



# PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

FOR THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING OF JUNE 6, 2011  
AGENDA ITEM C1

**PROJECT:** El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan  
Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Public Hearing

**APPLICANT:** City of Menlo Park

## BACKGROUND

Menlo Park is developing a long-term plan for the El Camino Real and Downtown areas. The completed visioning process (Phase I: 2007-2008) has led into the preparation of a Specific Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Fiscal Impact Analysis (FIA) (Phase II: 2009-2011). The culmination of the first phase of work was the City's Council's unanimous acceptance of the Vision Plan, which serves as the foundation for the Specific Plan. The completed Specific Plan will be a comprehensive, action-oriented set of rules, containing elements such as plans for open space and other public improvements, detailed land use regulations, design guidelines, and implementation measures.

The Specific Plan process is currently in Task 4 (*Draft Specific Plan, Fiscal Impact Analysis, and Draft EIR*), having completed the *Project Initiation, Existing Conditions Analysis, Vision Refinement, and Development of Framework, Concept Plans, Programs and Guidelines* tasks. A key milestone of the current phase of work was the release of the Draft Specific Plan on April 7, 2010 to strong community interest. Following the release of the Draft Specific Plan, City staff and consultants focused work on the Draft EIR and FIA. During this period, City staff also continued to conduct outreach with downtown businesses and other stakeholders, continuing the plan's overall emphasis on broad public outreach and participation.

On April 29, 2011, the City released the Draft EIR for public review, which is the focus of this public hearing and which is discussed in more detail below and in the associated draft meeting presentation (Attachment A).

## MEETING OVERVIEW

The purpose of the June 6, 2011 meeting on the proposed project is to provide an overview of the project background, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA),

the Draft EIR, and the next steps, all of which are described in more detail in the draft presentation included as Attachment A (this presentation may be modified in advance of the meeting). The purpose of the meeting is also to give Planning Commissioners and members of the general public an opportunity to comment individually on the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR was released on April 29, 2011, which with the June 20 comment deadline allows for 52 days of public review (greater than the 45 days that the CEQA Guidelines set as a minimum for this type of action). The meeting is also an opportunity for staff and the primary EIR consultant (ESA) to answer technical questions from Planning Commissioners, if necessary to inform comments. City staff will include representatives from both the Planning and Transportation Divisions. Planning Commissioners should note that neither the overall project consultant (Perkins+Will) nor the traffic impact analysis sub-consultant (Fehr & Peers) will be in attendance at the June 6 meeting, in order to minimize project costs. However, staff may relay specific questions/answers, if posed in advance.

Comments received during the public hearing on the Draft EIR will be transcribed by a court reporter and responded to as part of the Final EIR. Comments may also be submitted as written correspondence before the end of the comment period (June 20, as previously noted). Planning Commissioners and members of the public should not necessarily consider it an obligation to relay comments verbally at the June 6 meeting, given that written and verbal comments are treated equivalently during the Final EIR review process.

The response to comments in the Final EIR will be reviewed at a subsequent Planning Commission meeting. No staff recommendation on the Draft EIR is being provided, and the Planning Commission will not take any action as a body at this time. This public hearing is not intended to be a broad policy discussion on non-environmental aspects of the Draft Specific Plan. Following the close of the Draft EIR comment period, the Planning Commission will hold separate sessions to review and provide recommendations for the Draft Specific Plan. The Commission's recommendations will subsequently be reviewed by the City Council. These future recommendations and direction for changes will provide the basis for the Final Specific Plan, which will be reviewed concurrently with the Final EIR.

The recommended meeting procedure is:

- Summary Presentation
- Public Comment on Draft EIR
- Close the Public Hearing
- Commission Questions of Staff/Consultant on Draft EIR
- Commission Comments on Draft EIR

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## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notification consisted of publishing a legal notice in the local newspaper on May 4, 2011. In addition, the City has prepared a project page for the proposal, which is available at the following address: <http://www.menlopark.org/specificplan>. This page provides up-to-date information about the project, allowing interested parties to stay informed of its progress. The page allows users to sign up for automatic email bulletins, notifying them when content is updated and meetings are scheduled. The project list currently has 958 subscribers.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

A. Draft EIR Public Hearing Presentation (Draft)

## **EXHIBITS TO BE PROVIDED AT MEETING**

Draft EIR Public Hearing Presentation

## **AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW AT CITY OFFICES**

Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared by ESA, dated April 2011

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