



PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING

August 4, 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

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

There were no items on the consent calendar.

D. PUBLIC HEARING

- 1. El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan - Review of Draft Specific Plan: Meeting 4 – El Camino Real** – 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 August 4 meeting will be the El Camino Real geographic zone.

Staff Report: Planner Rogers said through a series of public workshops and meetings the City had identified 12 visioning goals for the El Camino Real and Downtown. He noted the past and ongoing public engagement in the process. He said the Specific Plan was an action-oriented plan with a timeline of 20 to 30 years and would provide a framework for public improvements such as parks, pedestrian circulation and parking garages and a strong foundation for private development through zoning regulations related to height, building size, and setbacks. He said the Plan was not a specific private development project and not a final decision regarding public improvements.

Planner Rogers said El Camino Real was both a regional and local serving arterial road. He said the Plan looked at public improvements to enhance the overall street character, east-west connection opportunities, and pedestrian comfort and safety. He said regarding private development, the Plan recognized and addressed the character of different various areas along the corridor with very detailed and specific development regulations. He presented some slides depicting the different areas. He said one of the proposed public improvements was enhanced north-south walkability with 15-foot sidewalks to include a 10-foot pedestrian through area and a five foot area for plantings or features on the east side of El Camino Real. He said along the west side, the sidewalks would be 12-feet wide due to the shallow lot depth. He said there was not much public support to remove street features to accomplish this proposed widening and these improvements were proposed to be part of private improvements. He said crosswalks were proposed for the Oak Grove, Santa Cruz, and Ravenswood intersections. He said there was a proposal for a bicycle link to connect to the train station. He said a number of bicycle improvements were proposed including alternate bike routes on Alma Street, Garwood Way and Laurel Street. He said regarding private improvements there were density and intensity standards, number of units to the acre and the amount of floor area relative to the size of lot that would be base development standards and would be an increase of what was now allowed. He said the public benefit bonus category could allow greater density and intensity for receipt of public benefit. He said public benefit would be discussed at the August 22 meeting. He discussed the allowable uses and noted there would be six new zoning areas for El Camino Real to allow for more customized regulations noting the current two zoning districts for the area. He said there was a new way of measuring height called the façade height. He said the parking standards would be established by use and not by zone. He said all El Camino Real projects would need to provide parking onsite.

Public Comment: Ms. Patty Boyle, Chair of the Housing Commission, said they supported the Downtown El Camino Real Plan and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. She said they support housing adjacent to the El Camino Real transit corridor specifically for seniors who are no longer driving and for job holders needing transit connections. She said they supported the proposed improvements to east-west connectivity to provide a more walkable, vibrant and safe community at Ravenswood Street and Santa Cruz Avenue. She said they recommended replacing blighted infill with housing for a variety of income groups including the low market rate requirements. She said they supported better utilization of public land by consolidating land into parking structures and suggested using the air space above the structure for condominiums, which might partially pay for the overall structure and also eliminate parking heat islands and reduce greenhouse gases. She said that there had not been any residential units built along the El Camino Real since the 1990s. She said there were 75 people who either live or work in Menlo Park that have been on a wait list for one or two bedroom Below Market Rate living units. She said the Grand Boulevard concept should be the standard for the El Camino Real.

Mr. David Geraghty, Menlo Park, said he interacts with El Camino Real as a pedestrian, bicyclist and driver of a car. He said one of the stated intents of the Plan was to maintain village character. He said when he discusses village character with Europeans they indicate villages are where one can walk and shop locally and never mention parking. He said this Plan seemed to focus heavily on parking, which concerned him. He said the main pedestrian improvement was sidewalk extensions, and he was opposed to those as a bicyclist. He said also they did not do much for pedestrians. He noted that he regularly walks with his 86 year old neighbor across El Camino Real and her only complaint was with the length of time for the traffic signal. He said he walks from College Avenue to the Ravenswood area and if he hits intersections wrong it

could take up to four minutes to cross El Camino Real. He suggested the signal light timing would be a better improvement than extending sidewalks. He said biking and walking viability had not been addressed enough in the Plan.

Ms. Adina Levin, member of the Menlo Park Green Ribbon Citizens Committee and the Environmental Quality Commission, said she was speaking as an individual. She said there was room for improvement for bike and pedestrian access in the Plan and that the City should set goals to improve bicycle and pedestrian traffic and transit opportunities. She suggested that routes rather than locations be considered. She noted that an important route to the Recreation Center was the Middle Avenue crossing which was proposed to have an underpass for the train but not an improved walkway. She suggested that if street parking was necessary on El Camino Real that it be restricted and not used during rush hour which would allow room for bicyclists.

Mr. Ray Mueller, Menlo Park Transportation Commissioner, said he was speaking as a private person and provided the Commission with a handout containing City traffic counts from 1995 to 2009. He said he asked staff for this information as he had been concerned that the project EIR had indicated the Plan would add 13,000 car trips and community members were concerned that this would change the Menlo Park village character. He said although the Plan would add 13,000 car trips, car trips in Menlo Park since 2005 had decreased 12.5 %. He said there had been 55,200 car trips at Middle Avenue and Ravenswood in 1995 which dropped to 30,500 in 2009 and that decrease was greater than the increase from the Specific Plan. He said that crystallized for him that the Specific Plan was not adding traffic to Menlo Park but would replace traffic the City had already lost. He said the Plan was not changing the City but trying to make it healthy again. He said it was smart to put housing near transit. He said he supported the Plan but would like the southern portion of El Camino Real to have a maximum height of 48 feet rather than 60 feet and be limited to four stories. He said for a developer to have five stories would require significant public benefit such as a bike tunnel.

Mr. Michael Teves, Intrinsic Ventures, noted he resided in Portola Valley and has a business in Menlo Park. He said he supported the Specific Plan. He said for over 30 years he had worked and lived in Menlo Park and the City was headed in the right direction with the Plan. He said he has been an active real estate investor and developer for over 17 years and had acquired and developed over a million square feet of space. He said he was presently working on a revitalization project in downtown Portland near a transit hub and a future light rail station. He said the major factor for success was access to transportation and that activation of retail and downtown would occur because of the use of all transit not just cars. He said downtown retail thrives because of very local repeat customers most of whom do not use a car. He said a dense affordable rental project and dense office project would contribute to retail vibrancy and not require that more retail space be built. He suggested the City allow for retail on the first floor in all districts but only require it on Santa Cruz Avenue between University Avenue and the train station and on El Camino Real between Menlo and Valparaiso Avenues. He said young people invigorate the street scene in the downtown core so the City needed more young people living and working downtown. He said high density uses should be situated around high traffic arterials and the train station within a ½ mile radius. He said residential should have a very high unit per acre count to encourage smaller units and building size should be limited to floor to area ratio, parking and height. He said creative office uses should be encouraged such as high tech, artists' lofts, live-work space and similar uses. He said parking garages were a must and needed to be incorporated in the design for new buildings abutting the downtown district. He

said bicycle parking as part of the garages should be considered as well as the use of parking permits for both daytime office/retail use and night time residential parking. He said density bonuses should include underground parking, public art and gathering spaces. He said that the height limits should be 70-feet and five stories along the El Camino Real with an FAR of 3.0 and three stories with an FAR of 2.0. He said the minimum clear height for the first floor should be 18-feet for higher for quality buildings and that minimum upper floor heights should be set between 12 and 15 feet. He said there should be no limit on the number of units per acre, that bike transportation and parking should be encouraged with safe biking lanes. He said having a vibrant downtown from 7 a.m. to midnight would attract young people with disposable income.

Ms. Patti Fry, Menlo Park, 20 year resident and former Planning Commissioner, Menlo Park Green Ribbon Citizen's Committee, said she appreciated that the Plan addressed climate change. She said that for the east-west connectivity alternative transit, like bicycling, there needed to be more aggressive solutions including underpasses, improving El Camino Real and establishing viable routes. She suggested that rather than wait for high speed rail to pay for improvements that the City should lower the base threshold so the public benefit bonus kicked in at a lower level. She said some might argue there was a need to give away density to encourage development but she did not agree with that in regards to El Camino Real. She said all the blighted lots on El Camino Real have approved plans which had not yet been built as those were under the existing regulations. She said the workshops were oriented toward what maximums the community would bear but did not really address impacts and tradeoffs. She said with the release of the Draft EIR for the Plan, it was clear that greenhouse gases would increase significantly despite mitigations suggested in the Plan and she thought that the community would have responded differently if they had realized the tradeoffs. She asked that they modify what was being presented toward a small town and not toward an urban center.

Mr. Keith Davis, Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter, said they supported increasing transit ridership and addressing urban sprawl by targeting the transit center around the train station and El Camino Real. He said the Plan proposes Class 3 bike lanes along El Camino Real, which requires lane sharing by bikes with cars and suggested the City consider upgrading El Camino Real to Class 2 bike lane. He said he rode his bike today and he would not like to have to ride on El Camino Real regularly. He said bicyclists want to use El Camino Real throughout the peninsula, and with the Plan the City had an opportunity to do something different.

Ms. Margie Radinsky, 389 El Camino task force, which is a coalition of neighbors from College and Middle Avenues who are working with the developer for a project at 389 El Camino Real. She said she did not think the façade modulations were stringent enough. She showed a rendering provided by Madsen Company for the 389 El Camino Real project. She said the Plan required modulation of the length of the building after 100 feet and said the modulation in the Plan would not apply to the building length shown in the rendering. She said even if the length was 105 feet under the Plan there could be just a change in color and the building would look massive. She said the Plan as proposed did not adequately protect Allied Arts homes from bulky mass that was out of character with the village character. She suggested that modulation should occur at 50 feet and that modulation be better defined.

Ms. Carol Grace, Menlo Park, said she wanted to comment on Santa Cruz Avenue as she had not been comfortable speaking at the Commission's previous meeting because of the audience. She said there were many comments about keeping Santa Cruz Avenue as is. She said with the Facebook and Gateway Projects moving into the Belle Haven area she wanted to insure

they kept vibrancy in the downtown. She said she was in favor of the changes proposed in the Plan and that the downtown needed a facelift. She said the best thing she had seen over the last 50 years in the City had been the tree installation along El Camino Real. She said she hoped they would include that feature ongoing as it made traveling more appealing to pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicle drivers. She said she did not like bulb outs as they served no purpose and were bad for bicyclists. She said to serve pedestrians and bicyclists the City needed to get rid of parking on the street, widen travel lanes and put parking in garages. She said the City needed bike lanes or bike paths along El Camino Real. She said it was terrifying to ride down Santa Cruz Avenue on a bicycle and there needed to be changes to make it safer and more comfortable for both pedestrians and bicyclists.

Mr. Laurance Zaro said he was the Property Manager of a downtown commercial store, and suggested that development along El Camino Real be more aggressive and that the proposed changes to downtown be less aggressive and more experimental. He said over a million dollars had been spent to date to revitalize the downtown and it would require much more. He said as taxpayers were paying for this Plan that taxpayers should be allowed to give a mandate as to how those funds should be spent. He said the Plan should be put to a vote.

Mr. Jeff Warmoth, property owner, expressed strong support for the process and for the Plan. He said it was critical to property owners to have such a Plan in place for certainty as to what types of projects could move forward. He said the Commission would retain design review under the Plan. He said for El Camino Real that properties within ¼ mile from the train station should have the opportunity for more intensive use particularly for residential. He said the maximum height for the Station Area East was 60 feet and had heard that was potentially controversial. He said a 38 foot height limit does not work from a design standpoint and suggested a height of 45 feet.

Ms. Geri Elbers, Menlo Park, said she liked improvements for bicyclists but cars and bikes did not mix. She said it was difficult to travel east-west and downtown on bicycles. She suggested the City take part of the parking plaza on the south side of Santa Cruz Avenue for use as a bike lane. She also suggested having a bike route along the train tracks parallel to El Camino Real similar to bike paths in Palo Alto. She said she would encourage the City to make Menlo Park a more bicyclist attractive place.

Mr. Steve Peckler, Menlo Park, said his opinion mirrored Mr. John Worthing's letter. He said he has spent time in Sweden where there was neither high intensity nor density. He said Menlo Park was not an urban center and its schools were already crowded. He said it was very dangerous for children to cross Santa Cruz Avenue and that the street would have more traffic under this Plan. He used as comparison University Avenue in Palo Alto which becomes very congested. He said he agreed that better bicycle opportunities north to south on El Camino Real were needed but the City would need to work with Atherton. He said that stretch of El Camino Real was very dangerous now for pedestrians and bicyclists. He said there was no danger of urban sprawl in Menlo Park and he thought they should think about the community. He said building to a high density would be detrimental to the City.

Chair Bressler closed public comment.

Commission Comment: Commissioner Riggs asked for clarification of how the Plan proposed to create improved east-west linkages. He said Planner Rogers had indicated in his presentation

that changes to the traffic lanes on El Camino Real had been rejected due to previous comments and wondered if he had meant Santa Cruz Avenue. Planner Rogers said the east-west improvements were centered on El Camino Real and around the train station with pedestrian crossing improvements proposed at Oak Grove, Santa Cruz and Menlo Avenues and Ravenswood Street to include high visibility crosswalks with enhanced pavement, pedestrian friendly signals, countdown signals, pedestrian crossing at bulb outs and median aisle pedestrian refuges. He said the Plan proposed at Encinal, Valparaiso, Roble, Middle and College Avenues basic improvements over current conditions to allow for high visibility crosswalks, accessible pedestrian friendly signals and bulb outs where appropriate. He said for the train track that a grade separation was proposed for pedestrian and bicyclist crossing to the train station and also in the vicinity of Middle Avenue. He said the Plan did not indicate any removal of lanes on El Camino Real.

Commissioner Riggs asked staff to comment on Mr. Crittenden's letter regarding the treatment of historical buildings. Planner Rogers said Mr. Crittenden was the owner of the Park Theater property and had written that for design proposals which were deemed to have historical significance that if they were to be rehabilitated then parking requirements should be limited to onsite or whatever the prior use had been both onsite and offsite. He said Mr. Crittenden's second point was that use and occupancy should be permitted without restriction to the FAR in the zoning area and without restriction as identified in the zoning code, and in the event economic feasibility did not support rehabilitation of a historically significant resource that the subject site should be redeveloped under the same guidelines. Planner Rogers said generally regarding the second point that for historical resources when rehabilitation was not feasible then the City would analyze the circumstances and make a determination. He said if the City then authorized demolition the underlying zoning regulations would apply. He said however that Mr. Crittenden's first point would require more analysis. He said if the Planning Commission had opinions about the first point, staff would like to hear those. Commissioner Riggs asked how this would affect buildings on the other side of El Camino Real and whether that would only apply with an existing use. Planner Rogers said if the Park Theater was proposed to be a movie theater which was the allowed use that any increased use or nonconforming feature would need to be considered and would not necessarily be grandfathered. Commissioner Riggs asked if there was any legal record of historical status for the Park Theater site. Planner Rogers said it was not part of the "H" District which was the City's historical designation and was not on State or National historical registry.

Commissioner Ferrick asked about the idea of a possible Class 2 bike lane on El Camino Real by restricting parking during commute hours or making changes to lanes. Planner Rogers said any changes to El Camino Real would have to be approved by Caltrans. He said regarding time restrictions for parking that something similar had been done on Laurel Street and that idea would need to be considered by the City's Transportation Division and Caltrans. Commissioner Ferrick said there was also a question of timing of the pedestrian crossings. Planner Rogers said that was not under the City's direct control. He said the City had approached Caltrans for signal changes and been told that those could be purchased, and then would become the City's to maintain in perpetuity. He said if the Commission wanted to look at peak hours and other restrictions on parking they would need to get additional input from business owners. Commissioner Ferrick asked if Caltrans regularly studied traffic flow and noted that congestion seemed heavier in Menlo Park than in other nearby cities. Planner Rogers said that the traffic signals on El Camino Real used adaptive signal technology to monitor traffic flow in real time and to optimize to the extent possible. He noted that traffic lanes reduce from three to two lanes

entering Menlo Park and increase from two to three lanes exiting Menlo Park on El Camino Real.

Commissioner Ferrick asked why the Plan proposed an undercrossing from Middle Avenue to the Burgess Area that did not include El Camino Real. Planner Rogers said the discussion regarding over and under crossings of El Camino Real looked at keeping an open feel to the area and that the distance from the train tracks to El Camino Real was so great that most designers said such a construct would be too long for people to use regularly and that taking people off the streets might impact existing businesses.

Commissioner O'Malley said Ms. Fry had indicated there was not a great deal of notice to the public that development under the Plan would significantly increase greenhouse gases. He asked what was considered a significant increase and what a significant level of greenhouse gases was. Planner Rogers said as part of the EIR prepared for the Plan that Bay Area Air Quality District (BAAQD) measurements of green house gases per capita and per transportation and utility uses were used to get a number for the ratio of greenhouse gases per person. He said the Specific Plan would be over the BAAQD ratio but that it was better than the use of existing zoning. He said it could be argued that the per capita measure was not the ideal way to measure as greenhouse gas emissions were not limited to a particular jurisdiction.

Commissioner Eiref asked if the Plan allowed for a path along the railroad tracks. Planner Rogers said the Plan had leveraged the existing path on the east side of the tracks. He said they might set up a goal within the Plan for such a bike path but that area was under the jurisdiction of the Joint Powers Board and the State's State High Speed authority. He said that if the Plan required the use of some of the properties that backed up to the train tracks the length of the path might be inconsistent. He said another concern was that many of the properties were relatively shallow and pinched by the train tracks and El Camino Real. He said the layout of high speed rail would also be a concern.

Commissioner Kadvany asked if a four way crossing was installed at Middle Avenue whether the City would need to maintain it. Planner Rogers said signals would become the City's to maintain in perpetuity and possibly the road surface as well. He said those crossings that might benefit pedestrians might also cause vehicular backup. Commissioner Kadvany asked if there were parking counts for El Camino Real as he had noted very little use of parking in some areas and more in other areas. Planner Rogers said to his knowledge the City had not studied the parking along El Camino Real. He said the City had gotten feedback from merchants in the central part of El Camino Real during the public workshop process for the Plan that parking was integral to their businesses. Commissioner Kadvany asked if there is a formal concept of blight applied to El Camino Real in reference to the description of blight used by one of the public members. Planner Rogers said there was a process and definition under State redevelopment law for blight and noted that redevelopment areas were facing challenges because of the State budget situation. He said that the City had not looked at El Camino Real as blight for redevelopment purposes. He said other things such as graffiti and vandalism that were visually unappealing were handled under Code Enforcement. Commissioner Kadvany asked about under crossings and whether there was a fundamental reason why those would need to wait for high speed rail. Planner Rogers said the City had looked at a tunnel concept similar to that used on Homer Avenue in Palo Alto. He said the City had started on the planning and design for that but stopped because of the high speed rail forecast. He said there would have to be certainty about the high speed rail before a tunnel or other crossing could be constructed and

that it might be feasible to reduce costs of construction during parallel construction of high speed rail.

Commissioner Yu asked how the proposed regulations in the Plan would support or discourage senior housing and asked if there was a metric for senior housing demand. Planner Rogers said the Plan did not distinguish between non-senior and senior housing but proposed encouraging the reduction of parking per residential unit from 2 spaces to 1.85 spaces, which would encourage smaller units. He said the Commission could consider if further distinctions should be made for senior housing. He said regarding demand that there was definitely interest in the area for senior housing. Commissioner Yu said one of the speakers had mentioned that 38 feet of height did not make sense. Planner Rogers said that had to do with the ceiling height and the number of stories. He said the City's consultant who arrived at 38 feet thought that maximum height would support good development in the area.

Chair Bressler said there were concerns about bulb outs. Planner Rogers said sidewalk extensions or bulb outs were illustrated on page D54 of the Plan. He suggested the Commission consider the recommended criteria of Grand Boulevard initiative such as the Multi-modal Access Strategy Sensitive Design Guidelines document, which had been recently finalized. He said the guidelines do indicate the need for bicycle lanes and to provide a sufficient width of bicycle lane related to bulb outs.

Chair Bressler said there were also comments about public benefits. He said he had prepared a handout for the Commission that recommended looking for public benefit money or amenities for any development value beyond the existing zoning regulations. He said a number of developers had indicated benefits they wanted. He said there was a lot of money on the table and one of the largest concerns was east-west connectivity and there had not been much suggested to address that. He said they should seek as much public benefit as they could.

Commissioner Riggs said between public comment and issues raised that there was much to discuss and suggested that the public benefit discussion might occur two weeks later. He said he was concerned with the statement that the City was not able to upgrade intersections on El Camino Real without being forced by Caltrans to take those over. He said he did not think that should keep the City from making planning goals. He said in previous meetings they had not gotten input from property owners' about development along El Camino Real and in the Downtown. He said the vacancies along El Camino Real and in the Downtown were due to economic infeasibilities. He said he appreciated hearing from Mr. Texas and Mr. Warmoth. He said he would also hope to hear from Stanford. He said Mr. Texas indicated that downtowns thrive on local business, walking and an infusion of youth. He said that should be the type of housing supported on El Camino Real. He said the 38 foot height that Mr. Warmoth mentioned was not so helpful since although three stories could be accomplished within 38-feet of height this was a design better suited to the Mission District in San Francisco and not in Menlo Park where higher ceilinged rooms were preferable. He said it was helpful that Commissioner Mueller had done research on car trips along El Camino Real. He said he would like to link that to what they would do about traffic flow on El Camino Real. He said he agreed with Mr. Geraghty that it was not the traffic but the timing for pedestrians to cross El Camino Real that created issues. He said bulb outs or sidewalk extensions would preclude right turn lanes and that would cause delays for a person making a right turn. He said bulb outs would be an inappropriate placement in Menlo Park.

Commissioner Kadvany said one speaker talked about the 389 El Camino Real project and the required 100 foot break for modulation. Planner Rogers said the guidelines state what an applicant absolutely has to meet but the Commission would have overview of design review. He said for the Downtown that walls exceeding 50 feet were required to have modulations. He said the Commission could recommend for a particular zone that standards be explored because of unique conditions.

Commissioner Yu said there was both a desire for senior housing and an infusion of youth to create vibrancy, which meant young families would need housing. She said seniors want to stay in Menlo Park and the younger adults have nowhere to go. She said they needed to consider density needed for Menlo Park and to balance that with village character. She said they needed to talk about the right incentives.

Commissioner Ferrick said she agreed with Commissioner Yu that they wanted development with fewer impacts on traffic and schools. She suggested that they talk about incentives for senior housing but also consider housing intensity with smaller units. She said regarding maximum heights along El Camino Real that pages E81 and E79 of the Plan addressed height and modulation. She said she would like to talk about the addition of a Class 2 bike lane along El Camino Real during commute hours. She said if a tunnel was built that it could be possible to transition Middle Avenue to a Class 2 bike lane. She said that page F13 of the Plan proposed bike route paths and lanes but there were no bike paths in Menlo Park. She said a tunnel would need to tie into a path to where people are going.

The Commission took a five-minute recess.

Chair Bressler reopened the meeting.

Commissioner Ferrick said one speaker had referred to page E79 regarding modulation. She asked how 100 feet came to be set as the point after which a wall had to be modulated. She said she was going to suggest reducing that length but then considered that it was more important relative to the size of the building. Planner Rogers said for the Downtown the consultant had found there was a pattern of 50-foot wide buildings and having modulation at 50-feet retained the appearance of that pattern. He said he was probably hypothesizing but thought the consultant had considered that width as too short a pattern for El Camino Real and doubled it. He said the Commission was able to make different modulations and require more if the result of this was a negative impact. He said they wanted to provide specificity for developers and property owners but not make things so inflexible that developers could not have a unique solution for a unique situation. Commissioner Ferrick said there were quite a few conditions for building on the west side of Menlo Park for single-family homes on narrower lots. She asked if there was support to recommend using downtown numbers in the El Camino Real south zone which has single-family residential homes.

Commissioner O'Malley said Planner Rogers had indicated that regardless of the recommended 100 feet that the Commission would be able to require more modulation. Planner Rogers said that was correct but that a future Commission might not hold the same values as this Commission. Planner Rogers asked if the downtown 50-foot modulation was for the side streets or El Camino Real. He said as structured this did not distinguish between side street facing sides. Commissioner Ferrick said she was thinking about the transition from the residential area to El Camino Real.

Commissioner Kadvany said the developer might argue that what was proposed for 389 El Camino Real was highly modulated and it had about a 35-foot high façade.

Commissioner Riggs suggested in the ECR SW there should be compatible modulation of form on facades adjacent to residential or residential--mixed zones. He said the City wanted to provide the greatest clarity for developers and property owners. He said the Commission would be concerned how facades modulate when adjacent to residential. Commissioner Eiref said he would support if it was somewhat general and specified concern but did not specify length. He asked if all buildings had to be parallel to El Camino Real as he liked existing buildings that were angled from El Camino Real. Commissioner Riggs said 1000 El Camino Real destroyed the concept of a street frontage. He said he would like flexibility. Chair Bressler suggested perhaps they could strike "require" from that statement.

Commissioner Ferrick said she would second Commissioner Riggs' motion to require compatible modulation of form on facades adjacent to residential zoned districts in the ECR SW Zone. She suggested in response to Commissioner Eiref's question to strike "parallel." Planner Rogers said in a downtown area the overall intent defines the street and makes the pedestrian experience more comfortable as there were no jagged building edges. He said staff would be comfortable with modifying the wording so that a significant portion of the building facing the street was parallel to the street which might allow for a feature off of the street and indicate what was acceptable but without a mandate.

Commissioner Riggs asked staff about the ECR NE-L residential zoning. Planner Rogers said that was very similar to the ECR SW residential zoning. Commissioner Riggs said he would like to amend his motion to include the ECR NE-L residential zoning. Commissioner Ferrick agreed as the second on the motion.

Building Façade Modulation Adjacent to Residential Areas

Commission Action: M/S Riggs/Ferrick moved to recommend amending the Building Façade Modulation regulations for the ECR NE-L and ECR SW zoning districts to call for compatible modulation of form on facades adjacent to residential or residential mixed-use zones.

Motion carried 7-0.

Chair Bressler asked about the wording requiring building facade to be parallel to the street. Commissioner Riggs said he would like to change "require" to "encourage" or require major elements of the façade be parallel to El Camino Real. Commissioner Ferrick said she would prefer the latter. Commissioner Yu said she would suggest changing to the majority of the street edge of that block rather than one property as people were open to the idea of something open and plaza like. Chair Bressler said he thought language should be "major elements." Commissioner Eiref said the requirement could be bounded to the building itself or for a block that the majority of buildings be parallel. Commissioner Ferrick said the majority of Kepler's and Borrone's faces the street but the first floor created a great plaza. She said she would not want the Commission's recommendation to diminish the creativity of architects by applying stringent language such as parallel, building majority, or even major elements. Commissioner Yu said she thought looking at the context of a block was better in maintaining a nice street edge and would allow for creativity on individual lots. Commissioner Riggs said that 888 Santa Cruz

Avenue has a setback on the left side and a diagonal storefront which was framed by a masonry shape at the property line. He asked staff if it was manageable to refer to the bulk of a block or if that would create competition about who could get a diagonal. Planner Rogers said it would be hard to manage and had the possibility of being unfair. He said also this could be hard to track because of the length of the block and there might need to be survey work done. Commissioner Riggs asked whether under such a format with no variance the Commission was able to allow something different. Planner Rogers said there were standards and guidelines and perhaps this standard should be moved to the guideline section or perhaps they should add a modifier that would allow Commission to approve without a variance. Commissioner O'Malley said he was in favor of Commissioner Riggs' original idea to "encourage" that the façade of the buildings be parallel to El Camino Real. Planner Rogers clarified that this recommendation would only be for the El Camino Real zone and not for the Downtown and Station Area. Commissioner Eiref suggested "encouraging major portions" of the building to be parallel to El Camino Real. Commissioner Ferrick said she wanted no requirement for it all to be parallel.

Massing and Modulation

Commission Action: M/S Eiref/Bressler moved to recommend amending the Massing and Modulation regulations for all El Camino Real zoning districts as follows:

- ~~The~~ **Major** portions of the building facing a street shall **should** be parallel to the street.

Motion carried 7-0.

Chair Bressler said there seemed to be a desire to eliminate bulb outs in certain areas. Commissioner Kadvany said they should be left in but the Commission was not strongly disposed towards them. He said that Commissioner Riggs' comment about parking on El Camino Real and density was important. Commissioner Ferrick said with the possibility of upgrades to bicycle lanes that they should not put in barriers rather she would suggest clear crossings and countdown crossings and other ways to keep pedestrians safe rather than bulb outs.

Commissioner O'Malley said he thought bulb outs would not affect any bike lanes as it only went out at the end of parking. Planner Rogers said Commissioner Ferrick was looking at an amendment to the parking layout to add bike lanes where there was currently parking and if that was done then bulb outs would affect bike lanes.

Commissioner Eiref said it would be nice to have a bulb out at Santa Cruz Avenue and El Camino Real. He said there was not as much right hand turn traffic into the Station Area at that location. He suggested that if the City upgraded the bike lane that they not do bulb outs.

Commissioner Riggs said Page D43 showed what he and Mr. Geraghty were concerned about on El Camino Real and also Mr. Mueller who said the problem with traffic was the flow. He said if there were two lanes rather than three lanes there would be a longer wait and it would take away the opportunity to make a right hand turn. He said bulb outs were counterproductive as the issue was the traffic signal timing. He said he would recommend deleting the proposed reduction of El Camino Real by bulb outs and create an additional dedicated right hand turn lane from north bound El Camino Real onto east bound Ravenswood, to keep the existing right hand turn lane for traffic continuing northbound, and concentrate on improved traffic signal

timing. He said they should reexamine left turn only lights that take up a full cycle and base crosswalk timing on the minimum time the slowest pedestrian needs to cross. He suggested two crossing times of 15 and 25 seconds.

Commissioner Riggs moved to delete the section proposing the reduction of El Camino Real through lanes in all cases, confirm the need for an added right hand turn lane from northbound El Camino Real onto eastbound Ravenswood and specifically improve traffic signals to reduce the cycle wait time for crossing. Chair Bressler asked about the existing right hand turn lane. Planner Rogers said if standing in front of 1000 El Camino Real building, there would be two through lanes, one combination through and right turn lane, and one right turn only lane. He said the through right hand turn lane would have to turn right at Oak Grove Avenue.

Planner Rogers said staff could present this to the Transportation Division for review and bring their determination back to the August 22 Commission meeting. Commissioner O'Malley said making those changes would rule out parking. Commissioner Riggs said the parking could be time constrained. Commissioner O'Malley asked how dedicated bike lanes could be built with that scenario. Commissioner Riggs said there was also a proposal to narrow the three lanes which might allow for a bike lane. Planner Rogers said it was proposed that for the central section of El Camino Real that the two lanes in both directions be narrowed to the greatest extent feasible to allow for sidewalk width. He said this was a Class 3 bike route. Commissioner Ferrick said she understood that but in the diagrams it appeared the outside lane was wider than the two center lanes and it might be easier to have a bike lane share that area in most of the sections and in a third lane except for the area crossing Ravenswood north through Oak Grove. Planner Rogers said in that section if curb was kept and parking removed there would not be room for a bike lane. Commissioner Ferrick said that the Plan looked at private development moving the sidewalk back on private property. She asked if there could be agreement to have additional setback to allow for a bike lane in the former car dealership area of El Camino Real. She said there had been comment that there were not enough bike improvements in this Plan. She said page F13 showed Class 2 on El Camino Real in Palo Alto and that Class 2 was being proposed for the north part of El Camino Real in Menlo Park. She said she believes Class 2 was feasible in this center section. Commissioner Kadvany said there were so many segments on El Camino Real that have so many differences that he could not vote on anything with any specificity. He said they needed to know what was feasible. He said if they wanted to encourage time dependent parking they should say that.

Commissioner Riggs said he would move to remove the addition of any bulb outs and add improved pedestrian traffic signals to cross El Camino Real. Chair Bressler seconded the motion. Commissioner Kadvany said perhaps they should not eliminate bulb outs. Commissioner Eiref said there were very few people turning right at Café Borrone and that had possibility for amenities to improve the pedestrian experience. Commissioner Riggs said the bus turns right at that street. Commissioner Ferrick said there were other ways to improve pedestrian flow and not use bulb outs. She suggested that they emphasize they want to explore other pedestrian improvements. Commissioner Riggs suggested adding to the motion to improve the flow of traffic. Chair Bressler said he would like to see things like tunnels.

Curb Extensions

Commission Action: M/S Riggs/Bressler to recommend that, in part to shorten the flow of cars and thereby shorten the traffic cycle as a means of easing pedestrian and bicycle crossings of El Camino Real, the proposed curb extensions (or “bulb outs”) on El Camino Real be removed from the Plan.

Commissioner Riggs suggested adding the possibility of two different timed buttons for pedestrians to push. Commissioner O’Malley said he was sure pedestrians would pick the button offering the longer amount of time.

Commissioner Kadvany said he wanted to break the suggested motion into two distinct motions for one to remove bulb outs and the second to improve pedestrian traffic signalization to shorten time for the cycle and improve traffic flow as he could not support the former concept. Commissioner Riggs said he had a problem with separating the two items as there were three lanes needed to improve traffic flow.

Motion carried 4 to 3 with Commissioners Eiref, Kadvany, and Yu opposed.

Commissioner Ferrick moved to recommend exploring upgrading or improving the El Camino Real bike route to a Class 2 lane. Commissioner Kadvany seconded the motion.

El Camino Real Bicycle Improvements

Commission Action: M/S Ferrick/Kadvany to recommend exploring the possibility of upgrading or improving bicycle improvements on El Camino Real to Class 2 bike lanes with an acknowledgement that this concept may be affected by whether or not curb extension were implemented.

Motion carried 6-1 with Commissioner Riggs opposed.

Commissioner Riggs said he was voting “no” as he believed bicycles needed to go in a different location.

Commissioner Ferrick moved to recommend that Middle Avenue west of El Camino Real be improved to Class 2 bicycle lane when a tunnel was built. Commissioner Riggs seconded the motion.

Middle Avenue Bicycle Improvements

Commission Action: M/S Ferrick/Riggs to recommend exploring the possibility of improving or upgrading Middle Avenue to Class 2 bicycle lanes when the proposed pedestrian/bicycle crossing of the railroad tracks is implemented.

Motion carried 7-0.

Commissioner Riggs said they needed to look at crossing El Camino Real as an undercrossing. He moved to recommend a specific goal for an undercrossing at or near Santa Cruz Avenue and at or near Middle Avenue. Commissioner Ferrick said Ms. Levine was talking about

keeping coherent routes. She said there was a proposed Class 2 lane for Oak Grove Avenue and asked if that would be a logical location for an undercrossing. Commissioner Riggs suggested that the Ravenswood intersection might be better. Planner Rogers said that most traffic went down Santa Cruz Avenue. Commissioner Riggs said there needed to be one downtown and one at Middle Avenue. Commissioner Kadvany said this might be another explore-type suggestion to set goals and explore options for additional four way intersections and underground crossing. Chair Bressler said he was afraid that four way crossings would deflect the desire for an underground crossing.

Commissioner Riggs moved to recommend the goal to provide underground crossing downtown and at Middle Avenue. Commissioner Yu said they had talked about creating public space at the train station and bringing people to the downtown. She said she visualized people on Santa Cruz Avenue and asked if an underground crossing would accomplish that street level liveliness. Chair Bressler said the proposal was generic to recommend that the Specific Plan have a goal of underground crossing at Middle Avenue and in the downtown area. Commissioner Eiref said that the underground crossing in Palo Alto was very deep and he was concerned about doing something similar on the entire width of El Camino Real. Chair Bressler suggested that they explore ways to increase east-west connectivity. Commissioner Kadvany said they all felt there needed to be improvements to create east-west connectivity. Commissioner Yu said she was having trouble with the motion and she wanted to keep street level activity. Commissioner Riggs said that he would withdraw his motion as it was not entirely a practical proposal. Chair Bressler asked if Commissioner Kadvany had some language. Commissioner Kadvany suggested they think about it and bring something back to the next meeting. Chair Bressler said they were carrying a lot over to the next meeting.

Commissioner Kadvany suggested stating that the Planning Commission was disappointed with the overall east-west connectivity of the Plan and while understanding the difficulties in solving it would still encourage the Council to take additional courageous steps. Chair Bressler suggested considering facilitating bike and pedestrian traffic. Commissioner Kadvany suggested considering more four way intersections and improved traffic signal control favoring pedestrians. Commissioner Ferrick suggested countdown signals. Commissioner Riggs said they recommended eliminating bulb outs to improve traffic signaling. Planner Rogers asked if they wanted to preface the recommendation that the Commission was disappointed in the overall east-west connectivity of the Plan and recognizing the difficulty of the planning solutions were encouraging the Council to explore additional bike and pedestrian considerations including but not limited to more four way intersections with improved traffic signal control favoring pedestrians. Commissioner Riggs said he did not want the word "disappointing" used. He said the Planning Commission's job was to vet information for the Council. He suggested the Commission say instead that to accomplish more than what was proposed for connectivity the Commission requested more creative and aggressive efforts at signal modifications. Chair Bressler said that also included but was not limited to additional four way intersections. Commissioner Riggs said he did not think additional four way intersections were necessary as there were not multitudes of pedestrians waiting to cross as they were in large cities. Commissioner Kadvany suggested putting the traffic signal timing first and four way intersections second. Commissioner Riggs suggested saying such as four way crossings and two possible units of crossing time. Planner Rogers restated the motion: to accomplish more with regard to east west connectivity along El Camino Real, to recommend more creative and aggressive efforts at signal timing and signal modifications including four-way crossings and bicycle safety.

East-West Connectivity

Commission Action: M/S Riggs/Kadvany to accomplish more with regard to east-west connectivity along El Camino Real, recommend more creative and aggressive efforts at signal timing and signal modifications, including four-way crossings and bicycle safety.

Motion carried 7-0.

Chair Bressler said he would put off the public benefit discussion to the next meeting and noted that they had maximum height and senior housing left to discuss. Commissioner Eiref said he would like incentives to build a bike path along the train tracks similar to what Palo Alto has. Commissioner Kadvany said façade setbacks should be looked at along El Camino Real and parking requirements. Commissioner Riggs said ECR NE should consider bonus height and tie it into small unit housing density and ECR NE-R should allow 48 feet of height rather than 38 feet also with a public benefit clause. He said he was not sure why the latter zone had much lower allowable height than the zone to the south of it or across the street. He said the way the 45 degree setback rule was listed they could have many 45 degree canted glass or standing seam metal roofs, which the City would not want. He said they should discuss the LEED points system and actual certification. Commissioner Eiref said that for the ECR SE there should be a public benefit required for anything above 45-feet. Chair Bressler suggested holding public benefit discussion to the next meeting. Commissioner Ferrick said the height and intensity were tied into the base. Chair Bressler said the public benefit concept he had outlined was changing the base as well and he did not think they had time this evening to discuss this.

Commissioner Yu suggested they consider senior housing and whether to encourage by increasing intensity and lowering parking requirements. She moved to encourage senior housing through increased density and lower parking ratios. Commissioner Ferrick seconded the motion. Chair Bressler said the parking requirements had been lowered considerably for the Station Area. Commissioner Kadvany suggested a definition of parking requirements for senior housing. Planner Rogers said that what was advisable was to suggest the overall value and intent now to encourage senior housing through increased density and lower parking ratios or other incentives. Commissioner O'Malley asked if there were studies on senior housing. Planner Rogers said he would check but that the overall needs and demographic changes were pretty clear. Commissioner O'Malley said if studies had been done they could get more out of their recommendation by considering those studies. Commissioner Ferrick said she had heard very compelling numbers for the need for senior housing in San Mateo County. Commissioner Yu said she wanted to create incentives for senior housing but not to preclude other development. Planner Rogers said it seemed the direction was to revise the plan to encourage senior housing by increasing density or lowering parking standards or other incentives but was not intended as a mandate and that senior housing should not necessarily dominate the Plan area. Commissioner Ferrick as the second agreed with the wording. Commissioner Riggs said he thought also the units should be smaller.

Senior Housing

Commission Action: M/S Yu/Ferrick recommend revisions to encourage senior housing through such things as increased density, lower parking ratios, or other incentives while noting that this

encouragement should not be necessarily interpreted as a mandate and that senior housing should not necessarily dominate the Plan area.

Motion carried 7-0.

Commissioner Ferrick said noting Mr. Warmoth's observation of having a first floor somewhat taller to make the space nicer to recommend allowing a higher maximum to 45 feet and in ECR NE-R to 48-feet to allow for a higher quality building. Commissioner Riggs said he would second and asked if that would make the maximum height for El Camino Real NE-R 48-feet. Commissioner Ferrick said to allow for high quality three story buildings. Commissioner Riggs said NE-R should be one of the prime residential areas as it faced the downtown. He said it should probably be one of the densest.

Commissioner Ferrick asked why the façade height was not applicable in all three areas. Planner Rogers said to the extent the Commission was interested in raising overall height, staff would suggest that be coupled with a façade height for areas that currently do not have a façade height. Commissioner Ferrick asked if the maximum height for all the zones should be 45 or 48 feet. Chair Bressler said he was concerned with changing heights. Commissioner Kadvany suggested that the height be reviewed but not make decisions now. Commissioner Riggs said he thought they should introduce a height bonus for public benefit and that any change in height should be qualified with a reason. Commissioner Eiref said there were two developers who indicated they would like to raise the height of buildings and referred to quality spaces. He said he would like some market data on that. Commissioner Riggs said a 15-foot floor to floor height created 11-foot ceiling height which was not a Class A retail ceiling.

Commissioner Kadvany said they were running out of time and had not discussed ECR SE as it was unlike the rest of El Camino Real because of its size. He said people had said 60-foot buildings even with setbacks were too much. He said they needed to look at setbacks elsewhere on El Camino Real.

Commissioner Ferrick moved to recommend allowing first floor spaces to have an increase in height for quality commercial spaces. Commissioner Riggs suggested recommending to enable Class A retail and office, and modern expectations of residential that when a public benefit was provided that buildings in the ECR NE and NE-R should be allowed a 48-foot height rather than 38 feet but limited to three stories.

Planner Rogers suggested looking at what the overall goal was rather than doing numbers. He suggested recommending that staff and the consultants review the proposed 38-foot building height maximum and whether it was sufficient to permit three-story buildings with current market expectations for floor-to-floor heights and report back to the Planning Commission in particular with regard to the ECR NE and NE-R zoning districts.

Commission Action: M/S Ferrick/Riggs to recommend that staff and the consultants review the proposed 38-foot building height maximum and whether it is sufficient to permit three-story buildings with current market expectations for floor-to-floor heights and report back to the Planning Commission, with regards to the ECR NE and ECR NE-R zoning districts.

Motion carried 7-0.

Commissioner Kadvany said things they had suggested in the Station Area regarding façade height and setbacks should be considered in this area as well. He said open space on top of a parking podium was not particularly desirable and an environment to have people connect in a building was needed. He said an average height of four stories would be workable. Chair Bressler asked what would happen if that was not counted as open space. Planner Rogers said parking areas could be considered open space as well as on top of parking structures including balconies and larger areas on the top of the building. Commissioner Eiref said that they did not want solid walls of 60-foot high buildings along the 8-acre parcel but similar to the Station Area to allow the maximum height for some component of the building and there should be some public benefit for height above the base line.

Commissioner Eiref moved that anything above 45 feet in height should provide a public benefit for that additional height and suggested using the language they had recommended for the Station Area. Planner Rogers said that was to consider other mechanisms to limit the overall proportions of a building at the maximum of 60 feet. Commissioner Riggs said he would second that if it was limited to 50 feet which would kick in public benefit. Commissioner Eiref agreed and suggested using whatever they had done in the Station Area. Commissioner Kadvany asked if they had included a third floor setback in the Station Area. Planner Rogers said the language used was to reduce façade height from 45 feet by one full story with staff and consultants to decide dimensions to establish the reduction, for staff to work with the consultant for alternative mechanisms to limit maximum building height to a portion and create architecturally interesting changes such as building restrictions and setbacks. Commissioner Eiref said regarding public benefit the applicant would need to prove architectural merit for going above the maximum height and provide public benefit. Planner Rogers said FAR and the number of dwelling units per acre was the metric that drove most of the decision making. Commissioner Kadvany said people do not see the number of units rather the size of the building. He said Palo Alto was at 50 feet and residents had said they did not want Menlo Park to become Palo Alto. He said he would feel better with a four-story limit and third and fourth floor setbacks. He said they could be stronger on setbacks and create more of a tiered look, and do more with open space and parking requirements. Commissioner Riggs said he was interested with what Commissioner Kadvany was saying but with limits on dwelling units per acre and FAR. He was concerned with setbacks for long distances and was not ready to modify. Chair Bressler asked if they wanted to apply the architectural language from the Station Area to this area as well. Commissioner Riggs said he would like to hear what they had agreed to on the Station Area. Planner Rogers recapped the Station Area recommendation on height:

- Reduce the façade height from the proposed 45 feet by one full story; staff and consultants to 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.

Commissioner Eiref said that this would make dramatic changes. Commissioner Riggs said he was concerned as there had been a reason through the visioning and workshops that ECR SE had been determined as the right place for height and density and the Commission was now considering weakening the community decision. Commissioner Kadvany said he was not sure

the community had voted for five stories at 60 feet. He said this was such a large area that it needed its own parameters. Commissioner Riggs asked if there was support for keeping the façade height at 45 feet and allowing for modulation. Commissioner Kadvany said that the motion was to replicate the Station Area language. Chair Bressler stated that he would make the motion. Commissioner Riggs provided the second. Commissioner Ferrick said there was no recommendation to change the numbers just the modulation. Commissioner Kadvany said he was not sure this addressed the concerns. Commissioner Eiref suggested tabling the discussion. Commissioner Yu said she was not sure of the value of this recommendation. Chair Bressler withdrew the motion.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 p.m.

Staff Liaison: Arlinda Heineck, Community Development Director

Recording Secretary: Brenda Bennett

Approved by Planning Commission on October 17, 2011