



# PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

FOR THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING OF JUNE 1, 2009  
AGENDA ITEM D1

**PROJECT:** El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan  
**APPLICANT:** City of Menlo Park

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## BACKGROUND

Menlo Park is developing a long-term plan for the El Camino Real and Downtown areas. The completed visioning process (Phase I) has led into the preparation of a Specific Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report (Phase II). Environmental and fiscal reviews are being integrated into this process, so that potential benefits (such as tax revenue) and impacts (such as traffic) of different scenarios will be considered as the community develops the long-term plan. The completed Specific Plan will contain elements such as detailed land use regulations, design guidelines, infrastructure plans, and implementation measures. Broad public outreach and participation continues to be a key element of the project. This process will continue to engage a wide range of community members, including those who may not currently be involved in civic activities.

The project is being guided by the planning and architecture consulting firm Perkins+Will (“the consultant”), with the close assistance of City staff. The project is currently in the “Development of Framework, Concept Plans, Programs and Guidelines” stage, having completed the project initiation, existing conditions analysis, and vision refinement tasks. A key milestone for the earlier work was the first Community Workshop, which took place on April 16, 2009. At this workshop, the community looked beyond the Vision Plan goals to understand existing opportunities and constraints and the inherent trade-offs (e.g., traffic/parking and pedestrian space) when considering a vibrant downtown appropriate for Menlo Park. Approximately 100 community members attended the first workshop.

The current stage involves developing, reviewing, and refining concept plans and strategic approaches for the Specific Plan project area. The work currently being conducted will inform the second Community Workshop, which will take place on Thursday, June 18, 2009. This workshop will primarily involve the review of alternative

scenarios for achieving the Vision Plan goals. The overall task will result in a preferred direction and strategic plan for El Camino Real and Downtown.

## **ANALYSIS**

This meeting of the Planning Commission is one of three working sessions on the project that precede the Commission's formal review of the Draft and Final Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The working sessions are intended to be regular 'check-ins' that allow the Commission to review the status of the project and to provide feedback that can be incorporated into the process. The Commission's sessions are complemented by similar meetings of the City Council, the next of which will take place on Tuesday, June 9.

The current Planning Commission and City Council working sessions dovetail with a meeting of the project's Oversight and Outreach Committee, which took place on Thursday, May 21. Commissioners Riggs and Bressler are members of the Oversight and Outreach Committee as the Planning Commission representative and an At-Large Member, respectively. The Planning Commission has also appointed Commissioners Ferrick, Kadvany, and Riggs as a subcommittee for the project.

This meeting will involve a presentation by the consultant consisting of the following topics:

1. Project Schedule
2. Review of Community Workshop #1
3. Preliminary Alternatives and Evaluation Criteria
4. Community Workshop #2 Process

Hard copies of the presentation will be available at the meeting for the Commission and the public, and an electronic version will be posted on the project web page after the meeting.

Staff recommends that the meeting follow the outlined procedure:

1. Consultant Presentation
2. Planning Commission Detail/Clarification-Type Questions of the Consultant and Staff
3. Public Comment
4. Planning Commission General Feedback

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The Vision Plan (Phase I) was a planning study and as such was not a project requiring environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Specific Plan (Phase II) includes the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

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## **PUBLIC NOTICE & APPEAL PERIOD**

Public notification was achieved by publishing a notice in the local newspaper and by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting. 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 or meetings are scheduled.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

None

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

Consultant Presentation

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