

Attachment A
El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan
Summary of Public Comment
July 21, 2011 Planning Commission Meeting

This summary is intended to inform the Planning Commission's review of the Draft Specific Plan.

Summary of Public Comment

Charlie Bourne

- Commented that the renderings in the Specific Plan are difficult to read all of the details, but urged the Commission to take a serious look at traffic circulation in the proposed civic plaza area.
- Stated that it is important for businesses that there be no reduction in movement or capacity, especially along Merrill Street and lower Santa Cruz Avenue.
- Noted that the Plan proposes extending the civic plaza to Menlo Center and hopes that reciprocity and symmetry are retained and that a similar extension can be considered for Menlo Square.
- Asked the Commission to consider the likely increase in shuttle bus traffic and need for expanded loading capacity, especially as a result of mitigations requiring shuttle buses for recently approved development.
- Asked the Commission to consider Sam Trans' plans to expand the transit hub.
- Questioned how all of the proposed improvements could be accommodated in such a small area.

Roxanne Rorapaugh

- Noted that the Station Area East (SA E) designation includes additional office use yet there is not a need for more office; specifically noted that she would not like to see Applewood Pizza replaced with office.
- Commented that the concept of public benefit needs to be more defined and not just something negotiated with the Council; there needs to be rules that apply to everyone equally and then further negotiation can occur within the context of the rules.
- Stated that she likes the clock tower as an entry to Menlo Park and finds it surprising that the Plan does not recognize the tower as an appropriate monument.
- Suggested focusing on improving safety in area as opposed to new facilities; noted difficulties at Ravenswood and the railroad tracks with being caught on the tracks and asked for the City to consider options such as moving the crosswalk further up the street or prohibiting right hand turns on Alma Street.

Jeff Warmoth

- Noted his association with Sand Hill Property Company.
- Stated his support for the process and for setting forth what owners can do with their properties; noted that having certainty is hugely important especially for owners of underutilized properties.
- Commented that the ¼-mile radius from the station includes more properties than the SA E and that he would like to see some of the development standards of SA E applied to other properties within the ¼-mile radius; noted that the approach to the SA E regulations are well thought out and should be applied to all properties within a ¼-mile radius equally.
- Noted height as one example and provided an example from Los Altos where the community decided that 45 feet with a third floor setback was appropriate along El Camino Real; stated that a 38 foot height limit is too low but that it would be reasonable to consider a 45 foot height limit with a 38 foot façade height in the El Camino Real Northeast Residential (ECR NE R) district.
- Commented that the difference in setbacks between the SA E and ECR NE R districts makes sense given the historic pattern of no setbacks in the station area but somewhat greater setbacks in other areas that can provide an appropriate pedestrian environment.
- Commented that the density and FAR of the SA E district should also be applied to the area within a ¼-mile of the station since higher density housing near the station and downtown is the right place for the housing.

Frank Carney

- Commented on the large number of proposals for the small area and asked about who will be paring down the list of proposals.
- Noted that Commissioner Kadvany had posed a key question regarding the goal of the Specific Plan and whether it is to improve Menlo Park or build something that will be different in the future; noted that many resident's like the current small-town character.
- Noted Commissioner Kadvany's comment about small town charm being in the eye of the beholder and stated his belief that most people would think the number of proposed changes would end the small-town charm.
- Stated his disagreement with the idea that upper floor setbacks on five-story buildings would help to minimize the impact.
- Noted Commissioner Eiref's question on whether the City has any data on existing conditions and that the City does not.
- Noted that not yet having the Fiscal Impact Analysis puts the Commission at a disadvantage.
- Questioned whether the Specific Plan is really an improvement and whether the amount of change proposed is really desired.

Bonnie McClure

- Stated her association with the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter
- Stated her support of the Plan overall, but noted that she had sent a comment letter on the Draft EIR.

- Commented that the Plan supports a mix of uses around the Station, including housing and that it is important to have higher density housing near the Station enabling people to walk to the Station; higher density housing around the Station allows for other areas of the City to remain in single-family residential development.

Holly Bourne

- Stated her association with Mid Peninsula Animal Hospital on Merrill Street.
- Commented that the drawings in the Plan show her building being gone and felt there was a lack of consideration for the existing business; noted that the business relies on on-street parking and asked for consideration of the long-term impact on the business.

Don Brawner

- Questioned why the meetings were being held in the summer on Thursday evenings and felt that this resulted in less transparency in the process; suggested meetings be postponed until after Labor Day.
- Referenced Menlo Park's opposition to planned development at Stanford in 1994-95 and eventual loss in the attempt to oppose the development.
- Referenced the activity and vibrancy of the Town and Country in Palo Alto on Wednesday night when a band was playing.
- Questioned consultant selection process and stated his belief that the current consultant may have a conflict of interest based on work also done for Stanford.
- Noted examples from Sunnyvale and Redwood City where similar proposals were failures.
- Noted that Menlo Park Fire Protection District appears to have concerns.
- Suggested terminating the project before more money is spent.

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