

**El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan
Consolidated City Council Direction on Draft Plan
October 2011**

Items reordered/reformatted from draft versions in order to relay concepts clearly.

Geographic Areas

Station Area

1. Height, Bulk
 - a. Reduce the façade height from the proposed 45 feet by one full story; staff and consultants to recommend a specific dimension to achieve the reduction.
 - b. Staff to work with consultants to determine alternative mechanisms to limit maximum building height to a portion of the building with the intent of increasing the architectural interest of the building; possible mechanisms include changes in the bulk restrictions, added setbacks, and/or requirements for architectural merit.
 - c. Reduce SA W maximum height from 60' by one full story.
 - d. On Alma Street portion of SA E zoning district, increase minimum upper-floor setback from 10' to 15'.
2. Safety Across Railroad Tracks at Ravenswood
 - a. The Planning Commission recommends that the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists at the intersection of the railroad tracks and Ravenswood Avenue be a high priority and possible solutions to the safety issues be expedited either through the Specific Plan or alternative programs.
 - b. Revise the plan to include “quad gates” as an option at Ravenswood and Oak Grove Avenues rail crossings
3. Revise Civic Plaza (p. D30-D31)
 - a. Consider large-growing trees such as maples, sycamores, or redwoods as ‘iconic’ plantings, in addition to oaks (which grow very slowly).
 - b. Add an enhanced pedestrian connection to Oak Grove Avenue
4. Revise the plan to remove any elements (e.g., curb extensions) that would preclude the ability of the City to modify the central portion of El Camino Real to provide 3 lanes of automobile travel in each direction and/or Class II bike lanes (either option potentially limited to peak hours)

Downtown Area

1. Chestnut Street Paseo/Market Place

- a. With outreach to and participation by the Downtown merchants and property owners to ensure success, pursue implementation of the Chestnut Paseo and Market Place in a phased approach. The first phase would include a temporary closure of Chestnut Street as delineated in the Specific Plan, with functional access for the operation of the Farmer’s Market, seven days per week to be used as a public space with seating, food vendors (food trucks), landscaping, and possibly decorative paving. The temporary phase would be maintained for several months and would be used as the basis for a review and consideration of the permanent installation of the Paseo and Market Place.
- b. With both the temporary and permanent installations, consideration should be given to Menlo Park merchants for access to the public space and should build upon successful existing businesses, including the Farmer’s Market.
- c. The recommendation is based on the recognition that the Chestnut Paseo and Market Place are closely linked in functionality and that the success of the space will be dependent on uses that would attract people.

2. Sidewalk Widening

- a. Retain the sidewalk widening elements and guidelines of the Specific Plan with implementation starting on a temporary basis for smaller block or half-block areas where there is a logical relationship to an adjacent use or purpose in order to assess the viability of the widening and whether to expand and make permanent the widened sidewalks over time.

3. Utilize trial/temporary installations for the pocket parks to determine the impacts on circulation.

4. Parking Structures

- a. Include Parking Plaza 2 in addition to Parking Plazas 1 and 3 as a possible site for a parking structure. (Factors considered by the Council in discussing preferred locations included the proximity of Parking Plaza 1 to transit, the Downtown merchants’ and property owners’ support of Parking Plaza 2, and the interest of the Presbyterian Church to work with the City on Parking Plaza 3.)
- b. Encourage utilization of portions of parking structures by parking permit users and preserve street level parking for customers.
- c. Provide opportunities for businesses to contribute to the financing of parking structures to the benefit of the business through reduced parking permit costs or other incentives.

- d. Require high aesthetic standards for the parking structures, including landscaping within required setbacks or as a vertical element of the structure.
 - e. Encourage the preservation of as much surface parking for customers as possible within the structures.
 - f. Limit the height of parking structures to be consistent with the scale of adjacent planned and existing buildings that can be no taller than 38’.
 - g. Downtown property owners must be presented with a viable financial model for funding the construction of the garages, so as not to create a burdensome cost drain on either businesses or the city (i.e., preferring in-lieu parking fees, public/private partnership, permit revenues, or other funding mechanism). Over 50% of downtown property owners must approve a garage if they are going to be assessed for construction costs.
5. Not including the Market Place, eliminate small mixed use buildings on the parking plazas (as shown on lots 4, 5, and 2) and discourage infill of the current parking plazas for purposes other than parking, pedestrian and bicycle circulation, and other limited public spaces.
 6. Eliminate the residential option associated with the parking structure on Parking Plaza 3.
 7. Staff to continue to work with Fire District to review Station 6 site standards and to consider flexibility where warranted
 8. Staff to reach out to John Hickson/Live Oak Lions Club to 'debrief' on City Council direction and review how to continue to reach out to Farmer's Market

El Camino Real (other than El Camino Real South-East (ECR SE) zoning district)

1. In the ECR NE and ECR NE-R zoning districts, establish a new Public Benefit Bonus standard for overall height, equivalent to one additional story.
2. Amend the Building Façade Modulation regulations for the ECR NE-L and ECR SW zoning districts to call for compatible modulation of form on facades adjacent to residential or residential mixed-use zones.
3. Amend the Massing and Modulation regulations for all ECR zoning districts as follows:
 - a. Major portions of the building facing a street should be parallel to the street.
4. In order to accomplish more with regard to east-west connectivity along El Camino Real, recommend more creative and aggressive efforts at signal timing and signal modifications, including 4-way crossings and bicycle safety.

ECR SE Zoning District (Council Member Fergusson recused)

1. Height, Bulk
 - a. Façade height at the 10' minimum setback to be reduced from the proposed 45 feet by one full story; staff and consultants to recommend a specific dimension to achieve the reduction; façade height may remain at 45 feet at the 20' maximum setback (in between: ??)
 - b. Staff to work with consultants to determine alternative mechanisms to limit maximum building height to a portion of the building with the intent of increasing the architectural interest of the building; possible mechanisms include changes in the bulk restrictions, added setbacks, and/or requirements for architectural merit.
2. Revise district regulations to address Stanford University concerns regarding development feasibility while still achieving Plan objectives, along the lines of the initial guidance:
 - a. The width of the proposed Middle Avenue may be reduced from 120' to approximately 90'
 - b. The requirement for the Cambridge Avenue publicly-accessible building break may be made more flexible, to allow for options such as a U-shaped building
 - c. The requirements for two private frontage breaks each north and south of Middle Avenue may be changed to one each, and made more flexible with regard to location
 - d. The rear setback may be eliminated, although as Stanford notes, Fire District regulations may effectively require the same kind of setback
 - e. The open space requirement of 40% minimum may be lowered to 30%, which would be similar to several comparable El Camino Real districts)
3. Bicycle/Pedestrian access:
 - a. Require protected bicycle network between the Middle Avenue bicycle/pedestrian crossing and Cambridge
 - b. Explore potential for requiring protected bicycle network between the Middle Avenue bicycle/pedestrian crossing and Roble

Non-Geographic Topics

Public Benefit

1. Move the Plan forward with the retention of the thresholds for public benefit as currently stated in the Plan, but provide the Council with additional information and analysis to enable further consideration of that threshold level.

2. Return with discussion points and potential recommendations around possible incentives for retail development over other types of development.
3. Retain in the Plan a general discussion of a Development Agreement approach to public benefits and a general listing of possible types of benefits with the understanding that it may become part of a broader discussion through the Planning Commission of public benefit in general.
4. Include the Santa Cruz Avenue Plaza improvements in the list of possible public benefits.
5. Revise the "Public Benefit Bonus and Structured Negotiation" process to be clearly subject to public review in one or more public meetings; documents estimating value should be provided as part of this process.
6. Public Benefit: explore potential for a simpler public benefit process that could apply to smaller projects which wouldn't require a Development Agreement; if not feasible, explain why.

Bicycle Improvements

1. City Council endorsements/amendments to Bicycle Commission recommendations:
 - a. The Plan should include and encourage bike lanes rather than bike routes wherever and whenever feasible, even if doing so will, in the long term, mean that the City adopt new or creative lane and parking arrangements. Using bike lanes will increase the use of bicycles by giving far greater comfort to those who would like to bicycle but are uncomfortable riding directly in traffic.
 - b. For that reason, the Commission supports the Plan's introduction of bike lanes on Oak Grove Avenue.
 - c. The Plan currently includes University Drive as a north-south bike route into and out of downtown. The Commission believes that University is a key route and would also suggest that the Plan include the possibility of installing bike lanes on University in the future.
 - d. The Commission would also comment that it would be appropriate for the Plan to include bike lanes on El Camino Real the entire length within the City limits and/or consider and examine other north-south paths/lanes/routes, including a potential path along Caltrain tracks/Stanford lands.
 - e. The Commission believes that the presence of schools on Middle Avenue, Encinal Avenue, Ravenswood Avenue, and Valparaiso Avenue, because they are routes from schools to the downtown area, in particular should include improved bicycle facilities, such as bike lanes, buffered bike lanes, and sharrows.

- f. The Commission believes that the Caltrain pedestrian/bicycle undercrossing at Middle Avenue is a key aspect of the Plan's east-west transportation for bicycle and pedestrians.
 - g. The Commission is in support of the proposed downtown parking garages because they take parking load off of the street and give the City more flexibility for adding bicycle facilities to downtown streets without undue impact to the availability of parking downtown. Parking garages and surface parking plazas may be used for pedestrian and bicycle parking/circulation.
 - h. The Commission believes that the Plan should include and encourage bicycle related improvements as public benefits, such as:
 - i. Bike parking (racks or bike corrals)
 - ii. Signage (to Downtown, Station, etc)
 - iii. Pedestrian/bike undercrossings
 - iv. Intersection improvements, such as
 1. crosswalks,
 2. bike through lanes
 3. bike-specific left-turn lanes
 - v. Bike share pods
2. Examine potential for bicycle improvements (signage, lanes, etc.) on Ravenswood Avenue east of El Camino Real, and on Menlo Avenue west of El Camino Real.

Land Uses

1. Restaurants with Live Entertainment – where C (Conditional), change to A (Administrative).
2. Restaurants (Limited Service) – reexamine comprehensively to determine appropriate categorization based on definition of use.
3. Day Care Center – where C (Conditional), change to A (Administrative).
4. Consider adding new category for Live/Work Lofts, in particular around Station Area.
5. Explore potential revisions regarding retail uses and whether/how they could be encouraged/required.
6. Recommend revisions to encourage senior housing, such as through increased density, lower parking ratios, or other incentives; note that this encouragement should not be necessarily interpreted as a mandate, and that senior housing should not necessarily dominate the Plan area.

Parking

1. Modify the parking ratio for the Station Area from the proposed 1.85 spaces per unit for residential development to a minimum of 1.0 space per unit and a maximum of

- 1.5 spaces per unit with an emphasis on the accommodation of shared vehicles, guest parking, shared parking and unbundled parking, subject to review and comment by staff and the consultant.
2. Commission recognizes that reduced parking ratios may encourage development of smaller units and senior housing and potentially reduce traffic and school impacts.
3. Explore potential for extending Station Area residential parking requirements to other appropriate transit-oriented/walkable areas.

General

1. Add language clarifying that “Illustration of Standards + Guidelines” graphics are examples and are not necessarily binding in and of themselves.
2. Procedures for Approval of Future Projects
 - a. If not adequately addressed in the Specific Plan, add language to the Specific Plan that states that during Architectural Control review by the Planning Commission, the Commission will look for overall quality of materials, and specifically look for a change of materials, setbacks, and break-up of massing of upper floors.
3. Maximum Allowable Development: provide more context/analysis around this concept and explanation of what occurs when cap is reached.
4. Recommend that the Finance and Audit Committee review the FIA for the El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan and provide input to the City Council.