

Attachment A
El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan
Summary of Public and Planning Commission Comment
July 11, 2011 Planning Commission Meeting

This summary is intended to inform the Planning Commission's review of the Draft Specific Plan. As such, it is not intended to capture the full discussion at the meeting, but focuses on the items identified for further consideration in the Commission's upcoming discussions. The summary includes the public comment and comment by individual Commission Members, as well as a listing of the comments by Issues Relevant to all Geographical Areas of the Specific Plan, Issues Relevant to the Station Area, Issues Relevant to the Downtown, and Issues Relevant to the El Camino Real Corridor. Although several of the issues may have applicable in more than one category, the intent is to help provide structure to the Commission's discussions.

Summary of Issues to be considered in Planning Commission Deliberations

Issues Relevant to all Geographical Areas of the Specific Plan

Evaluation of Plan Objectives and Potential Impacts

- Consider what impacts business owners may experience due to the implementation of various plan elements and how the Plan can best address those potential impacts.
- Identify potential benefits of the additional commercial and residential development allowed by the Plan.
- Consider the overall community values and inherent policy issues when reviewing the City Council's guidance to the Commission.
- Consider the different community values associated with the term "village character" and how this may influence decisions on the Plan.
- Consider what is meant by "vibrancy", understanding that it could range from doing a better job of being Menlo Park to boosting the profile of Menlo Park by creating attractions that will sustain and move the city to the next level.
- Consider short term and long term benefits and funding of Plan elements.
- Consider the accuracy of the ABAG population projections used in the Draft EIR.
- Identified need for sufficient information and documentation in order to fully consider whether the Plan's guiding principles have been successfully applied.

Evaluation of Development Potential

- Identify any additional information that would be useful to the Commission in determining minimum requirements to encourage redevelopment of property.
- Consider how best to analyze development potential.
- Consider whether and what evidence may be needed to ensure that there is a market for the commercial space proposed in the Plan
- Identified need for fiscal information in order to assess whether statements and assumptions in the Plan are supported; as an example cited the proposed

reduced FARs for medical office uses and the need to understand the economics to determine if the proposed FARs are self-defeating or intentionally defeating.

- Identified the need to understand the conditions necessary for properties to be redeveloped under the existing zoning regulations, i.e., without the proposed zoning changes.
- Consider the appropriate incentives and processes to attract the kind of development outlined in the Plan.

Plan Components

- Consider whether the Plan should include specific provisions for senior housing.
- Consider whether additional measures should be included in the Plan to enhance east-west connectivity.
- Consider whether building height should be addressed as part of the bonus program, similar to density and intensity.
- Consider whether alternative modes of transportation are strong enough to support further reductions in parking rates as a way to reduce potential traffic impacts.
- Consider whether the categories of land uses as permitted, administratively permitted, and conditional are appropriate and how these categories may change the Planning Commission's role in the review process.
- Consider the appropriateness of an alternative housing impact fee that scales in portion to the build out of office space allowed by the Plan, as a method to reign in development after a certain amount has been constructed.
- Consider whether an in-lieu sales tax fee would serve to encourage the turnover of or more realistic rental rates of land banked properties.
- Consider providing more detail on the public benefit portion of the Plan.

Plan Implementation

- Identify some "quick hits" and consider how best to begin to implement those in the short term.
- Consider whether there are ways for the Plan to guarantee the success of projects; consider whether the use of pilot projects can help to provide the guarantees.
- Consider building into the Plan additional measures for monitoring development and adjusting the Plan as may be necessary so that appropriate expectations are established for property owners and developers.
- Consider the inclusion of additional interim reviews of the Plan as uses reach certain levels of build-out.

Additional Information

- Believes there would be a benefit in having a table comparing existing and proposed zoning regulations.
- Identified need for an image from the Plan for a poster that could be used for neighborhood outreach.

- Identified need for information on the number of properties owned by private trusts in order to address land banking issues.

Issues Relevant to the Station Area

- Consider what types of incentives are necessary to encourage land development and whether incentives such as height, density and intensity included in the Plan are appropriate, especially for the El Camino Real corridor.
- Consider alternatives to the Plan proposals that would strengthen connectivity in the Plan area, i.e., use of more sophisticated traffic signals rather than the proposed bulb-outs and other pedestrians improvements along El Camino Real.

Issues Relevant to the Downtown

Plan Proposals

- Consider how best to communicate the flexibility inherent in the marketplace concept.
- Consider whether more specificity should be provided regarding the location of the Farmer's Market.

Sequencing of Public Improvements and Use of Pilot Projects

- Consider the appropriate sequencing of activities that would kick start the public improvements, perhaps starting with sidewalk widening on Santa Cruz Avenue
- Consider how Chestnut Paseo should be considered in the sequencing given the lack of activity in the area currently and need for activity on both sides of Chestnut Street before implementation of the paseo.
- Consider how best to use the concept of pilot projects or temporary installations of some public improvements, especially the widening of sidewalks and Chestnut Paseo, and how the use of pilot projects can help to ascertain the potential impacts on parking and traffic in the downtown of proposed public improvements

Parking

- Consider whether the Plan should include more provisions to ensure the continuation of convenient customer parking.
- Consider whether the Plan should include additional limitations regarding on-street parking in order to minimize potential conflicts between parked cars and bicycles in order to enhance bicycle safety in the downtown.
- Consider feasible circulation patterns for parking plazas 6 and 7, inclusive of the Chestnut Paseo.
- Identified need for a sample pro-forma for a parking garage in order to evaluate how the financing of such a structure might affect property and business owners, especially those not considering redevelopment of their properties.
- Consider what impact a parking assessment district for structured parking would have on property values.
- Consider alternatives to the proposed structured parking heights, locations and uses, i.e., a reduction in the height of the garages, use of parking plaza 2 as a

location rather than parking plazas 1 and/or 3, and the removal of housing as a component of the parking plaza 3 garage.

- Identified the need to clarify the legal status and potential process of approval for changes in the use of the parking plazas.

Issues Relevant to the El Camino Real Corridor

- Consider what types of incentives are necessary to encourage land development and whether incentives such as height, density and intensity included in the Plan are appropriate, especially for the El Camino Real corridor.
- Consider the zoning parameters carefully for the properties along the southeast corridor of El Camino Real given their narrow characteristic.
- Consider alternatives to the Plan proposals that would strengthen connectivity in the Plan area, i.e., use of more sophisticated traffic signals rather than the proposed bulb-outs and other pedestrians improvements along El Camino Real.

Summary of Public Comment

Gail Sredanovic

- Lives near The Alameda and was an active participant in the Alameda Streetscape Task Force which was successful in fighting for bike lanes
- Has spent considerable time and money in Menlo Park
- Although she is no longer in a wheelchair, she can't see herself being able to walk the distance back and forth to parking structures and worries about people with groceries walking that kind of distance
- Concerned about the impacts of the marketplace on Trader Joe's and the farmer's market; they are irreplaceable features
- Stated that if it's not broken, don't fix it and noted that she avoids Palo Alto and Redwood City; Palo Alto parking is impossible
- With the exception of Santana Row, there are very high vacancy rates in San Jose and Palo Alto and Redwood City is losing money
- Asked the Commission to look hard at the Draft Plan
- Noted that she was shocked by the number of architects and elaborate displays at the first meeting; she submitted comments but is unsure if they were read or considered; also shocked in subsequent meetings by the loss of parking and use of parking structures and how the Plan may impinge on the farmer's market
- Noted that having 680 people trying to park could be overwhelming
- Came away from meetings with feeling that the Plan was not community-driven, that the focus was on El Camino Real and that real estate brokers would be the ones to benefit.

Roxanne Rorapaugh

- Noted Wilbur-Smith report on parking and speaker series presentation that emphasizes "parking once" concept, use of parking structures, and infill development on parking plazas; noted similarities between this concept and Plan

proposals and wondered how much this earlier work influenced the Plan proposals compared to community input

- Noted that in Menlo Park, people don't drive from plaza to plaza but instead park and walk around
- The plazas help define the "small-town" image
- There is no parking shortage and a parking structure is not needed

Tiger Bachler

- Former resident of Menlo Park and owner of Alys Grace women's boutique
- Offered the business person's perspective
- Noted the loss of business and current vacancies because the downtown is not appealing; concerned about the sustainability of her business
- Noted the need for more vibrancy downtown and that vibrancy helps small business owners; expressed support for the revitalization of downtown
- Expressed concern that farmer's market, Trader Joe's and Draeger's should be protected from impacts since they provide for substantial vibrancy in the downtown

Jim Clendenin

- Younger generation has nicknamed Menlo Park as "Menlo Dark"
- Noted his participation in all events and opportunities for public participation on the Plan
- Hundreds of residents involved in the workshops and came to a consensus; the results should be respected and taken seriously
- The Plan does a good job of balancing the community desires for a village character as well as enhanced vibrancy
- The Plan includes flexibility and is a good guide for development
- Noted opposition that had been expressed at the last workshop and wished it had been expressed earlier so that it could have been more thoroughly discussed

Anne Moser

- Asked the Commission to keep in mind the growth of the senior population and the need to address their needs now and in the future, specifically for affordable housing
- Noted that 12 percent of the population work in Menlo Park which also indicates a need for housing for more daytime workers resulting in a more cohesive and productive place
- Asked the Commission to look at ways of increasing affordable housing
- Suggested having a table at farmer's market with staff and Council Members to help further inform people of the Specific Plan

Frank Carney

- Has lived in Menlo Park for 40 years; great place to raise a family

- Attended many of the meetings and the one thing that came across as an overriding community value was the small-town or village character yet Plan disregards this value and instead emphasizes growth and vibrancy; focus seems to come from people who want to make a profit
- The Commission should keep in mind the community value centered on maintaining the small town character when reviewing the growth potential in the Plan
- Consider installing street changes on a temporary basis to assess impact; examples of where this was beneficial or could have been beneficial include the closure of Alma Street near Linfield Oaks and the changes tried on Santa Cruz Avenue

Robert Lico

- Property manager for a couple of downtown buildings; family grew up in Menlo Park
- Believes the objectives of the Plan are headed in the right direction but have gone a bit too far
- Goal of expanding services is a good idea but does not believe the infrastructure, existing parking or City budget can take on an expansion of retail, commercial and residential
- Noted that even with focus on other forms of transportation, people will continue to drive; noted benefit of having close parking for elderly customers of Walgreens
- Change for the expansion of the population does not give anything back to the City; City needs to take care of what it has
- Police and Fire infrastructure is not ready for changes on Santa Cruz Avenue that remove parking and create potential obstacles to emergency services
- Great idea to close Santa Cruz Avenue for the farmer's market and other events but do not create competition for existing retail uses
- Menlo Park should be proud of having such a low vacancy rate
- Best way to "expand" sidewalks is to remove unsightly newspaper racks on Santa Cruz Avenue; expansion of sidewalks on El Camino Real may be okay
- Keep downtown at a two-story height and El Camino Real at four stories

Jo Eggers

- Noted that City had asked for the public to provide comments on the Draft EIR but that she has not received a notice that the comments have been addressed yet
- Believes the Commission needs the complete comments to make decisions on the completeness of the EIR before it is approved; expressed hope that the Commission would have the comments before the conclusion of their meetings
- Noted that she believes her comments as well as the comments of others are very important

Michael Frost

- Specific Plan is on the right track; noted factors that influence need for efforts like Plan including the fact that we are in the 21st century, climate change, peak oil, raising energy costs, and the global economy
- Noted that city lost significant revenue with the loss of the car dealerships and that the Specific Plan is addressing the need to increase revenue, create a livable downtown core and bring jobs to the city
- Specific Plan recognizes that the millennial generation is driving the economy in the area through technology companies; they don't want to drive to business parks in the suburbs but want to live, work and play in the same community
- Noted that he loves the farmer's market and where it is currently located but that farmer's markets are movable and can go anywhere; their benefit is not based on their location
- Plan area faces no flood risk
- Infill development is the future and where we need to go as a society; no matter how nice the past was, we can't romanticize every part of the past
- The Plan is forward looking and a perfect policy framework for the city to drive new development and be competitive

Carole Grace

- Has been a resident of Menlo Park for 30 years and grew up in Palo Alto
- Expressed appreciation for the process; noted the significant amount of public comment received and asked that it be taken into consideration
- Supports garages and offered the garages along California Avenue in Palo Alto as a positive example; noted that she prefers using garages in inclement weather and finds above ground garages very easy to use
- Believes there are ways to provide both convenient parking for customers and parking for employees through the use of garages; noted the difficulties of having shop owners needing to move their cars every few hours
- Stated that she chose to live in Menlo Park because of the opportunities to walk and bike but has found that the on-street parking makes biking dangerous because of cars pulling out, believes that bike access and safety would improve if on-street parking were moved to garages

Don Brawner

- Served many years on the Transportation and Housing Commissions and Board of Zoning Adjustment
- Asked the name of the first consultant on the process and commented that the reason the first consultant was replaced is that current consultant has worked for Stanford for years and this allowed the City to harmonize its plans with those of Stanford; commented that this seems like a set up and potential scam
- Commented that the Plan appears dedicated to certain development interests with one-story buildings who want to build up to five stories
- Commented that problems in Menlo Park started when real estate interests started building office on Menlo and Oak Grove Avenues; commented that office employees are dead weight since they do not stay to shop in town

- Commented that best retail center is Town and Country in Palo Alto and that they are not adding offices; Stanford shopping center is also not adding offices; commented that offices kill neighborhood shopping and offered recent development in Sunnyvale as an example
- Commented that mixed use is whatever the developer can get away with
- Finds it incredible that Plan pushes for taller office buildings
- Stated that he would provide more information at a later date
- Expressed appreciation of Roxanne Rorapaugh's editorial

Lawrence Zaro

- Manager of a property on Santa Cruz Avenue
- His tenant is worried about the project impacts on his livelihood
- Plan sounds like a fairy tale, promising everything that everyone wants
- Does not see many people walking on Santa Cruz Avenue
- Asked the Commission to consider what guarantees will be in place to ensure that everything will work; stated that if there are no guarantees, nothing should be done
- Commented that Redwood City is a mess and that the only people who know what it takes to run a business are the business owners
- Asked how much the City is willing to pay for the Plan and how much the citizens will have to pay; commented that merchants will be hurt because costs will be passed down to them; noted the vacancies downtown

Planning Commission Comments on Issues for Further Consideration

Chair Bressler

- Consider what impacts business owners may experience due to the implementation of various plan elements and how the Plan can best address those potential impacts.
- Identify potential benefits of the additional commercial and residential development allowed by the Plan.
- Consider whether the Plan should include additional limitations regarding on-street parking in order to minimize potential conflicts between parked cars and bicycles in order to enhance bicycle safety in the downtown.
- Consider whether the Plan should include more provisions to ensure the continuation of convenient customer parking.

Vice Chair Ferrick

- Consider whether the Plan should include specific provisions for senior housing.
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Commissioner Eiref

- Believes there would be a benefit in having a table comparing existing and proposed zoning regulations.
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- Consider the need for centers of activity on both sides of Chestnut Street before implementation of the paseo, including in a pilot program.
- Consider whether alternative modes of transportation are strong enough to support further reductions in parking rates as a way to reduce potential traffic impacts.

Commissioner O'Malley

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Commissioner Riggs

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Commissioner Yu

- Consider the appropriate incentives and processes to attract the kind of development outlines in the Plan.

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