



PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSHOP SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

May 19, 2008

7:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers

(with mid-meeting small-group discussion tables in the Administration Building)

701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025

CALL TO ORDER – 7:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL – Bims, Bressler, Deziel (Chair), Keith, O'Malley, Pagee, Riggs (Vice chair)

INTRODUCTION OF STAFF – Deanna Chow, Senior Planner; Arlinda Heineck, Community Development Director; Thomas Rogers, Associate Planner

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

B. CONSENT - None

Items on the consent calendar are considered routine in nature, require no further discussion by the Planning Commission, and may be acted on in one motion unless a member of the Planning Commission or staff requests a separate discussion on an item.

C. PUBLIC HEARING - None

D. REGULAR BUSINESS

1. [El Camino Real/Downtown Vision Plan](#): 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.

1. [Welcome and Introductions](#)

2. [Vision Process Summary](#)

The consultant provided an overview of the visioning process and the Draft Vision Plan for the benefit of the Commissioners and the other community members.

3. [Small Group Discussion](#)

Attendees, having been assigned a random number upon check-in, broke into small groups to discuss the Draft Vision Plan in more detail. Some tables were located

within the Council Chambers, and some were located in the Administration Building. Planning Commissioners were not assigned to a particular group, but rather 'floated' from table to table, observing the dialog.

4. Small Group Reports

All attendees returned to City Council Chambers. Each small group appointed an individual who then summarized that group's discussion to the Commission and the other community members. The consultant then summarized key themes and potential areas of agreement from all the groups.

5. Planning Commission Discussion with Small Groups

Commissioners had the opportunity to understand more of the context and richness of the small group discussions, asking follow-up questions of the consultant and the group representatives.

6. Public Comment

The following members of the public addressed the Commission regarding the Draft Vision Plan and the visioning process:

- Elias Blawie
- Chuck Bernstein
- Charlie Bourne
- Mitch Slomiak
- Clark Kepler
- Elizabeth Houck
- Richard Draeger
- Michael Gullard
- Margie Roginski
- Barrett Moore
- Skip Hilton
- Frank Priscaro
- Morris Brown
- Fran Dehn

7. Planning Commission Review and Comment

The Commission gave the following direction by general consensus, 7-0;

- For the City Council Meeting of June 10, the consultant should prepare a document that presents Vision Plan options. The consultant should evaluate the various options with regard to certain criteria and should make a recommendation.
- The Vision Plan should be based on the underlying principle that if any changes would result in benefits (such as "upzoning") to private property owners, the public should also receive benefits as a result of a project. The Vision Plan should set the stage for a specific public benefits framework and/or implementation strategy.
- The consultant should consider and potentially include revitalization techniques such as an area-wide sales-tax in-lieu fee.

Prior to the direction as listed above, commissioners also gave individual comments, which are summarized below:

- Concern about the narrowing of consensus and drawing conclusions too quickly
- Support for ideas such as underground parking and a connecting underpass of El Camino Real, like the California Avenue station in Palo Alto
- Need to emphasize nightlife and appealing to a broad cross-section of customers
- Question whether workshop attendees represent the broader community
- Concern with small-group discussion nuances getting lost in summaries
- Desire for a bold vision; bold ideas do not often come from consensus
- Concern with overall process and individual workshop exercises potentially moving too fast
- Encourage quality and diversity of businesses; discourage chain stores
- Debate whether increasing housing density in downtown would substantially improve business vibrancy
- Encourage the promotion of downtown as home furnishings market
- Existing downtown parking regulations need to be reformed to achieve goal of being a European-style village
- El Camino Real businesses should not compete with downtown
- Parking plaza entrances to downtown businesses should be improved
- Under grounding of El Camino Real not realistic and not preferred even if realistic, unless it provides some connection to downtown
- Improved sidewalks would help draw Palo Alto and Atherton pedestrians into town
- Encourage consideration of short loop shuttles
- Community members who have not already been involved in process should be brought into it and welcomed
- Alternating an expanded Santa Cruz Avenue sidewalk from side to side is not understood by some (existing parking alternates diagonal with parallel)
- Need for more bicycle improvements
- Community members who have been involved in the process are the most interested people; bringing out less-interested people may not be productive
- Surveys don't account for opinions developing and changing over the course of a process
- Concerns about speeding cars in neighborhoods is an issue of enforcement
- Consider idea of charging for short-term parking, not long-term; encourage shoppers to visit multiple establishments in one trip
- Belief that El Camino Real is where traffic is allowed; walkability is not high priority relative to downtown
- The recurring complaint about traffic is really about flow: if we restrict El Camino Real, we get more perception of "traffic"
- Downtown garage to serve employees
- Support for housing in and near downtown
- Discourage Safeway-style site layouts, with parking in front and buildings at rear

E. COMMISSION BUSINESS - None

G. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS - None

ADJOURNMENT 12:30 a.m.

Regular Meeting	June 2, 2008
Regular Meeting	June 16, 2008
Regular Meeting	July 14, 2008
Regular Meeting	July 28, 2008
Regular Meeting	August 11, 2008
Regular Meeting	August 25, 2008

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