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Fellow Menlo Park Community Members,

The **El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan** process is entering an important phase with the pending release of the *Draft Specific Plan*, and your conscientious participation is important. With this in mind, I'm personally asking you, the project area business owners, property owners, and residents, to consider the following facts:

- **The plan is long-term, looking at the next 20 to 30 years.** The plan will set a clear framework for potential public improvements and private development, but it will not actually approve the construction of any new buildings or other improvements. If the plan is approved, many decisions and opportunities for input will still lie ahead, including the specifics about each new project, implementation phases, scheduling, and financing.
- **The community outreach has been broad and open.** Menlo Park has never seen a community engagement process as extensive as this one. Thousands of residents, business owners, property owners, and other stakeholders have taken the time to participate in workshops, attend Council and Commission meetings, email suggestions and concerns, and relay input in other ways. We are absolutely hoping to add new voices to this discussion, but it is important to understand and respect all of the contributions that have come throughout the entire process, even if one ultimately disagrees with them.
- **Input has been, and will continue to be, used to make significant improvements in the plans.** By way of example, the idea for a new, downtown "Market Place" interested many community members, but it was correctly pointed out that the initial conceptual design would require significant changes to two entire parking lots. The conceptual design was refined to dramatically reduce the size of this concept and also relocate it to a better location to complement the Farmer's Market. When it was pointed out that the revised design could impact a heritage oak tree, the concept was again modified. These are real and substantive changes, and we do expect more as we proceed.
- **The plan will have complex and interrelated aspects.** When the draft is released within the next month, we all will need to take the time to fully understand all implications and provide specific,

- constructive suggestions for improvement based on the actual plan documents and facts. This approach helps the community achieve a plan that may not include everyone's first choice but hopefully one that everyone can live with. Later this spring, we will also release the companion environmental and fiscal analyses, which are important parts of the discussion. We are looking for a healthy discussion, but I'd like to personally ask you to keep an open mind for the time being.
- **Menlo Park is a community of diverse opinions.** A successful plan will, by its nature, involve a healthy amount of give-and-take. No particular individual or group can expect that every aspect of a plan will be their first preference, but we should all feel heard and respected. The process to date has benefited from participation by a wide cross-section of the community (no specific group has dominated), and we look forward to the continuing thoughtful consideration of all interests as we refine our future even further, together.

The attached FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) provides more information about the process. On behalf of the City Council, I look forward to your feedback and hope to see your participation in the public meetings which will be held after release of these important planning documents.

Sincerely,
Glen Rojas
City Manager