

EL CAMINO REAL/DOWNTOWN
VISION PLAN



Submitted to
The City of Menlo Park | July 15, 2008

This Plan was accepted by the Menlo Park City Council
on July 15, 2008.

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DESIGN, COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT

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EL CAMINO REAL/DOWNTOWN VISION PLAN

This document reflects the vision of the Menlo Park community for Menlo Parks' Downtown and El Camino Real corridor. This vision has been developed through intensive outreach and discussion during Phase I of this process. The Vision Plan is intended to serve as a starting point for further discussion and community planning. The next step in Menlo Park's planning for the future of El Camino Real and Downtown will be in Phase II. Planning processes taking place in that phase will include expanded community-wide discussions, stakeholder involvement and technical analysis.

A. The Vision Plan Area

As shown in Figure 1 below, the Vision Plan Area generally includes all parcels fronting onto El Camino Real for its entire length through Menlo Park; parcels fronting onto Oak Grove Avenue, Santa Cruz Avenue and Menlo Avenue generally between University Drive and the railroad tracks; and parcels fronting onto Alma Street immediately east of the train tracks.

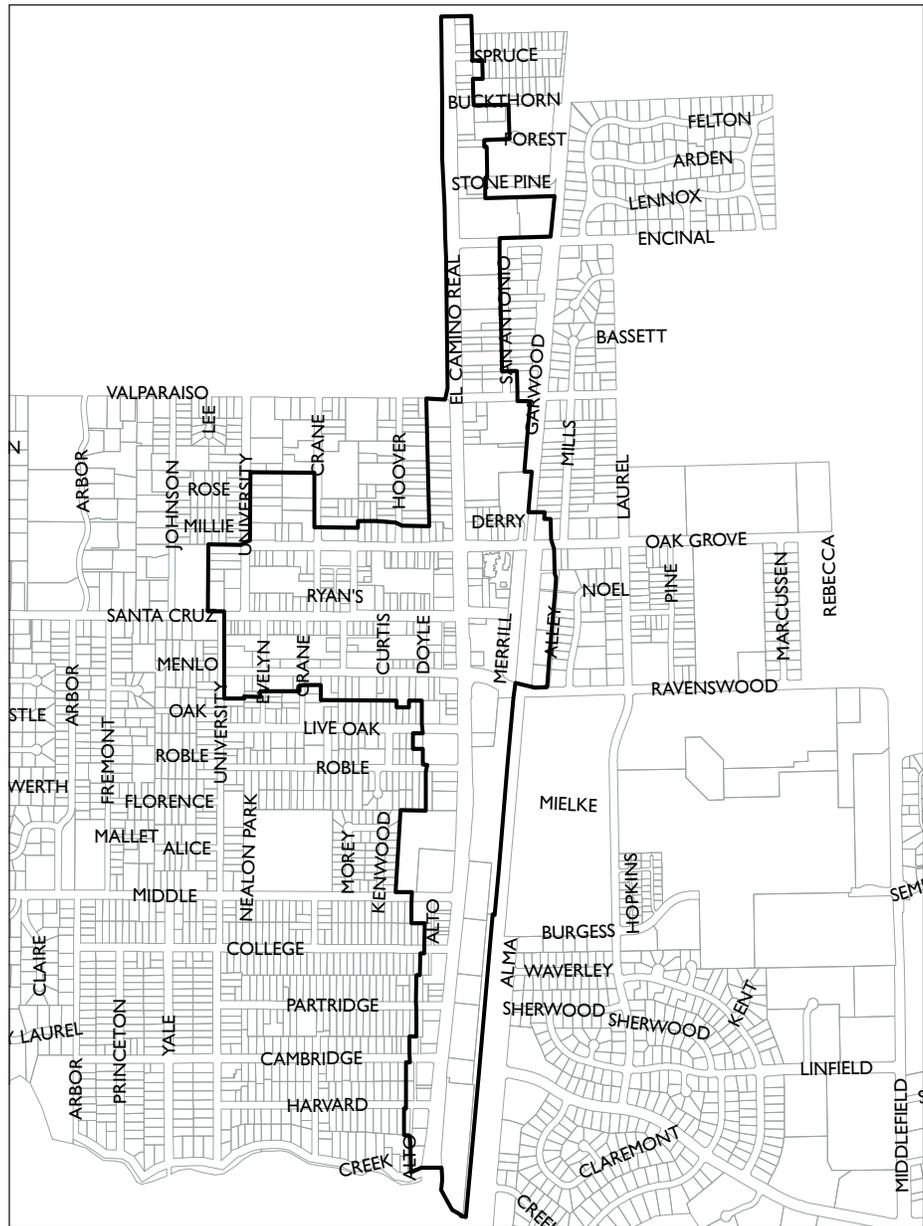


Figure 1. Vision Plan Area

B. Outreach Efforts

The Vision Plan was developed through a community workshop process. Attendance at those workshops and community interest in the Vision Plan process were generated through an extensive series of outreach efforts to the Menlo Park community. Those efforts included:

- ◆ Visioning Process Oversight and Outreach Committee
- ◆ Mobile Tour
- ◆ Walking Tours
- ◆ Stakeholder Interviews
- ◆ Community Surveys
- ◆ Targeted Outreach
- ◆ Speaker Series

Input gathered from these outreach efforts, the three previous Community Workshops and the workshop held with the Planning Commission are included as appendices to this report.



Mobile tour.



Walking tour.



Community workshop.

C. Vision Statement

Downtown Menlo Park and the El Camino Real corridor through Menlo Park will continue to be known for the vitality and diverse range of activities that are available. It will become a place where people live, work and shop and a place that provides services and offers cultural opportunities. A unique identity can be created for the Vision Plan Area that builds on the attributes and opportunities that exist as community assets in the Vision Plan Area today. Those Menlo Park assets include:



Santa Cruz Avenue.



Train station.

- ◆ **Santa Cruz Avenue.** Menlo Park’s “Main Street” is an intimately-scaled street with fairly wide sidewalks and a rhythm of storefronts that is conducive to pedestrian activity. City-owned parking plazas are accessible via a series of similarly-scaled cross streets and augment the on-street parking provided on Santa Cruz Avenue.
- ◆ **The Menlo Park Train Station.** Rail and bus service connects Menlo Park’s downtown to the region; the station provides the opportunity for Menlo Park residents to access job opportunities elsewhere on the Peninsula as well as to bring visitors to existing and expanded opportunities in downtown Menlo Park.
- ◆ **Menlo Park’s Independently-owned Businesses.** The range of services and goods provided by local businesses and merchants has been identified by several community members as a major contributor to the small town, or village, character in Menlo Park. One-of-a-kind retail businesses and services contribute greatly to making a downtown unique.
- ◆ **Strategic Opportunities for Near-term Change.** Vacancies and underutilization of the Plan Area’s larger parcels, particularly those with the exposure that El Camino Real provides, offer the opportunity to envision future uses that are different than those that formerly occupied those key sites.

- ◆ **City-owned Parking Plazas.** These areas are integral to the health of businesses and merchants in the Downtown. However, the parking plazas are also the largest areas of City-owned land in the Plan Area, outside of public streets. A comprehensive redesign of these areas could provide the potential for a more efficient configuration and greater number of parking spaces, as well as shade trees in conjunction with plazas or small park spaces that could be components of a coordinated downtown pedestrian network.
- ◆ **Future Railroad Conditions.** Although precise determinations of future activities on the Caltrain tracks are unknown at this time, alterations or expansion of the tracks to accommodate high speed rail or future Caltrain needs seems likely. Acknowledging that such changes may occur provides the opportunity for the Vision Plan to propose ways to expand east-west connectivity across the tracks for bicyclists and pedestrians, in addition to vehicles, in conjunction with future track changes.
- ◆ **Other Unique Community Assets.** Menlo Park also contains a number of additional community assets, both in and outside of the Vision Plan Area. Allied Arts Guild, an architecturally unique complex, is located near the Vision Plan Area. Fremont Park, Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, Burgess Park and the Menlo Park Civic Center are also important community assets located just outside the Vision Plan Area. The Park Theater, now vacant, is located in the Vision Plan Area and is considered by some community members to be a significant cultural asset. The numerous trees of the city are also considered by many to be an important community asset.



Parking plazas.



Allied Arts Guild.

Menlo Park has also undergone several previous planning projects and studies for this area. The Vision Plan builds on these earlier efforts, which include the following:

- “Imagine a Downtown” Charrette
- Center City Design Plan
- Commercial Zoning Ordinance Update (CZOU)
- Downtown Parking Structure Feasibility Study

These community assets and past efforts are among the building blocks for attaining a vision of a more vital and thriving downtown and establish Menlo Park’s segment of El Camino Real as an integral component of that vitality. In order to achieve this vision for the future of the El Camino Real corridor and downtown Menlo Park, future development and public improvements need to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the next section.

D. Goals and Objectives

This section provides goals and specific objectives for twelve topic areas, all of which were derived from the visioning process. The goals and objectives follow a brief background discussion about the community input on each topic. For some goals and objectives, an expanded discussion providing recommendations for implementation or potential City improvements is provided. Figure 2 on the next page shows a conceptual illustrative plan for future development and open space in the Vision Plan Area.

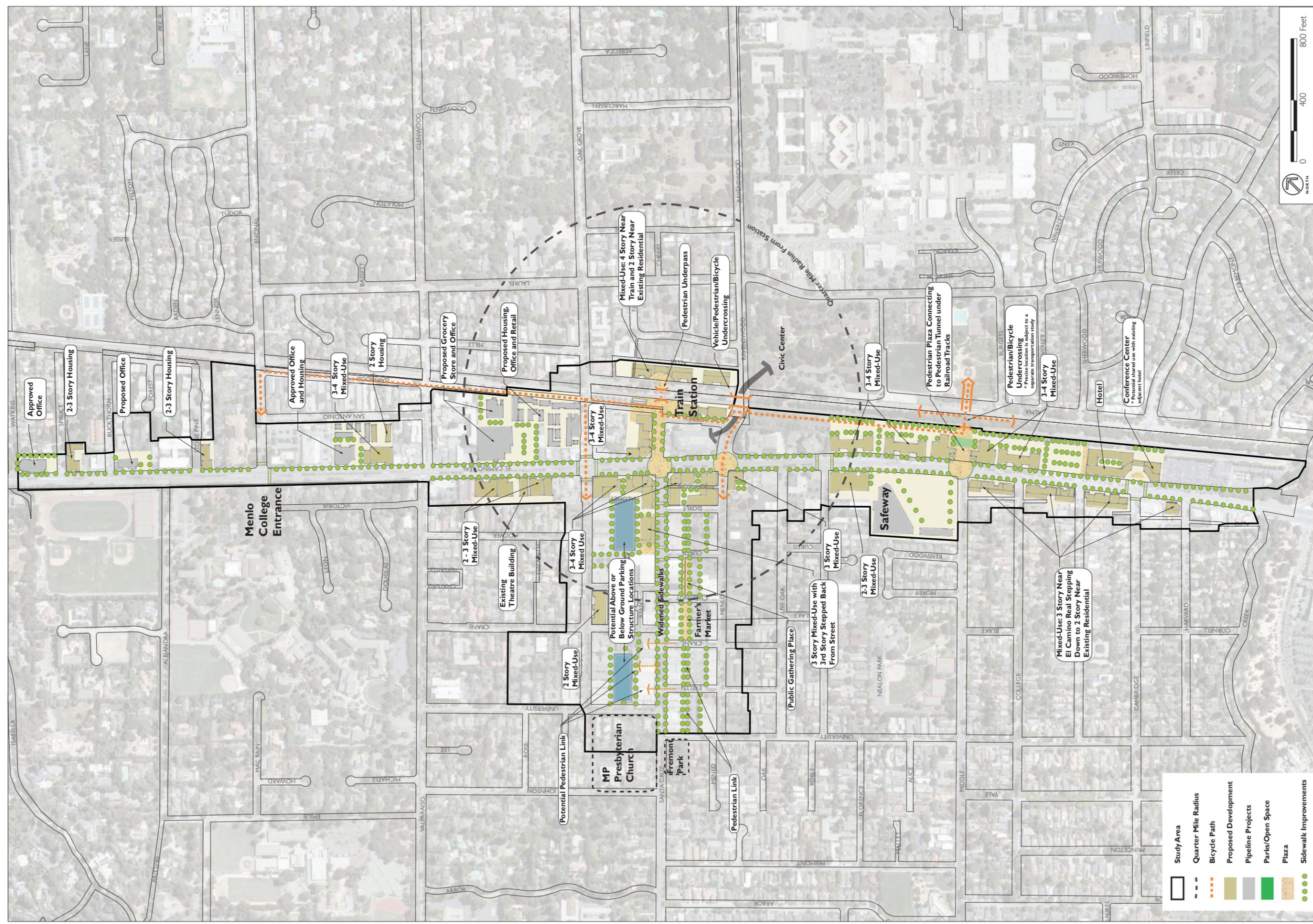


FIGURE 2
CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

1. Vision Plan Area Character

Background

An image that was repeatedly provided by a number of community members was one of a “village feel.” This was quite often characterized by the inclusion of vertical mixed-use, but not “highly intense” development. Several other characteristics also contribute to the village feel, including a comfortable, walkable scale and pedestrian safety in conjunction with active places, expanded business hours and more vitality in the Downtown. It was expressed that the walkable character already present in Downtown, shown in Figure 3, could be improved. The interest in expanded vitality was also heard from participants seeking an appropriate balance between “village” and “city”, where the latter might have more cultural institutions, restaurants and shops.



Figure 3. Santa Cruz Avenue Character.

The character identified in the visioning process for El Camino Real is one that includes variety in development. El Camino Real should be a diverse corridor, including different architectural styles and building scales, featuring good design and high-quality building materials. Buildings and open spaces should provide visual interest and be compatible with their existing context.

Given this input, it is recommended that Menlo Park establish the following goal and objectives to ensure that the “village feel” is pursued for the Vision Plan Area:

Goal: Maintain a village character unique to Menlo Park.

Objectives:

- Downtown accessible by all transportation modes, and particularly for pedestrians.
- Expanded housing opportunities, particularly for seniors and all segments of the workforce.
- Well-designed and well-maintained buildings, plazas and streets.
- Downtown storefronts that exhibit community pride and contribute to Menlo Park’s identity.
- Development in the Downtown and on El Camino Real that is sensitive to the adjacent residential context.
- A mix of uses, with upper floor uses ranging from residential to office and—under specific circumstances—retail.
- Specially-designed and strategically-placed gateways that mark the entry to Menlo Park as well as to Downtown.
- A rich tree canopy in Menlo Park.
- A balance of hardscaped plaza spaces, and active and passive green spaces.
- Development and open spaces on El Camino Real that support one another and provide a variety of uses, architectural styles and building scales.

2. East-West Connectivity

Background

East-west connectivity was identified as an important issue for the Vision Plan Area during the community outreach process. Community members specifically identified El Camino Real and the Caltrain tracks as barriers to traveling from east to west through Menlo Park, particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists.

During the workshop process, most people reported they liked the idea of a bicycle and pedestrian underpass of the train tracks and a plaza, tentatively identified at the terminus of Middle Avenue, particularly along with improved bicycle and pedestrian crossings of El Camino Real at Middle Avenue. Figure 4 shows an artist's rendering of the underpass and plaza. Community mem-



Figure 4. Rendering of a Potential Plaza and Pedestrian/Bike Underpass near Middle Avenue.

bers also expressed an interest in improved connections between the west side of El Camino Real and the train station and Civic Center areas. There were a variety of ideas expressed for how such connections could be improved, ranging from pedestrian and bicycle underpass/overpass to a grade separation, to putting some or all of El Camino Real underground as it goes through Menlo Park. Trenching Caltrain through Menlo Park was another potential solution identified by community members.



Bicycle bridge over major arterial.

Pedestrian and bicycle bridges over or tunnels under El Camino Real were also identified as potential measures for improving east-west connectivity. One idea was to connect taller buildings on opposite sides of El Camino Real with bridges between their upper floors. It was also proposed that the east and west sides of El Camino Real be connected underground at its intersection with Santa Cruz Avenue, with significant underground parking areas at either end of the pedestrian connection.

During targeted outreach sessions in Belle Haven, it was reported that some members of that community do not go to the west side of town because the transit connections between the east and west are slow and infrequent. They would like to use the train and the recreational amenities of Burgess Park but need to be able to access those areas of town more easily.

Given this input and preliminary analysis, it is recommended that Menlo Park establish the following goal and objectives to create better east-west connections:

Goal: Provide greater east-west, town-wide connectivity.

Objectives:

- Improved pedestrian/bicycle connections across the railroad tracks.
- Improved vehicular connections across railroad tracks.
- A pedestrian/bike underpass of the railroad tracks in conjunction with a public park or plaza.
- Improved crosswalk and pedestrian/bicycle connections across El Camino Real.



Pedestrian-friendly street crossing.

- Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections between Downtown and Civic Center/Burgess Park.

It is recommended that this goal and corresponding objectives be implemented through the following actions:

- Train tracks grade separated to allow Ravenswood to run underneath.
- Pedestrian/bicycle underpass of rail in conjunction with a public park or plaza at Middle Avenue (or other appropriate location).
- Pedestrian/bicycle underpass or other protected crossing of train tracks within the station area.
- El Camino Real crossing improvements at grade, including features such as textured pavement, pedestrian refuges and count-down signals, where feasible.
- Improved connections to Civic Center/Burgess Park; including resolving possible conflict with grade separations.

Other solutions for improving east-west connectivity, including the undergrounding of Caltrain and El Camino, are not recommended for the following reasons:

- Costs of these methods are high, and it is unlikely that funding could be secured during the lifespan of this Vision Plan.
- The horizontal distance required to underground Caltrain would require extensive new infrastructure, and likely have an effect on Caltrain outside of the Menlo Park city limits.
- Undergrounding Caltrain or El Camino Real would dramatically change current block and street pattern in Menlo Park, including demolition of existing buildings.
- Undergrounding Caltrain could require deep tunneling to ensure that San Francisquito Creek is not disturbed.
- Pedestrian and bicycle bridges are often used with less frequency than anticipated due to the additional time required for their use. Tunnels are often underused due to safety and lighting concerns.



Vehicular underpass of Caltrain tracks in Redwood City.



Pedestrian/bicycle underpass in Palo Alto.

3. El Camino Real Circulation

Background



El Camino Real traffic.

Traffic flow and north-south connectivity on El Camino Real was identified as an issue for the Vision Plan Area during the community outreach process. Community members specifically identified parking, traffic and pedestrian amenities as major issues for El Camino Real.

Reconnaissance of El Camino Real for this planning process determined that there are approximately twenty-two cross-sectional configurations (arrangements of lanes, parking, medians, etc.). These twenty-two conditions are sometimes repeated so that in the approximately one and one half mile length of El Camino Real in Menlo Park, at least twenty-seven different changes in configuration take place. Some community members suggested trenching or tunneling El Camino Real for a distance that would range from just the blocks between Menlo Avenue and Oak Grove Avenue to a longer stretch of El Camino Real. Some community members also suggested that connecting Sand Hill Road as it enters the Stanford Shopping Center across El Camino Real directly to Alma Street in Palo Alto would alleviate congestion. Currently, traffic turning onto El Camino Real from Alma Street must turn right, and then u-turn in Menlo Park to travel southbound on El Camino Real or to continue west on Sand Hill Road. With regard to non-trenching solutions, community opinions expressed at Workshop #2 included the following approaches:

- Convert the entire length to two travel lanes and one parking lane in each direction.
- Convert the entire length to three travel lanes and no parking lane in each direction, except where parking could also be accommodated.
- Convert the entire length to two travel lanes and one parking lane in each direction; however, the parking lane would be closed during commute hours to accommodate a third travel lane.
- Extend Alma Street or other alternate north-south routes to alleviate traffic on El Camino Real.
- Coordinate with Palo Alto to connect Sand Hill Road to Alma Street.

In addition to the input from the community, it is important to consider Caltrans in determining the vision for El Camino Real because it is a Caltrans facility. A preliminary meeting with Caltrans indicated that they would have concerns about any reduction in the number of lanes. This is due to a recent agreement with City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County (C/CAG) stating that lanes should be retained for future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) opportunities. C/CAG does, however, recognize in the agreement that additional lanes for BRT may not always be possible through downtown-type settings. BRT could be considered as a constraint to some potential improvements on El Camino Real in Menlo Park; however such a system could help to facilitate better connectivity, accessibility and safety for community members and visitors.

Given this input and some preliminary analysis, it is recommended that Menlo Park establish the following goal and objectives to improve conditions on El Camino Real:

Goal: Improve circulation and streetscape conditions on El Camino Real.

Objectives:

- Wider sidewalks.
- Less congestion.
- Calmer traffic.
- Increased opportunities for safe east-west connectivity.
- Standardized cross-sections of El Camino Real, including number of lanes, lane widths and availability of parking lanes, where feasible.



Wider sidewalks.

These objectives would need to be followed up with further engineering studies to determine how the standardized cross-section could best be achieved. There will be several different considerations to take into account in this study, including Caltrans' and C/CAG's preferences to retain lanes for Bus Rapid Transit; the desire for a more pedestrian-friendly roadway; and the desire to reduce congestion on El Camino Real. In order to implement this recommendation, the City would need to work closely with Caltrans and C/CAG to find an acceptable configuration. Further public outreach would also need to be undertaken to ensure that an appropriate tradeoff is being made

between reducing congestion on El Camino Real and creating a more pedestrian-friendly roadway. While some improvements could be made that would meet both of these objectives, most improvements to the pedestrian experience would result in either no change to congestion or an increase in congestion.

A more standard lane configuration could add to the safety and understanding of drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists. It would make it possible to have more consistent plantings in the medians and along the sidewalks. It would not necessarily result in any change in the amount of traffic congestion. Figure 5 below shows the existing street cross-section, and Figure 6 shows a recommended configuration that modifies unnecessarily-wide vehicle lanes to create wider sidewalks.

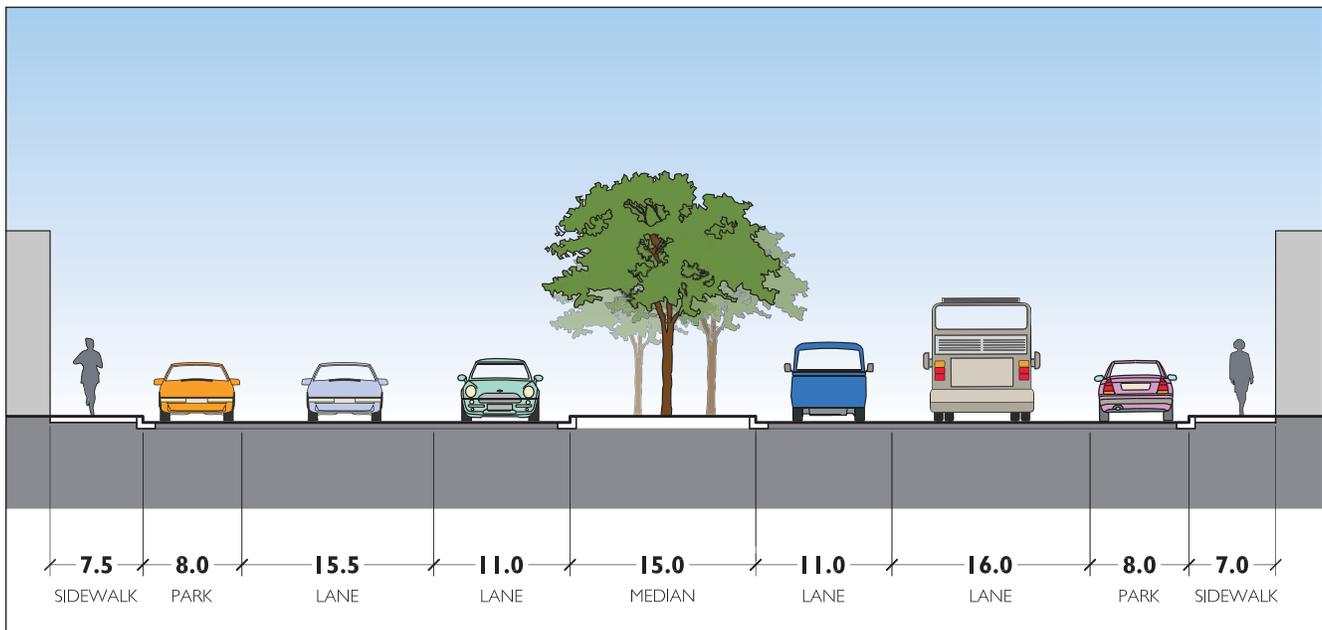


Figure 5. El Camino Real Street Cross-Section.

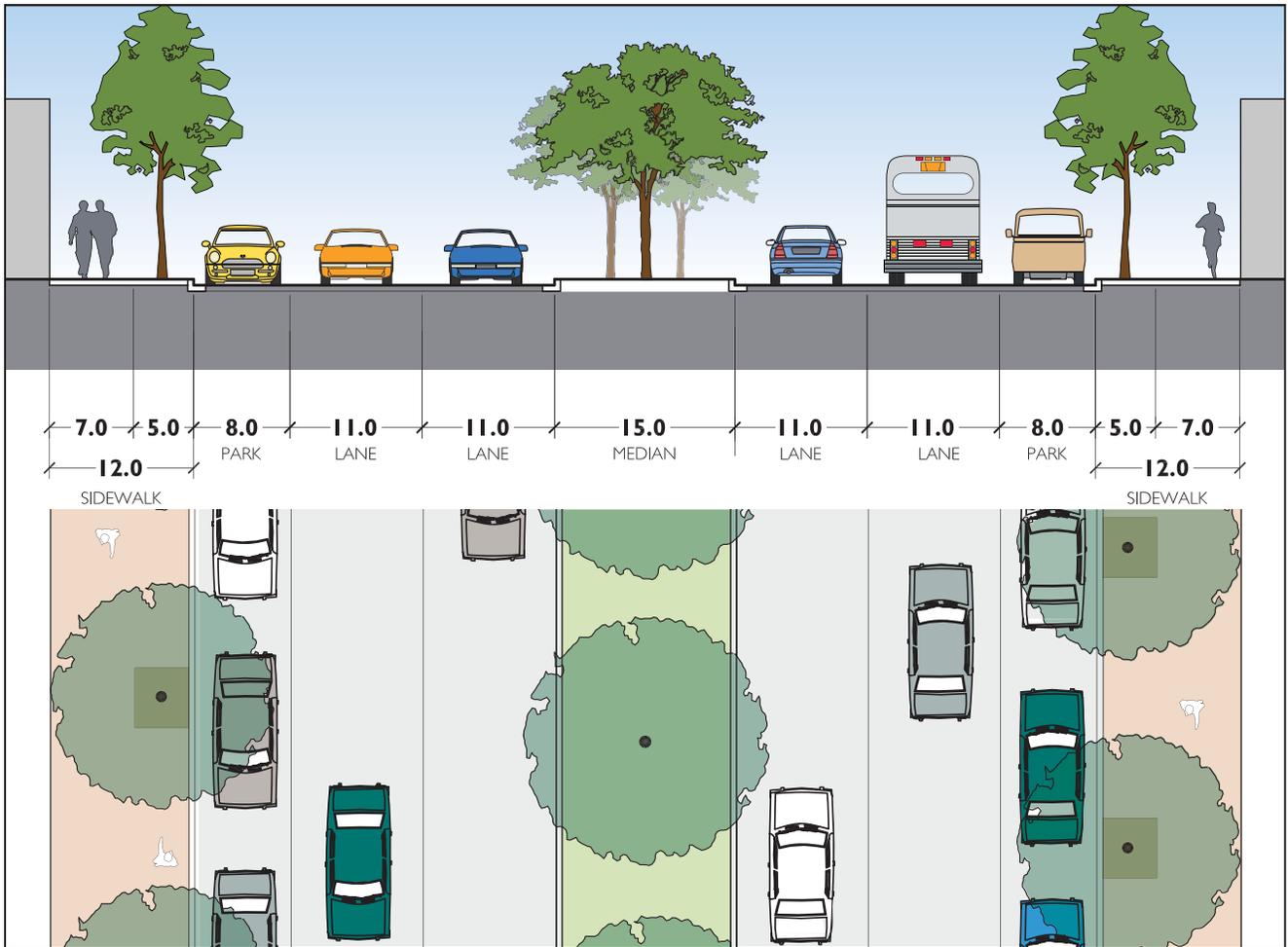


Figure 6. Proposed El Camino Real Street Cross-Section and Plan.

4. Neighborhood Context

Background

During the visioning process, community members generally agreed that the scale of development allowed in Menlo Park should be altered to allow greater density and height in certain areas. This opinion was accompanied by an equally strong desire to carefully identify where development intensity could increase.

Workshop participants felt that the east side of El Camino Real could accommodate higher intensity development because it does not have immediate neighbors (between El Camino Real and train tracks) and the buildings would not cast shadows onto any other buildings. On the west side, more concern was expressed about casting shade on neighboring single-family residential parcels. When El Camino Real was discussed in small group sessions at Community Workshop #2, most groups used Alternative 2 (moderate development) as a starting point. They discussed making sure buildings on the west side stepped down to be sensitive to the existing residential neighborhoods. At the north end of the Plan Area, there was also interest in mixed-use development, with the anticipation that housing and office uses would be most successful. Although there was some skepticism about the success of retail in this area, the market conditions will ultimately determine which uses will be provided.

Additional opinions with less support surfaced throughout the visioning process that contrast the majority vision described above. Specifically, some community members felt that the existing development intensities in Menlo Park are appropriate, and should not be altered. Another minority opinion observed was that the vision should include higher intensity development, including 4-6 story mixed-use development along El Camino Real and in Downtown.

Given this input and preliminary analysis, it is recommended that Menlo Park establish the following goal and objectives to ensure that new development along the El Camino Real corridor is in accordance with the desires of the community and is sensitive to nearby residential neighborhoods:

Goal: Ensure that El Camino Real development is sensitive to and compatible with adjacent neighborhoods.

Objective:

- Variations in building heights and uses on different parts of El Camino Real are respectful of their neighboring contexts and also provide opportunities for variations in the character.

It is recommended that this goal and corresponding objective be implemented in the following ways:

- On the west side of El Camino Real, new buildings are up to 2 to 3 stories in height, stepping down in height and potentially include increased setbacks and landscape screening on the sides of the building that are adjacent to residential neighborhoods. Uses may include residential, office, retail and, potentially, smaller hotels. Figure 7 shows an artist's rendering of this type of development on El Camino Real.



2-story building on El Camino Real.



Figure 7. Rendering of Potential El Camino Real Development, Stepping Down Toward Neighborhood.

- On the east side of El Camino, north of Oak Grove Avenue, new buildings are up to 2 to 3 stories in height. Uses may include residential and, potentially, office and retail.
- On the east side of El Camino, south of Ravenswood Avenue, new buildings are up to 4 stories in height. Uses include residential, retail, office and potentially a hotel with conference facilities.

The building heights suggested above, which are based on input received during the visioning process, provide a general framework to move forward by providing broad upper limits for new development. Future development will likely be provided in a range from single-story existing development to the upper limits suggested above. Development will need to be considered for its relationship with adjacent development and for its overall contribution to the Menlo Park community. This flexibility will facilitate the variety desired for development along El Camino Real.

5. Vacant and Underutilized Parcels on El Camino Real

Background

There has been general agreement throughout the planning process that something needs to be done on vacant sites in varying states of disrepair to improve the character of El Camino Real. This is most notable in the southern portions of El Camino Real on the land formerly occupied by automobile dealerships. Stanford University owns the majority of these properties, some of which are encumbered by long-term ground leases. Although Stanford is continuing to work with the City on short-term leases for the properties, their continued vacancy is a serious concern for Menlo Park and a major impetus for the visioning process. Community members continually expressed their concern about the blight these vacant parcels bring to Menlo Park and urged that they be redeveloped in a timely manner. Additionally, the community supported redevelopment of other parcels along El Camino Real currently developed in a less-efficient manner. For example, some community members expressed that small, 1-story auto mechanic and service uses were not appropriate on El Camino Real. With regard to new land uses, the community identified hotels as a potential priority, due to their positive fiscal benefits and relatively limited negative impacts.



Vacant auto-dealership on El Camino Real.

Given this desire of the community, it is recommended that Menlo Park establish the following goal and objectives to ensure that vacant and underutilized parcels are redeveloped on El Camino Real:

Goal: Revitalize underutilized parcels and buildings.

Objectives:

- A hotel with conference facilities as a part of future development of the south end of El Camino Real. Figure 8 shows an artist's rendering of a conference center on El Camino Real.
- Additional hotel uses, including small, affordable hotel rooms.
- New development maintains a sensitive relationship to adjacent neighborhoods.
- North-south bicycle and pedestrian connections are created on or adjacent to the railroad right-of-way.

- Wider sidewalks provided on El Camino Real in coordination with redevelopment.
- Support for and recruitment of “green” businesses, highlighting a local emphasis on innovation and environmental leadership.
- Retrofitting or redevelopment of seismically vulnerable buildings.

The viability of conference/hotel facilities needs be studied in further detail to ensure they will be appropriate for Menlo Park. Issues to be explored further include continuing to work with Stanford University to determine their need and future plans for similar facilities, potential partnerships with the existing Stanford Park Hotel and how plans for such a facility would affect short-term existing tenants and expected future tenants on these properties. In general, conference facilities have limited direct profit potential, but are catalysts for hotel use and other revenue sources.



Figure 8. Rendering of Potential Hotel and Conference Center on El Camino Real.

6. Train Station Area

Background

Community members expressed that the train station area should be livelier and provide something for people to do as they are waiting for the train. During community walking tours of the Downtown, participants expressed that the uses around the station do not take advantage of their location. Even the generally-approved-of Menlo Center (the building housing Kepler's Books and Café Borrone) turns its back on the train station and does not show much of an entrance to the station area.

Given this desire of the community, it is recommended that Menlo Park establish the following goal and objectives to promote increased activity, new uses and plaza spaces near the Caltrain station area:

Goal: Activate the train station area.

Objectives:

- Expanded housing opportunities, particularly for seniors and all segments of the workforce.
- New cultural institutions or similar facilities contribute to the liveliness of this area.
- New parking facilities in this area are generally underground.
- A public plaza terminating Santa Cruz Avenue serves as a forecourt to the station.
- Mixed-use development with active ground floor retail uses.
- Increased Caltrain service at the Menlo Park station.



Mixed use near transit.

Figure 9 shows an artist's rendering of the Caltrain station area including implementation of these objectives.

Community members have expressed concern about the cost of underground parking in this area. Underground parking would likely be provided privately as part of a larger development project. Underground parking could also be provided through a public/private partnership between a developer and the City to ensure that some number of parking spaces would be made available to members of the public.



Figure 9. Rendering of Potential Station Area Development.

7. Santa Cruz Avenue Pedestrian Character

Background

There has been much discussion on the future sidewalk and street conditions of Santa Cruz Avenue. Community members expressed their desire to maintain and expand the pedestrian character of Santa Cruz Avenue. Wider sidewalks were often identified as a desired improvement. This change would allow for additional street furniture, outdoor seating and other activities. Though most agree that these improvements would be positive, there is some disagreement about what strategy is most appropriate for Santa Cruz Avenue.

Some community members have advocated closing it permanently to vehicular traffic, perhaps in coordination with conversion of Menlo and Oak Grove Avenues to one-way streets. Alternately, others have suggested turning Santa Cruz Avenue itself into a one-way street. Others have suggested keeping the existing vehicular travel lanes but undertaking other changes to provide a more comfortable pedestrian environment along Santa Cruz Avenue. Some community members have advocated for the transformation of angled parking on Santa Cruz Avenue to parallel, dedicating the excess space to sidewalk widening. Others suggested that any number of parking spaces could potentially be removed from Santa Cruz Avenue in order to provide additional open space



Pedestrian-focused shopping area.



Sidewalk dining in Redwood City.

and other public amenities. It was also stated that it would be important that any removal of parking be analyzed for its feasibility for businesses and coordinated with a broader downtown parking strategy and potential parking structures.

It is recommended that Menlo Park establish the following goal and objectives to promote increased pedestrian character on Santa Cruz Avenue:

Goal: Protect and enhance pedestrian amenities on Santa Cruz Avenue.

Objectives:

- Strengthened pedestrian character on Santa Cruz Avenue.
- Wider sidewalks on Santa Cruz Avenue to provide additional space for outdoor seating, street furniture or other pedestrian amenities.

It is recommended that this goal and corresponding objectives be implemented in the following ways:

- Eliminate parallel parking, retain angled parking and widen sidewalks where parallel parking previously existed.
- Create more “public” mid-block connections between the street and the parking plazas.
- Create intermittent plazas that would form a network between Fremont Park and the plaza at Café Borrone.
- Design “step-down” feature into sidewalk to better accommodate street closure for festivals, farmers markets and other potential community events.

Figures 10 and 11 show the existing street cross-section and plan, as well as the recommended configuration for Santa Cruz Avenue, including the removal of parallel parking and sidewalk extension. This approach to providing additional sidewalk width on Santa Cruz Avenue was supported by a majority of

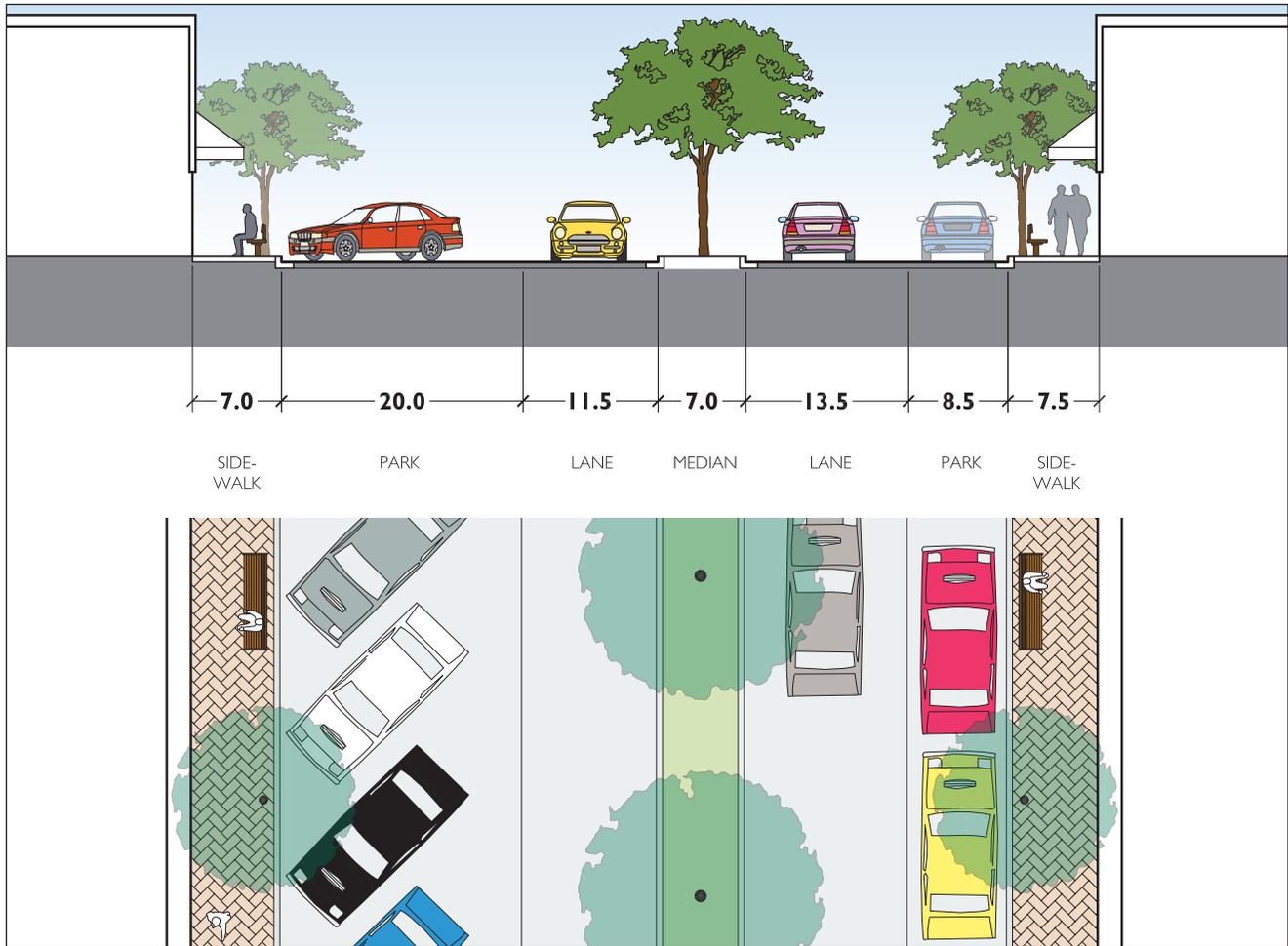


Figure 10. Existing Santa Cruz Avenue Street Cross-Section and Plan.

participants at the Planning Commission Workshop. Preserving the angled parking is most feasible and will also accomplish the following:

- Preserve existing median and mature trees on Santa Cruz Avenue.
- Preserve angled parking spaces on Santa Cruz Avenue to retain more on-street parking for Downtown businesses.
- Continue to bring vehicle and pedestrian traffic through Downtown, ensuring that businesses have a steady stream of potential customers.

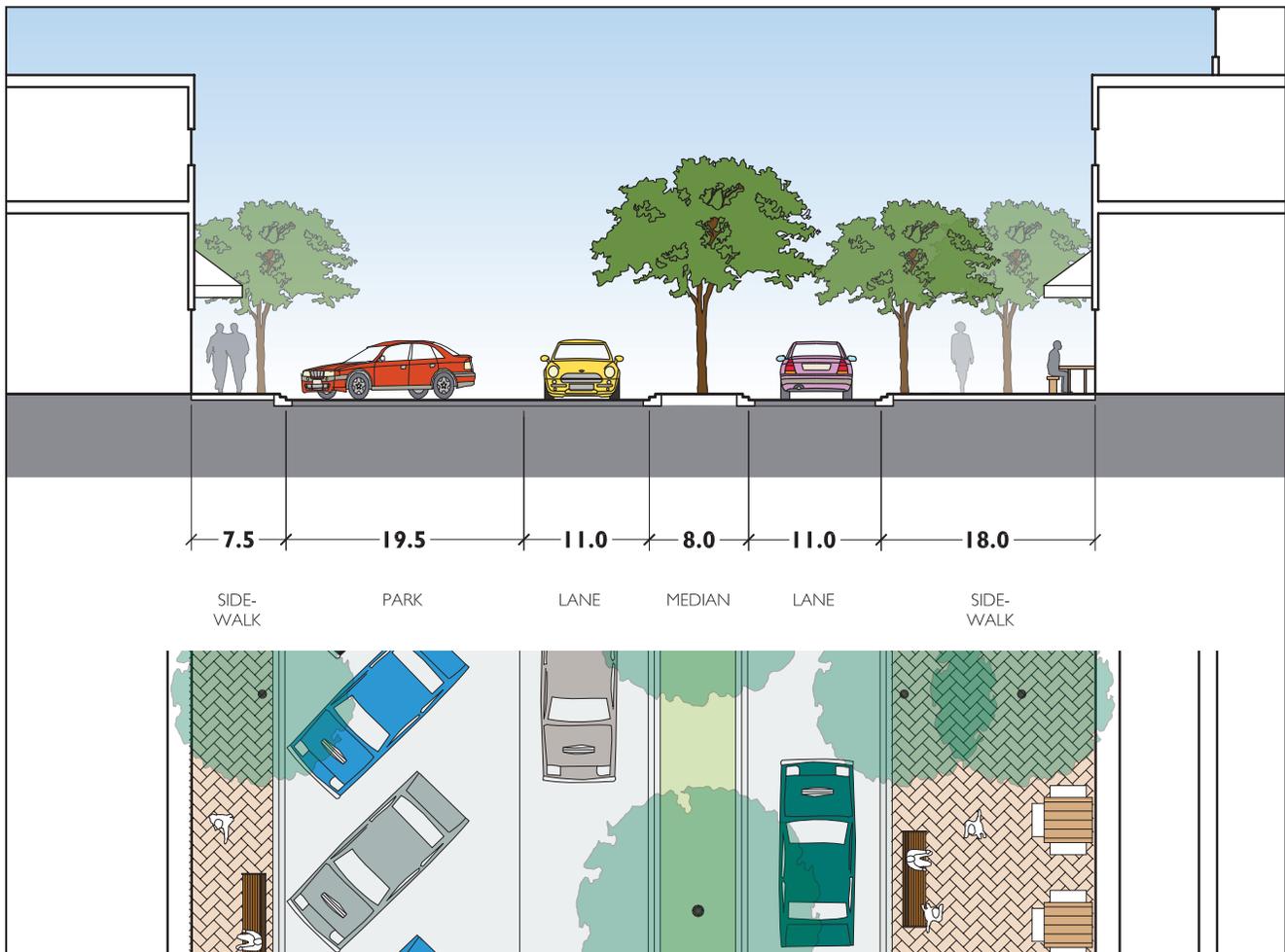


Figure 11. Proposed Santa Cruz Avenue Street Cross-Section and Plan.

Figure 12 provides an artist’s rendering of Santa Cruz Avenue as it would look if the steps outlined above were followed.

The objectives for this goal do not include permanent closure of Santa Cruz Avenue because this is rarely successful, more often reducing business due to limited visibility for stores.



Figure 12. Rendering of Potential Development and Public Improvements on Santa Cruz Avenue.

8. Downtown Vibrancy

Background



Outdoor seating in Berkeley.

The visioning process indicated that there is strong community support for increased vibrancy in Downtown. Community members expressed a desire to encourage a development density and use mix that will help facilitate increased activity in Downtown. Many workshop participants also expressed a desire to have uses in Downtown that would remain active later at night and on weekends.

Some community members expressed a desire for new development in the Downtown to be 1 story in height while others suggested 4 stories would be appropriate. A larger number of small group workshop reports expressed that 3 stories would work, particularly to expand opportunities for housing. Many of those expressing a desire to see 3 stories in the Downtown suggested that those buildings should step back at the third story.

Some community members also suggested that an institutional use, such as a library or some other City service, would help to increase vitality in the Downtown. Some community members think the vision should focus on retail and restaurant uses in Downtown, and that housing uses will not effectively add to Downtown vitality.

It is recommended that Menlo Park establish the following goal and objectives to promote increased vitality Downtown:

Goal: Expand shopping, dining and neighborhood services to ensure a vibrant downtown.

Objectives:

- Most restaurants and stores are open during evening hours and weekends; family-friendly restaurant options expand.
- New buildings are up to 2 to 3 stories in height with the third floor stepping back from the front façade.
- Upper floor uses include residential, office and, potentially, retail.
- There are expanded housing opportunities, particularly for seniors and all segments of the workforce.

- The parking plazas are more active and carefully designed to facilitate pedestrian activity, including the addition of plaza-facing storefronts, articulated walkways, and additional landscaping elements. Figure 13 shows an artist's rendering of the parking plazas with implementation of this objective.
- There are anchor destinations at both ends of the Downtown, the train station at the east and another at the west, potentially in coordination with Menlo Park Presbyterian Church. The Church has expressed interest in adding new public amenities, such as plazas and a performing arts center.
- Cultural institutions, such as a small museum or theater are part of the downtown mix.
- An independent shuttle bus circulates through parts of Menlo Park with the Downtown as its hub.



Figure 13. Rendering of Potential Landscape and Open Space Improvements in Parking Plaza.

9. Housing

Background

At the community workshops and other Vision Plan events, a strong majority of community members expressed concern over a shortage of housing options in Menlo Park. Community members generally agreed that new housing opportunities should be provided within the Vision Plan Area.

Many workshop groups expressed that they wanted to see more housing in the area, both as a way to provide affordable housing and as a way to bring more life to the area, bringing people in who would support the market for a downtown that stays open later in the evening.

Some community members have expressed strong concerns about the impacts residential development has on Menlo Park's schools, traffic and other community facilities and services. It was also expressed that any new housing should be carefully evaluated to ensure that it is compatible with Menlo Park's existing character. These concerns led some community members to recommend that no new housing be added unless it could be shown that the impacts could be mitigated. Both character and the impacts of new housing need to be considered in planning for future residential development.

The following goal and objectives capture the community's vision for housing in the Vision Plan Area:

Goal: Provide residential opportunities in the Vision Plan Area.

Objectives:

- The Downtown, the area around the train station and the El Camino Real corridor see the development of differing types of housing depending on the specific traffic and issues for each of those areas. Figure 14 shows an example of existing mixed-use development in downtown Menlo Park that includes housing on the upper floor.
- New affordable housing options within the Vision Plan Area.
- Housing improves the jobs/housing balance in Menlo Park.



Senior housing on El Camino Real.

New housing should respect existing development, both in terms of its physical presence and the impacts it may create. These impacts will be studied further in Phase II and as projects are proposed within the Vision Plan Area.



Figure 14. Mixed-use Development in Downtown Menlo Park with Housing on Upper Floors.

10. Open Space

Background

Community-wide desire for new parks, plazas and other open spaces was evident throughout the visioning process. The desired types, locations and character of potential open spaces differed across the community.



Cafe Borrone Plaza.

Open space was discussed by many community members. The plaza in front of Borrone's was often cited as a positive example to follow. Park space, particularly in conjunction with new residential development was viewed as being a crucial component of the Vision. A larger park space was discussed for the southern areas of El Camino Real. Community members generally agreed that passive open space, as opposed to active playing fields and other similar open spaces were needed most in the Vision Plan Area. The parking plazas were also identified for their potential to locate new open space. For example, the parking provided at one plaza could be replaced in a new parking structure, allowing another parking plaza to be redesigned as a "town square" or public park. The potential to provide dramatic streetscape and landscape features, such as water features, interpretive walkways, educational signage or public art display, should also be explored.

Some community members suggested different approaches to providing open spaces in Menlo Park, including the following:

- Make Santa Cruz Avenue a "pedestrian mall" or "walking street".
- Playing fields on existing parking plazas.
- Underground El Camino Real, provide plazas and open space on top.
- Underground parking at existing parking plaza locations, provide plazas and open space on top.
- "Pedestrian way" through southern parking plazas.
- Plazas and outdoor parks on El Camino Real.

The following goal and objectives capture the community’s vision for plazas and parks in the Vision Plan Area:

Goal: Provide plaza and park spaces.

Objectives:

- Plazas activated by storefront activity or ground floor uses.
- Parks that provide passive and active recreational spaces. Figure 15 shows an example of a passive open space in Portland that provides a combination of hardscape plazas and green space.
- Parks and plaza spaces that provide amenities for a range of ages, including seniors and children.



Figure 15. Plaza and Park in Portland, Oregon.

It is recommended that this goal and corresponding objectives be implemented through the creation of the following open spaces:

- New plaza on Santa Cruz Avenue.
- Pedestrian way through southern parking plazas.
- Plaza/park at Middle Avenue, in coordination with bicycle/pedestrian underpass.
- Plaza at train station.
- Semi-public plazas provided in coordination with private development throughout the Vision Plan Area.

These open spaces could be developed through a number of mechanisms, including a trade-off with developers of future projects. One example of such a trade-off would be the granting of density bonuses to developers of projects providing publicly accessible open spaces. The City could also provide plazas and parks by allocating funds for such projects, using potential parking revenues to make improvements, creating a Benefit Assessment District, competing for grant funding, or by creating a new tax program.

11. Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

Background



On-street bike lane.

Community members have been supportive of increased access and facilities for pedestrians and bicycles throughout the visioning process. Much of the input has focused on east-west pedestrian and bicycle connections, but community members have also discussed north-south connections, so people have alternatives to walking and biking on El Camino Real. It was expressed in the visioning process that pedestrians and bicycles often have very different needs or conflict with one another, and at times may need to be planned for individually rather than collectively. Specific circulation ideas were also discussed, including a bike loaner program or a shuttle system to assist pedestrians in traveling longer distances.

The following goal and objectives capture the community's vision for pedestrian and bicycle circulation in the Vision Plan Area:

Goal: Provide an integrated, safe and well-designed pedestrian and bicycle network.

Objectives:

- Pedestrian and bicycle connections provide alternatives to El Camino Real.
- Conflicts between motor vehicle circulation and bicycle and pedestrian connectivity are minimized.
- Bicycle connections that extend to Downtown.
- Strong bicycle connections to Palo Alto and Palo Alto's bicycle system.

It is recommended that this goal and corresponding objectives be implemented through the creation of the following pedestrian and bicycle improvements:

- A path runs behind the parcels on the southern segment of El Camino Real. Figure 16 for an example of an effective off-road bike path.

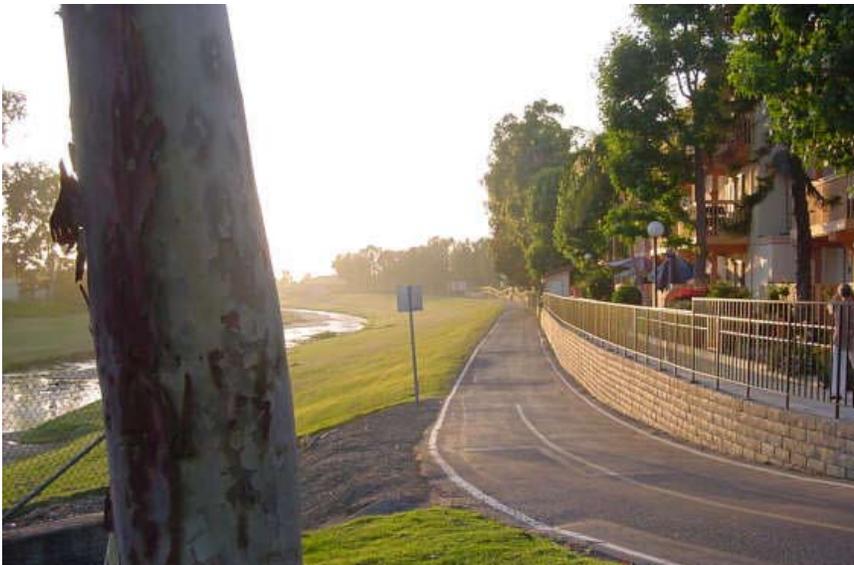


Figure 16. Off-road Bicycle Path Adjacent to a Community's Drainage Corridor:

- Another path is on the other side of the tracks, on Alma Street, which connects to the bicycle/pedestrian bridge to Palo Alto at the south end of the city.
- A safe and clear connection between Downtown, the station area and the Civic Center/Burgess Park area.
- Downtown bike connections, the routes of which still need to be determined. One possibility would be dedicated bikeways or lanes on Menlo and Oak Grove Avenues.

12. Parking

Background



Parking meter with payment options.

Community members expressed some concern that they would like to patronize shops and restaurants in downtown Menlo Park, but find the current 2-hour parking limit constraining. People sometimes get parking tickets because a lunch or other activity has gone on longer than anticipated. Such comments were often in conjunction with a willingness to pay for parking if it would mean fewer parking tickets and more flexibility in how long they could stay downtown. Some community members are adamant that parking should be free. Specific parking solutions proposed by the community included the following:

- Parking strategies and pricing and timing mechanisms.
- Parking structures—or not; above grade or below.
- Below grade parking as an opportunity to create plaza/park space at grade.
- Coordination with Menlo Park Presbyterian Church.
- Parking Meter District.
- Shortest-term meters on Santa Cruz Avenue.
- Short-term meters on Menlo and Oak Grove Avenues.
- Advanced parking technologies.
- Employee/Church parking structure on Parking Plaza 3.
- Parking Structure on Parking Plaza 1.

- Free parking in structures for first 2 hours.
- Free parking.
- Paid short-term parking combined with free long-term parking to encourage patrons to spend more time Downtown.

The following goal and objectives capture the community's vision for parking in the Vision Plan Area:

Goal: Develop parking strategies and facilities that meet the commercial and residential needs of the community.

Objectives:

- Ample parking to accommodate all Downtown users.
- Development of a "Park Once" strategy—"destination parking".
- Balanced parking to accommodate the needs of employees and downtown patrons, short visits and long-term.
- Surface parking strategies that accommodate patrons and employees, and encourage greater downtown patronage.
- A parking strategy that is good for business, and is carefully evaluated in the context of local competition.
- Underground parking where possible to promote improved aesthetics on El Camino Real.

It is recommended that this goal and corresponding objectives be implemented by the following strategies and infrastructure improvements:

- 1-2 parking structures (1 public, 1 in coordination with church/business owners/employees). Figure 17 shows an example of a successful parking structure in San Luis Obispo.
- Paid parking on surface lots and streets.
- Shorter-term parking where high turnover is desired; longer-term parking further away from high turnover locations.
- Parking revenues earmarked to benefit the Downtown area.



Figure 17. Parking Structure in San Luis Obispo, California.

The community did not come to a clear agreement about parking strategies, but a majority did agree that parking structures and some fee mechanism would be appropriate for Downtown. The recommendation above will preserve some short-term parking for customers visiting the Downtown, provide an opportunity to institute a “park once” strategy in Downtown and encourage partnerships between the City and other entities to provide parking.

E. Next Steps

This section outlines potential implementation tools to be considered by the City of Menlo Park for Phase II of the Downtown/El Camino Real planning process. The items discussed below include broad measures that could potentially become the end result of Phase II, as well as more focused studies that could be conducted independently or as part of a broader planning effort. This Vision Plan is a planning study, and as such will not directly change the regulatory structure regarding land use planning or development in Menlo Park. It provides a base from which to move toward a more literal policy change, which will sufficiently permit the vision to be implemented. All of the potential next steps would include additional public outreach and provide additional opportunities for community members to voice their opinions and discuss future options, similar to that of the Vision Plan process.

It is recommended that Phase II use as its base the preparation of a **Specific Plan**. Under California law cities and counties may prepare Specific Plans to develop policies, programs and regulations to implement the jurisdiction's adopted General Plan. A Specific Plan can provide greater detail on a range of issues, from the adoption of broad policies to be considered when reviewing new development in a certain area to detailed land use regulations, development standards, design guidance and financing mechanisms. The Specific Plan process would include the following components:

- ◆ **General Plan Amendment.** Certain aspects of the Specific Plan could be inconsistent with the current General Plan, which would require amendments to bring it into compliance.
- ◆ **Zoning Ordinance Amendment.** A zoning ordinance amendment could be completed to implement new land use regulations and development standards, as well as other specific directives created as part of a Specific Plan.
- ◆ **Environmental Review.** A Specific Plan and associated General Plan and Zoning Ordinance amendments would require environmental review, most likely through the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The EIR would analyze potential impacts such as traffic and transportation.

- ◆ **Design Guidelines.** Design Guidelines could serve as another tool to ensure that new development within the Vision Plan Area reflects the vision for Menlo Park. Design guidelines could be created independently or as part of a broader Specific Plan process undertaken for the Vision Plan Area. Design guidelines can create strict standards or broad and flexible guidance for new development and redevelopment projects.
- ◆ **Caltrain/High-Speed Rail Grade Separation Feasibility Study.** This Vision Plan recommends a grade separation of Ravenswood and the Caltrain (and High-Speed Rail, pending state action) tracks. Some research has already been conducted on this issue, and should be built upon with further research. A feasibility study should recommend a strategy for grade separations, including identifying the most suitable locations. Additionally, a feasibility study may analyze costs of a specific strategy and provide direction for the City to secure funding.
- ◆ **Fiscal Impact Analysis.** A fiscal impact analysis would review the potential revenue benefits and service impacts of the proposed Vision Plan elements. This could include analysis of possible financial assistance or public/private partnerships that might be required for implementation; revenue that could be expected from new development; and costs to provide amenities envisioned.
- ◆ **Study of Development Incentives/Density Bonuses for Public Benefits.** It has been stated several times throughout the Vision Plan process that any upzoning or benefit to developers should be balanced by a requirement that those same developers provide some public benefit. A potential study could analyze a number of approaches to establishing rules by which such a trade-off between developer and City could occur, as well as the potential to create developer incentives, density bonus programs or other similar programs. This study could occur as part of a broader process or independently.
- ◆ **Santa Cruz Avenue/Downtown Streetscape Plan.** Interest was expressed during the visioning process in upgrading the current streetscape on Santa Cruz Avenue, and potentially other portions of Downtown. A streetscape plan for Santa Cruz Avenue could provide direction for the future of the street, including direction about lane configuration, materials, landscaping, tree placement, street furniture and amenities, and other detailed physical characteristics.

- ◆ **Parking Study.** A detailed parking plan or study would create a comprehensive parking strategy for the Downtown and train station portions of the Vision Plan Area. The study would include investigation of potential parking alternatives, including parking facilities, analysis of various fee mechanisms, or the development of a strategy that will equitably provide parking solutions for Downtown customers and employees. The parking study would be performed as part of a Specific Plan process and incorporated directly into the regulations being created as part of that Specific Plan. It would build upon past studies that have been completed by providing more detailed information, particularly regarding payment for a possible parking structure(s).
- ◆ **El Camino Real Configuration Study.** A detailed study of El Camino Real could examine a number of issues. Ideally, a study of potential solutions for improving the configuration and alleviating congestion on El Camino Real would analyze a number of potential solutions and compare them. The study could include analysis of removal of parking or travel lanes, or any number of other potential improvements. It could also examine the impacts of any changes on adjacent neighborhood streets. This study would require close coordination with Caltrans.
- ◆ **Discussion and Coordination with Stanford University.** A major driving force for the undertaking of the visioning process has been the vacant parcels located at the southeastern portions of El Camino Real. These parcels are owned by Stanford University, although some of them are encumbered by long-term ground leases. As such, Menlo Park should continue to work with Stanford University to better understand their intent for these parcels, including discussing the potential for conference facilities and hotels. The potential to include these types of uses on these parcels was discussed during the visioning process.
- ◆ **Detailed Market Study for Menlo Park.** A more detailed market study could be performed for Menlo Park, the Vision Plan Area, or specifically for the Downtown area. A more thorough understanding of the market potential for specific land uses could help to develop business recruitment and retention strategies that focus on bringing and retaining appropriate businesses to Menlo Park.

- ◆ **Review Comprehensive Bicycle Development Plan.** Several key points in this Vision Plan include bicycle circulation. For the most part, they are consistent with the existing Comprehensive Bicycle Development Plan, which indicates how the City can improve its bicycle network and continue to emphasize bicycle transportation around the City. The Comprehensive Bicycle Development Plan should be reviewed for consistency with the Vision Plan, however, to ensure that the specific approaches to bicycle circulation mentioned in the Vision Plan are captured in the bicycle plan.

APPENDICES

**Comments recorded at El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan Workshop #1,
held on March 6, 2008**

TRAFFIC, TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

<i>Count</i>	<i>Comment</i>
5	East-west bike/pedestrian route (under tracks)
6	Off-road bike facilities
13	Underground Caltrain/use space above
4	Improve bike/ped crossing on El Camino
10	Consider undergrounding El Camino/use space above 10
5	Focus on community needs for El Camino and maintain parking
1	No freight on Caltrain line
8	Bridge connection along Alma
4	Sand hill road connection to Alma
1	Maintain and improve regional vehicular access to the downtown
2	Community shuttle
3	Underground parking
1	Caltrain is attractive to homeless population
1	Park once strategy
1	Office space near transit
7	More pedestrian/bike friendly
	Improve transit in MP
2	Consider BRT on El Camino
	Connect bike, pedestrian and transit facilities
6	Six-lane El Camino pass-thru by taking out parallel parking (during commute hours)
2	Maintain or expand current parking ratio
1	Left turn lane onto Santa Cruz from El Camino
5	Improve El Camino sidewalks
10	Pedestrian/bikeway along train tracks connected to Palo Alto
1	Reinstitute Caltrain service
	Maintain free parking downtown
1	Santa Cruz Avenue as walking street (closed off to autos)
4	Extend sidewalks on Santa Cruz Avenue to the west
3	Parking garage

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

<i>Count</i>	<i>Comment</i>
2	Don't use economic values as land use criteria (zoning dictates land values)
8	Garner public benefit from any upzoning
12	Maintain diversity of small businesses
3	Emphasize mixed-use on El Camino
21	Density to support amenities
2	Larger Trader Joes on El Camino
4	Green retail on El Camino

Count reflects number of dots (out of a total of four given to each participant) placed next to the comment. If there is no number, the comment was recorded, but no dots were placed there.

**Comments recorded at El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan Workshop #1,
held on March 6, 2008**

OPEN PARKS, RECREATIONAL, ETC.

<i>Count</i>	<i>Comment</i>
	Plan any parks/plazas to not become an attractive nuisance (homeless on benches, etc)
3	Dog park (24 hours)
7	Downtown square
3	Kids facilities-parks, indoors, cultural (museums, etc)
5	Playing/soccer fields

EL CAMINO REUSE

<i>Count</i>	<i>Comment</i>
6	Green retailers
2	Marriott Hotel

HOUSING

<i>Count</i>	<i>Comment</i>
	Ensure school district impacts are considered
4	Mixed-use to facilitate synergy between housing and commercial
6	Senior housing (especially at Little House) Consider economic viability of existing multi-family housing

OTHER

<i>Count</i>	<i>Comment</i>
	Homelessness and services
3	Reduce train noise
	Public art in new development
	Emphasize local character and identity
	Maintain vistas
3	Reasonable height limit to preserve views
3	Green building/minimize environmental footprint
4	Beautiful and innovative building design
	Heights along ecr and near downtown/caltrain
5	Varied setbacks on retail frontages downtown
1	Unique innovative development
	Eliminate overhead utilities
	Restore Park Theater
	Community flag for Menlo Park
5	Shuttle service

Count reflects number of dots (out of a total of four given to each participant) placed next to the comment. If there is no number, the comment was recorded, but no dots were placed there.

Summary of Group Comments from El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan Workshop #2, held on April 3, 2008

Community Workshop #2, which focused specifically on the El Camino Real portions of the Study Area, began with a presentation by the consultant about the Vision Plan process, a summary of public input and outreach, a discussion of the community impacts of different land uses, and an overview of different development types and open spaces that may be appropriate for El Camino Real. After the presentation, participants split into groups to discuss their vision for El Camino Real, as well as review and comment on three conceptual development alternatives. The development alternatives provided ranged from least intensive change for Alternative 1 to most intensive change for Alternative 3. Each group was asked to choose one of the three alternatives to alter and comment on. Eight of the groups chose to begin with Alternative 2. One group did not submit a map, but still presented their ideas at the end of the small group exercise. Below are summaries of the content that came from each group.

GROUP 1

- Like the current look and feel of Menlo Park
- Minimize street grade parking
- Widen sidewalks
- Maintain/enhance the “green” look of Menlo Park: Plant new street trees
- Encourage increased building height near railroad tracks and El Camino/Santa Cruz intersection
- Buildings heights should be lower than in southern portion of El Camino
- Office and housing more appropriate in northern portion of El Camino
- Higher densities on east side of El Camino

GROUP 2

- New mixed-use with retail and residential uses in north, no retail there now
- Tax revenue-creating uses on vacant car lots
- Underground Caltrain through Menlo Park
- Underground El Camino from Oak Grove to Ravenswood
- Transit oriented development with housing near Caltrain station
- Encourage shared parking
- New hotel with conference center in southern portion of El Camino

GROUP 3

- Eliminate parallel parking on El Camino
- Retail should not compete with Downtown
- Market should determine land uses and land use mix
- Increased setbacks on El Camino Real
- New pedestrian amenities between Roble and Ravenswood
- Underground Caltrain through Menlo Park
- Create east-west pedestrian and bike connectivity
- Replace theater with new use
- No residential uses on ground floor
- Underground some portion of El Camino
- Opposed to any increase in density (minority opinion)

GROUP 4

- Land uses should support one another
- Residential/retail mixed-use, hotel and light industrial uses on El Camino Real

Note: Due to the number of attendees, there was no Group #6.

Summary of Group Comments from El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan Workshop #2, held on April 3, 2008

- Cluster housing around Caltrain station
- Eliminate parallel parking during commute hours
- Wider sidewalks, make El Camino sidewalks ADA compliant
- Improve El Camino crossings at Menlo, Santa Cruz and Oak Grove Avenues
- Support bike underpass below Caltrain tracks
- Underground parking in Downtown plaza, build playing fields at grade

GROUP 5

- Want to keep the quiet residential areas and support a vibrant downtown
- New plazas/open space must be supported by businesses and housing
- Improve El Camino crossings at Middle, Menlo and Oak Grove Avenues
- Increase sidewalk widths, larger setbacks

- Offer incentives for parcel consolidation
- Ensure Plan Area remains accessible to all, including seniors
- Eliminate parallel parking on El Camino during peak times
- Higher density on east side of El Camino

GROUP 7

- Community form should be tighter, more village-like
- Create a gateway at north and south ends of El Camino
- Concentrate high density development around Santa Cruz and El Camino, buildings should step down in height and density toward the north and south ends
- Attract tax revenue
- Uses should be appropriate for all age groups
- Underground parking
- Mitigate “canyon” effect of taller buildings on El Camino
- Create a centralized plaza
- New hotel use on southern portion of El Camino
- Develop architectural guidelines for development to ensure “unified” look

GROUP 8

- Like the quiet town feel of Menlo Park
- New hotel use on southern portion of El Camino
- Conference center associated with hotel, providing facilities for large groups
- Uses on vacant car lots should compliment hotel
- New recreational/gym facility

GROUP 9

- Create an identity for Menlo Park: village feel, especially on Santa Cruz
- Concentrate taller buildings on southern end of El Camino and Downtown
- Augment bicycle underpass with new open space
- Improve landscaping
- Improve crossings in southern portion of El Camino
- Senior housing on west side of El Camino
- Need amenities to support new residential uses
- Attract medical office uses

Note: Due to the number of attendees, there was no Group #6.

**Summary of Group Comments from El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan
Workshop #2, held on April 3, 2008**

- New hotel use in northern portion, to prevent competition with Stanford Park
- Mixed-uses with retail at central and south, mixed-use with office in northern portion

GROUP 10

- El Camino should not be trenched
- Maintain parking on El Camino
- Widen sidewalks along with increase in density
- Design buildings to mitigate “canyon” effect from increased height
- Mixed-use development with housing, but still pay attention to tax revenue
- Emphasize housing, especially affordable housing and jobs/housing balance

Note: Due to the number of attendees, there was no Group #6.

Summary of Group Comments from El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan Workshop #3, held on May 1, 2008

Community Workshop #3, which focused specifically on the Downtown portions of the Study Area, began with a presentation by the consultant about the Vision Plan process, a summary of the input received at Community Workshop #2, a discussion of the community impacts of different land uses, and an overview of different development types and open spaces that may be appropriate for Downtown. After the presentation, participants split into groups to discuss their vision for Downtown, as well as review and comment on three conceptual development alternatives. The development alternatives provided ranged from least intensive change for Alternative 1 to most intensive change for Alternative 3. Each group was asked to choose one of the three alternatives to alter and comment on. After this exercise, a volunteer from each group presented their maps to the workshop participants. Three of the groups chose to begin with Alternative 1. Three groups chose Alternative 2. Two groups chose Alternative 3. One group combined elements from Alternatives 2 and 3. Below are summaries of the content that came from each group.

GROUP 1 (ALTERNATIVE 2)

- Streetscape Improvements (Santa Cruz, Oak Grove and Menlo)
- Pedestrian bridge over ECR @ Santa Cruz Avenue
- Underground parking at Caltrain station
- Downtown Plaza at Chestnut and Santa Cruz
- 3-story development on Santa Cruz Avenue (set back 3rd story)
- Expand housing downtown
- Connect Menlo and Oak Grove to Santa Cruz Avenue
- Underground utilities

GROUP 2 (ALTERNATIVE 3)

- 3-4 story along Santa Cruz and at Caltrain Station area
- Pedestrian and bicycle connections from Downtown to Civic Center/Burgess Park
- Parking structures on parking plazas 1 and 3 (4 levels above, 1-2 subterranean)
- Improve El Camino crossings
- Iconic gateway feature at Santa Cruz/El Camino intersection
- Paid parking, using new technology (similar to Redwood City)
- Loaner bike program

GROUP 3 (ALTERNATIVE 3)

- 5-level parking structure on Plaza 1 (3 above ground, 2 subterranean)
- 3-story mixed-use along Santa Cruz
- Provide affordable housing
- Organic or “irregular” pedestrian connections
- Small access streets behind retail on Santa Cruz
- Acknowledge importance of Santa Cruz/El Camino intersection
- Eliminate parking on Santa Cruz
- Widen sidewalks on Santa Cruz
- Water features or fountains in Downtown
- Allow for temporary shut-down of Santa Cruz for community events
- Preserve solar access
- Retail, entertainment, restaurants, office and small hotel appropriate Downtown
- Underground utilities

Note: Due to the number of attendees, there was no Group #5.

Summary of Group Comments from El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan Workshop #3, held on May 1, 2008

GROUP 4 (ALTERNATIVE 1)

- Widen Santa Cruz sidewalks
- More parking needed for businesses close to El Camino
- Maintain median on Santa Cruz
- Eliminate some parking on Santa Cruz
- Maintain and expand tree cover
- 2-story buildings on Santa Cruz
- 3-story along El Camino, Menlo and Oak Grove
- Improve bicycle connections
- Underground utilities
- Encourage architectural variety
- Recognize importance of Santa Cruz/El Camino intersection
- 2-3 story development near Caltrain station

GROUP 6 (ALTERNATIVE 1)

- Need architectural design guidance Downtown
- Plaza and cultural center near Caltrain station
- Pedestrian mall on Santa Cruz for one block, on either side of El Camino
- Landmark architecture at Menlo/El Camino intersection
- Eliminate parking on Santa Cruz
- Widen sidewalks on Santa Cruz to allow more outside seating
- 2-story maximum on Santa Cruz
- 3-story maximum on east side of El Camino
- Eliminate street parking on Menlo and Oak Grove
- Underground Caltrain

GROUP 7 (ALTERNATIVE 2)

- Parking structure (3 levels above ground, 1 subterranean)
- Street level enhancement of El Camino crossings
- Bike connection from Roble to Civic Center
- Improve overall pedestrian experience
- Minimize office uses Downtown
- Improve “back doors” to parking plazas
- Provide affordable housing

GROUP 8 (ALTERNATIVE 1)

- Free parking
- Bike route along Caltrain tracks
- Downtown employee parking reservoir at Oak Grove/Crane intersection (parking plaza 2)
- Workforce housing near Santa Cruz/El Camino intersection
- New north-south street west of Caltrain tracks
- Dedicated right-turn lane on eastbound Menlo Avenue onto southbound El Camino
- Zoning should allow mixed-use Downtown
- Maintain small town feel
- Beautify parking plazas

Note: Due to the number of attendees, there was no Group #5.

**Summary of Group Comments from El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan
Workshop #3, held on May 1, 2008**

GROUP 9 (ALTERNATIVE 2)

- Paid parking
- Plaza or park near Caltrain
- Pedestrian thoroughfare (pedestrian street during daytime hours only)
- Coordinate parking structure with Menlo Park Presbyterian Church (plaza 3)
- Uses and amenities should be balanced to offer to all age groups
- 2-3 stories on El Camino
- 3 story mixed-use development on Santa Cruz
- Nighttime vibrancy
- Performing arts center
- Gym

GROUP 10 (ALTERNATIVES 2 & 3)

- 3-story mixed-use on Santa Cruz
- 4-5 story mixed-use near El Camino
- 2-story mixed-use along north side of Menlo Avenue
- Playing fields
- Small scale hotel for Downtown
- Pedestrian "alley" between Santa Cruz Avenue and Menlo Avenue
- Quality architecture

Note: Due to the number of attendees, there was no Group #5.

Summary of Group Comments from El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan Planning Commission Meeting, held on May 19, 2008

The Planning Commission meeting began with a presentation by the consultant describing the Vision Plan process and summarizing the input received at previous community workshops. The presentation also outlined 12 broad goals of the vision plan. On eight of these goals, the community had previously reached relative agreement, while there were still four goals that warranted further discussion by community members. After the presentation, participants divided into groups to briefly review the first eight goals and then discuss in more depth the four remaining goals. These groups also commented on the Draft Conceptual Illustrative. After this exercise, a volunteer from each group presented their group's work to all of the workshop participants. Below are summaries of each group's discussions.

TABLE 1

- ◆ FIRST 8 GOALS – General agreement.
- ◆ E-W CONNECTIVITY – Support for north-south pedestrian and bicycle improvements (crossings and paths). Consider pedestrian refuges in the median of the road. Also, the idea of pedestrian scrambles might be considered. Grade separation at Ravenswood and possibly at Oak Grove was supported.
- ◆ EL CAMINO REAL – Supported making El Camino real 3 lanes with no parking. Lanes should be narrower to reduce speed.
- ◆ SANTA CRUZ – Not mentioned.
- ◆ PARKING – Eliminate parallel parking. Support for 2-3 story structure with 1 story below ground.

TABLE 2

- ◆ FIRST 8 GOALS – General agreement.
- ◆ E-W CONNECTIVITY – Supported a bike tunnel but only with best practices outlined and in conjunction with safer El Camino Real crossings. Did not support a bicycle/pedestrian overpass.
- ◆ EL CAMINO REAL – Did not support encouraging fast traffic. Lanes should be left as they are now.
- ◆ SANTA CRUZ – Liked the idea of widening sidewalks. The current design is not bicycle friendly and an alternative should be developed with this in mind.
- ◆ PARKING – Supported 2 structures with a pricing structure that is more expensive nearer the shops. Perhaps proceeds from new parking meters could go to building downtown structures.

TABLE 3

- ◆ FIRST 8 GOALS – General agreement, though there was some concern about having too much housing near the railroad tracks.
- ◆ E-W CONNECTIVITY – Supported bicycle and pedestrian underpasses on Oak Grove and Valparaiso for better pedestrian circulation. Supported enhanced crosswalks.
- ◆ EL CAMINO REAL – El Camino Real should be left at 2 lanes and areas currently with 3 lanes should be converted into 2 lanes. With the extra room, make sidewalks wider. Be sensitive to sensitive to the lack of off street parking.
- ◆ SANTA CRUZ – Liked the suggested design for Santa Cruz Avenue, no disagreement on DC&E suggested design.
- ◆ PARKING – Supported parking structures as well as the “Park Once” philosophy, but parking should still be free. Shuttles for parking structures should be considered. Employees especially should be encouraged to use parking structures to reduce demand closer to businesses.

Summary of Group Comments from El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan Planning Commission Meeting, held on May 19, 2008

TABLE 4

- ◆ FIRST 8 GOALS – Not mentioned.
- ◆ E-W CONNECTIVITY – Ravenswood undercrossing is most important. Also, the bike tunnel at Middle Avenue is a good idea but there was concern about cost or feasibility.
- ◆ EL CAMINO REAL – Unresolved. One person said to retain parking on ECR for businesses.
- ◆ SANTA CRUZ – Widen sidewalk a little bit (2 feet), but don't eliminate parking. Work to accommodate bicycles on Santa Cruz Avenue. Support for paid parking on Santa Cruz Avenue similar to what is in Redwood City.
- ◆ PARKING – Try metering Santa Cruz Avenue to help with turnover.

TABLE 5

- ◆ FIRST 8 GOALS – Not mentioned.
- ◆ E-W CONNECTIVITY – Concerned about high speed rail and grade separation.
- ◆ EL CAMINO REAL – Leave traffic circulation the same. On street parking is important along this corridor. Improve the sidewalks gradually as development occurs (take from parcels).
- ◆ SANTA CRUZ – Poll business owners to be sure that the sidewalk widening would be equitable for all businesses. Instead of losing parking on one side, just make the existing diagonal parking all parallel parking so that parallel parking is on both sides.
- ◆ PARKING – Supported parking structures, though the more below grade parking the better. Need to decide who gets the benefits from the parking structures, balancing the benefits. Especially liked the structure closer to the train station. Fees for parking should only be after 2 hours of free parking.

TABLE 6

- ◆ FIRST 8 GOALS – Concern about traffic and impacts of higher density on neighborhoods west of El Camino Real.
- ◆ E-W CONNECTIVITY – Supported grade separation at Ravenswood and possibly at Oak Grove. Liked the bike tunnel at Middle Avenue.
- ◆ EL CAMINO REAL – Should be 2 lanes with parking for its entire length. Also, ECR should have wider sidewalks/beautification/etc. Traffic signals could be coordinated to help with traffic flow. Keep speed on El Camino Real slower (25/30 miles per hour).
- ◆ SANTA CRUZ – Liked extending sidewalks and alternating by block and removing parking. Remove the 35 spaces and replace with sidewalk.
- ◆ PARKING – Concerned about harm to businesses if paid parking is implemented. Either metered parking or building a structure with free parking to discourage parking on Santa Cruz Avenue. Consider other placement options for the parking structure (above ground or below ground) as well as pricing options (2 hr. free or always charge). Have good signage with parking structure.
- ◆ OTHER – Support for building better biking facilities.

TABLE 7

- ◆ FIRST 8 GOALS - General agreement about the first eight goals, though group members had differing views of a “village” character. The term “village” needs to be defined. Also had

Summary of Group Comments from El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan Planning Commission Meeting, held on May 19, 2008

concerns about affordable housing (rental housing) vs. ownership and the proximity of new housing near the train station. Also concerned about the process for achieving a vision.

- ♦ E-W CONNECTIVITY – Pedestrian crossing at Middle Ave has strong support, while grade separation doesn't have as much support. Specifically, a grade separation at Ravenswood is even more controversial. Perhaps the two issues should be separated.
- ♦ EL CAMINO REAL – Unresolved. While agreed that El Camino needs wider sidewalks, they would still need to be more separated from traffic.
- ♦ SANTA CRUZ – Unresolved. Santa Cruz Avenue would likely need anchors on each end. There was moderate support for a pedestrian only mall, though implication for retailers on that mall needs to be researched more.
- ♦ PARKING – Agreed that parking structures are needed, perhaps behind buildings and underground.
- ♦ OTHER – Not enough focus on Bike lanes, bike facilities/infrastructure.

TABLE 8

- ♦ FIRST 8 GOALS – General agreement, though there was some concern about building heights. Supported heights near the train station, but there was not agreement on how high buildings should be on south El Camino Real.
- ♦ E-W CONNECTIVITY – A Bike/Pedestrian tunnel at Middle Ave was supported.
- ♦ EL CAMINO REAL – Tentative support for keeping El Camino Real 2 lanes. The idea of placing El Camino Below grade should still be considered, with local traffic above.
- ♦ SANTA CRUZ – General consensus for wider sidewalks on both sides of Santa Cruz, with parallel parking on both sides. Liked the idea of developing the back of the parcels on the south side of Santa Cruz. Also, there was too much emphasis on only Santa Cruz, and there should be some development plans for Oak Grove and Menlo Avenue.
- ♦ PARKING – General consensus on the parking structures, but there were concerns about structures both being on the north side of the street. Location of parking structures should be equally accessible for most businesses.