



## CONTINUED STUDY SESSION

**Date:** 12/01/2022  
**Time:** 7:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Zoom.us/join – ID# 871 4022 8110 and  
Council Chambers  
751 Laurel St., Menlo Park, CA 94025

### A. Call To Order

Chair DeCardy called the continued study session to order at 7:00 p.m.

### B. Roll Call

**Present:** Andrew Barnes, Chris DeCardy (Chair), Linh Dan Do, Cynthia Harris (Vice Chair), Henry Riggs, Jennifer Schindler, Michele Tate

**Staff:** Deanna Chow, Assistant Community Development Director; Ed Shaffer, Assistant City Attorney; Tom Smith, Principal Planner; Chris Turner, Associate Planner; Mary Wagner, Assistant City Attorney

### C. Continued Study Session

Study session for introduction of changes to the Zoning Ordinance and El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan that might be needed to modify residential densities and associated development standards to implement the Housing Element Update. ([Staff Report #22-063-PC](#))

Planner Smith presented an overview of the item.

The Planning Commission held a study session to provide feedback and receive public comments on an overview of potential modifications to the Zoning Ordinance and El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan (Specific Plan).

Chair DeCardy opened public comment.

Public Comment:

- Patty Fry said allowable office needed to be addressed and changed in all the zoning to improve the housing/jobs imbalance and to allow for increased heights that zoning changes needed to include increased setbacks, mediation and articulation.
- Adina Levin said the city should look at how much density they allowed in the Bayfront and not have less than that in the core downtown transit-rich, service-rich areas and encouraged more proactive changes for affordable housing.
- Marc Bryman supported parking reduction and centralized parking downtown and suggested in addition to opportunity sites to look at the low VMT alternative.
- Karen Grove said heights downtown should be greater than the five story limit proposed and questioned how affordable housing would actually get developed.
- Brittani Baxter said this was an opportunity to make the downtown more vibrant and to use height limits strategically to have a greater mix of size of units and affordability supporting

greater diversity.

- Michael (no last name) said the downtown could support much more housing and increased heights would accommodate that.
- Brian Kissel encouraged identifying levers to use to ensure the city presented an updated housing element that would be approved by the state and asked the Planning Commission to address.
- Katie Beruzzi said they could do a lot more downtown to accommodate different housing needs and simplify rules to be proactive with housing density development and incentivize housing and maybe not so much office.

Chair DeCardy closed public comment.

The Commission asked clarifying questions of consultants Geoff Bradley and Asher Kohn, M-Group. Assistant Community Development Director Deanna Chow and Mary Wagner, Assistant City Attorney, also provided additional information.

Planning Commissioners provided the following general comments:

- Proposed zoning modifications to densities, floor area ratios (FARs), and heights in the Specific Plan area should be increased beyond those discussed in the staff report. Densities in the range of 150 to 200 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) were suggested to be explored, with corresponding increases in FARs and heights to make development at those densities feasible.
- When considering higher residential densities, thought should be given to creating adequate areas for open space and recreation for residents as part of projects and also off-site throughout the community.
- Building façade heights adjacent to low density residential areas should remain lower than the maximum potential building heights to provide a more gradual transition to denser development.
- Minimum parking rates should be removed in the Specific Plan area and new maximum parking rates created.
- Consideration should be given to removing the Zoning Ordinance requirement that certain single-family residential projects receive use permits from the Planning Commission.
- Tentative support was expressed for combining parcels of a similar size and urban context in the C-1-A, C-2, C-2-A, C-2-B, C-2-S, and C-4 zoning districts into a single zoning district utilizing the existing mixed-use C-2-B development regulations as a starting point. It was recommended that the project team explore increasing the density above 30 du/ac currently allowed in the C-2-B district if the development community indicates it would be more likely to result in residential development on the parcels.

#### **D. Adjournment**

Chair DeCardy adjourned the meeting at 10 p.m.

Staff Liaison: Deanna Chow, Assistant Community Development Director

Recording Secretary: Brenda Bennett

Approved by the Planning Commission on March 13, 2023