

**El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan
Summary of Public Comment
August 22, 2011 Planning Commission Meeting**

Maurice Shiu

- Presented the Transportation Commission's recommendation that the City Council approve the Specific Plan; noted that the Commission had also identified a list of concerns related to the implementation of the transportation components of the Plan
 - Stated a concern regarding the coordination of the construction of the parking garages with development that would occur in a more piecemeal fashion
 - Stated that El Camino Real is a congested main artery and that in order to balance traffic flow with a desire for a village character, there may be a need to look at having six lanes of traffic at certain times of the day
 - Stated a concern regarding how improvements would be implemented at Ravenswood Avenue which is a very congested intersection
 - Stated that certain improvements, such as the Chestnut Paseo and parking garage access points, should be more detailed
 - Stated that there should be trial implementation of some features before money is spent to make the features permanent
 - Explained that in 2006 the Federal Highway Administration approved changes to the manual of uniform traffic control devices and that the State then adopted all of the changes except four or five; noted that the ones not adopted by the State could be important for the implementation of the Plan and provided an example that State intersection designs require a pedestrian travel speed of four feet per second although the Federal Highway Administration recommended three feet per second based on an aging population; stated that Menlo Park should consider adopting the Federal standard based on the City's demographics
 - Recommended that the Plan include a policy on older American mobility

Sramana Mitra

- Has lived in Menlo Park for eight years and would like to live in the city for many years to come but wants to see Menlo Park be a more exciting place than it is today
- Noted her involvement with One Million By One Million, the goal of which is to help one million entrepreneurs reach one million in revenue by 2020
- Stated that the city will see change, especially with Facebook coming to Menlo Park and going public next year, and that how the City evolves is a function of how we plan for the change
- Stated that Facebook will bring energy, innovation, money and young people, but that the young people and angel investors are electing to and will live and work in San Francisco unless an interesting downtown is created in Menlo Park

- Stated her desire to see energy and culture happen in Menlo Park; noted that no other downtown in Silicon Valley has an emphasis on culture and that this is an opportunity for Menlo Park to do something interesting such as jazz clubs, theater, music and good restaurants
- Stated that the village needs to be sophisticated, not drab and boring with outdated architecture, amenities, and offerings; stated need for a sophisticated and interesting downtown that preserves village character and green concepts

Dominique Trempont

- Has lived in Menlo Park for over 20 years, worked in Silicon Valley for 25 years and had been a CEO of several companies
- Noted that he has connections with CEOs and entrepreneurs that have left Menlo Park to go to San Francisco to start companies
- Stated that he would like to counter this movement and keep entrepreneurs and venture capitalist in Menlo Park
- Stated that in some ways Menlo Park is the capital of Silicon Valley and he would like to see it stay that way
- Stated his support for the Specific Plan

Bernardo Urquieta

- Architect from San Francisco who has worked in Menlo Park and studied the Plan
- Congratulated City on a bold Plan
- Stated that the Plan has great scale and connectivity, allows for great public transportation, is sustainable, is human, will create vibrant places, will reflect what's distinct, unique and proper in Menlo Park and will help to channel and concentrate in the right direction the powerful forces created by Facebook
- Stated that the Plan is a good tool
- Stated that it is important for the Plan area to be exciting, beautiful and memorable in order to attract people, especially young people

Vikrant Mathur

- Small business owner located on Haven Avenue
- Stated that Menlo Park is losing its image as a hub of entrepreneurship, innovation, and exciting and fun companies; noted that many of these companies are now in Palo Alto or San Francisco
- Stated that from an entrepreneurship perspective, the loss in image is a shame because the city has much to offer
- Stated that half of his workforce lives in San Francisco because they feel Menlo Park is a boring place; the employees are in their 20s and 30s, are single, and find nothing to do in the city

Gail Sredanovic

- Stated that the Plan is deficient in regard to bike improvements; noted that a good bike network is needed to get people out of their cars; urged support for

getting people out of their cars by making it convenient, easy and cheap as opposed to eliminating parking; questioned how the various improvements would be financed and whether they would be free

- Stated that the Plan is also deficient in that there is no discussion of secondary housing units; noted belief that this would be a good way to meet the city's housing plans
- Explained her involvement with the Alameda Streetscape project and that the project started with residents, established goals and listened to merchants and did not need architects or pricey drawings; noted that the project included bike lanes and did not eliminate parking
- Stated that she did not see how building over parking lots and hotels would make Menlo Park exciting or sophisticated; suggested that if people want sophistication, they should probably be in a major city
- Stated that by eliminating local business, which the Plan may do, people who need cars will drive elsewhere to do their daily errands thereby increasing the overall carbon footprint
- Asked that the needs of the merchants and all residents be listened to and reconsidered

Mike Harding

- Member of the Bicycle Commission but speaking for himself
- Stated that he would like to see the Plan continue
- Noted that shared lane arrows are already being planned for University and east-west streets and that the idea of replacing parking with a bike lane on Oak Grove Avenue is a good idea
- Noted that although he would like to see parking give way to a Class II bike lane on El Camino Real, that it was probably not realistic; suggested shared lane arrows and pointed to an example in Redwood City between Brewster and Broadway that implements a small piece of the Grand Boulevard Initiative and that seems acceptable to Caltrans; explained that shared lane arrows at least announce to motorist that bikes belong in the lane
- Suggested that more bike parking is needed on Santa Cruz Avenue, especially near the markets, and at the Caltrain Station

Sam Sinnott

- Resident of the downtown area for 31 years and has owned business in the Plan area for 21 years
- Stated strong support for Plan; noted that it has been a good process and that the Plan is detailed oriented and represents the entire city; stated that no fundamental changes are needed, only some refinement
- Noted that as a downtown resident he has had to fight to keep people associated with downtown businesses from parking on his street all day
- Stated that former mayor Chuck Kinney and he produced a conceptual plan for a mixed use/housing project on parking plaza 2 that would preserve most if not all of the existing parking (distributed copy to Commission); stated belief that the project demonstrates that parking can be provided while meeting the goals of the

Specific Plan; stated that he has also prepared a financial feasibility study of the project; noted that comments of concern have been expressed regarding the distance from parking to shopping and believes the project will add the convenience of another parking lot and help to simplify construction phasing of the parking garages

- Asked that the Plan be modified to add public parking on plaza 2 in addition to mixed use

Marnie Foody

- Has been a resident for over 13 years with 20 years of experience in architecture and real estate development
- Encouraged moving forward with the Plan
- Noted that it was a good thing when the car dealerships on El Camino Real left and expected to see some change but nothing has happened since that time; stated that the vacancy creates blight and that if not addressed, blight will continue to grow; noted that Menlo Park is gaining a reputation as anti-development
- Stated that to get rid of the blight the City must partner with developers to move forward rapidly with approving the Plan; noted that through personal experience large scale, multiple use developments have risky returns, are difficult to predict and to secure funding for
- Stated that new multiple use facilities next to the train station and downtown makes green building sense, will invigorate existing businesses, and add tax dollars necessary to aid struggling schools
- Stated that this is an opportunity to make a lasting and positive impact on the town and urged that the Plan be moved forward quickly

Steve Elliott

- Stated that he was representing Stanford University's ownership of six parcels on El Camino Real
- Stated that Stanford University is very supportive of the Plan and the process; stated belief that the Plan will provide significant benefits to the city and a clear road map for property owners to encourage the redevelopment and renewal of Menlo Park
- Noted that there are a few requirements that will impair Stanford University's ability to redevelop it's property and realize the Plan goals due to the narrowness of the properties that create constraints that limit site layout and building size and orientation
- Noted that although Stanford University is supportive of the need for the building break requirements, that Stanford University is requesting more flexibility in the location and dimensions of the breaks; noted that the Plan encourages breaks for the remainder of El Camino Real but requires the breaks for the ECR SE district and that this requirement adds a further constraint in addition to the one already created by the narrowness of the properties
- Requested the elimination of the rear setback due to the narrow lot size and the fact that the properties back up to the railroad tracks

- Stated that the redevelopment of the Stanford University properties offers an excellent opportunity to dramatically increase open space along El Camino Real but that constraints of the site create more rather than less hurdles to redevelopment than other sites along El Camino Real that would have a 20% open space requirement; requested that the open space requirement be changed to 20% similar to other areas of El Camino Real
- Noted that sustainability opportunities will not necessarily be higher for the Stanford University property and requested to have the same requirement as for the rest of the Plan area
- Requested that the open space definition be modified to include all landscaped areas and walkways rather than just those publically accessible
- Requested that the Plan be modified to encourage rather than require TDM consistent with State law

Charlie Bourne

- Speaking as a resident and not as the vice chair of the Transportation Commission
- Stated that he cannot support the Plan because it would negatively change the look and feel of the town
- Noted that recent approvals of several projects has already committed the city to a future of major impacts on many streets and intersections and associated traffic, parking and circulation impacts are too severe to be counterbalanced by any positive benefits from the Plan
- Noted that the EIR makes a case for denial by stating that traffic from future projects would adversely affect the operation of seven area intersections and 14 local roadway segments that would have significant adverse impacts, and four intersections that would have significant and unavoidable impacts
- Noted that there are other streets and intersections with issues as well, including Chestnut Street and Oak Grove Avenue
- Noted that the proposed mitigations in the EIR are mostly procedures by which future development would contribute financing to improvements, but that this could lead to years of significant problems before enough funding is available to implement a specific improvement
- Noted that other mitigations are not considered feasible since they require approval by other agencies and are not completely within the control of the City
- Noted that TDM-related mitigations cannot be guaranteed and therefore remain significant and unavoidable
- Stated that there is no effective mitigation; noted that a conservative approach assumes that no mitigation is implemented
- Noted that the Plan includes reduced parking ratios but that these have not been separately reviewed by the Commission or Council but that by approving the Plan, the reduced ratios will be accepted by default; stated that the change in parking ratios should have its own formal review on its own merits; noted parking issues at Wells Fargo, Trader Joe's, Draeger's and pocket parks
- Noted that the Plan assumes the parking in the garages will be available to accommodate the new parking demand; stated belief that the two are unlikely to

track each other and that it is probable that the parking demand will grow faster than available parking in a garage

- Stated that the Plan does little to improve east-west bike connectivity although this was a community goal; noted that the crossing of the railroad tracks is dependent on the High Speed Rail which is not in the City's control
- Noted that the plan includes hotels and housing but that approval of hotels separate from the overall Plan would be a better idea
- Suggested that quiet asphalt be used on all streets impacted by future projects to mitigate the increased noise from increased traffic
- Stated that his biggest concern is with the cumulative analysis because other major projects operating within the same time frame as the Plan, including Stanford medical center, vmware, Westin, Sheraton, Hillview building construction, Bohannon project, Rosewood Hotel, High Speed Rail and Facebook were given little weight in the analysis; stated that while it could be argued that under CEQA these projects are not required to be included, this could be relevant in a legal challenge
- Noted that even with a conservative approach, the EIR cumulative analysis concludes that the project impacts at local intersections will be considerable and result in unavoidable cumulative impacts
- Noted that under cumulative conditions, there will be significant and unavoidable impacts to streets, intersections and routes of regional significance
- Noted that traffic on five streets were analyzed in three different EIRs and had significant impacts; noted that of the streets studied in the EIR, 40 segments and 19 intersections will have significant cumulative adverse impacts
- Noted that the City has already committed to impacts on 27 street segments and 11 intersections through approvals of other projects
- Stated that the City Council already has mortgaged the future capacity of the roadway and the quality of life of the people who live on the impacted streets will suffer; noted that if the Plan is approved the City will have committed to significant adverse impacts on 19 intersections and 40 streets and used up all available capacity for other projects

John Hickson

- Representing the Menlo Park Lions Club, sponsors of the Farmer's Market
- Stated that the 32 parking spaces in plaza 6 that are proposed for removal will have a significant impact on the Farmer's Market by taking a large chunk out of the Farmer's Market area and disrupting the layout and smooth running of the Market
- Noted that the Planning Commission was recommending closing off a smaller area and that, according to Commissioner Kadvany's information, any food vendors would be located in plaza 7; noted the importance of having the food vendors separated from the Farmer's Market by Chestnut Street; noted that the Farmer's Market does not want hot food vendors to mingle with the Market which would happen if the vendors were allowed in plaza 6
- Noted that they pay considerable fees to operate and want to maintain the Market for fresh produce

- Stated that they prefer no marketplace or closing of Chestnut Street but that if it happens and vendors are only allowed in plaza 7, it would appear there is no need for a structure in plaza 6
- Suggested that when a trial is conducted for the paseo and marketplace, that it be held all week as opposed to just Saturday and Sunday to test the impacts on the downtown and Farmer's Market

Adina Levin

- Resident for five years, member of the Green Ribbon Citizen's Committee (GRCC) and of the Environmental Quality Commission; speaking as an individual to report on activity from the GRCC
- Stated that a recent meeting drew more than 25 people to discuss the Plan from a climate change perspective; reported that GRCC is not ready to take a specific position yet but does have a few comments
- Noted that the EIR is commissioned to look at climate change from a local perspective but from a regional perspective the Plan area is a priority development area for infill that can help to prevent sprawl; encouraged city to consider regional impacts potentially using data from ABAG and MTC
- Noted that the Bicycle Commission has agreed to recommend to the City Council that it take on some further analysis from a bike and pedestrian perspective
- Noted that Caltrans is more open to bike and pedestrian improvements
- Stated belief that traffic impacts can be mitigated by improvements to bike, pedestrian and transit access and service; cited Palo Alto's improvement in the number of students biking and walking due to improvements in those facilities; suggested more analysis of possible traffic impact mitigations

Jo Eggers

- Questioned whether there is enough parking in downtown and whether it is accessible
- Noted that plaza 2 is now being considered for parking and believed that would increase parking accessibility; stated support for including plaza 2 as well as other sites
- Suggested that city carefully consider the timing of the parking removal, especially in regard to the potential need for parking during the construction of garages on existing plazas; noted possible need for on-street parking during the garage construction
- Stated that the city should also consider the impacts of construction dust and noise on the vibrancy of downtown

Avonne (Bonnie) McClure

- Representing the Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter
- Stated that the Sierra Club has already submitted comments on the Plan and EIR
- Stated concern for the Planning Commission's recommendation for reduced height in the Station Area; recommended that the façade height not be reduced and expressed support for the original façade height of 45 feet and overall height

of 60 feet with upper level setbacks, depending on the level of public benefit offered

- Suggested that the Planning Commission consider height along with good design and quality materials in project review
- Expressed support for the recommendation to reduce residential parking ratios, noting that seniors and young people don't need two cars; stated support for parking approaches that use unbundled parking and shared cars
- Stated a preference for mixed age housing projects

Patti Fry

- Noted that change is coming and that planning for the change is good so that the city gets what it wants
- Commented that over time, projects have been approved on all of the vacant lots on El Camino Real although not all of the projects have been built, probably because of the economy; commented that the Plan will not provide everything necessary to see development of the lots
- Noted that the idea of converting a suburban area to a San Francisco type environment needs more discussion
- Commented that the results of the FIA are quite disturbing even though there has been inadequate time to review the document in detail
- Commented that the FIA demonstrates that the Plan will result in a deficit unless a hotel is constructed
- Commented that the FIA shows that the Plan favors office and that retail is projected to decline in square footage; stated that there would be a loss equivalent to \$2.5 million in revenue
- Stated that the city has a deficit of housing compared to jobs and there are other approved projects that will add even more jobs
- Commented that the operating costs of the garages are substantially more than for the plazas
- Suggested reducing the public benefit bonus level to the current maximum levels of allowed development since higher levels are not necessary to promote projects to come forward; suggested that this would help favor housing and community-serving retail over office; suggested that the public benefits could fund things that are difficult to fund
- Commented that the Plan need to be redefined and needs input from other commissions; provided the Bicycle Commission looking at the issue of east-west connectivity as an example and suggested asking the Finance and Audit Committee to review; commented that it may result in a better mix of uses and a Plan to support those uses; noted distrust of the market economy and that it doesn't always result in positive financial benefit

Chuck Bernstein

- Distributed a letter documenting problems in the FIA; noted that there are serious errors with things not adding up, wrong totals and major errors
- Noted that he could not recreate the calculation of sales tax with there being a \$100,000 difference between his calculations and those of the consultant

- Expressed hope that the FIA is taken seriously and that he can get answers to his questions and concerns
- Noted his second handout that shows the deconstruction of the consultants work to try and determine how much each Plan component would contribute to the General Fund; noted that he could not get the same numbers as the consultant with the two largest differences being in sales tax and per capita revenue
- Commented that the FIA shows that the housing component is a huge loser with a loss of almost \$400,000 in the last year of the Plan; noted that commercial provides a small surplus of \$71,000 out of a total surplus of \$2.2 million
- Noted that housing and commercial use also carry the greatest environmental impacts to the city
- Noted that retail shows a positive surplus
- Noted that hotels carry the greatest surplus and he cautioned the Commission against looking at it in the aggregate; questioned why the city would carry the losses from the housing and commercial
- Suggested that if the Plan is pursued, focusing on the positive fiscal outcome and starting with the hotels; suggested that nothing should happen until a hotel is built
- Commented that the first rule should be to do no harm but the Plan does harm
- Commented that some Plan elements could improve Menlo Park, but not the entire Plan; suggested that more study was needed and that the Plan should not be rushed through to encourage development which will happen anyway because of the desirability of Menlo Park
- Recommended that the city take the time to do it right

Peter Mason

- Town Council Member in Woodside, lives in western hills area and is a former resident of Menlo Park
- Stated that the Plan is a great visionary effort by the city and will create a vibrant commercial area and improve parking; noted support for the inclusion of plaza 2 for parking
- Strongly recommended moving forward