

Attachment A
El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan
Planning Commission Preliminary Recommendations

The following are the preliminary recommendations of the Planning Commission on the Specific Plan's three geographic areas. The recommendations will be reviewed and possibly modified/augmented prior to forwarding final recommendations to the City Council.

Station Area

Height (7-0)

- Reduce the façade height from the proposed 45 feet by one full story; staff and consultants to recommend a specific dimension to achieve the reduction; and
- Staff to work with consultants to determine alternative mechanisms to limit maximum building height to a portion of the building with the intent of increasing the architectural interest of the building; possible mechanisms include changes in the bulk restrictions, added setbacks, and/or requirements for architectural merit.

Residential Parking (6-0; Commissioner Yu absent)

- Modify the parking ratio for the Station Area from the proposed 1.85 units per space for residential development to a minimum of 1.0 space per unit and a maximum of 1.5 spaces per unit with an emphasis on the accommodation of shared vehicles, guest parking, shared parking and unbundled parking, subject to review and comment by staff and the consultant.
- Commission recognizes that reduced parking ratios may encourage development of smaller units and senior housing and potentially reduce traffic and school impacts.

Procedures for Approval of Future Projects (6-0; Commissioner Yu absent)

- If not adequately addressed in the Specific Plan, add language to the Specific Plan that states that during Architectural Control review by the Planning Commission, the Commission will look for overall quality of materials, and specifically look for a change of materials, setbacks, and break-up of massing of upper floors.

Safety Across Railroad Tracks at Ravenswood (6-0; Commissioner Yu absent)

- The Planning Commission recommends that the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists at the intersection of the railroad tracks and Ravenswood Avenue be a high priority and possible solutions to the safety issues be expedited either through the Specific Plan or alternative programs.

Downtown

Chestnut Street Paseo/Market Place (5-0; Commissioner O'Malley absent and Commissioner Riggs recused)

- Pursue implementation of the Chestnut Paseo and Market Place in a phased approach. The first phase would include the temporary closure of Chestnut Street as delineated in the Specific Plan on Saturday and/or Sunday to be used as a public space with seating, food vendors (food trucks), landscaping, and possibly decorative paving. The second phase would be based on a review of the first phase and would be used to determine if the Paseo and Market Place should continue in operation and be made more permanent through extended hours, days and/or installation of new or permanent features.
- With both phases, consideration should be given to Menlo Park merchants for access to the public space and should build upon successful existing businesses, including the Farmer's Market.
- The recommendation is based on a recognition that the Chestnut Paseo and Market Place are closely linked in functionality and that the success of the space will be dependent on uses that would attract people.

Sidewalk Widening (5-0; Commissioner O'Malley absent and Commissioner Riggs recused)

- Retain the sidewalk widening elements and guidelines of the Specific Plan with implementation starting on a temporary basis for smaller block or half-block areas in order to assess the viability of the widening and whether to expand and make permanent the widened sidewalks over time.

Parking Structures (5-0; Commissioner O'Malley absent and Commissioner Riggs recused)

- Include Parking Plaza 2 in addition to Parking Plazas 1 and 3 as a possible site for a parking structure.
- Encourage utilization of parking structures by parking permit users.
- Provide opportunities for businesses to contribute to the financing of parking structures to the benefit of the business through reduced parking permit costs or other incentives.
- Require high aesthetic standards for the parking structures, including landscaping within required setbacks or as a vertical element of the structure.
- Encourage the preservation of as much surface parking as possible within the parking structures.
- Retain the height standards of the Specific Plan as maximums but encourage the design of parking structures that are consistent with the scale of adjacent planned and existing buildings.

El Camino Real

Building Façade Modulation Adjacent to Residential Areas (7-0)

- Amend the Building Façade Modulation regulations for the ECR NE-L and ECR SW zoning districts to call for compatible modulation of form on facades adjacent to residential or residential mixed-use zones.

Massing and Modulation (7-0)

- Amend the Massing and Modulation regulations for all ECR zoning districts as follows:
 - ~~The Major~~ portions of the building facing a street ~~shall~~ should be parallel to the street.

Curb Extensions (4-3; Commissioners Eiref, Kadvany, and Yu dissenting)

- In part in order to shorten the flow of cars and therefore shorten the traffic cycle as a means of easing pedestrian and bicycle crossings of El Camino Real, recommend that the proposed curb extensions (or “bulb outs”) on El Camino Real be removed from the plan.

El Camino Real Bicycle Improvements (6-1; Commissioner Riggs dissenting)

- Recommend exploring the possibility of improving/upgrading bicycle improvements on El Camino Real to Class II bicycle lanes; acknowledge that this concept may be affected by whether curb extensions are implemented or not.

Middle Avenue Bicycle Improvements (7-0)

- Recommend exploring the possibility of improving/upgrading bicycle improvements on Middle Avenue to Class II bicycle lanes when the proposed pedestrian/bicycle crossing of the railroad tracks is implemented.

East-West Connectivity (7-0)

- In order to accomplish more with regard to east-west connectivity along El Camino Real, recommend more creative and aggressive efforts at signal timing and signal modifications, including 4-way crossings and bicycle safety.

Senior Housing (7-0)

- Recommend revisions to encourage senior housing, such as through increased density, lower parking ratios, or other incentives; note that this encouragement should not be necessarily interpreted as a mandate, and that senior housing should not necessarily dominate the Plan area.

Building Height (7-0)

- Recommend that staff and the consultants review the proposed 38-foot building height maximum and whether it is sufficient to permit three-story buildings with current market expectations for floor-to-floor heights and report back to the Planning Commission; interest is in particular with regard to the ECR NE and ECR NE-R zoning districts.

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