



CITY COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY MINUTES

Tuesday, May 13, 2008

7:00 p.m.

701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025

Menlo Park City Council Chambers

ROLL CALL – Cohen, Robinson, Boyle, Cline, Fergusson

Staff present: City Manager Rojas, City Attorney McClure and City Clerk Kelly. Other staff was present in the audience.

City Manager Rojas introduced Cherise Brandell, the new Community Engagement Manager.

The Mayor announced that Thursday is Bike to Work Day and that the City will be hosting four energizer stations between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., at which bikers will receive bike bags and other goodies.

The Mayor reminded the public that the seventh Speaker Series for the El Camino Real/Downtown Visioning Process will be held on Wednesday, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

The Mayor also announced that he will be hosting a Sub-Regional Community Meeting on Homelessness on Wednesday, May 28th, between the hours of 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

A. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Lewis spoke in support of re-establishing the Arts Commission, which has been in abeyance since the resignation of all of its members in 2004.

Kristen Duriseti, representing the Oak Knoll neighbors, asked the Council to assist them in coming up with a workable solution between the neighbors and the School Board regarding the renovation project for the Oak Knoll School. She said that the Board has not shown any interest in taking into account concerns of the neighborhood. At a minimum Ms. Duriseti requested that the City not grant the curb cuts that the School District has requested and that the City require the District to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for this project.

B. STUDY SESSION

1. **Consideration of and possible direction on a proposal that would require a General Plan Amendment and Zoning Ordinance Amendment in order to construct a Mixed-Use Development comprised of 48 residential units and approximately 5,100 square feet of commercial space on a 1.23-acre project site located at 389 El Camino Real. ([Staff Report #08-060](#))**

Justin Murphy, Development Services Manager, informed the Council that the purpose of the study session is for the Council and the members of the public to hear a presentation

from the property owner, The Matteson Companies , on a development proposal for 389 El Camino Real. Mr. Murphy reported that the project owners made an initial presentation to the City Council in February 2006, but that since then the Council established the El Camino Real/Downtown Visioning Process. He reported that a draft of the Vision Plan is expected to come before the Council in June. He stated that because of the visioning process, the developer has not submitted a formal development application, but has requested a study session before the City Council.

Mr. Murphy reported that the project site is comprised of the former Anderson truck lot on 389 El Camino Real, a residential property at 612 Partridge Avenue, and a residential properties at 603-607 College Avenue. The proposal includes: a total building area of 131,591 square feet on a 1.23 acre project site, comprised of 91,502 square feet of building above ground and a 40,089 square foot below grade garage; 48 residential condominium units; 5,100 square feet of commercial use on the ground floor; 140 parking spaces, including 116 spaces below grade and 24 surface spaces; and a four-story design with a maximum building height of 59 feet, 4 inches.

Mr. Murphy stated that the proposal would require amendments to the General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance in order to increase the maximum allowed residential density from approximately 18.5 dwelling units per acre to approximately 40 dwelling units per acre and to increase the maximum allowed floor area ratio (FAR) from approximately 75 percent, subject to a use permit, to approximately 170 percent for the project site. Other land use entitlements would also be required related to the project design and height of the building.

Mr. Matteson, president of The Matteson Companies, announced that he has been a life-long resident of Menlo Park, and is not just a developer, but is also a concerned citizen of the community. He stated that he has been an active participant in the visioning process for El Camino Real and the Downtown and is sensitive to this project being part of the vision for the area.

John Baer, Director of Development for The Matteson Companies, stated that their objective in asking for this study session is not to circumvent the visioning process, but rather to have a constructive dialogue with members of the City Council and the community about the visioning process as it relates to a real project. He noted that the plan being introduced was designed prior to the start of the visioning process, and that they understand it will need to be altered to meet the guidelines of the Vision Plan. Mr. Baer showed visuals of other projects on El Camino Real in Menlo Park and in other cities and reviewed several aspects of the project including: the site location; architectural design; the site plan; the subterranean parking; traffic efficiencies and trip generations; proximity to transit and shopping; proximity to a residential neighborhood; municipal revenue impact; and cost of housing.

Mr. Baer responded to specific questions by members of the Council regarding details of the proposed project and assertions made related to parking, traffic, transit and revenues.

Members of the public commented as follows:

Margaret Garland questioned why this presentation is before the Council without the developer first having discussions with the neighbors being most affected by the project. Elizabeth Lasensky thanked the developer for being patient and waiting through the visioning process. She stated that as part of the visioning process, she has heard a lot of

support for higher density, with housing, on El Camino Real. She pointed out that the number of units proposed is the same as the revised Derry project and that she thinks the project does have the ability to increase transit use. She suggested that the developer make sure the sidewalks are wide enough to be both pedestrian and bike friendly and hoped that the retail space would be leased to local independent businesses.

Peter Colby stated that he does not believe retail works at this location for egress for delivery trucks. He also pointed out that the property, as zoned, allows for curbside parking and that this causes problems for bike riders.

Tracy Van Ligten said she is adamantly opposed to this project and questioned why the City would feel the need to amend its General Plan and Zoning Ordinance for the purpose of maximizing a developer's profits. She said that a three and four story project next to a residential neighborhood would greatly impact their quality of life. Ms. Van Ligten questioned the plan to have the entrance and exit from the project onto College and Partridge, and not El Camino Real, and felt the traffic caused by this project would be a detriment to the neighborhood.

Barrett Moore pointed out that the proposed plan includes the demolition of a couple of residential homes. He said that most of the neighbors would support some high density housing, but they feel that they have been blindsided by this proposal.

Sam Galdes said that he does not support this project, as proposed, and sees no reason to change the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, to facilitate this project. He expressed concern for what will happen to the neighbors' property values.

Margie Roginski opposed this project as not in keeping with the adjoining neighborhood. She expressed concern based on the height of the project and traffic issues.

Mary Beth Holman said she is against this project in its present form, but she is not necessarily opposed to projects on El Camino Real. She expressed concern that the project is too tall, as it backs up to a residential neighborhood, and that traffic will increase on the residential streets.

Tim Straight said he is opposed to the project as proposed, but is not against building something on this site. He questioned what the next steps will be.

Peter Cooke said he has mixed feelings, because he has been an advocate for growth that goes up and not out. However, he stated this project is in his neighborhood. He hoped that there will be lots of communication between the developer and the neighbors.

Frank Priscaro informed the Council that College is a quiet street with lots of children. He felt the neighbors' property values will go down if this project is approved. He stated his believe that there are already good rules and regulations in place, and urged the Council not to override these. He suggested that a test for this project would be if the Council would be fine with having it next to their homes.

Annie Berlin informed the Council that this neighborhood has been through the Allied Arts and Safeway projects and as a result is organized and committed to ensuring that whatever gets built on this site is the best that can be done for the area.

Sheila Rose agreed with the prior speakers and suggested that the Vision Plan for El Camino Real be adopted before this project goes any further.

Sharon Jade Johnson said she was disappointed with the presentation because the developer could not answer specific questions regarding the community impact, and he did not address concerns that will be raised with this project being adjacent to a residential neighborhood. She felt that this shows a lack of thoughtfulness and care of the community and lack of outreach to neighbors and as a result this fosters distrust. She questioned why the developer felt the need to meet with the Council prior to meeting with the neighbors.

Shahnar Sean Amiri said he just bought property next to this proposed project and the fact that this project is being planned was not disclosed to him at time of purchase. He said that he agrees and shares the thoughts of his neighbors.

Don Brawner said that the community has been at war with certain development interests and that the best thing the Council can do is "just say no". He suggested that if the developer wants to propose a plan that meets the current General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, then the Council should talk about that.

Patty Boyle said she has participated in some of the visioning workshops and has heard that people would like to see more housing on El Camino Real, including more condo options. Having said that, she said that she can understand how the neighborhood feels, but would urge them to work with a mediator to see if they can find a middle ground.

Massimo Carallore said she opposes this project because the traffic flow will be dumped onto two residential streets. She suggested that the developer take a walk around the neighborhood and see who will be impacted.

Margaret Osborn asked that the Council make sure the developer follows the rules and that this project not put driveways onto College and Partridge.

Wendy Haesemayer said that she agrees with her neighbors. She stated that none of them want to look at an empty lot, but that 140 parking spaces flowing onto College and Partridge will dramatically impact the neighborhood streets.

John Kadrany said he is surprised at the scale of project, but that he also supports development on this site. He stated that he would like to see the developer reach out to the neighbors. Mr. Kadrany also said that he is not opposed to modifying the zoning for the benefit of a high quality project, and suggested that the developer get creative in making this work for both the developer and the neighborhood.

Daniel Roitman stated that he does not like to look at El Camino Real as it is today and understands that it has to change. However, he expressed alarm for the project as proposed and the developer's response to questions raised by members of the Council.

Elias Blawie said that it is the Council's job to protect the community and not to worry about whether or not the project pencils out for the developer.

Morris Brown expressed amazement that the neighbors came out tonight to speak and urged them to continue to stay involved not only on this project but on other issues that effect their community as a whole. He stated his belief that the developer most likely paid too much for the property and that this is a speculative project. He said he does not

support 40 units per acre and considers that too dense. Mr. Brown felt that the most important thing is that this project not come forward until after the Vision Plan is adopted and that it conform with the Plan.

David Ambriz said that he hasn't been involved in the past, but that he will stay involved and follow this project. He pointed out there are already problems with traffic and parking in the neighborhood and there are a lot of children that play in the neighborhood.

In response to questions raised by members of the Council, the City Manager reiterated that at this time there is no formal application from the developer and that the City is moving forward with the El Camino Real/Downtown Visioning Process. He said that the developer has said that they will be modifying the project based on the visioning process and will be performing community outreach.

Community Development Director Arlinda Heinick informed the Council that this matter was scheduled for a study session at the request of the developer, as is his right, by paying the required fee to present a project to the Council, but that the developer has not submitted a development application. She stated that once the developer submits an application, the project will go through extensive environmental review including public scoping sessions and meetings before the Planning and Housing Commissions and review by the City Council. She said this process will most likely take more than a year.

Applicant, John Baer, reiterated that their plan is to wait until the City finishes the visioning process for El Camino Real and the Downtown and then to revisit and revise their proposed project based on the Plan. At that point Mr. Baer indicated they would meet with the neighbors, after which they would be ready to submit an application for a proposed project to the City.

Members of the Council stated that the study session was an opportunity for the Council and the community to get some basic information from the developer on a proposed project. Members of the Council emphasized that it is important for the City to continue with the El Camino Real/Downtown Visioning Process and for the developer to consider this process and adjust their proposal accordingly and to reach out to the neighbors by holding community meetings and to start addressing their concerns. The Council assured the neighbors that this project is a long way from becoming a reality. They thanked the community members for coming and expressing their opinions and encouraged them to stay involved in the visioning process as well as involved in this particular project.

C. ADJOURNMENT – Adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry M. Kelly, City Clerk

Approved at the Council meeting of June 17, 2008