

From: Roxie Rorapaugh <rrorapaugh@att.net>
Sent: Saturday, June 18, 2011 5:32 PM
To: Rogers, Thomas H; _Planning Commission
Cc: _Planning Commission; _CCIN
Subject: Menlo Park El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report

June 18, 2011

Mr. Thomas Rodgers

Menlo Park Planning Department

Dear Mr Rogers,
I wish to submit the following additional comments about the Menlo Park El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report:

1. The environmental impacts of a parking garage in plaza 3 and plaza 1 need to be included.
 - a. Implementation of the Menlo Park El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan with the two parking garages will physically divide an established Community and the aesthetic impacts need to be looked at more closely. Such structures will cause dramatic changes to the pedestrian traffic and interconnectivity between the neighborhood extending from Oak Grove Avenue and to the north. Currently, because the plaza allows easy pedestrian access many people can cross over from various points to stores on Santa Cruz Avenue using their back doors. Diagonal crossing through the parking plaza also saves pedestrians walking time and encourages more exploration of the area. It is also easy to see cars coming in and out of the plazas, so pedestrians using sidewalks are safe. A large parking structure will not only block people who use the plaza itself as a route, because cars exit from an enclosed structure pedestrians do not have as much time to see the cars coming and so walking is more dangerous and stressful. This will discourage pedestrian traffic on the sidewalks for the businesses along side streets as well as hurt businesses on Oak Grove Avenue and isolate the parts of the City just north of Oak Grove which are currently well integrated with downtown.
 - b. A survey of the trees on the plazas which would be removed should be in the air since they currently sequester carbon dioxide and the removal of trees will impact air qualities

- c. The health impacts of residential townhomes above a four level parking garage as suggested for plaza 3 should be included since this could locate new sensitive receptors in an area of elevated concentrations of air and noise pollutants from automobiles.
2. Illustrative plan (figure 3-2, page 3-12 of draft EIR) indicates area enclosed by Menlo Ave to the South, El Camino Real to the East, Santa Cruz Ave to the North and Doyle to the West as Mixed Use/Residential. This is not consistent with other parts of the plan.
 - a. Proposed Zoning Districts (Figure 4.9-3 page 4.9-16 of draft EIR) shows this area to be zoned SA-W (station area west) which is Retail/Mixed Use according to the Table 3-3 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS on page 3-50 of the Draft EIR.
 - b. Specific Plan Location Map (Figure 3-1 page 3-3 of draft EIR) shows this area to be in the downtown core, which would lead one to expect it to be retail or mixed use retail.
3. Illustrative plan (figure 3-2, page 3-12 of draft EIR) indicates area enclosed by Santa Cruz Ave to the South, El Camino Real to the East, Oak Grove Ave to the North and Maloney Lane to the West as Mixed Use/Residential. This is not consistent with other parts of the plan.
 - a. Proposed Zoning Districts (Figure 4.9-3 page 4.9-16 of draft EIR) shows this area to be zoned SA-W (station area west) which is Retail/Mixed Use according to the Table 3-3 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS on page 3-50 of the Draft EIR.
 - b. Specific Plan Location Map (Figure 3-1 page 3-3 of draft EIR) shows this area to be in the downtown core, which would lead one to expect it to be retail or mixed use retail.
4. While the Specific plan states allows residential development near Train Station, El Camino Real and Downtown adjacent areas, it does discourages services such as day care centers and animal clinics by requiring conditional permit reviews in the many portions of the plan area. The plan also prohibits gas stations, automobile leasing, community social service and public safety facilities in the Downtown/Station/Downtown Adjacent areas. This is bad policy, encouraging residential growth but not allowing for the services (day care, veterinarians) people will need.
5. The “public benefit” development intensity bonuses should be eliminated. The City has never had used a two tier system like this before. There are no specific guidelines for what constitutes a “public benefit”, making it an arbitrary designation which will cause confusion, headaches and probably lawsuits. Specific bonuses, such as the 15% intensity bonus for below market rate housing which currently applies to some zoning districts make sense. A blanket public benefit does not. Is a store that sells only health food able to apply for “public benefit”? I bet about any business feels they are contributing to the public good, this amorphous “public benefit” sounds like a path to favoritism, confusion and possible corruption.

6. There is no mention of the flooding problems Atherton Channel is already experiencing, since one half of the Specific Plan area will drain to this channel the negative impact on the channel should be studied.

7. Why are private parking lots prohibited in areas of the Specific Plan when the same Plan is suggesting that parking structures be built on public land? The El Camino Real areas which prohibit private lots are within walking distance of downtown. Employees of businesses like Trader Joes could park there easily if the price were right. Why set it up so that the City has to supply all parking?

Regards,

Roxanne Rorapaugh

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