the project goal, ultimately establishing a Council Subcommittee of Council Members John Boyle and Richard Cline and reaching general agreement that a broad and inclusive visioning process is needed prior to creation of a Specific Plan or equivalent document.

To provide background and context, the Council authorized \$25,000 for consultant services to analyze previous planning efforts in the El Camino Real/Downtown area, research the visioning and planning efforts of other cities, and analyze medical office uses. The Council also appropriated \$25,000 for initial public outreach, in particular an educational speaker series on general planning topics.

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- August 7, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Council Member Reports

The Council reviewed a recommendation from the Subcommittee to issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a consultant to manage the visioning process. The Council approved the recommended actions, including the draft RFQ. The final RFQ was subsequently issued to 36 consulting firms on August 13.

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Project History

- September 25, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Regular Business

The Council reviewed a recommendation from the Subcommittee to issue a more-detailed Request for Proposal (RFP) to five of the 10 consulting firms that responded to the RFQ. The Council approved the recommended actions, including the draft RFP (with some minor changes) and the establishment of a six-person consultant review committee comprised of Council Members Boyle and Cline, two Planning Commissioners to be selected by the Commission, Community Development Director Arlinda Heineck, and City Manager Glen Rojas. The RFP was subsequently issued on September 26.

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Project History

- September 25, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Regular Business (cont.)

The RFP specified that at the core of the project is the need for broad public outreach and participation, stating that the process is intended to engage a wide range of community members, including those who may not currently be involved in civic activities. The RFP also specified that the process should be customized to the unique needs of Menlo Park.

The five firms were selected based on their experience working with a range of cities and other governmental entities, which indicates an ability to tailor visioning processes to the unique goals and challenges faced by any individual client. The recommended firms did not present preferred answers to the questions around corridor and downtown development, such as automatically recommending certain building styles or development intensities.

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Project History

- October 8, 2007 – Planning Commission Meeting: Regular Business

The Planning Commission appointed Commissioners Vincent Bressler and Henry Riggs to the consultant review committee after considering the City Council's direction to provide a balance of interests and backgrounds.

- November 8, 2007 – Consultant Review Committee Meeting: Interviews
- November 13, 2007 – Consultant Review Committee Meeting: Clarification

On November 8, the consultant review committee interviewed three consulting firms and discussed the merits of the respective proposals. On November 13, after asking for and receiving a few points of clarification, the committee formally recommended the selection of Design, Community & Environment (DCE). The recommendation was primarily based on the firm's strong emphasis on broad community involvement and public participation.

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- November 20, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Regular Business

The Council reviewed the consultant review committee recommendation and formally selected DCE as the project consultant and approved the overall scope of work. The Council authorized the consultant review committee to reconvene to select which of the optional tasks should be included in the final scope of work and to formulate a recommendation for the specific composition and charter of the Working Group.

- December 4, 2007 – Consultant Review Committee Meeting: Refinement

The consultant review committee met with staff and the consultant to discuss the topics listed above. The committee opted to include some, but not all, of the optional tasks, and reached general consensus on a Working Group recommendation (discussed in more detail later in the presentation).

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- December 11, 2007 – City Council Meeting: Regular Business

The Council will discuss the consultant review committee recommendation.

All of the 13 listed meetings have been open meetings, noticed in accordance with the Brown Act. The process to procure consultant services has been a fully transparent process, in line with stated community goals regarding openness and opportunities for public input.

While the consultant process has been taking place, the City has also commenced a number of associated project tasks:

- Speaker Series
- Newsletter and Survey
- Project Web Page
- Email List

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Project History

Speaker Series

As directed by the City Council at the meeting of June 19, staff has organized an educational forum to introduce the community to planning and transportation topics. The forums are free and are available on the City's web site for online viewing. This series will continue during the visioning process.

- October 24, 2007 – Michael Dyett: *Previous Planning Projects in the El Camino Real/Downtown Areas, Visioning and Planning Projects in Other Cities, and Lessons for Menlo Park*
- November 14, 2007 – Dena Belzer: *Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in the Peninsula Context*
- December 12, 2007 – Denise Conley: *The Economics of Mixed-Use Development*

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El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Project History

Newsletter and Survey

As directed by the City Council at the meeting of August 7, staff has overseen the design and mailing (sent October 18) of a project newsletter to all Menlo Park residents and property owners.

The newsletter includes a short survey (also available online), soliciting initial thoughts on the El Camino Real and Downtown Areas. Staff is currently reviewing the 500+ responses in order to help guide the next steps in the process. Many responses relay an excitement about the visioning process and an appreciation that their input has been requested.



Published by the City of Menlo Park

In the coming months, Menlo Park will start work on a "Vision Plan" for the future of Downtown and the El Camino Real corridor. Community members can help lead the way by considering topics such as:

- What kinds of new businesses does our City need?
- Would you like to see more housing in Downtown and along El Camino Real?
- How tall should new buildings be?
- Should the City build public parking garages?
- What changes would you like to see on the streets for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians?



Corner of El Camino Real and Birchwood/Menlo Avenue, early 1980s—car lot and clothing store.

The visioning project will benefit from the input of a wide range of people, including residents, business owners, elected and appointed officials, developers, and architects. The City Council believes that your active participation is crucial to the success of this project. Current opportunities for involvement include:

- **Email List:** Sign up to receive project bulletins by emailing throgers@menlopark.org.
- **Survey:** Fill out and return the short survey below to provide your initial thoughts.



Corner of El Camino Real and Birchwood/Menlo Avenue, 2007—Menlo Center home of Explorer's Books and Café Barroco.

As the project moves forward, additional activities and resources will be available:

- **Speaker Series:** Attend upcoming educational forums on a range of planning/transportation topics, including a history of previous Menlo Park plans for these areas.
- **Community Workshops:** Starting in January, attend workshops or other meetings to learn more and offer your input.
- **Newsletters:** Watch for more newsletters like this one e. providing status updates and listing upcoming events.
- **Project Web Page:** Review the project site at http://www.menlopark.org/projects/comdev_cerdowntown.htm for background information and other resources.

Si usted necesita más información sobre este proyecto por favor llamar 650-330-6718, y pregúntale por María Juana.

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Initial Survey

Contact Information:
Thomas Rogers, Associate Planner
throgers@menlopark.org
650.330.6722

Help us begin planning our future by filling out and returning the following short survey. You can also fill out the survey online by going to: <http://www.menlopark.org/>

1. Name _____ Email Address _____
Postal address _____
2. As you envision the El Camino Real corridor evolving over the next 10 – 20 years...
 - a. What would you like to see change? _____
 - b. What would you like to stay the same? _____
3. As you envision Downtown evolving over the next 10 – 20 years...
 - a. What would you like to see change? _____
 - b. What would you like to stay the same? _____
4. What should this El Camino Real/Downtown visioning and planning effort be named? _____
5. Any other comments? _____

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El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Project History

Project Web Page

- Up-to-date project status
- Relevant documents, such as staff reports, public hearing notices, and speaker series materials
- Contact information
- Online version of survey

Email List

- Project updates, meeting announcements, invitations for comments
- Currently has 527 subscribers



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

El Camino Real/Downtown Visioning and Planning Process

Project Description

Menlo Park is embarking on a visioning project for the El Camino Real and Downtown areas, with the aim of increasing economic vitality and helping guide policy decisions on land use and transportation proposals. At the core of the visioning process is the need for broad public outreach and participation. This process will engage a wide range of community members, including those who may not currently be involved in civic activities.

The visioning process (Phase I) is intended to lead into a Specific Plan, Zoning Ordinance Amendment, or equivalent implementation strategy (Phase II). For reference, Specific Plans are tools for the systematic implementation of the general plan, establishing a link between implementing policies of the general plan and the individual development proposals in a defined area.

Current Status

On November 20, 2007, the City Council selected Design, Community & Environment to provide consultant services for the El Camino Real and Downtown Vision Plan. The Council also authorized the Consultant Review Committee to select which if any of the optional tasks are to be conducted, and to provide a recommendation to the Council for the composition and charter of the Working Group. The Consultant Review Committee discussed these topics with staff and the consultant on December 4, and the City Council will review the committee's recommendation on December 11.

The consultant and staff will conduct community workshops and other visioning activities starting in early 2008. While that process is being organized, the City has sent an initial project newsletter and is holding an educational speaker series. Please see below for more information about these project components.

Newsletter

The City has sent a newsletter to introduce the project to the community. The newsletter was mailed to all Menlo Park postal customers (both residential and non-residential addresses), as well as to all Menlo Park property owners that reside out of town. The newsletter includes a short survey to solicit contact information and initial thoughts on the El Camino Real and Downtown areas.

- Newsletter (mailed October 18, 2007)
- Interactive Survey - Let the City know what you like about El Camino Real and Downtown, and what you might like to see change.

Speaker Series

To help generate initial ideas and discussion, the City is holding an educational forum on general planning and transportation topics. The events will take place at the City Council Chamber (City Hall) at 10:00 AM on the following dates:

Contact Person

Thomas Rogers, Associate Planner
E-mail: throgers@menlopark.org
650-330-6722

Staff Reports and Related Links

- Speaker Series Agenda - December 12, 2007
- City Council Staff Report - December 11, 2007
- Consultant Review Committee Agenda - December 4, 2007
- City Council Staff Report - November 20, 2007
- Speaker Series Agenda - November 14, 2007
- Consultant Review Committee Agenda - November 13, 2007
- Consultant Review Committee Agenda - November 8, 2007
- Speaker Series Agenda - October 24, 2007
- Planning Commission Memorandum - October 8, 2007
- Request for Proposal (RFP) - September 26, 2007
- City Council Staff Report - September 25, 2007
- RFP (Request for Qualifications) - August 13, 2007
- City Council Memorandum - August 7, 2007
- City Council Staff Report - June 19, 2007
- City Council Staff Report - May 22, 2007
- City Council Staff Report - March 20, 2007
- City Council Staff Report - February 12, 2007

Graphics

- Potential Study Area
- Zoning Map and General Plan Land Use Diagram - Sheet 3

http://www.menlopark.org/projects/comdev_ecrdowntown.htm

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**Council Action: Consideration of
Consultant Review Committee
Recommendation for the Composition
and Charter of the Working Group**

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Working Group Charter

As recommended, the Working Group would:

- Represent the community's interests in the development of a plan that reflects the vision for El Camino Real and the Downtown
- Serve as a sounding board for the consultant and staff throughout the process
- Review the materials that will be used and presented during the walking tours and at the Community Workshops
- Provide outreach services and be a communication link to the Commission or community that they are representing

The Working Group would not:

- Be asked to resolve issues of detailed policy for the plan
- Make final decisions or take positions on issues beyond those covered by the vision plan

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Working Group Charter

Expectations for Working Group Members

- Attend all four Working Group meetings
- Attend all three Community Workshops
- Attend the two Walking Tours and the one Mobile Tour
- Attend as many speaker series events as possible
- Provide outreach to other community members, helping bring them into the visioning process

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Working Group Composition

Member	Number	Selection Method	Date
Parks and Recreation Commission	1	Appointed by Commission	12/12/2007
Planning Commission	1	Appointed by Commission	12/17/2007
Housing Commission	1	Appointed by Commission	1/2/2008
Environmental Quality Commission	1	Appointed by Commission	1/2/2008
Transportation Commission	1	Appointed by Commission	1/9/2008
Bicycle Commission	1	Appointed by Commission	1/14/2008
Stanford University	1	Appointed by Stanford University	1/7/2008
Downtown/ECR Business Owner	1	Appointed by Chamber of Commerce	1/7/2008
Downtown/ECR Property Owner	1	Appointed by Chamber of Commerce	1/7/2008
Development Community Representative	1	Appointed by City Council Through Open Application	1/15/2008
Downtown/ECR Area Residents	3	Appointed by City Council Through Open Application	1/15/2008
At-Large Members	3	Appointed by City Council Through Open Application	1/15/2008
Total	16		

(also available on page 7 of December 11 Staff Report)

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Working Group Composition

Intent of Recommended Composition

- Emphasize residential interests while also tapping into the valuable perspectives of the business, property ownership, and development communities
- Use existing City Commissions to leverage the skills and knowledge of individual residents, as well as provide a mechanism to keep the respective Commissions engaged throughout the process
- Allow City Council to appoint the one developer representative, three El Camino/Downtown resident representatives, and three “at-large” representatives (seven total members) after the other nine appointments are made, in order to ensure that the overall Working Group represents the full diversity of the City.

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Correspondence

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Correspondence

The City Council has received one letter from Charles D. Bernstein expressing concerns with the approved scope of work. In response, staff would like to clarify some points:

Stakeholder Interviews (Task B2 – Attachment A7)

- Interviews would be anonymous in order to generate candid responses
- The ideas generated in stakeholder interviews would not lead directly into policy formation; they would be one of many data points that would be fully vetted during the community workshops (“checks and balances”)
- If an idea generated in the stakeholder interviews does not receive support in the community workshops, it will not be part of the vision plan
- All of the other consultants also recommended that such interviews be anonymous, as a way to solicit useful ideas that are subsequently reviewed in a public forum

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Correspondence

Economic Research Associates (ERA)

- Under the approved scope, Economic Research Associates would provide economic analysis to help ensure that community vision is economically feasible
- ERA states a firm dedication to objectivity, and notes that it does not assume equity positions in development projects
- The firm's clientele is evenly divided between government agencies and private interests

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Conclusion

El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan – Conclusion

- The consultant procurement process has been highly transparent, with numerous opportunities for public input
- The visioning process will be a community-led effort (“bottom-up” versus “top-down”); the consultant will manage the process with staff assistance, but the ultimate vision will be the community’s
- Staff and the consultant do not have any particular outcome in mind; the resulting vision could range from extensive changes to the current land use regulations to only minor tweaks
- The recommended Working Group composition would emphasize residential interests while also tapping into the valuable perspectives of the business community
- Stakeholder interviews would be anonymous, but they would only be used to generate ideas that are subsequently reviewed in a public forum, and are only one element of a much broader, extremely inclusive visioning process