



PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

July 11, 2011

7:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers

701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025

CALL TO ORDER – 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL – Bressler (Chair), Eiref, Ferrick (Vice Chair), Kadvany, O'Malley, Riggs, Yu – All Present

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

A. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

B. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were none.

C. CONSENT

Commissioner Kadvany asked what the protocol was for transcripts, noting he had not read the entire document. Planner Rogers said staff had quickly reviewed the transcripts and corrected names. Commissioners Riggs and Yu both indicated they needed more time to review the transcripts. Commissioner Kadvany asked if the transcripts could be continued to the next meeting. Planner Rogers said the next meeting was the special meeting of July 21 and that the response to comments for the draft EIR was pending the approval of the transcripts. He said as these were transcripts there would be less errors. Chair Bressler asked if continuing the approval of the transcripts to the July 21 meeting would allow the time needed for the response to comments. Planner Rogers said he thought staff could make that work.

1. Approval of transcripts from the June 6, 2011 Planning Commission meeting.

Commission Action: There was majority consensus with one Commissioner opposing to continue the approval of the transcripts from the June 6, 2011 Planning Commission meeting to the special meeting of July 21, 2011.

REGULAR BUSINESS

1. **313 Barton Way/Vinay Kalra/Use Permit** – Request from Commissioner Yu for reconsideration of the Planning Commission's action at the previous meeting of June 27 in order to modify a condition of approval regarding the garage door.

Ms. Michelle Miner, project designer, said the garage doors in the material provided to the Commission were what the property owners really liked. She said it might not be the exact model of door used but they would use a door with the same appearance and feel.

Chair Bressler closed public comment.

Commission Comment: Commissioner Yu noted she was requesting that the Commission reconsider condition of approval 4.a.i as applicants' selection of a garage door model addressed the Commission's concern with the bulk of the garage door. Commissioner Kadvany said he liked what was being proposed for the garage doors.

Commission Action: M/S Riggs/O'Malley to reconsider the Planning Commission's action at the previous meeting of June 27 in order to modify a condition of approval regarding the garage door.

Motion carried 7-0.

Chair Bressler moved to approve the garage door replacement as presented. Commissioner Ferrick seconded the motion.

Commissioner Riggs said his concern was Ms. Miner's comment that what garage door was installed might not be the same model as that shown, which was what the Commission liked.

Recognized by the Chair, Mrs. Kalra said their intention was to have a garage door that looked like two doors. She said she could not guarantee that the model shown would be the exact model they bought but they would definitely buy a garage door that looked like two doors. Commissioner Riggs said that the applicants needed to guarantee this aesthetic feature if it was what the Commission approved. Ms. Miner said that the property owners had researched garage doors on the Internet, and that it was not guaranteed the exact door model could be purchased locally. Commissioner Riggs said he would want the image presented to be the door they chose. Commissioner Kadvany said the decorative doors were the key and not a plain door. Commissioner Riggs said he disagreed and that if the image was presented in good faith that should be what garage door was used. Commissioner O'Malley said he agreed with Commissioner Riggs' comments. He said if staff would review the garage door the applicants chose for installation to confirm that it was very similar to the image presented this evening

then he could support the motion. Chair Bressler asked if the motion had to be expanded. Planner Rogers said that it was clear from the Commission's comments that the door would need to be very similar to what was presented. Commissioner Eiref said he recalled a project in which a particular paint scheme had been indicated but the property owner then went with a completely different color scheme. He said he would want staff to review the actual garage door chosen as an amendment. Commissioner Riggs said he thought that staff would make that decision correctly without any further instructions.

Commission Action: M/S Bressler/Ferrick to approve the proposed garage door as presented to the Commission on July 11, 2011.

Motion carried 7-0.

D. PUBLIC HEARING

1. **El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan** – The Planning Commission will commence a multi-meeting review of the Draft Specific Plan. The intent of this review is for the Commission to provide clear and specific recommendations on potential improvements and refinements to the draft plan, for the future consideration of the City Council

Planner Rogers said a review of the Draft EIR for the El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan had just been completed engendering numerous comments. He said they were now looking at the Plan itself and upon conclusion of several meeting reviews the Commission would present recommendations on elements of the Plan that could be strengthened, reviewed, refined and modified as the City moved toward a final Specific Plan.

Planner Rogers said an overview of the project would be presented relatively similar to the presentation given at the release of the draft Specific Plan in April 2010. He said it would review the project history, the Vision Plan phase, the Vision Plan goals that set the stage for the Specific Plan process, the key elements of the draft Specific Plan, look at the key topics that would set the framework for the Planning Commission's review in particular breaking the Plan up by geographical areas, looking at public versus private improvements as a way to structure the meeting, considering interrelationships between different elements of the Plan and how those might affect each other, and looking at some guidance from the City Council's June 14 meeting. He said the presentation would take about an hour and then the Commission would receive public comment. He said the meeting would conclude with an opportunity for the Commission to ask procedural and technical questions as well as consider what the Commission would need for their review of the Plan at upcoming meetings or to note overarching themes.

Planner Rogers said the instigating factors for this project had emerged within the range of years from 2000 to 2007 primarily because of the loss of car dealerships along the El Camino Real. He said that loss occurred gradually but completely by 2005-2006. He said at the same time the City was reviewing a number of projects with specific General Plan and Zoning Ordinance amendments requests around the Station Area. He said these two instigating factors created a desire in the City to come to a long term and community focused approach. He said that desire was taken to the City Council and to a subcommittee of the current Mayor Cline and former Council Member John Boyle. He said the decision was made to take a two-phase approach with Phase I beginning a general visioning phase and Phase II being a detailed planning phase. He said this process was in line with community engagement best principles. He said the process was intended to be open ended to allow for the full range of outcomes and could be typified as interest-based planning, which allowed for the determination of common ground consensus.

Planner Rogers said the hiring of a consultant was a completely open and public process noting that Commissioners Bressler and Riggs had served on the RFP Committee to hire the consultant. He said the work began in 2007 with a citywide survey and a newsletter, which was informative in setting the overall themes. He said they then held an educational speakers series that looked at City plans that had come and gone, and proposals for changes that did not evolve, which helped set the process for this project. He said the series also looked at what was being done in peer communities.

Planner Rogers said the visioning plan activities included a range of events such as walking tours, three well attended community workshops, and public meetings of the Oversight and Outreach Committee, noting that Commissioners Bressler and Riggs served on that Committee. He said Commissioners Eiref and Ferrick had also served on that Committee prior to becoming members of the Planning Commission. He said the activities were promoted through five citywide mailings to both property owners and occupants. He said the Vision Plan was unanimously accepted by the Council in July 2008 and set the foundation for the Specific Plan, particularly the 12 Vision Plan goals excerpted in Attachment A to the staff report. Those are: to maintain the village character unique to Menlo Park, create greater east-west connectivity, improve circulation and streetscape conditions on El Camino Real and make sure El Camino Real's development is sensitive and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, to revitalize and reutilize parcels and buildings, activate the train station area, to enhance and protect pedestrian amenities on Santa Cruz Avenue, to expand shopping, dining and neighborhood services to insure a vibrant downtown, to provide residential opportunities in the Vision Plan area, to provide plazas and park spaces, a well designed pedestrian and bicyclist network, and to develop parking strategies to meet the commercial and residential needs of the community. He suggested as they reviewed the Plan to consider how well it addressed those goals and how to deal with

some of the tradeoffs among them as all of them could not be supported to the same level.

Planner Rogers said that a specific plan was a planning document under state law that takes a set geographical area and sets guidelines, policies, rules and regulations for that specific area. He said the process to develop the Plan was to match or exceed the community engagement in the Vision Plan processes set in Phase I, including the addition of more frequent check-ins with the Planning Commission and the City Council. He said a new consultant was selected through a fully transparent request for proposals with a consultant selection panel process. He said the community outreach met the efforts made in Phase I and there were mailings to all of the property owners and occupants citywide and a couple of focused mailings to project areas. He said the Oversight and Outreach Committee did public outreach. He said there were regular email alerts to over 950 people.

Planner Rogers said the first community workshop reviewed and prioritized the Vision Plan goals and considered the opportunities and constraints and tradeoffs among them. He said at the second community workshop at based on what was heard at the first workshop a number of alternative approaches were presented that looked at different land use mixes, circulation options and parking scenarios. He said they took that feedback to the third community workshop which presented a preferred plan called the emerging plan and received feedback. He said throughout this process there had been strong and diverse workshop attendance.

Planner Rogers said the draft Specific Plan had been released over a year ago and was a clear and action oriented plan for the next 20 to 30 years. He said it provided a very detailed framework for public space improvements and a very strong foundation for private development improvements. He said the Plan was a draft Plan and it was not a specific development project such as the Gateway Project. He said that the Plan would not be the final decision on every public improvement but would set up standards, objectives and intents and while it provided some schematics the Plan did not design or implement those improvements.

Planner Rogers said the Plan's beginning chapter included a summary of the plan, requirements under state law and summarized the process and how the City had gotten to this draft Plan. He said in using the document that for a particular improvement such as public space improvements there were lists of components, statements of what the intent of the improvement was and standards and guidelines.

Planner Rogers said Chapter B described the analysis and background that went into the workshop processes. He said that Chapter C identifies the guiding principles of the Plan, which were refinements of the Visioning Plan goals. Those principles are: enhance public space, generate vibrancy, sustain the City's village character, enhance connectivity and promote healthy living and sustainability. He said the guiding principles were detailed more in Attachment B to the staff report. He said Chapter C

also looked at some principles of sustainability that were embedded in other chapters. He said it also discusses the illustrative plan and development program that was an estimation of likely sites for redevelopment, looked at what the Plan would allow, and drafted out some rough buildings as to how many residential spaces, how many commercial spaces, and how many hotel rooms you would get. He said those were the totals that form the basis of the environmental and fiscal analyses.

Planner Rogers said that the geographic areas identified in the Plan would form the basis for the Commission's next deliberations. He said a key element in the Downtown was the concept of the Santa Cruz Avenue Plaza that was intended as a signature public space at the heart of downtown. He said that the two traffic lanes on Santa Cruz Avenue would remain but the idea was to eliminate some parking to allow for wider sidewalks and enhance the paving surface. He said the lanes could be closed for special events. He said other downtown improvements were widened sidewalks on other parts of Santa Cruz Avenue, with parking retained but reconfigured. He said the Chestnut Paseo Marketplace was intended to connect to the central plaza and have a synergy with the existing Farmer's Market.

Planner Rogers said a Civic Plaza was the focus for the Station Area. He noted that Menlo Park's train station was in the top 10 busiest stations but could be enhanced to draw people to Santa Cruz Avenue. He noted that on the other side of the street the Plan identified the Alma Street Walk and Ravenswood Gateway that led to the City activities center.

Planner Rogers said the public space emphasis on El Camino Real was walkability, particularly north south walkability, and included improving the existing narrow sidewalks. He said the Plan would set up requirements for 15 foot sidewalks on the east side and 12 to 15 foot sidewalks on the west side of El Camino Real. He said in most areas there was no spare space to extend sidewalks out and sidewalk expansion would have to come through property redevelopment.

Planner Rogers said the east-west connectivity improvements identified in the Plan included crosswalks, median islands, and a signal countdown to cross El Camino Real. He said also at Middle Avenue the Plan proposed a bicycle pedestrian crossing that would be either an over or undercrossing dependent upon the grade separation for the railroad tracks that would connect that area to Burgess Park and also provide for open space on the Middle Avenue side.

Planner Rogers said Chapter E of the Plan contained the substance of the private development regulations. He said there were five different land use designations that updated the current rules which had been established in 1967 and tweaked over the years. He said the current zoning treated a Pilate's studio the same as an 18-hole golf course. He said the Plan would further define uses. He said the Plan sets up 10 different zoning districts with each having its own dedicated regulations such as height,

setbacks, and modulation techniques. He said the current ordinance for Plan area has two primary districts and several smaller zones.

Planner Rogers said the Plan considers options for public benefit bonus and noted that the Council had requested that the Commission look at this area and make recommendations beyond what the Plan listed. He said the proposed development standards in the Plan have different height measurements including up to 48-feet for parking plaza improvements and 60-feet over all in the Station Area and south of Ravenswood on the east side of E Camino Real. He said setbacks were defined relative to existing character. He said in the Station Area many buildings were placed on the edge of property line, which would be maintained, noting that helped create a comfortable pedestrian and retail frontage. He said along El Camino Real there would be enhanced requirements for setbacks in order to widen and improve sidewalks. He said the Plan also has new massing and modulation requirements including varying the building profile and setting upper story setbacks.

Planner Rogers said Chapter E looks at sustainability regulations and sets up new LEED green building requirements. He said LEED silver certification would be required for most new projects. He said Chapter F focuses on circulation and was broad in intent to include vehicles, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, parking standards, and downtown parking supply policies with some projected changes.

Planner Rogers said that the Plan outlines the actions needed to enable implementation and includes General Plan and Zoning Ordinance Amendments. Those amendments would apply only to the Plan area and not to other parts of the City. He said the Planning Commission would begin a detailed review of the Plan and form recommendations to the Council. The Council would then give staff and the consultant direction on refinements to the draft Plan. He said the Planning Commission's discussion was informed by the recent draft EIR process. He said that staff had intended to have the Fiscal Impact Analysis released prior to this session but that had not occurred. He said the Commission would have that report prior to making its final recommendations. He said many aspects of the Plan were interdependent so when making suggestions to change one part of the Plan you also needed to consider what affects that had elsewhere.

Planner Rogers said Attachment E was a summary of the June 14 Council direction to the Commission to highlight insuring the small town and village character were maintained, look at opportunities and specifics for additional public benefits, examine parking garages in detail including design, timing, and sequencing for other infrastructure improvements, and to stay objective and consider facts and data. He said that staff would also get input from the Transportation Commission and summarize that information for the Planning Commission and Council.

Public Comment: Ms. Gail Sredanovic, Menlo Park, said she lives near the Alameda and was an active member of the Alameda Streetscape Task Force, and had

successfully fought for bicycle lanes on the Alameda. She said she spends a lot of time and money in Menlo Park and that nearby parking was essential, noting that surgery had gotten her out of a wheelchair but physically she was not up to walking some distance to a parking garage and did not think others would want to have to carry groceries any distance. She said she was concerned that the Marketplace would have a negative impact local existing markets. She said if it's not broken, don't fix it. She said she avoids Palo Alto and for the most part Redwood City because of parking problems. She said Santana Row in San Jose looks good but San Jose, Palo Alto and Redwood City all have a higher vacancy rate than Menlo Park. She said she was shocked by the number of architects and elaborate displays at the first meeting. She said she has submitted comments but did not know if those had been read. She said at subsequent meetings she was shocked by the loss of parking and use of parking structures and how that would impinge on the farmer's market. She said she came away from the meetings feeling that this Plan was not community driven, was focused on El Camino Real and that real estate brokers would be the ones to benefit.

Ms. Roxanne Rorapaugh, Menlo Park, said that before 2007, Wilbur Smith Associates had sent recommendations to MTC that the parking in Menlo Park should be consolidated, which would allow for infill projects in the parking plazas. She said Wilbur Smith Associates presented one of the speaker series for this Plan and had emphasized the concept of parking once and using parking structures to allow for infill development in the parking plazas. She questioned how much this earlier work had influenced the Plan's development in comparison to community input. She said people in Menlo Park already park in one place and walk around. She said parking plazas helped define the small hometown feel of Menlo Park. She said there were no parking shortages, and the City does not need parking structures.

Ms. Tiger Bachler, former resident of Menlo Park, and owner of Alys Grace, a boutique next to Peet's coffee, said she wanted to offer a business perspective. She said she loves the idea of a revitalized downtown area. She questioned the idea of the downtown's "village charm" as the downtown was not appealing because of the loss of business and vacancies. She expressed support of the revitalization of the downtown as vibrancy would help small business owners. She said she did not want to lose the existing Farmer's Market. She said Draeger's and Trader Joe's draw many customers into the downtown which was good for all of the businesses there. She asked that the existing businesses not be hurt.

Mr. Jym Clendenin, Menlo Park, said that young people have nicknamed Menlo Park "Menlo Dark." He said he had been involved in the Phase I process and had attended many of the speaker series, most of the workshops, Oversight and Outreach Committee meetings and other public meetings. He said there had been several hundred business owners and residents involved in these workshops. He said the Plan does a marvelous job of combining the community's desire to maintain village character and increase liveliness in the downtown. He said there had been almost total consensus in the

workshops on the direction the community wanted to go except for an individual's opposition near the end of the last workshop, which he wished had been expressed earlier so it could have been more thoroughly discussed.

Ms. Anne Moser, Menlo Park, said she was a member of the City's Housing Commission but was speaking as a resident. She asked that the City keep in mind the growth in the senior population within San Mateo County and to address the lack of affordable housing. She said only 12 percent of Menlo Park's population works in Menlo Park and it would be better if people who worked in the City could live here, which would make the community more cohesive and productive. She asked that the City increase the supply of affordable housing within Menlo Park. She said that there were still people who had no idea what was being proposed in the Plan and suggested staff and officials staff an informational table at the Farmer's Market.

Mr. Frank Carney, Menlo Park, said he was a 40 year resident and the City was a great place to raise a family. He said he had attended as many of the meetings related to this project that he could. He said the overriding value he had heard residents express was to maintain the small town and village character of Menlo Park. He said the Plan disregards what the residents value most highly and proposes growth and vibrancy, and that its focus seems to come from those who want to make a profit. He said the Commission should keep in mind the community value centered on maintaining the small town character when reviewing the growth potential in the Plan. He suggested making circulation changes temporary so impacts could be assessed noting example of Linfield Oaks residents who had thought closing Alma Street would be a benefit but after a few months discovered it was not and that some years prior traffic calming measures were made on Santa Cruz Avenue that proved unpopular and cost time and money to remove.

Mr. Robert Lico, VP of Giannotti Inc., said he was the property manager of several properties downtown and had grown up in Menlo Park. He said the overall objectives of the Plan were headed in the right direction but he believed it had gone a little too far. He said expanding services, retail and residential development were good goals but he did not think the infrastructure and the City's budget could support that expansion. He said it was good to beef up the transportation corridor and travel options, but he believed that people would continue to drive their cars. He noted the parking behind Walgreens was a benefit for seniors picking up their prescriptions and he would not like them to lose that. He said the proposed changes to Santa Cruz Avenue would impede emergency access. He said it was a great idea to close Santa Cruz Avenue for the Farmer's Market and other events but not to create competition for existing retail. He said that the City should be proud that it has such a low commercial vacancy rate. He suggested rather than expanding sidewalks that the newspaper stands be removed. He said it was okay to expand the sidewalks on El Camino Real, that height on Santa Cruz Avenue should be limited to two-story and on El Camino Real to four-story. .

Ms. Jo Eggers, Menlo Park, said the City had requested public comment on the draft EIR but she had not received a notice that staff had addressed comments. She said it was important for the Commission to have the complete comments to make decisions on the completeness of the EIR before it was approved and that it was important for the public to review the comments and response to comments before it was finalized. She said she and others had made comment and those were important.

Mr. Michael Frost, Menlo Park, said that the Plan was on the right track, noting that we are in the 21st century and have to consider climate change, global economy, and population increase. He said the City lost significant revenue with the closure of the car dealerships and the Plan looks at increasing revenue and improving downtown core. He said the population born after 1990, tagged as the "Millennials" and who are driving the technology economy wanted to work, live and play in the same community. He said he goes to the Farmer's Market every Sunday and loves it but it was very moveable and its benefit was not its location. He said the Plan area faces no flood risk, that in-fill development was the future, and that the past could not be romanticized. He said this was a forward looking plan and a perfect policy framework for the City to drive new development and be competitive.

Ms. Carole Grace, Menlo Park, said she has lived in the City for 30 years and grew up in Palo Alto. She said she appreciated the process, noting the significant amount of public comment received, and asked that it be taken into consideration. She said California Avenue in Palo Alto has two parking garages and plazas and on very hot and rainy days she goes there to shop because of the parking garages. She said there was a way to parking structures and still keep convenient parking. She said she has been in businesses in Menlo Park when a shopkeeper has indicated they have to leave to move their car. She said she chose to live in Menlo Park because of the opportunities to walk and bike but now finds bike riding dangerous because so many cars park on the streets. She said if those cars parked in a parking garage instead it would create greater safety for bicyclists.

Mr. Don Brawner, Menlo Park, noted he had served eight years on the Transportation Commission, four years on the Board of Zoning Adjustments and four years on the Housing Commission. He asked the name of the first consultant in the process and suggested that the first consultant was replaced was that the current consultant has worked for Stanford for years and this allowed the City to harmonize its plans with those of Stanford. He said that this seemed like a setup and a potential scam. He said the Plan appears dedicated to certain development interests in town who have one-story buildings and want to build up to five stories. He said that the problems in Menlo Park started when real estate interests started building office buildings on Menlo and Oak Grove Avenues and that those were dead weight for the City as the employees there did not stay to shop downtown. He said that the best retail was Town and Country Village in Palo Alto and that group was not interested in adding office building and noted the same with Stanford shopping center. He said office buildings kill neighborhood

shopping and offered recent development in Sunnyvale as an example. He said mixed use was whatever a developer could get away with, and he found it incredible that the Plan pushed for taller office buildings. He said he would provide additional information at a later date. He said Ms. Rorapough had written an outstanding letter to the editor about the Plan, which no one had commented upon.

Mr. Lawrence Zaro, property manager, Santa Cruz Avenue, said he had spoken with his tenant about the Plan and what would happen if it went ahead. He said his tenant was worried about the project impacts on his business. He said that the Plan sounded like a fairy tale, that everyone was being promised everything they wanted. He said that he does not see many people walking down Santa Cruz Avenue. He asked the Commission to consider what guarantees would be in place to ensure that everything will work and that if there were no guarantees, then nothing should be done. He said the City of Redwood City was a mess and that only people who know what it takes to run a business are the business owners. He asked how much the City was willing to pay for the Plan and how much the citizens would have to pay. He said the merchants would be hurt as the costs will be passed down to them, and noted the already existing vacancies in the downtown.

Chair Bressler closed public comment.

Chair Bressler said Ms. Eggers asked if the public would have an opportunity to look at the comments on the draft EIR before the Council considered its approval. Planner Rogers said all of the comments were on the website project pages as submitted. He said responses would not be available until consideration of the Final EIR which the Commission would see with the Final Specific Plan.

Commissioner Ferrick said it seemed that some people had a misconception that the City would build all the things, and asked staff to clarify. Planner Rogers said the Plan was a framework and was an enhanced version of the Zoning Ordinance and the General Plan for this area. He said the Plan talks about public improvements such as parks and parking garages which could be in partnership with private owners but whatever public improvement projects occurred those would have their own review and vetting. He said the private improvements were up to the discretion of the private property owners. Commissioner Ferrick asked about the process for development for private property owners. Planner Rogers suggested the Commission look at the implementation section for actions required. He said the architectural control action would be required of any new building and significant remodels and additions in line with current practice. He said whether a project needed a use permit was based on what type of use it was and noted that uses the community wanted to see might be permitted. He said basically different actions would have different requirements.

Commissioner Yu said it seemed downtown business owners who were not necessarily Menlo Park residents were concerned about the Plan. She asked what had been done to get their input on parking. Planner Rogers said the main form of outreach were the newsletters that went to all postal addresses in the City as well as to City property owners who live elsewhere. He said the Chambers' Downtown Business Group meets monthly which meetings he had attended along with the City's Business Development Manager Dave Johnson and individual City Council members. He said one of the most informative events the City hosted was when Community Development Director Heineck, Mr. Johnson, the Council subcommittee members and he divided up the downtown and visited all of the downtown to meet the business owners and get their input. He said the overall diversity of opinion about the Plan found in the general City population was also found within the downtown merchants group. He said the City encouraged letter writing if people could not attend meetings and all the meetings were videotaped and streamed. He said there had been a number of outreach options but they were open to suggestions for improvement.

Commissioner Kadvany expressed appreciation for the succinct and comprehensive staff presentation, and thanked the public for engaging in the process. He suggested the Commission take time this evening to discuss some of the topics raised.

Commissioner Eiref asked if the 950 people on the email group had been notified about the upcoming Commission meetings on the Plan. Planner Rogers said they had been.

Chair Bressler asked Planner Rogers how someone gets on the email mailing list. Planner Rogers said people should go to www.menlopark.org/specificplan and go to the link at the bottom to sign up or to email him at throgers@menlopark.org, or to just hand him their information on a piece of paper.

Commissioner Riggs asked if the consultants would respond to the input received from the public and Commissioners over the next five and six meetings including the Council's at the end of that process or whether that would be ongoing. Planner Rogers said that would occur with the City Council's review of the Commission and public comments and they would direct and authorize the consultant's work on the Plan. Commissioner Riggs asked if that was because the budget would need augmentation. Planner Rogers said it was mainly to do the changes at one time comprehensively. He said also recommendations made by the Commission might not be accepted by the Council. He said the consultant has done much of their planned work but dependent upon what the changes were there were potentials for changes to the scope of work. Commissioner Riggs said the outreach was quite specific about having the public come forward to comment on the Plan and if the budget for the consultant was not sufficient to allow the consultant to respond to comments that would be disappointing. He said it was not demonstrated to enough people that the five guiding principles had been successfully applied whether it was a parking structure, the idea of pocket parks, and the station area being 60-feet tall. He said in upcoming meetings backup from Strategic

Economics would be needed and asked if that consultant would be present since the Fiscal Impact Analysis was not prepared. Planner Rogers said the expanded Commission schedule was accomplished primarily through staff time and Strategic Economics would not be part of the special meetings but to the extent that staff could relay concepts or questions they would.

Chair Bressler said he would like to address questions the public asked before members of the public left the meeting.

Commissioner O'Malley said he thought they were to gather information at the meetings, form conclusions and make recommendations to the public at the last meeting. He said if they started responding to questions then they would respond without having gotten all of the input from the public.

Chair Bressler said there were questions for staff that he would like answered for the public. He said there was concern that the Plan might be expensive or disruptive to merchants and asked staff to respond. Planner Rogers said a parking garage would have to have a majority voted assessment district. He said expanded sidewalks or other works could disrupt business. He said when an improvement was planned, construction stages were set and there were ways to mitigate construction interruptions.

Chair Bressler asked about the benefits of adding extra office and extra residential. Planner Rogers said benefit could be fiscal in that new buildings would be taxed at higher rate and that redevelopment supported overall vibrancy. He said there were stated community goals for the provision of affordable housing.

Chair Bressler asked if the Plan addressed the comment that the City was dangerous for bicyclists. Planner Rogers said the City's adopted bike plan has Oak Grove Avenue as a Class 3 shared route and that would be enhanced to a Class 2 bike lane. He said that would require parking to be removed. He said overall the Plan would leverage the bike plan, not all of which was in effect yet. He said that they had to balance the need for parking and the need for bicycle paths and that discussion could occur on the geographic area discussions.

Chair Bressler said that he had heard comments requesting that parking be maintained behind the drugstore for the benefit of seniors. Planner Rogers said there had been an initial workshop option for a hotel potential in plaza 8 behind Walgreens but that had been removed, and there were no improvements planned there. He said employees can take up a lot of the surface parking spaces and part of the rationale for a parking garage was to have employees park there and free up other spaces for customers.

Commissioner Ferrick asked related to Ms. Moser's comments whether the Plan has specific recommendations for senior housing versus other affordable types of housing because of their decreased parking and school impacts. Planner Rogers said the Plan currently did not distinguish between senior housing and market rate housing. He said

it did distinguish between affordable housing and market rate housing. Commissioner Ferrick asked if it were the will of the community could senior housing be spelled out as part of the plan. Planner Rogers said they would need to look at a use category and whether permitted or conditional. He said densities and other development standards might be tailored for senior housing although that was complex. Commissioner Ferrick asked about the suggestion to engage the public by staffing an information table at the Farmer's Market. Planner Rogers said there currently were no plans for that but staff could take the idea to the Council subcommittee. Commissioner Ferrick said she would like additional public outreach outside the public hearing venue. She asked for more information on east-west connectivity. Planner Rogers said that most of the east-west connectivity improvements related to crosswalks, improved striping, countdown timers, median refuges, and an optional element, bulbouts or sidewalk extensions at certain locations. He said a train track undercrossing or overcrossing were suggested for Middle Avenue to the train station. He said it included north/south sidewalk improvements along El Camino Real. Commissioner Ferrick asked about east-west connectivity for vehicles. Planner Rogers said that was not addressed.

Commissioner Riggs said that even if it was not budgeted for Strategic Economics to attend meetings, it had been budgeted to have a Fiscal Impact Analysis prepared. He asked when that report would be available. Planner Rogers said the final revisions were being made but the report would not be ready by July 21 when the Commission would again meet. He said it was planned to have the report to the Commission by the last meeting review whether that was August 4 or August 22. Commissioner Riggs said there were statements and assumptions made in the draft Plan that could not be substantiated without the Fiscal Impact Analysis.

Commissioner Yu said the Plan was creating a policy framework for an attractive downtown and housing, and asked what the incentives were to make that happen. Planner Rogers says the Plan would offer more clarity and certainty about what City wants to see by laying out design guidelines and principles. He said for development projects could use the program level EIR if the project was covered under the Plan. He said revisiting the use regulations and what was permitted versus what was conditionally permitted was favorable. He said the Plan supports positive revenue generators such as hotels and housing. Commissioner Yu said some people see Redwood City's redevelopment as successful and others do not, and asked where it worked and didn't. Planner Rogers said there were buildings after Woodside Road along El Camino Real that were very monolithic and not appropriate. He said some people liked the paid parking downtown and others thought it was a disincentive. He said that more shopping and dining options were favorable.

Commissioner O'Malley said he had heard it commented several times that there was not a parking shortage in the downtown. Planner Rogers said there have been a number of parking surveys done over the years, and the most recent indicated that certain parking plazas at peak times have shortages when they are operating at greater

than 85% capacity. He said there are broader issues with parking beyond pure occupancy relating to function and management. He said for instance that parking garages would not just address a shortage of parking but would help with employee parking and also allow for public improvements.

Commissioner O'Malley said he had attended most meetings associated with the Plan and had not heard any concerns that the Fire Department and Police Department would be unable to handle the changes. Planner Rogers said the Fire District had sent a letter commenting on the concept of expanded sidewalks that would require a change in the distance from the building where a fire truck would set up. He said it seemed from one comment made earlier that there was an impression the Central Plaza would be closed off at all times but there would be through traffic on Santa Cruz Avenue at all times unless closed for a special event.

Commissioner Eiref said he had a concern about what seemed to be dramatic growth in building size and height under the Plan. He asked if there was a side by side comparison of current zoning to the standards in the Plan including height to height, and density to density. Planner Rogers said in isolation such a comparison would not be meaningful if what was existing now was not providing the community with what was wanted. Commissioner Eiref said there was a tremendous amount of details in the Plan but nowhere did it qualitatively compare the objectives of the General Plan and the Specific Plan. He said he had received an email from a resident who had done a side by side comparison. He said without the fiscal analysis it was hard to know what the incentive would be for developers, but it might not be a five-story building. Planner Rogers said at one of the workshops they had shown a prototype that looked at the different development standards and how that affected the overall theoretical profitability and feasible development

Commissioner Kadvany said, regarding direction to give to Council, consultant had indicated that the Plan was not the answer but an envelope of many answers, and that it was to the City to make public policy and value judgments. He said the bullet points from the City council were "pre-decisional", such as examining parking garage sizes when the Planning Commission had not yet recommended them. He said, related to "village character", there was much controversy about that means. He said he was trying to keep his mind open and thought the Council should try to do that too. He said they were being instructed to pay attention to facts and data, but much of the Plan related to value judgments and preferences of the community. He asked if the marketplace concept was one of the several options for the use of that space. Planner Rogers said it could encompass a broad range of options and was not intended to be direct competition to Draeger's and Trader Joe's. Commissioner Kadvany said there was a fear of impacts on the Farmer's Market but there was nothing in the document that said where the Farmer's Market had to be located in Plaza 6. Planner Rogers said the graphics in the Plan were conceptual options. Commissioner Kadvany said Mr. Zaro asked about guarantees of success and had suggested pilot projects. Planner

Rogers said that pilot projects were included in the Plan; for instance for sidewalk extensions they might want to do one or two parking spaces at a time to see how traffic flows. He said if there were things the City definitely wanted to do then doing a pilot project would cost more.

Commissioner Kadvany said the question of village character was ambiguous and its definition would depend on what the focus was on and how much it was valued. He said “vibrancy” could mean to boost the profile of Menlo Park to create an attraction, and not just to sustain but to take the downtown to the next level, or another interpretation could just be a better Menlo Park. He noted the boutique owner’s desire to maintain sustainability downtown but noted that his sense of vibrancy was something toward the middle of maintaining sustainability and creating an attraction. He said it was up to the Commission to really listen and understand what people hear in those terms and find a path that makes sense.

Commissioner Riggs said fiscal information was needed to assess whether statements and assumptions in the report are supported. He used an example of the proposed Floor Area Ratio of medical buildings and the economy of shared business, but asked if that was only 30 percent was that self-defeating. He asked if it made sense to have an alternative housing impact fee scale in proportion to the buildout of the office space and whether there should be a City budget for downtown office space and if development exceeded some percentage of that a housing impact fee would be imposed. He asked regarding land banking if an in-lieu sales tax would encourage turnover or more realistic rental placing of land banked properties. There was no data and background. He asked if it was known how many lots were owned by private trusts downtown. He said some speculate that 50 percent of the properties downtown are owned by trusts. He asked what would be the cost to an existing building owner who did not engage in expansion in a parking structure and suggested a sample pro forma be done to evaluate that. He asked what the affect of a parking assessment district for structure parking would have on property values. He said the City had to understand the conditions for properties to be redeveloped under the existing zoning regulations and under what conditions renewal would pencil out without zoning change, noting in the last five years there had been four properties on Santa Cruz Avenue area rebuilt. He said the Plan would not have any revisions until after the series of five or six meetings and suggested thinking about alternatives to the proposed structure parking heights, locations and uses such as an alternative less than 4 stories and with and no condos on it. He asked if he was correct that the EIR was structured so that a parking structure could be built on plaza 2 as opposed to plaza 3. Planner Rogers said if that was the direction they would have to look at traffic patterns and how that would impact intersections, and analyze in full detail according to EIR analysis principles. Commissioner Riggs said Ms. Couperus had emailed him earlier and challenged City’s unimpeded right to build on parking plazas without 51% of majority vote. He said it would make sense to include an interim review of any use when project buildout reaches a certain level. Planner Rogers noted that the Plan has an overall development program and that could not be exceeded

without requiring its own environmental review. Commissioner Riggs asked if it would be appropriate to ask for stronger alternatives for connectivity issues such as more sophisticated traffic signals. He asked about the public benefits the Council had highlighted for the Commission to look at. Planner Rogers said there were some listed on page E23.

Commissioner O'Malley said there was a problem with the assumption that if retail space was approved, retail would, as he sees no evidence of that occurring downtown. He said despite what one speaker said he thinks the downtown has a high vacancy rate. He said the Fiscal Impact Analysis should take into account why it would make sense that developers should do what the City wants as that would get closer to the concept of a guarantee that another speaker raised. He asked what was in the Fiscal Impact Analysis. Planner Rogers said in general the Fiscal Impact Analysis looks at expected costs and revenues for a particular project and plan associated with the budget of that government entity and affected entities. He said the delay on the analysis was the consultant needed to get supplemental analysis on the fire and school districts. He said the study looks at the cost of providing service to additional development and the incremental revenue associated with the development. He said the study was limited in scope.

Commissioner O'Malley asked if there had been a marketing study to prove the need for increased height and density. Planner Rogers said market studies for the projects in the Plan talk more about the overall market interest in residential, retail office and commercial, which speaks to overall demand and market saturation. He said it was more qualitative than quantitative.

Commissioner O'Malley said population growth had been projected at 15% from 2010 to 2030 or about 30,000 people more. He questioned the accuracy of the ABAG population projections. He asked if the Plan was approved whether the role of the Planning Commission would change significantly. Planner Rogers said that the Plan offers recommendations for all uses as to whether conditional or permitted. He said if the Plan does a good job of establishing uses City wants to see and the character and design of those buildings was desirable that there might be less discretionary review. He said the question was whether the uses listed were the right uses.

Commissioner Kadvany said that bonus density applied only to FAR and not height, and asked why. Planner Rogers said the presumption was given how much construction costs increase with building height it was essentially so less likely that if you were not in the public benefit bonus for density and intensity allowing you to have a bigger building that would be more profitable that you would not build up, but it was something the Planning Commission and City Council direct review on. He said if you were under the base densities you were unlikely to go for the 60-foot height because you do not have as much building to fill in under it. Commissioner Kadvany asked if amount of office and professional space would scale upward with public benefit. Planner Rogers said that

was correct. Commissioner Kadvany said he would like good fiscal guidance but he thought the assumptions were probably generic. In the context of the EIR, he said one concern was the transportation analysis at intersections around downtown but not within downtown and with the efforts of key changes downtown. He said they could try the Paseo but they did not know what would happen with traffic and parking. He suggested they do a pilot program or perhaps consider a paseo elsewhere. Planner Rogers said the process would be to run high level check of the EIR analysis for that change and determine if impacts projected on Chestnut would be the same for Crane and if they are, the EIR could be amended. Commissioner Kadvany said he was wondering what the feasible circulation patterns would be for parking plazas 6 and 7, inclusive of the Chestnut Paseo and if there was something that could be used to demonstrate to people what these changes would look like. Planner Rogers said there was nothing prepared but perhaps could be prepared quickly to roughly show what flows would look like.

Commissioner Eiref said there were concepts in the Plan for which there seemed some consensus such as experimenting with widening sidewalks on Santa Cruz Avenue. He said he has been advocating for some time that they should identify some “quick hits” to prove the benefits of this planning process. He said were other things much more complicated and it was not clear whether there would ever be consensus. He asked about the next set of meetings and if it was envisioned that discussion would get to much more specific recommendations about the Plan. Planner Rogers said he expected there would be ongoing dialogue and thinking about the interrelationships among things when changes were suggested. He said the Commission was probably expected to be coming to these next meetings with at least some ideas that address concerns heard, Commissioners’ own preferences for these geographic areas between the public and private improvements framework as starting points. He said they would want to leave each meeting with some type of recommendation. Commissioner Eiref asked whether they would be able to make specific enough recommendations based on the vast amount of detail in the Plan. He said the downtown area was a personal experience for most. He said El Camino Real was a big challenge for him. He said regarding recommending sequencing to start public improvements that widening the sidewalks along Santa Cruz Avenue was a strong possibility but he was not sure about the Chestnut Paseo concept as there was not really anything on that section of Chestnut. He said he liked Commissioner Riggs idea to consider building into the Plan additional measures and monitoring development and adjusting the Plan as this was a vast amount of policy to put into place to establish appropriate expectations for property owners and developers.

Commissioner Kadvany said there were so many options that if they could do them and make them work would be great. He said the developable area of the southeast area of El Camino Real was a challenge and was narrow except for the area of the Café Borrone. He said regarding the Chestnut Paseo it was important to note that there was nothing now but there had be something there for it to work, and that had to be worked

into the pilot. He said there was much concern about traffic impacts and to pay attention to the Transportation Commission and while there was discussion in the Specific Plan on unbundling parking, the discussion was not going to the next step of suggesting that perhaps only one car was needed for some number of residents. He said again it might not make sense if they found that their Station Area was not a strong enough transit center for that type change.

Chair Bressler suggested for the following meetings that it would be important to get the agenda packets to the Commissioners as early as possible.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:37 p.m.

Staff Liaison: Arlinda Heineck, Community Development Director

Recording Secretary: Brenda Bennett

Approved by Planning Commission on August 8, 2011