



## OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

**Council Meeting Date: August 27, 2013**  
**Staff Report #: 13-152**

**Agenda Item #: F-4**

**REGULAR BUSINESS:** Accept the 500 El Camino Real Subcommittee Final Report

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### RECOMMENDATION

The 500 El Camino Real Subcommittee recommends that the City Council accept its final report which establishes the following requirements for a revised proposed project submittal from Stanford:

1. Stanford will eliminate all medical office. All office will be general office (this follows Stanford's previous reduction for all office to 199,500 square feet).
2. Stanford will make a substantial contribution to the cost of design and construction of a pedestrian-bike undercrossing at Middle Avenue. The amount will be negotiated/determined through the project approval process with the goal of ensuring there will be sufficient funding to construct the undercrossing in timely manner.
3. Stanford will participate in a City working group regarding the design of the Middle Avenue plaza, undercrossing and vehicular access to the site.
4. Stanford will fund a neighborhood cut through traffic study as scoped by the City.

### BACKGROUND

On January 28<sup>th</sup>, the Planning Commission hosted a study session on Stanford's proposed project which included 229,500 square feet of office space (96,150 square feet of which was medical office space) and a range of 135-152 residential housing units. Many concerns were voiced by the public regarding the potential traffic impacts, need for additional integration of bicycle and pedestrian access and community benefit including the long planned bike/pedestrian railroad undercrossing at Middle Ave. and improvements to the plaza. In addition, the applicant was given feedback to increase the amount of housing, reduce the amount of office space and improve the architecture for the office building.

On April 16<sup>th</sup>, the City Council hosted a study session on a revised project proposal that included architectural enhancements, an increase of housing units to 170, a reduction of office space to 199,500 square feet, of which 25,000 square feet could be used as medical office space, and increased square footage of the plaza. Based on public comment and the concerns raised by individual council members, the City Council created a subcommittee of the City Council, consisting of Councilmembers Keith and

Carlton, to explore potential further project refinement. The 500 El Camino Real Subcommittee was charged with:

- Providing a framework for discussing the issues related to the 500 El Camino Real Project.
- Facilitating the productive communication of information between neighborhood representatives and the applicant, regarding project refinement that balanced the needs of the applicant and those of the greater Menlo Park community prior to the submittal of a revised project proposal.
- Assisting with developing a timeline for review of the Specific Plan

## **ANALYSIS**

### Overview

The 500 El Camino Real Subcommittee has met 17 times since April 16<sup>th</sup>. The Subcommittee has met with neighborhood representatives, the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition, representatives from environmental groups, representatives from Stanford University and City Staff. These meetings provided the Subcommittee with the necessary background and input to make the recommendations included in this report. These recommendations provide a framework to the applicant regarding project refinement.

### Traffic

There were two specific concerns related to traffic. First, the potential impacts of cut-through traffic on the neighborhood bounded by El Camino Real, University Dr., Middle Ave. and Creek Dr. While the Specific Plan EIR had studied traffic impacts at a higher program level, it had not studied the traffic impacts at a specific project level. It had always been anticipated that a project level analysis would be necessary to assess conformance with the Specific Plan and address any project related traffic impacts. The Subcommittee met with staff, neighborhood representatives and Stanford in order to develop the scope and methodology for this project level analysis. A staff recommendation for this project level analysis will be submitted for City Council approval.

The second traffic-related area the Subcommittee addressed was that of overall anticipated traffic generation by the project. After reviewing the amount of traffic typically generated by general office use and the significantly higher amount generated by medical office, it was clear that removal of medical office from the mix of uses would significantly reduce the overall traffic generation. It is anticipated that this one concession will reduce the overall traffic generation from the 3,840 daily trips to 3,284 daily trips. This reduction of 556 daily trips represents a 14.5% decrease in traffic trip generation.

### Undercrossing

Residents have long anticipated a railroad undercrossing at Middle Ave. in order to improve east/west connectivity. The Specific Plan identifies an undercrossing connecting the Stanford properties under the railroad tracks to Burgess Park. This undercrossing would improve connectivity for neighborhoods on both sides of the

railroad tracks with City amenities, and access to public transit and Downtown Menlo Park. It would encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation and contribute to a healthier Menlo Park. While there are several issues that still need to be addressed, the Subcommittee is confident that the groundwork is in place for making this undercrossing a reality. Stanford has agreed to participate in a working group that will develop a budget, design, and plan for construction. Stanford has also agreed to take a major role in the financing and construction of the undercrossing.

### Plaza

The Specific Plan also identifies construction of a public plaza on the Stanford property. Stanford will work with a City working group to ensure that among other things the public plaza is designed to minimize vehicular traffic and maximize pedestrian access. The proposed plaza area will be greater than the public plaza area at Café Borrone.

### Downtown/El Camino Real Specific Plan Review

At the June 11<sup>th</sup> City Council Meeting, the Subcommittee report to the City Council stated that the annual review of the Specific Plan should coincide with the completion of the Subcommittee's work on the 500 El Camino Project. If the City Council approves the recommendations contained within this report, then the review of the Specific Plan will begin with a public hearing before the Planning Commission at its September 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. Following the Planning Commission hearing on September 9<sup>th</sup>, City Council will hold a public hearing to review the Specific Plan. This hearing is tentatively scheduled for October 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES**

There are no direct impacts on City resources associated with the actions of this report. The costs associated with the staff review of the revised proposed project submittal will be funded by the development fees paid by the applicant.

## **POLICY ISSUES**

The 500 El Camino Real Subcommittee has completed its charge and submits the recommendations enclosed in this final report to the City Council. It is expected that Stanford will draft a revised proposed project submittal based on these recommendations. The revised proposed project will be submitted for staff review of its conformance with the Specific Plan.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

While this action does not require environmental review the expected proposed project will be reviewed for conformance with the Specific Plan. This review will include the aforementioned cut-through traffic analysis. Upon the completion of staff review, the revised proposed project submittal will be brought before the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission must make a finding of conformance with the Specific Plan prior to issuance of building permits. The Planning Commission's finding is appealable to the City Council.

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public Notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

None

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