



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

FOR THE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING OF MAY 19, 2008
AGENDA ITEM D1

APPLICATION: El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan

APPLICANT: City of Menlo Park

PROPOSAL

Menlo Park is in the process of developing a long-term vision for the El Camino Real and Downtown areas. The Planning Commission Workshop will provide an opportunity for the Commission and other community members to review and comment on the Draft El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan, which consists of a draft vision statement, goals and objectives, and a conceptual plan. The feedback and direction received at this meeting will be used to prepare the revised Draft Vision Plan that will be presented for review at the City Council Meeting of June 10, 2008.

BACKGROUND

At the City Council retreat on January 6, 2007, the Council identified a goal to set a clear long-term plan for the El Camino Real and Downtown areas. The setting of this goal was inspired in part by the presence of a number of large vacant parcels along El Camino Real that were formerly occupied by auto dealerships, as well as by the referendum of the Derry Lane mixed-use development, which placed on hold General Plan and Zoning Ordinance Amendments for an area near the Caltrain station.

Over the following months, the Council discussed various options for realizing this goal, establishing a Council Subcommittee of Council Members Boyle and Cline and reaching general agreement that a broad and inclusive community visioning process (Phase I) was needed prior to creation of a Specific Plan, Zoning Ordinance Amendment, or equivalent implementation strategy (Phase II).

During the latter part of 2007, the City conducted a multi-phase consultant review process, ultimately selecting Design, Community & Environment (DCE) to manage the community visioning process. The selection of DCE was based primarily on the firm's strong emphasis on broad community involvement and public participation, as well as its extensive Bay Area experience. The primary project work commenced in December, 2007, although the City staff conducted some initial outreach tasks during the consultant

selection process. These tasks and the main outreach work are discussed in more detail in the Analysis section.

ANALYSIS

Project Objective

The project objective is a general one, with the overall intent to develop a long-term vision for the El Camino Real and Downtown areas. At the core of the visioning process is broad public outreach and participation. This process is intended to engage a wide range of community members, including those who may not currently be involved in civic activities. The Vision Plan is not meant to be as detailed as a Specific Plan or equivalent planning document, but it will clearly detail the next steps in the process, setting the stage for a Phase II implementation strategy.

The open-ended nature of the Vision Plan objective is by design, with the City Council acknowledging that the lack of success of some previous plans could potentially be traced to a perception that they were burdened with preconceived outcomes or solutions. The two-phase structure of the current process serves to reinforce that principle. For example, an alternate decision to start working on a Specific Plan (even one that incorporated a significant visioning component) could have been interpreted as an implication that significant changes to the current General Plan and Zoning Ordinance were assumed, and that more modest modifications had already been ruled out. By contrast, the current visioning process has been set up to fully allow for a wide range of outcomes.

Oversight and Outreach Committee

As part of the visioning process, the City Council approved the formation of an Oversight and Outreach Committee (“the Committee”). The Committee has operated with the following primary objectives:

1. Provide input to the consultant and staff regarding the management of the process; and
2. Reach out to other community members and help bring them into the broader visioning process through participation in the Community Workshops and other visioning activities.

The Committee consists of 18 community members, appointed either by a designated group (such as a City Commission) or by the City Council. The Committee membership is as follows:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Member</u>
Parks and Recreation Commission Planning Commission Housing Commission Environmental Quality Commission Transportation Commission Bicycle Commission	Kristi Breisch Henry Riggs Elizabeth Lasensky Daniel Kocher Reginald Rice John Fox
Stanford University	Steve Elliott
Downtown/El Camino Real Business Owner Downtown/El Camino Real Property Owner	Kerry Hctor Lorie Sinnott
Development Community Representative Downtown/El Camino Real Area Resident Downtown/El Camino Real Area Resident Downtown/El Camino Real Area Resident At-Large Member At-Large Member At-Large Member At-Large Member At-Large Member	Jeff Warmoth Tom Hilligoss Todd Temple Elizabeth Weiss Vincent Bressler Ben Eiref Katie Ferrick J. Michael Gullard Clark Kepler

The Committee has conducted four meetings, all of which were open to other community members, and public comment was welcomed and incorporated by the Committee into its own discussion. All materials presented at the Committee meetings are available on the project web site. The meetings provided an opportunity for Committee Members to discuss outreach efforts, as well as to review and comment on past project tasks/events and the plans for upcoming project work.

The Committee served as an invaluable sounding board, and in several cases helped to direct substantive changes to the structure of the workshop format, such as by emphasizing the importance of general verbal visioning exercises prior to diving into detailed map review. The Committee has also worked to increase turnout at the project events by posting flyers, sending messages to various private email groups, and informally promoting the project. The Committee has concluded its formal set of meetings, although Committee Members are strongly encouraged to stay involved through the remainder of the visioning process, to provide continuity and related project assistance.

Community Surveys

Two short surveys were distributed to every postal address in Menlo Park, as well as to all local property owners with an out-of-town mailing address of record (approximately 19,000 addresses total). Both surveys included paid return postage.

Prior to selection of DCE as the project consultant, City staff sent a short open-ended survey card in October 2007, which generated approximately 600 responses. The general input received was used in helping structure the primary visioning process, and was also useful in helping establish a strong base of project email list subscribers.

In February 2008, a second, more focused survey was sent, which to date has resulted in over 2,000 responses (approximately 11% return rate). The survey was used to establish and prioritize specific topics for discussion at the Community Workshops. A summary of the survey results is included as Attachment A. This summary was also distributed at Community Workshops #2 and #3, and is also available on the project web page.

Mobile Tour

On February 6, 2008, a mobile tour of neighboring communities took place, primarily for the benefit of the Oversight and Outreach Committee, although several other community members also attended and contributed to the discussion. The group visited various sites in San Carlos, Redwood City, and Palo Alto, looking at a variety of buildings, street configurations, streetscape improvements, grade separations, and other aspects of the built environment. The objective was to learn from a wide range of examples, in order to help inform Menlo Park's visioning process. Tour stops included sites and features such as: a one-story retail corridor with newer streetscape improvements (San Carlos); mixed-use buildings, district identification signs, and plazas (Redwood City); and a bicycle-pedestrian tunnel, low-rise parking structures, and playing fields (Palo Alto). Photographs from the Mobile Tour are available on the project web page.

Walking Tours

On February 9 and 23, 2008, three separate walking tours were held of the north and south segments of El Camino Real and the Downtown. The purpose was to allow participants to review the existing conditions, discuss challenges and opportunities, and interact with other community members in an informal setting. The tours stopped at key locations to collect input and opinions from participants. Participants also discussed the character of development, transportation issues, public space and other issues at each site. Approximately 40 people attended the walking tours of El Camino Real, and 50 people attended the walking tour of the Downtown.

Comments and photographs were taken by individual community members and later reviewed and consolidated by the consultant. A summary of the feedback received on the walking tours is included as Attachment B. This summary was distributed at

Community Workshops #2 and #3, and is also available on the project web page. Tour maps are also available on the project web page.

Stakeholder Interviews

On February 13, 2008, the consultant conducted a set of small-group interviews of certain target groups:

- Residents
- Property owners/managers
- Business owners
- Schools, religious institutions, and seniors
- Architects and developers
- Former City Council Members
- Applicants for the Oversight/Outreach Committee
- City staff

These interviews were intended to generate useful, frank discussions that would identify key issues to be discussed during the main portion of the visioning process. A summary of the consultant interviews, with comments sorted by group, is included as Attachment C. This summary was distributed at Community Workshops #2 and #3, and is also available on the project web page.

Targeted Outreach

The process has included targeted outreach to community groups, with the specific goal being to increase attendance at the workshops by members of the target groups. Early outreach efforts included presentations to service clubs (Rotary International, Kiwanis International), the Menlo Park Senior Center, Belle Haven Child Development Center, and general canvassing of the Downtown during a typical lunch hour and during a weekend Farmer's Market. Due to the fact that some of the early feedback consisted of guidance that attendance at the evening workshops was significantly challenging for certain groups, some of the later targeted outreach efforts were restructured to serve as more detailed informational sessions for specific groups such as parents of young children, seniors, and members of the Belle Haven community.

Speaker Series

The first public event for the visioning process took place in October 2007, with the inauguration of an educational forum on planning and related topics. The speaker series has continued throughout the primary visioning process, with the objective of generating discussion that could help inform the Community Workshops. All presentations have been followed by question-and-answer sessions, allowing for a lively exchange of ideas.

Staff and the consultant have attempted to schedule a range of topics, with the full schedule consisting of the following presentations:

- “Previous Planning Projects in the El Camino Real/Downtown Areas, Visioning and Planning Projects in Other Cities, and Lessons for Menlo Park” (Michael Dyett, October 24, 2007)
- “Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in the Peninsula Context” (Dena Belzer, November 14, 2007)
- “The Economics of Mixed-Use Development” (Denise Conley, December 12, 2007)
- “Preservation and Prosperity in Downtown Environments” (Frederic Knapp, February 13, 2008)
- “Parking and Transportation Demand Management Strategies for Cities Like Menlo Park” (Jeffrey Tumlin, March 12, 2008)
- “Twelve Ingredients for a Successful Downtown” (Jeff Eichenfield, April 9, 2008)
- “Context-Sensitive Thoroughfare Solutions” (Jim Daisa, May 14, 2008 – *to occur after the publishing of this staff report*)

Video (in one case, audio only) of all presentations is available on the project web page, along with all presentations and handouts.

Newsletters

In addition to the initial project flyer sent in October 2007, three project newsletters have been sent to every postal address in Menlo Park, as well as to all local property owners with an out-of-town mailing address of record (approximately 19,000 addresses total). The newsletters have been intended to keep the general community apprised of the progress of the project and to solicit ongoing input and community participation. A final newsletter will be sent between this Planning Commission Workshop and the City Council Meeting of June 10, describing the Draft Vision Plan in more detail.

Project Web Site and Email Updates

A project web page has been established at the following address:

http://www.menlopark.org/projects/comdev_eocrdowntown.htm

This page provides up-to-date information about the project, allowing interested parties to stay informed of its progress. The page hosts electronic copies of all presentations, handouts, meeting notices and agendas, photos, maps, staff reports, and all other supporting materials. The project web page has been an important part of the outreach process, allowing community members to stay informed and involved, even when attendance at certain meetings is not possible.

In addition, the page allows users to sign up for automatic email bulletins, notifying them when content is updated and when events are occurring. The project list currently has 676 subscribers, which is significantly more than any other planning-related project list.

Dozens of bulletins have been sent to this list over the course of the visioning process.

Community Workshops

The three Community Workshops represent the core of the visioning process, creating a forum for community members to work with each other to discuss the pros and cons of potential visions. The first Community Workshop, held March 6, 2008, provided an opportunity for the public to learn more about the Vision Plan process and to provide initial input. Opportunities and constraints in the Study Area were discussed, including results of the public walking tours and community surveys. The workshop included individual and group exercises, summaries of which are included as Attachments D and E.

At the second and third Community Workshops, held April 3 and May 1, 2008, community members began to create a more detailed vision, focusing respectively on the El Camino Real corridor and Downtown. Each workshop started with a summary of the input received to date. Then, workshop participants broke into small groups to provide feedback on conceptual alternatives, combining and modifying ideas and adding new proposals to agree upon a vision. Each workshop concluded with a summary from each group, followed by an overall summary by the consultant of areas of underlying agreement, as well as areas for which there did not appear to be current community consensus. Summaries of these workshops are included as Attachments F and G.

The attendance at all Community Workshops has been very positive in relation to both past City projects and the consultant's professional experience, with approximately 100 attendees at Community Workshops #1 and #2 and 70 attendees at Workshop #3.

Draft Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives, and Conceptual Illustrative

The Draft Vision Plan has been prepared in accordance with the extensive visioning process described above. The Draft Vision Plan consists of a vision statement and 12 detailed goals and objectives (Attachment H), as well as a conceptual illustrative (Attachment I) that relays aspects of the vision statement and goals in a visual format.

At the core of the Draft Vision Plan is the set of 12 detailed goals and objectives. Each goal statement includes a list of objectives for meeting the goal. For each goal there is also a background statement, which describes the community input that led to the formulation of that particular goal. Certain goals are based on what the consultant and staff believe to be relatively clear areas of suggested community compromise, while others are not. As an example of the latter, while there has been a clearly-expressed overall goal of improving circulation and streetscape conditions on El Camino Real, there is not yet clear agreement on specific solutions, such as how many vehicle lanes should be present at various locations and what if any sidewalk improvements should be implemented.

The end result of this meeting is intended to be detailed feedback from the Planning Commission and other community members on the Draft Vision Plan, in particular the

four goals for which there are not yet clear areas of suggested community compromise, although all aspects of the Draft Vision Plan may be discussed during this workshop. Community members who have attended previous workshops and other meetings are strongly encouraged to attend this workshop and to continue to help refine the vision. In addition, this workshop is structured to allow newer attendees to get up to speed quickly and to contribute to the visioning process.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Vision Plan (Phase I) is a planning study and as such is not considered a project requiring environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Subsequent work on a Specific Plan or equivalent implementation strategy (Phase II) may require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

RECOMMENDED MEETING AGENDA

The Planning Commission Workshop is intended to function as a hybrid of a Community Workshop and a standard Planning Commission meeting. The recommended agenda is as follows:

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Vision Process Summary

The consultant will provide an overview of the visioning process and the Draft Vision Plan, for the benefit of both the Commissioners and the other community members.

3. Small Group Discussion

Attendees, having been assigned a random number upon check-in, will break into small groups to discuss the Draft Vision Plan in more detail. Some tables will be located at the rear of the Council Chambers, and some will be located in the Administration Building. Ideally, the small groups will focus on the goals for which there is not clear community agreement, although any aspect of the Draft Vision Plan may be discussed during this segment.

Planning Commissioners will not be assigned to a particular group, but rather should 'float' from table to table, observing the dialog.

4. Small Group Reports

All attendees will return to City Council Chambers. Each small group will have appointed an individual to summarize that group's discussion to the Commission and the other community members.

5. Planning Commission Discussion with Small Groups

Commissioners will have the opportunity to understand more of the context and richness of the small group discussions, asking follow-up questions and engaging in a dialog with the group representatives.

6. Public Comment

Any attendee may individually address the Commission regarding the Draft Vision Plan or any other aspect of the visioning process.

7. Planning Commission Review and Comment

The Commission will have the opportunity to provide detailed comments on the Draft Vision Plan. Commissioners may ask questions as needed of the consultant and staff, and members of the public as needed.

Thomas Rogers
Associate Planner
Report Author

Arlinda Heineck
Community Development Director

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

In addition, the City has prepared a project page for the proposal, which is available at the following address: http://www.menlopark.org/projects/comdev_ecrdowntown.htm. This page provides up-to-date information about the project, allowing interested parties to stay informed of its progress. The page allows users to sign up for automatic email bulletins, notifying them when content is updated.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Summary: Community Survey
- B. Summary: Walking Tours
- C. Summary: Stakeholder Interviews
- D. Summary: Community Workshop #1: Individual Exercise
- E. Summary: Community Workshop #1: Group Exercise
- F. Summary: Community Workshop #2: Small Group Discussion
- G. Summary: Community Workshop #3: Small Group Discussion
- H. Draft Vision Statement and Goals
- I. [Draft Conceptual Illustrative](#)

EXHIBITS TO BE PROVIDED AT MEETING

Full-size Conceptual Illustrative

V:\STAFFRPT\PC\2008\051908 - El Camino Real-Downtown Vision Plan.doc

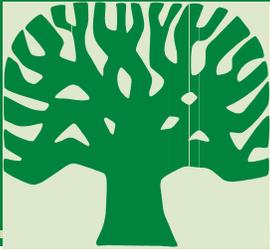
Attachment A. Summary: Community Survey

COUNT, OUT OF 2,036 RESPONSES TALLIED

	<i>Live</i>	817
	<i>Work</i>	309
1. Do you live, work.....	<i>Property</i>	569
	<i>Business</i>	132
	<i>Daily</i>	901
2a. How often Downtown?	<i>Weekly</i>	973
	<i>Monthly</i>	104
	<i>Infrequently</i>	54
	<i>Daily</i>	308
2b. How often El Camino Real?	<i>Weekly</i>	1094
	<i>Monthly</i>	354
	<i>Infrequently</i>	267

AVERAGE RANK ORDER: 1 IS HIGHEST AND 5 IS LOWEST

	<i>Specialty</i>	2.1
	<i>Restaurant</i>	2.1
3a. Most needed Downtown?	<i>Nightlife</i>	2.9
	<i>Mixed-Use</i>	2.3
	<i>Other</i>	3.1
	<i>Specialty</i>	2.5
	<i>Restaurant</i>	2.2
3b. Most needed El Camino?	<i>Nightlife</i>	2.9
	<i>Mixed-Use</i>	2.1
	<i>Other</i>	3.2
4a. Housing Menlo Park?	<i>rank 1-5</i>	3.3
4b. Housing El Camino Real	<i>rank 1-5</i>	3.2
5. Bike/ped El Camino	<i>rank 1-5</i>	2.0
6. Bike/ped Caltrain	<i>rank 1-5</i>	2.1
7. Traffic flow ECR	<i>rank 1-5</i>	1.6
8. Increased Parking Downtown	<i>rank 1-5</i>	2.2



Help Imagine Menlo Park's Future

In October 2007, the City conducted an initial survey to gain a better understanding of the community's desires for El Camino Real and Downtown. We received over 500 responses! Thanks to those who participated! This survey follows up with some more focused questions, and will be used to help structure the Community Workshops and associated visioning activities. Please refer to the enclosed newsletter for more information about the Vision Plan process and to see the portions of Menlo Park that are included in the Study Area.

1. Do you live, work, own property or own a business in the Study Area?
(Please circle all that apply)
2. How often do you visit Downtown Menlo Park?
Daily Weekly Once a Month Infrequently (circle one)

How often do you visit establishments on El Camino Real?
Daily Weekly Once a Month Infrequently (circle one)
3. Of the following business types, which do you think are needed most in Downtown Menlo Park?
(rank the following, with 1 being the highest rank)
specialty stores__ restaurants__ nightlife__ mixed-use*__ others _____

Of the following business types, which do you think are needed most on El Camino Real?
(rank the following, with 1 being the highest rank)
specialty stores__ restaurants__ nightlife__ mixed-use*__ others _____

*Mixed-use development is defined as the combination of two or more uses within one structure. For example, a two-story building with a retail use on the ground floor and a residential or office use on the second floor is classified as mixed-use.

4. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement:
More homes, including condominiums and apartments, are needed in Downtown Menlo Park.
strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree (circle one)

More homes, including condominiums and apartments, are needed on El Camino Real.
strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree (circle one)

For the following issues, please rate the level of importance to you.

5. Bike/pedestrian crossing of El Camino Real
very important important neutral unimportant very unimportant (circle one)
6. Bike/pedestrian crossing of Caltrain tracks
very important important neutral unimportant very unimportant (circle one)
7. Improved traffic flow on El Camino Real
very important important neutral unimportant very unimportant (circle one)
8. Increased parking Downtown
very important important neutral unimportant very unimportant (circle one)

Additional Comments/Clarification

Attachment B. Summary: Walking Tours

MENLO PARK EL CAMINO REAL/DOWNTOWN VISION PLAN – WALKING TOURS

Summary of Comments Recorded at the Three Walking Tours

1. North El Camino Real

- Make distinction between north and south El Camino Real
- Improve east-west connectivity
- Encourage appropriate tree planting
- Improve transit facilities
- Improve bike/pedestrian access
- Improve and articulate entrances on El Camino
- Mitigate sidewalk impediments
- Provide affordable housing
- Do not create “canyon” feel with tall buildings close to El Camino
- Re-open Park Theater or redevelop
- Minimize driveways on El Camino
- Buildings should have appropriate architectural detailing and landscaping
- Wider sidewalks on El Camino
- Storefronts should have transparent windows
- Need variety in buildings
- Need level sidewalks
- Land uses should inform building form
- Auto service/mechanics not best use on El Camino
- Shield noise from El Camino
- Underground utilities
- Preserve trees
- Encourage monument signage
- Parking is attractive for potential office tenants
- Consider shared parking and access
- Need more grocery stores

2. South El Camino Real

- Consider a local shuttle service
- Strip malls are unattractive
- Widen sidewalks
- Improve pedestrian crossings of El Camino
- Improve street furniture
- Recreation, housing, hotels, retail for empty car dealer lots
- Provide pedestrian/bike access across tracks to Burgess Park
- Plant more trees
- Underground parking improves visual quality on El Camino
- Balance pedestrian and vehicular needs

- Improve signage
- Improve east-west connectivity
- Consider a new fitness center
- Consider an arts center
- Improve visibility of businesses
- Preserve solar access on El Camino
- El Camino should not compete with Downtown Menlo Park
- Higher densities are appropriate on El Camino

3. Downtown Menlo Park

Station Area, Alma and Menlo Center

- East side of Alma is isolated by train tracks
- Provide connectivity among transportation modes
- Station area is underutilized
- Pedestrians and vehicles conflict in station area
- Merrill Street should be a hub for new retail
- Recognize historical significance of station area site
- Make station area more pedestrian-oriented
- Encourage housing in station area
- Housing near tracks will become slum housing
- Station area needs more parking
- Over/Underpass of El Camino
- Eliminate parking on El Camino to provide more separation between vehicles and pedestrians
- Differentiate between El Camino and Santa Cruz Avenue
- Build pedestrian bridge over El Camino
- Menlo Center is out of scale (too large/tall) for Menlo Park
- Setbacks are important for El Camino
- Mix of old and new (BBC building and Menlo Center) is positive

Downtown/Santa Cruz Avenue

- Raised storefronts are negative
- Parking is appropriately located behind buildings
- Trees should be encouraged in parking plazas
- Parking plazas are not pedestrian friendly
- Consider parking structures in Downtown
- Consider one-way streets in Downtown
- Plant more trees along Santa Cruz
- Trader Joes often has parking problems
- Consider creating housing above retail
- 1142 Crane Street is an example of good building massing and design

- Replace single-story buildings with multi-story buildings
- Provide more open space Downtown
- Encourage more nighttime businesses/nightlife
- Downtown suffers from lack of investment
- Consider more residential development Downtown to support retail
- Develop parking areas, but ensure common amenities are provided
- Streetscape needs improvement
- Provide wider sidewalks
- Provide space for outside seating
- Underground parking to provide park space above
- Improve rear storefronts and landscaping on parking plazas
- Improve consistency of signage, but still allow for flexibility
- Need Downtown health club
- Offices/banks are not appropriate uses for Downtown

Menlo Avenue

- Improve landscaping on Menlo Avenue
- Scale of office uses and residential on Menlo Avenue is appropriate
- Retail along north side of Menlo Avenue is not successful
- Taller buildings would be appropriate on north side of Menlo Avenue
- Underground utilities
- Plant more trees

Oak Grove Avenue

- Consider parking lot at Oak Grove and Crane as an opportunity for development
- Provide greater setbacks on Oak Grove
- Oak Grove businesses are well-landscaped
- Oak Grove needs a clear identity
- Oak Grove should be northern boundary of Menlo Park's central business district

Attachment C. Summary: Stakeholder Interviews

MENLO PARK EL CAMINO REAL/DOWNTOWN VISION PLAN - STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Interviews held February 13, 2008

A. *City Staff*

- Concerns are with respect to traffic and density.
- Parking structures should be incorporated into any new development.
- Should incorporate parking structures into other uses.
- Interested in creating new housing along El Camino Real and in downtown.

B. *Schools, Churches & Seniors*

- Concerns are with respect to transportation, pedestrian safety and capacity of school facilities.
- El Camino Real is not pedestrian friendly and hard to cross.
- Bicycling is difficult and unsafe along El Camino Real.
- Kepler's building is a model for new development, young people congregate there.

C. *Architects & Developers*

- Concerns are with respect to design and development needs to make the city a livable and vibrant place.
- Medium to high density development is the only thing that makes fiscal sense, as shown by recent development along El Camino Real.
- The downtown needs to include housing to make it a vibrant space.
- The downtown needs to have a variety of uses and services.
- The size of parcels along El Camino Real makes development difficult; the city needs to facilitate parcel aggregation.
- Housing in downtown makes sense.
- Redwood City's Precise Plan is a model for planning.

D. Property Owners/Managers

- There should be more focus on El Camino Real rather than in downtown.
- The “small town” feel creates a fear of growth within the community
- More housing development is a good idea.
- Retail should not be required on portions of El Camino Real north or south of downtown, due to limited pedestrian traffic.
- Need to mitigate traffic congestion on El Camino Real, much of which is generated by other communities. Possibly by removing parking on El Camino and creating bus pull-out lanes and better landscaping.
- Need to assemble parcels to facilitate development.
- Need to create parking downtown.
- Create a “Downtown Village” by redeveloping parking plazas; City can stimulate redevelopment.
- Fees are a barrier to housing development.

E. Business Owners

- Concerns are with parking downtown.
- There is no consistency in parking policy, design or payment.
- Feel that there are parking issues in downtown all the time.
- It is important to consider paid parking.
- Standard of 6 parking spaces per 1000 sf seems high and is a detriment to growth.
- Need to update the parking codes.
- Concerned with new retail drawing customers away from downtown area.
- Possible alternate location for farmers market, the present location takes parking away from store customers.

F. Former City Council Members

- There needs to be new housing in downtown because it is too quiet at night and the downtown needs the vibrancy people bring.
- It is important to focus new development on El Camino Real, to provide new housing and jobs.
- The housing needs of singles and seniors are not met within the city.
- The city needs to provide more affordable housing.
- The issue of parking clouds every decision.
- There needs to be better public participation to ensure community approval.
- The aggregation of parcels is necessary for development.
- The combination of the downtown and the train station creates a great opportunity for mixed-use.
- El Camino Real needs wider sidewalks and better crossings.
- Retail along El Camino Real is preferable to office because of sales tax dollars.

G. Residents

- Concerns are with maintaining residential neighborhood and creating new community amenities.
- There needs to be height restrictions on the residential side of new development along El Camino Real.
- There are downtown parking problems, and it is important to consider underground parking.
- There should be trees along El Camino Real.
- The city needs better pedestrian connections; pedestrian bridge, multi-use trails.
- It is important to bring the “park” back into Menlo Park.
- Closing Santa Cruz Avenue to cars should be considered to make a pedestrian only street.
- Green building standards should be incorporated into new development.
- Preserving the residential neighborhood feel is important.

- It is important to keep Menlo Park unique.
- Higher density needs to include height restrictions and set-backs.

H. Applicants for Outreach Committee

- It is important to create a safer and more walkable El Camino Real.
- High density development will require lots of community buy-in.
- A higher end chain hotel should be developed on the former automobile dealership parcels.
- Creating higher density in the downtown area might be better than creating an alternative to downtown on El Camino Real.
- There needs to be bicycle and pedestrian improvements on El Camino Real.
- Office and residential should be developed along El Camino Real.
- Underground El Camino Real.
- There is a need for downtown parking structures.
- Better connections are needed across El Camino Real.

Attachment D. Summary: Community Workshop #1 Individual Exercise

MENLO PARK EL CAMINO REAL/DOWNTOWN VISION PLAN – COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #1

Frequent responses to the question: “What improvement would you most like to see to El Camino Real and/or Downtown Menlo Park?”

1. Pedestrian Improvements

- Widen sidewalks
- Create walkability
- Accessibility
- Encourage walking
- Better crossings on El Camino Real
- Connection across railroad tracks
- Connection to Burgess Park

2. More Housing

- Affordable
- Closer to train station (TOD)
- Senior

3. Mixed-use Development Downtown

- Relaxed height limit
- Low density

4. Parking Structure

- Under-grounded parking mentioned a number of times
- Near El Camino Real

5. New Park or Plaza Space

- Downtown
- In one of the existing parking lot areas
- At the railroad station
- Include activities for children

6. Trees and Landscaping

7. Bicycle Improvements

- Bicycle lanes on El Camino Real
- Connections across railroad tracks
- Connection to Burgess Park

8. Widen El Camino Real

- Underground El Camino Real
- Three lanes in each direction

9. Improve Night Life

- More restaurants
- Theatre
- Shops/Restaurants to stay open later
- Local businesses

10. Transit-Oriented Development

- Multiple uses
- Including housing

Attachment E. Summary: Community Workshop #1 Group Exercise

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.

Attachment F. Summary: Community Workshop #2: Small Group Discussion

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

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
- 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

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

- 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
- 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.

Attachment G. Summary: Community Workshop #3: Small Group Discussion
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 both sides 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
- All downtown parking to be free and underground

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 with active uses (businesses/cafes) surrounding it
- 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
- Green spaces in Downtown

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.

Attachment H. Draft Vision Statement and Goals

EL CAMINO REAL/DOWNTOWN VISION PLAN

This document is a working draft of the *El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan* for use at the Planning Commission Workshop on May 19, 2008.

A. *The Vision Plan Area*

As shown in Figure 1, 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.

B. *Outreach Efforts*

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

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

Input gathered from these outreach efforts as well as from the three previous Community Workshops are included as appendices to this report.

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 Plan Area today. Those Menlo Park assets include:

- ◆ **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.** A significant contributing factor to the small town, or village, character that is highly valued by community members today is the range of services that are provided by local businesses and merchants. One-of-a-kind retail businesses and services contribute greatly to making a downtown unique.
- ◆ **Strategic Opportunities for Near-term Change.** Vacancies and under-utilization 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.

These community assets will be 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 detailed below, which are illustrated in Attachment I, the Conceptual Illustrative drawing:

- ◆ **Maintain a village character unique to Menlo Park.**

There is a distinct character to the place. There are many ways to access the Downtown, particularly for pedestrians. There are expanded housing opportunities, particularly for seniors and all segments of the workforce. The buildings, plazas and streets are well-designed and well-maintained. A sense of pride that merchants maintain in their storefronts contributes to a Menlo Park identity. Development in the Downtown and on El Camino Real is sensitive to the adjacent residential context. Specially-designed and strategically-placed gateways mark the entry to Menlo Park as well as to Downtown.

Background

An image that was provided by a number of community members was one of a "European village feel." This was quite often characterized by the inclusion of vertical mixed-use, but not "highly intense" development. Upper components of that mixed-use could range from residential to office and, under specific circumstances—retail. Also contributing to

what people feel is a necessary component of the village character would be a comfortable, walkable scale and pedestrian safety in conjunction with active places, expanded business hours and more vitality in the Downtown.

◆ **Provide greater east-west, town-wide connectivity.**

An examination of potential ways to achieve this goal will be part of the work taking place at the May 19 Planning Commission Workshop. Discussion topics include:

- East-west connections across the railroad tracks
- Grade separations for all streets currently crossing the railroad tracks
- A pedestrian/bike underpass of the railroad tracks and public park or plaza
- Improved crosswalk and pedestrian connections across El Camino Real

Background

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 in the area of Middle Avenue, particularly along with improved bicycle and pedestrian crossings of El Camino Real near the proposed underpass. Community members 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. During targeted outreach sessions in Belle Haven, it was reported that some members of that community don't 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.

◆ **Improve circulation and streetscape conditions on El Camino Real.**

An examination of potential ways to achieve this goal will be part of the work taking place at the May 19 Planning Commission Workshop. Discussion topics include:

- Provide opportunities for wider sidewalks
- Alleviate congestion
- Increase the opportunities for safe connectivity
- The configuration of El Camino Real, including number of lanes, lane widths and availability of parking lanes

Background

Observations of El Camino Real for this planning process determined that there are approximately twenty-two different configurations of the lane configuration. These twenty-two conditions are sometimes replicated 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. Because of the impact this would have on existing businesses and property owners along El Camino Real, in addition to the cost and time required for construction, the consultant believes that approach is not achievable. With regard to non-trenching solutions, community opinions expressed at Workshop #2 were approximately divided between three 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.

In all three scenarios above, excess space in the cross-section should be devoted to making sidewalks wider on El Camino Real.

◆ **Ensure that El Camino Real development is sensitive to adjacent neighborhoods.**

Variations in building heights, setbacks, landscaping, and uses on different parts of El Camino Real are respectful of their neighboring contexts and also provide opportunities for variations in the character. The variations include:

- On the west side of El Camino Real, new buildings up to 2 to 3 stories in height. Uses include residential, office and, potentially, smaller hotels.
- North of Oak Grove Avenue, new buildings on the east side of El Camino Real are up to 2 to 3 stories in height. Uses include residential and, potentially, office.
- South of Ravenswood Avenue, new buildings on the east side of El Camino Real are up to 4 stories in height. Uses include residential, office and potentially a hotel with conference facilities.

Background

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 parcels. When El Camino Real was discussed in small group sessions at Community Workshop #2, most groups used as a starting point Alternative 2 (moderate development). 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, participants generally felt there is not much of a market for retail or restaurant uses, which have often ended up failing in that part of the city. There was more in-

terest in housing or office uses, or retail uses that are different from those in the Downtown.

◆ **Revitalize underutilized parcels and buildings.**

A hotel with conference facilities is part of future development of the south end of El Camino Real. There is also the development of residential uses and neighborhood-oriented park space. Some of the residential use is on upper levels, with retail on the ground floor. New development maintains a sensitive relationship to adjacent neighborhoods. The Park Theater site is a cultural amenity that complements but does not compete with the Downtown. Wider sidewalks are provided on El Camino Real. North-south bicycle and pedestrian connections are created on or adjacent to the railroad tracks.

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.

◆ **Activate the train station area.**

There are 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.

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 doesn't show much of an entrance to the station area.

◆ **Protect and enhance pedestrian amenities on Santa Cruz Avenue.**

An examination of potential ways to achieve this goal will be part of the work taking place at the May 19 Planning Commission Workshop. Discussion topics include:

- Pedestrian character of Santa Cruz Avenue
- Wider sidewalks, less on-street parking, possibly a pedestrian-only mall
- Mid-block connections between the street and the parking plazas
- Intermittent plazas that would form a network between Fremont Park and the plaza at Café Borrone.

Background

There has been much discussion but no clear general agreement on the future sidewalk and street conditions of Santa Cruz Avenue. Some community members have advocated closing it permanently to vehicular traffic.

◆ **Expand shopping, dining and neighborhood services to ensure a vibrant downtown.**

Most restaurants and stores are open during evening hours and weekends. There are expanded housing opportunities, particularly for seniors and all segments of the workforce, creating more active users of downtown businesses. New buildings are up to 2 to 3 stories in height with the third floor stepping back from the front facade. Upper floor uses include residential, office and, potentially, retail. The parking plazas are more active and carefully designed to create conditions that are more pleasant for pedestrian activity. 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. 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.

Background

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 community workshop small group summaries 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. Many community members have expressed a desire for greater liveliness, particularly in the evening hours.

◆ **Provide residential opportunities in the Vision Plan Area.**

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 location in the Vision Plan Area and surrounding context.

Background

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 drive the market for a downtown that stays open later in the evening. Some community members are concerned about the impacts residential development has on Menlo Park's schools and other community facilities and services. Those impacts need to be considered in the planning for future residential development.

◆ **Provide plaza and park spaces.**

Plazas activated by storefront activity or ground floor uses and parks that provide passive and active recreational spaces are key components of the Vision Plan Area.

Background

This issue was discussed by many community members. The plaza in front of Borrone's was often cited as an exemplary model 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.

◆ **Provide an integrated, safe and well-designed pedestrian and bicycle network.**

Pedestrian and bicycle connections provide alternatives to El Camino Real. A path runs behind the parcels on the southern segment of El Camino Real. 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.

Background

Community members discussed north-south connections, so people have alternatives to walking and biking on El Camino Real.

◆ **Develop parking strategies and facilities that meet the commercial and residential needs of the community.**

An examination of potential ways to achieve this goal will be part of the work taking place at the May 19 Planning Commission Workshop. Discussion topics include:

- Development of a “Park Once” strategy
- 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

Background

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 often 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.