



PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING

July 21, 2011

7:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers

701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025

Teleconference with participation by Commissioner Ferrick from:
10 Edinburg Road
Windham, NH 03087
(Posted July 18, 2011)

CALL TO ORDER – 7:01 p.m.

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

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

1. **Approval of transcripts from the June 6, 2011 Planning Commission meeting.**
Continued from the meeting of July 11, 2011.

Commissioner Riggs suggested a change on page 14 of the minutes, in line 6, that "Fall 2001" should read "Fall 2011," and on page 111, in line 6, it was indicated that Commissioner Eiref had worked on the "Vision Committee" and that should be "Oversight and Outreach Committee."

Commission Action: Unanimous consensus to approve the transcripts with the modifications previously emailed to staff and those made at the meeting.

Motion carried 7-0.

D. PUBLIC HEARING

1. **El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan - Review of Draft Specific Plan: Meeting 2 – Station Area** – The Planning Commission will continue its multi-meeting review of the Draft Specific Plan. The intent of the overall 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. The focus of the July 21 meeting will be the Station Area geographic zone.

Planner Rogers provided an overview of the project history and made a presentation on the features of the Station Area in the Draft Specific Plan. He outlined the next series of meetings and the focus of those meetings.

Public Comment: Mr. Charlie Bourne, Menlo Park, said the details of the renderings in the Draft Specific Plan were difficult to read. He urged the Commission to take a serious look at traffic circulation in the proposed Civic Plaza area. He said it was important that there be no reduction in movement or capacity on Merrill Street and lower Santa Cruz Avenue as that was important to the existing and future businesses there. He said the Plan proposes extending the Civic Plaza area to the Café Borrone (Menlo Center) area and he hoped there would be reciprocity and symmetry as well as a similar extension to the area of Crepes and Lisa's Tea House (Menlo Square). He suggested the Commission look at the likely increase of shuttle busses going to the Station loading area, noting that shuttle buses have been required as traffic mitigation for a number of recently approved development projects, and there would need to be an expanded bus loading area. He said the City should also consider any SamTrans plans to expand its transit hub in the Station Area. He questioned how all of the proposed improvements would be accommodated in such a small area.

Ms. Roxanne Rorapaugh, Menlo Park, questioned the Plan's inclusion of additional office space. She said there was no need for additional office space, particularly in the Station Area. She said she would not want Applewood Pizza replaced by office building. She said she would like a description and definition of public benefit and was not comfortable with public benefit just being identified as something to be negotiated with the City Council. She said the rules needed to be the same for everyone and that within those rules there could be further negotiation. She said she liked the clock tower as the entry way to Menlo Park and was surprised that it was not considered an appropriate entry way. She suggested limiting improvements in the area to those improving safety. She said that the intersection of Ravenswood and El Camino Real at the train tracks was dangerous because of a combination of the cross walk and people in cars not signaling to make a right on Alma Street which results at times with cars stopped on the train tracks. She suggested moving the crosswalk further up the street or prohibiting right hand turns onto Alma Street.

Mr. Jeff Warmoth, Sand Hill Property Company, expressed his support for the process and the idea in setting forth in a Specific Plan what owners may do with their properties. He said that certainty was hugely important especially for owners of underutilized properties. He said as a

property owner of properties within the quarter-mile radius of the circle under consideration that he would like the development standards of Station Area East (SA E) to apply to those other properties within that quarter mile radius. He said there were thoughtful concepts developed for Station Area East that should be applied to all properties within the quarter-mile radius. He said that the 38-foot cap on height was too low and noted that the community in Los Altos had ultimately decided that a 45-foot height was appropriate with a third floor setback along El Camino Real. He said they would like to see the standard of a 45-foot height with a 38-foot façade height allowed in the El Camino Real Northeast Residential District (ECR NE R). He said the setbacks for properties not in SA E made sense noting a historic pattern of no setbacks in the Station Area. He said greater setbacks in other areas could provide an appropriate pedestrian friendly environment such as what was required in ECR NE R. He said the density and Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of the SA E district should also apply equally to the area within the quarter-mile of the Station Area since higher density housing near the station and downtown was appropriate.

Commissioner Riggs indicated he had some questions for Mr. Warmoth and if he could ask those later. Chair Bressler confirmed with staff that this could occur if the questions were related to the Specific Plan. Chair Bressler requested the Commission to first hear public comment and discuss the Station Area.

Mr. Frank Carney, Menlo Park, noted there were many different proposals for a small area. He asked who would pare down the expansive list of proposals. He said he would like to comment on some good points made by the Commissioners at their July 11 hearing. He said a key question had been posed by Commissioner Kadvany as to what the goal of the Specific Plan was, whether it was to improve what was existing or to create something that would be different and had noted that many residents like the small town feel of the City. He said Commissioner Kadvany also pointed out that the question of small town charm was in the eye of the beholder. Mr. Carney said in his opinion doing all of the proposed changes in this area would mean the end of small town charm. He said he disagreed with the idea that setbacks on a five-story building would minimize the effect of the height and mass of the building. He said Commissioner Eiref had asked if there was data on existing conditions such as how many shoppers or diners come to Menlo Park and the amount of revenue produced now so that information might be compared to what was projected in the Plan, but there was not. Mr. Carney said Commissioner Riggs had asked about the Fiscal Impact Analysis. Mr. Carney said not having that analysis put the Commission at a disadvantage in making recommendations about these proposals.

Ms. Bonnie McClure said she was with the Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club, and expressed overall support of the Plan. She noted that she had sent a comment letter on the Draft EIR. She said the Plan supported a mix of uses around the Station, including housing and that it was important to support Caltrain and have higher density housing near the Station enabling people to walk to the Station. She said having higher density around the Station Area would allow other areas to remain in single-family residential development which would keep the small town charm of the City.

Ms. Holly Bourne, Menlo Park, said she was one of the owners of Mid-Peninsula Animal Hospital on Merrill Street. She said the Plan process seemed to lack consideration for existing businesses in the area. She said the animal hospital has been located at that site for 50 years and she was concerned that there was a graphic in the Plan showing this building gone. She said on-street parking was essential to this business. She asked that consideration be made of the Plan's long-term impact on existing businesses.

Mr. Don Brawner, Menlo Park, said his major complaint was that the public hearings were being held during the summer, when many residents were away, and on Thursday evenings which was not the usual meeting time for the Commission to meet. He said as a result the process was not transparent. He referred to the City's opposition to planned development at Stanford University in the mid-1990s, which was not successful and how the resultant development had impacted Menlo Park. He noted that Wednesday evenings a band performs at the Town and Country Village Shopping Center in Palo Alto and suggested people visit that shopping center if they wanted to see what vibrancy looks like. He said he had asked staff previously but had gotten no answer about why the first consultant hired as terminated and Perkins + Wills retained instead. Chair Bressler noted there had been a consultant selection process that had occurred publicly. Mr. Brawner said his concern was that Perkins + Wills had been retained by Stanford University for years and there was a conflict of interest to have the same firm plan for the University and the City of Menlo Park. He said he would like the public hearings to continue after Labor Day when people returned from vacation so they would have time to consider what was being proposed. He noted that Ms. Nancy Couperus donated her three minutes of public comment to him. He said Sunnyvale and Redwood City had developed similar Specific Plans and parking proposals that were failures. He said the Fire District has concerns with the Specific Plan. He suggested that the project be terminated before more money was spent.

Chair Bressler closed the public hearing.

Questions of Staff: Chair Bressler suggested asking questions posed by the public first. He asked what the maximum number of stories was allowed under the Plan in the Station Area. Planner Rogers said the maximum overall building height for the Station Area, both East and West, was 60 feet. He said the number of floors allowed was based on whether it was a commercial or residential use. He said for residential use there could be potentially five stories and with commercial use it was more likely there would be four stories. He said if it was a mixed use that it would depend on which use had precedence. He said every zoning district has a height and floor area limit maximum. He said not every development project was developed to the maximum height and floor area limit. He said sometimes that was because the lot has unique constraints. He said in the Plan area it was hard to know exactly what plans for development would come forward but with smaller properties, changes to construction costs and other variables, it was not feasible that every future development project would be developed to the maximums.

Chair Bressler asked staff to address the process related to the comment made about transparency. Planner Rogers said the four to five meetings of the Planning Commission on the

Plan were additional to the original scope, which was to have one Commission meeting to provide comments and direction on the Plan and Draft EIR. He said there had been one meeting on the Draft EIR and now an additional five meetings on the Draft Plan. He said the Commission had discussed scheduling of the meetings including the point that the perception summer was off limits for public meetings was not really reflective of most people's schedules, and that most people probably did not take more than two weeks off at a time. He said also Commissioners who were parents indicated a preference for summer rather than the first couple of weeks of school. He said it was seen as a good compromise to meet when most people were able to attend. He said there were multiple opportunities for the public to attend and the 6:00 p.m. refresher presentations allowed residents to get caught up with what they might have missed if they had been on vacation for two weeks.

Chair Bressler said he was on the subcommittee that selected both sets of consultants, and he did not recall mention that the second set of consultants were doing work for Stanford University. Planner Rogers said consultant proposals include references and past projects. He said he would look at the Perkins + Wills proposal, and noted that was available online. He said the first consultant proposal had been from a firm that was then acquired by Perkins + Wills. He said to his knowledge the principals on the City's project have nothing to do with Stanford projects.

Chair Bressler asked about the negotiated benefits clause. Planner Rogers said the public benefit bonus concept was discussed on page E23 of the staff report. He said they had really looked at whether this could be made formulaic and predictable. He said the feedback from the consultants was that there were so many variables with any particular property such as when the land was bought, how much it cost, what type of development was being proposed, and what kind of construction costs would apply that it was not possible to provide a regular, standardized formula. He said they then came to the concept of a structured negotiation in which an applicant would propose a benefit and the City could accept or not. He said a number of ideas that might be considered for public benefits were listed on page E23 and that the Council had also directed that the Planning Commission consider these and how they might be expanded or revised in any way. Chair Bressler said the Commission had considered public benefits under negotiated development agreements but this seemed to be a new concept. Planner Rogers said it was and that it could take the place of a development agreement. Chair Bressler asked if a particular area was in mind when this concept was proposed. Planner Rogers said that it was not restricted to any particular area under the Plan.

Commissioner O'Malley said a speaker had concern about traffic in the Station Area and asked if there was a traffic study done. Planner Rogers said this particular area did not have high traffic volume but provided access for busses and shuttles. He said having access to busses and shuttles was one of the goals of the Plan. He said when a development project was proposed was when such details as traffic impacts would be addressed. Commissioner O'Malley said he would like Staff to comment about the impacts of potentially new transportation developments in the Station Area before the Plan went to Council. He said the concern about drivers getting stopped on the railroad tracks at Ravenswood was valid and asked if moving the

crosswalk further east would have an impact on the Plan. Planner Rogers said it would be dependent on how far the crosswalk was moved as there might be impacts when a pedestrian was made to change behavior. He said as an instance, a person might decide it was too difficult to walk and decide to drive instead. He said overall the Plan would enhance the existing crosswalk but would not change the traffic flows. He said there could be improvements to the configuration with future decisions related to the high speed rail. He said the Commission could direct further investigation.

Commissioner Yu asked about public improvements and if those were to be carried out by the City. Planner Rogers said there were certain improvements such as sidewalks that developers would be required to do for the portion of frontage associated with their development project. He said for the most part the other proposed public improvements would be prioritized, implemented and funded through the City's Capital Improvement (CIP) process. He said the City had recently gone to a five year CIP plan. He said if the Plan was adopted, the City would look every year for the next five years at which of the Plan's elements were most likely to be implemented and how that would be funded.

Commissioner Kadvany said in one of the graphics that the southern portion of the Caltrain parking lot was identified as a potential development area with proposed underground parking. Planner Rogers said the property was owned by a Joint Powers Authority and any potential for development would start with that owner's interest. Commissioner Kadvany suggested for near and future term reference that it would be very helpful to have data on all the sites in the Plan identified as development sites and include characteristics about those lots. He asked whose parking this was. Planner Rogers said it was owned by Caltrain for Caltrain customers. Commissioner Kadvany said information like that would be helpful if shown in the Plan.

Commissioner Kadvany said in one of the southeast areas of the El Camino Real, the form graphic for the type of buildings at 60-feet height showed surface and underground parking, but on the building form at five stories for the Station Area East, there was no parking shown. He asked if two levels of underground parking would be needed. Planner Rogers said the drawings were meant to look at how the forms applied to such things as façade height, overall height and setbacks. He said development types were used as a way to relay those concepts but were not meant to be binding in terms of what an actual section of the building would look like, with the exception that retail use was emphasized on the frontages and office and residential uses were the most likely uses of the upper stories.

Commissioner Kadvany said parking was important especially in how it related to first floor uses. He said in an email exchange with Planner Rogers, Planner Rogers had explained the difference between a roof line and a parapet. He said his understanding was that a roof height could be 40-feet and the parapet that screened mechanical equipment could be another eight feet. He asked if the maximum height was 60 feet as proposed whether the building height would actually be 68 feet once the parapet was added. Planner Rogers said the Plan was structured exactly as the ordinance was currently structured. He said the building height was measured to the roof deck. He said roof screening of mechanical equipment, whether it was an

integrated parapet or an inset wall, was allowed to exceed the building height. He said there was potential to modify this and add restrictions regarding height of the parapet and the type of roof screening.

Commissioner Kadvany asked about noise screening for residences in this area, noting that setbacks at Menlo Square probably helped reduce noise. Planner Rogers said noise screening was addressed in some detail in the draft EIR noise section. He said the analysis considered residential units which are considered sensitive noise receptors being brought into an area that has compromised noise reception that exceeds relevant noise standards. He said mitigation would require higher standards of noise reduction features such as insulation but he did not think increased setbacks were effective at screening noise.

Chair Bressler said Ms. Bourne was concerned that her building was not shown in the Specific Plan. Planner Rogers said these drawings were conceptual only and there was no planned redevelopment and development of the properties would be the property owners' decisions. He noted that the animal hospital was a conditioned use, which was subject to review.

Commissioner Riggs said Ms. Rorapaugh had commented it would be a shame to lose Applewood Pizza, and asked if the business could relocate. Planner Rogers said the Plan showed conceptual options but there was no intent to remove businesses. Commissioner Riggs said it seemed a parking garage was ruled out in the Station Area East as it was not an allowable use. He asked if the City and the JPA owning the Caltrain parking lot wanted to build a parking garage at that site whether that would be in conflict with the Station Area East zoning regulations. Planner Rogers said public parking was probably a permitted use noting that this area did not seem to be part of the Main Street Downtown Overlay. He said that could be clarified in the Plan. Commissioner Riggs said where parking was a primary feature such as the parking under the Relax the Back Store that such parking would not be in conflict with the Plan. Planner Rogers said that was correct. Commissioner Riggs said that he would not have questions for Mr. Warmoth this evening as they were not related to the Station Area.

Commissioner Kadvany said he wanted to follow up on Commissioner Riggs' comments about the potential of a parking structure on the Caltrain parking lot and that if that was negotiated between the City and the JPA whether that would provide parking for surrounding uses that could pay into the structure. Planner Rogers said there was no decision to exclude that possibility rather a recognition of the historical boundaries of the downtown shared parking districts, which existing property owners have bought into and have adjacencies to, and for which in-lieu parking fees were collected. He said there was probably not a fundamental objection to applying that concept to the Station Area East with the potential exception that it would only apply to parking facilities developed in that area as those who had bought into the downtown parking district might have concerns if the Station Area East could then buy into the western parking area. He said that the best way was to have two distinct parking districts.

Chair Bressler noted recommendations heard: improve bus shuttle access across from the station, improve safety and the crosswalk at the Ravenswood/El Camino Real intersection and shared parking at Caltrain.

Commissioner Yu asked about façade heights and if there was a height whereat any type of setback or mitigation became ineffective. Planner Rogers said it was not that standardized and that the workshop process tried to evaluate preferences in an iterative, detailed way. He said on page E-20 of the Plan there were shown some things they had done at the workshop around façade height through the use of photographs of structures, block modeling of some of the existing downtown, and input from the public to identify the community's comfort with height levels. He said height was subjective and he did not want to negate any person's opinion about that, but through the workshop process they had gotten a good sense of what the community would support. Commissioner Yu asked if a developer wanted to develop a specific project with that façade height if that would come to the Commission and the subjectivity dealt with there. Planner Rogers said the architectural control process would need to be based on facts and particular reasons given for Commission direction. Commissioner Yu said it had been inferred that buildings would infrequently reach the maximum allowable height and asked why it was not reduced to something more realistic. Planner Rogers said the allowable height was meant to address community preferences and allow flexibility. He said it was a balancing act of what people were comfortable with and giving an envelope through which individual developers could come up with different solutions. He said this meeting was exactly the forum for the Commission to discuss alternate building heights. Commissioner Yu requested through the Chair that the Commission discuss the allowable building height with the other topics already noted.

Commission Comment: Commissioner Kadvany presented slides of buildings of alternate façade heights along El Camino Real, Oak Grove, the Station Area, a building on Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Square, Menlo Center, Encinal and El Camino Real, and other interesting buildings built in the recent past and other buildings in the nearby area. He said he liked a number of the larger buildings but with the directive to maintain village character, he thought they would need to reduce the height and increase setbacks particularly in the Station Area.

Commissioner Yu said she agreed with reducing the allowable height. She said one of the goals of this area was to create a Civic Plaza that was inviting to people entering Menlo Park. She said really tall buildings such as those in San Francisco created a tunnel and overshadowed the street so it felt like you were walking in an alley and did not feel drawn in. She said if they wanted to pull people from the Caltrain station into downtown that large buildings in this area would not be conducive that that. She suggested that there could be more aggressive setbacks or that the tallest part of the building would be in the rear of the building. She did not know if they should do a blanket reduction of the height or make other changes such as increased setbacks and other articulation and details to address height.

Commissioner Eiref said related to building height that he had reviewed the notes from Community Workshop 1. He said the question asked was whether they liked taller buildings and quite a few did, some less did not but many people were undecided. He said when you drive down Santa Cruz Avenue toward the train station, you already see a mass of big buildings and he thought the 60-foot height would be too much to add to that area. He suggested

removing a story to limit at 45-feet, and require a setback beginning at the third story rather than at the fourth story.

Commissioner Ferrick said height and an increase in density made sense around the Station. She liked the idea of the 45-degree setback and that it did not bother her much to see height when driving toward the station. She asked what the financial impact was when the density was increased from 18.5 units per acre to 50 units per acre. She said she agreed with Commissioner Eiref that the setbacks should start at the third floor rather than at the fourth floor. Planner Rogers said the question was how height improved the feasibility of projects. He said Attachment F examined for theoretical developments the typical land and construction costs, and what kind of revenues might be expected with different height limits. He said it found on a broad level that increasing the height would make it more likely the projects would redevelop but there were other factors. He said there was a range of different goals for the Plan project that should all be considered. He said reducing height in favor of the village character would mean less incentive to redevelop, and it was not expected that the goal of village character would trump all other goals.

Commissioner O'Malley said he had trouble defining the Station Area in terms of village character as that was not how it was defined now. He said he did not think it had to be defined that way. He said he would like more options to lower the height in stages from 60 feet than what was offered in the Plan. He said most important in this area was the attractiveness of what was proposed. He said he had problem with the public benefit bonus as he was not sure what it was although it was broadly presented in the Plan. He said his concern was it could be different in one area from another and could be used with favoritism. He said there were large increases offered such as density and height without any public benefit. He said the public benefit should be required at a lower level. He agreed with setbacks beginning on the third story. He thought the Commission should have architectural control review rights.

Chair Bressler said he added public benefits and its parameters to their list of discussion items for recommendations. He asked the Commission to comment on height and come up with recommendations in that area. Commissioner Riggs said he liked having density tied in with public benefit and thought it could be extended to height as well. He said for a five story building the upper two stories should be set back. He said they might want to regulate maximum height to a proportion of a structure. He said materials and changes in materials were important to minimizing massing. He said that the east side of Menlo Park might be the best place for 60-foot high buildings and that the west side of Menlo Park could be at a different scale. He said contrasts similar to how tall and low features were used in Italian villages to create contrasts of intimacy and large open areas might be effective toward maintain a sense of village character. He said that Redwood trees could be an appropriate feature for the City's gateway at the Station Area.

Commissioner Kadvany said drivers on El Camino Real would have a different impression of 60 foot height than what they have with what was there now.

Commissioner Eiref said in Palo Alto near the train station there were buildings with glass and metal with condos on the top floor that were quite attractive and might be useful for their discussion. Planner Rogers said they could look it up for a future meeting.

Commissioner Riggs noted one of the slides showed a building which limited the maximum height to 20 percent of the total structure, which might be a good way to add variety.

Commissioner Kadvany said he would like a more finessed approach to height as suggested by Commissioner Yu. He said another approach as recommended by Commissioner Riggs was to determine what percentage of a building could be at the maximum height. He said he would like these types of insights to be codified if possible.

Commissioner Eiref said he would need to see architectural merit in what was being proposed. He said he liked the concept of contrasts typified in an Italian village that Commissioner Riggs had mentioned. He said they could suggest to Council that anything built above 45 feet would have to have architectural merit with that perhaps not tied to proportion but more to the interest factor for the entry to the City.

Commissioner Kadvany suggested design objectives for what was above the third story in the different areas. Chair Bressler asked if he was suggesting a design review for anything above three stories. Commissioner Kadvany said he was not but that was a good idea. Chair Bressler said that would give uncertainty. Commissioner Yu said she was worried about giving guidance based on terms like architectural merit or that proposals above a certain height would need to go to a different committee as the intent was to provide developers with some type of cohesive and predictable, and somewhat empirical guidance. She said she liked Commissioner Eiref's original suggestion to create a setback at a lower level and that maximum height would be limited to a certain proportion of a building. Commissioner Ferrick said she agreed with Commissioner Yu and suggested some limiting of massing in certain areas was the clearest direction to a developer. She said if a big project was proposed, the Commission would have the opportunity to review it and see if it fits within that proportion of maximum height. She said there was a good framework already and suggested adding a few more architectural details but not too many.

Commissioner Riggs said he agreed with Commissioner Yu about not adding another design review, but there would be architectural control review. He said that it might assist the Commission if there was direction to applicants for a change in materials and use of setbacks to reduce the massing of the upper floors.

Commissioner Kadvany suggested focusing on the numbers in the Plan such as the 45-foot façade. He said that was as high as the Menlo Square building at its highest point. He said the façade height should be lower. Chair Bressler asked if that was the façade before the setbacks. Commissioner Ferrick said the setbacks should be started at the lower stories and suggested making the façade height 30-feet. Planner Rogers suggested that it was better generally for the Commission to direct reducing the height by one story and then allow staff and the design experts to analyze that as to what that would mean in terms of height. He said there seemed to

be a consensus to reduce façade height from the 45 feet with different distinctions in areas around the Station Area.

Chair Bressler said he would recommend that the setback start at the third story and his preference was that the buildings be limited to three stories as having four stories was not compatible in any sense with village character. He said in most of the public meetings he had attended on the Plan he recalled that the discussion for four and five stories were for areas other than the Station Area.

Commissioner Riggs said he did not see there was a village character in the Station Area now. He said he saw a difference between Santa Cruz Avenue and its cross streets and the Station Area. He said unless that difference was accepted the whole idea of adding housing, density and vibrancy in this area would be whittled away until there was nothing left. He said buildings on Santa Cruz Avenue have a maximum 30-foot height and lowering the height in the Station Area did not seem to accomplish the goals shown on the poster.

Commissioner Kadvany said whether the Station Area has village character or not was a choice based on what they wanted for this area. He said it was the oldest train station in California. He said one of the hardest tradeoff was trying to keep a scale and sense of proportion that people perceive in Menlo Park and the benefits gained from more density and floor area. He said it might be helpful to get some models of criteria from staff with some other options of what might go in this area. He said it seemed everyone was looking for some decrease in the maximum allowed.

Commissioner Yu asked if the Commission would want to recommend lowering the overall height to four stories and have setbacks start at the third story with some façade maximum and percentage restriction on the maximum height. Commissioner O'Malley said that would take away the public benefit.

Planner Rogers said there was a reference to a setback at the third story and asked if that was intended at the third story or after that. Commissioner Eiref said at the third story. Planner Rogers suggested the Commission might recommend that the façade height should start a floor lower, which was something staff and the consultants could work with. He said there was no conceptual issue with this approach and it seemed to address most of the perception of height. He said regarding limiting the overall height to a percentage that there was a development standard in this Zone called the bulk control restriction. He referred to page 83 which was a bulk control restriction in the Station Area East of 175 feet in length and 200 feet in length diagonally required for all portions of the building above 45 feet. He said the best description was on pages E68-69. He said rather than introducing a new standard they might want to look at tightening that standard to meet the goal of the Commission's intent.

Commissioner Eiref said he liked Commissioner Riggs idea of contrast between some buildings tall and some short. He said he wanted something with architectural merit which would require review.

Commissioner Riggs said as an architect he would not want to be told that the façade was two stories and the other two stories were set back as that balance might be awkward but he said the design experts could look at that. He said regarding the height and character in the Station Area that they should consider all of the 12 goals but seemed to be fixated on the one goal of maintaining village character.

Commissioner Kadvany said that it was possible to pick up density in this area and use setbacks and modulations to evoke this perception of reduced scale and village characters. He noted that traveling south along El Camino Real there were mundane looking three and four story buildings, which he hoped the City would avoid with good design criteria whatever the number of stories. .

Chair Bressler asked Planner Rogers to restate what he had said earlier about façade height. Planner Rogers said there was some consensus of exploring some reduction of façade height limit from the proposed 45-foot height by one story and to limit the overall proportion of the building through some method to achieve the overall height limit.

Commissioner Ferrick said that the Plan for this area seemed to address other goals and she could support a lower façade but did not want the height too low as there might not be a tradeoff for public benefits and open areas. She asked if the recommendation was to just reduce the façade height one full story or the overall building height. Chair Bressler said the recommendation thus far was to lower the façade height one story and the overall height by one story and to investigate with the consultant and staff design criteria to make the overall profile of the building more interesting. Commissioner Ferrick asked if the overall 60-foot height would be reduced to 50 feet. Chair Bressler said that would come out of the one-story reduction. Commissioner Ferrick said she thought that was for the façade height not the overall height. Chair Bressler said he thought they were also talking about overall height but asked Planner Rogers to reconfirm. Planner Rogers said he thought the consensus was to reduce the façade height one story and limit the overall maximum height to some proportion and increasing the architectural interest of the building. Commissioners Yu, Eiref, and O'Malley indicated that was their perception.

Commission Action: Consensus to recommend changes to the Height section of the Plan to include:

- Reduce the façade height from the proposed 45 feet by one full story. Staff and consultants will recommend a specific dimension to achieve the reduction; and
- Staff to work with the consultants to determine alternative mechanisms to limit maximum building height to a portion of the building with the intent of increasing the architectural interest of the building. Possible mechanisms include changes in the bulk restrictions, added setbacks, and/or requirements for architectural merit.

Motion carried 7-0.

The Commission took a five minute break.

Chair Bressler reconvened the meeting and asked about density bonus.

Planner Rogers noted that Commissioner Yu needed to leave the meeting to attend to family matters.

Chair Bressler said density bonus resonated with some of the goals but not with others. He said housing in this area did not seem to support east-west connectivity but would support vibrancy. Commissioner Kadvany said he liked the idea of more people coming into the area and it did not matter how many units there would be. He said everyone was concerned with more traffic and cars which led him to consider the nominal parking requirements. Commissioner Eiref asked if there was a notion of limiting residential units to a demographic that uses alternate transportation, which housing could be made affordable for younger people. Planner Rogers said there were a number of components of development besides the City's regulations and some funders would not fund projects that did not have a minimum of parking. He said parking maximums could be reduced to incentivize someone who wanted to do fewer car trips but could not mandate that in an effective way and still achieve positive redevelopment with a degree of certainty.

Commissioner Riggs said the product or housing development was located in a zone that targeted a certain demographic and the living downtown next to the station demographic would be the reduced number of cars demographic. He said they could require one-bedroom units for housing which would mean fewer cars. Commissioner Ferrick said having a lower parking requirement in the Station Area made sense for higher density residential unit development. Commissioner Eiref said it was popular in the City to have car share. He said one concern would be residents who had two cars and parked them elsewhere in town. He said one person had commented on the need for housing for seniors, and suggested this might be appropriate here. Commissioner Kadvany said on page F21 there was a minimum parking rate schedule with a recommendation from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) for a parking range from 1.0 to 1.5 spaces. He said he agreed with Planner Rogers that this was a tricky issue as they might want to have extra spaces for Zip and other shared cars. He said they could make a recommendation similar to the MTC's with some form of parking bundling. Commissioner O'Malley said he supported Commissioner Kadvany's ideas. Chair Bressler said that basically whatever was allowed was what would happen. Commissioner Kadvany said Facebook was looking at drastically underparking their campus. He requested that staff research the requirement and look at the technicalities. Commissioner Ferrick suggested stating that the parking requirements would be in line with MTC's recommendations related to the density. Planner Rogers said the Plan reduced the required parking minimum from 2 spaces to 1.85 spaces but developers could and did provide more parking. He said if the reduction was to have a minimum of 1 to 1.5 spaces that was not a problem but the City was also looking at a parking maximum for which there was some support but for which a lot more discussion needed to happen. Chair Bressler said he would hate to see a situation where there was not enough parking but he would not want people to come into the Station Area to live and expect to own two cars. He said he would like a minimum of 1 space per unit and a maximum of 1.5 spaces per unit but that there should be spaces for shared vehicles and guest parking, shared and unbundled parking. Commissioner Eiref said he would not like residents in that area to be able to get street parking stickers. He said there was a value judgment and suggested smaller units that would appeal to younger people and seniors.

Commissioner Riggs said there was no risk of looping traffic as there was no overnight street parking. He said they were in a position of saying that they would have a minimum of one space per unit and a maximum of 1.5 spaces per unit. Commissioner Kadvany said parking enforcement was not an issue in Menlo Park. He said it was hoped that the City would get some findings and recommendations from the Transportation Commission. He said he looked at data on intersection volumes and changes in levels of service in the Draft EIR. He said he expected the Transportation Commission would find that most intersections now were Class C but that increased development and mitigations were taking away sidewalks, which was something they were trying to enhance. He said the City should take a leadership role and Stanford and Menlo Gateway would then have to step up. Chair Bressler said if there was going to be retail in this area there would need to be parking and that if residential units were in the area of retail that could be shared parking but that would penalize developers to build parking for retail. Commissioner Riggs said for the residential units parking would not be for retail as it would be under the building. Chair Bressler said another option would be to have a portion of parking for shared vehicles. Commissioner Riggs said he had come up with 10 items for public benefit and that when they got to public benefit that could be discussed. Chair Bressler said the simple statement was 1 to 1.5 parking spaces per dwelling unit. Commissioner Riggs said he thought that staff would take this recommendation to the traffic consultant for analysis. Planner Rogers said that direction could be coupled with a broad value statement such as shared car services and unbundled parking. Commissioner O'Malley said he liked the idea of providing shared space for shared cars. Commissioner Ferrick said she would like the residential units to be smaller and provide housing for young people and seniors, less traffic and the use of shared parking.

At the Chair's request, Planner Rogers said the Commission's recommendation was to revise residential parking requirements for the Station Area to establish a minimum rate of 1 space per dwelling unit and a maximum rate of 1.5 space per dwelling unit, emphasize the usage of share car services and trip reduction programs. Commissioner Riggs said they also would want guest spaces. Commissioner Kadvany said the Plan in the downtown was based on a fairly sophisticated parking plan. He said they were now looking at a parking strategy for Station Area and El Camino Real and that made sense. Commissioner Eiref said the .5 space could be achieved through shared parking or it could be unbounded and for all of the 1.5 spaces. Planner Rogers said the 1 and 1.5 spaces were the provision and then the management allocation was more of a project by project decision. He said unbundling was where the pricing of parking was separate from the pricing of the unit, which created incentive for individual renters or buyers to not pay for a space they are not going to use.

Commission Action: Consensus to make the following recommendation about residential parking:

- Modify the parking ratio for the Station Area from the proposed 1.85 units per space for residential development to a minimum of 1.0 space per unit and a maximum of 1.5 spaces per unit with an emphasis on the accommodation of shared vehicles, guest parking, shared parking and unbundled parking, subject to review and comment by staff and the consultant; and
- Commission recognizes that reduced parking ratios may encourage development of smaller units and senior housing and potentially reduce traffic and school impacts.

Motion carried 6-0 with Commissioner Yu no longer in attendance.

Commissioner Riggs said they had talked about the overall height and reduced façade height and had suggested some things to help the architect and applicant in the architectural review. He suggested during architectural review that the Commission look at a change in materials, setbacks, and breakup of massing of upper floors. Commissioner Kadvany suggested also quality of materials. Planner Rogers said there were a lot of design guidelines in the Plan. Commissioner Riggs said in the sample guidelines on page E31 that he did not see quality of materials. Planner Rogers said that the Commission could direct that if it was not already in the document to recommend architectural control findings. He said the procedure for approval of projects was found in the section on the implementation of projects and suggested there could be a new finding or guideline related to the quality of materials added.

Commissioner O'Malley asked where public benefits were established and if it was during architectural review or not at all by the Planning Commission. Planner Rogers said the recommendation in the Plan was somewhat purposefully vague as to whether the determination of public benefit would be established with the Planning Commission and appealable to the City Council appealable. He said he thought that the action of determining public benefit would be part of the application process itself, which might also benefit from a study session. He said the Council requested that the Commission make specific recommendations on the public benefit process.

Commissioner Kadvany said there was a façade standard in the El Camino Real South East Zone to allow continuity for a 100 foot length and then have a change. He said that was a very long length and asked how that would interact with what Commissioner Riggs was suggesting. Chair Bressler said he thought Commissioner Riggs' recommendation was to give the Commission some leeway in addressing that without specifically saying what was acceptable and what was not. Planner Rogers said the element Commissioner Kadvany brought up was outside Commissioner Riggs' recommendations related to architectural detail.

Commissioner Eiref asked if this was in conflict with what they had recommended for height. Commissioner Riggs said this was more of how to handle 60-foot height. Commissioner Ferrick said she supported what Commissioner Riggs was saying but this was outlined in detail on page E31 except for quality of materials. Commissioner Riggs said he did not think there was a change in materials included in that information. Commissioner Kadvany said these were guidelines and not specifications and they would not do harm but would fill out a perspective.

Commission Action: Consensus to add to "Procedures for Approval of Future Projects:"

- If not adequately addressed within the Specific Plan, add language to the Specific Plan that states that during Architectural Control review by the Planning Commission, the Commission will look for overall quality of materials, and specifically look for a change of materials, setbacks, and break-up of massing of upper floors.

Motion carried 6-0 with Commissioner Yu no longer in attendance.

Chair Bressler said it was after 10:30 p.m. and asked if the Commission was willing to continue past 11:30 p.m. There was consensus to finish by 11:30 p.m.

Commissioner Riggs said related to public benefits that the process benefited if these could be listed and if Council could give developers a points system of valuation, which would give them

if not certainty at least guidelines. He said he had started a list of possible public benefits for this area to include provision of a community room and community available patio and public plaza. Chair Bressler said Commissioner O'Malley's concern was that they threw out the public benefit with the removal of the fifth floor. He said he thought that Commissioner O'Malley wanted to know about the process. Commissioner O'Malley said he wanted some kind of assurance that the Planning Commission would have involvement in establishing public benefit. Planner Rogers said the Council wanted the Commission's input on public benefit. He said the process was not yet determined and what the Commission's role in the process of public benefits would be. Chair Bressler suggested the public benefits process needed more discussion at another meeting when the Commission had more time. Commissioner Riggs said he wanted to offer a process for which he had a sample of public benefits. Commissioner Kadvany said he thought they needed another meeting on public benefits to look at what the City would get from built-in requirements and what would be a higher level public benefit.

Commissioner Riggs proposed in response to the prompt in tonight's agenda about public benefit that the Commission would seek not to be thoroughly involved in every public benefit discussion but to review what was presented. He suggested developing a public benefit menu to be provided to applicants. He said the goal was to have clarity for applicants. Commissioner Kadvany said there were numerous public benefit projects but the key issue was the valuation of benefits. Chair Bressler asked if they wanted to ask the staff and consultant to provide that information. Commissioner Eiref said in this process it was important to document the valuation method.

Commissioner Riggs asked about qualifications for public benefits in other cities. Planner Rogers said a Council subcommittee had looked at how to determine a value of an entitlement and had found it was so difficult because of the land costs, construction costs, and other variables, and was not able to arrive at a specific formula. He said on page E23 staff had provided their best estimate of valuation.

Chair Bressler asked staff to summarize what had been said thus far on public benefit. Community Development Director Heineck said the Planning Commission would seek not to be thoroughly involved in every discussion on the establishment of public benefit but would review what was presented in accordance with a menu of desirable public benefits to be vetted over the next months by the Planning Commission, and ultimately approved by Council. She said they wanted to look at a clarification of the valuation. Chair Bressler said one of the primary concepts was that for any up zoning there should be a consideration of public benefit. Commissioner Kadvany said it was important to convey to the community what was entailed in public benefits. Chair Bressler suggested continuing the public benefits discussion to another meeting. Commissioner Eiref said he thought there were some topics that they could list from this discussion for the future discussion including what staff summarized.

Commissioner Ferrick said the public benefit to the developers and community should be made clear. She said someone had suggested a percentage and said that might be the most equal way to apply that.

Chair Bressler said he would table public benefits and consider at the next meeting.

Commission Action: Consensus to:

- Table Public Benefits for later discussion.

- Key considerations to include:
 - Planning Commission role in discussion of public benefits;
 - Level of development/up-zoning triggering a public benefit requirement;
 - Establishment of a “menu” of desirable public benefits and/or features of public benefits; and
 - Methods for the valuation of benefits.

No vote was taken but there was general consensus on this recommendation.

Commissioner Eiref said he did not want to see a lot of office space in the Station Area and he would like the first floor to be restaurants, retail or other active services. Planner Rogers said the FAR was limited in each zone and within that there was an inherent limit on office use. He said in the downtown overlay no first floor offices were permitted. He said the success of certain businesses downtown was due to use by office employees. He said during the workshops there was not an inherent perception that office was undesirable. Commissioner Eiref asked if office use would be allowed in this district on the first floor. Planner Rogers said on first floor office use was not allowed in the Main Street Overlay but was allowed in the other areas in the Plan. Commissioner Eiref said that dining, services, and retail were more desirable on the first floor. Commissioner Riggs noted there were a number of vacancies downtown and that there were not enough customers for retail. He said he thought for years that having residences next to transit hubs was valuable in reducing greenhouse gases but later learned that office use was as valuable if not more than residential toward that end. Commissioner Ferrick said if there was a lot of office space that was filled there would be increases in need for deli's and personal services. She said she supported the Plan as proposed for uses. Commissioner Eiref said there were offices downtown but those were on the second floor, which he preferred. Commissioner Kadvany said it would be good to investigate if office space, including either dental or medical, should be allowed to be built to the base level rather than the bonus level.

Chair Bressler said he has experienced being almost caught on the railroad tracks at Ravenswood and this situation was much related to pedestrians and/or bicyclists. He said that a grade separation was needed there to support any future development. He said this was a public safety and east-west connectivity issue and it was not right to congest this area more if that safety issue was not addressed. Commissioner Riggs said he had experienced the same situation at this intersection and on his bicycle as well. Commissioner Ferrick suggested expressing concern to the Council about the safety of the intersection in light of the increased cars, pedestrians and bicycles, but to leave it to traffic engineers to look at what can be done there and not just require a grade separation. Commissioner Eiref suggested detaching the concern from the Station Area. Commissioner Kadvany said people speaking in Public Comment have indicated that bicycle improvements were not sufficient for safety. Commissioner O'Malley said he had suggested changing the crosswalk and that it was dangerous but he would not want that to prevent the building of residential units in the Station Area, which he supported. Chair Bressler asked why the solution was not in the Plan if it could be solved by engineering. Planner Rogers said there were potential signage and other improvements that could be made. He said the Commission could make a statement of general concern and possible solutions might be expedited either through the Specific Plan or alternative programs.

Commission Action: Consensus to make a recommendation to address safety across the railroad tracks at Ravenswood.

- The Planning Commission recommends that the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists at the intersection of the railroad tracks and Ravenswood Avenue be a high priority and possible solutions to the safety issues be expedited either through the Specific Plan or alternative programs.

Motion carried 6-0 with Commissioner Yu not in attendance.

Commissioner Kadvany said he was supportive of improving bicycle circulations, but was concerned about the proposal to remove 30 parking spaces to provide one bike lane one way on Oak Grove Avenue. Chair Bressler asked if Commissioner Kadvany was recommending removing the bike lane on Oak Grove. Commissioner Kadvany said he hated to take anything away from the bike lane but there should be better ways to work with bicycles and cars. Planner Rogers said there would be bike lanes on both sides. Commissioner Kadvany acknowledged Planner Rogers' correction that the bike lanes would be on both sides, but affirmed concerns for the loss of parking. There was general consensus that Commissioners did not want to take away any bicycle improvements.

Commissioner Kadvany suggested tabling the discussion to the downtown geographic area and to look at the balance between enhanced bike facilities and the benefits of on-street parking.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 p.m.

Staff Liaison: Arlinda Heineck, Community Development Director

Recording Secretary: Brenda Bennett

Approved by Planning Commission on August 22, 2011