

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DISTRICT 4

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*Serious Drought.
Help save water!*

July 13, 2016

SM84302
SON-84-0.316
SCH # 2016062053Ms. Jean Lin
Planning Department
City of Menlo Park
701 Laurel Street
Menlo Park, CA 94025**Middle Plaza at 500 El Camino Real Project – Infill Environmental Checklist and Notice of Preparation**

Dear Ms. Lin:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the Middle Plaza at 500 El Camino Real Project. Caltrans' new mission, vision, and goals signal a modernization of our approach to California's transportation system, in which we seek to reduce statewide vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 15 percent by 2020 and increase non-auto modes of active transportation. Caltrans plans to increase non-auto mode shares by 2020 through tripling bicycle, and doubling pedestrian and transit. Also, these targets support the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) Sustainable Communities Strategy, which promotes the increase of non-auto mode shares by ten percentage points and a decrease in automobile VMT per capita by ten percent. Our comments are based on the Infill Environmental Checklist and Notice of Preparation.

Project Understanding

The proposed project would demolish existing structures and construct a 459,013 square foot (sf) mixed-use development on the 8.4 acre site located at 500 El Camino Real in the City of Menlo Park (City). El Camino Real is also known as State Route (SR) 82 and is under Caltrans jurisdiction. The development would accommodate 215 residential units in 305,000 sf, 144,000 sf of non-medical office space, 10,000 sf of commercial space, and 1,005 parking spaces. The project site is located within the El Camino Real Corridor and Downtown priority development area (PDA), as identified by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG); and falls under the El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan (2008). The Infill Environmental Checklist indicates that the project would satisfy the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15183.3, *Appendix M: Performance Standards for Infill Projects Eligible for Streamlined Review*, as the site would be located in a low vehicle travel area and is within 0.5 miles of the Menlo Park Train Station. Vehicular access would be provided via three driveways located on SR 82 at its

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intersections with Middle Avenue, Partridge Avenue, and Cambridge Avenue.

Lead Agency

As the lead agency, the City is responsible for all project mitigation, including any needed improvements to State highways. The project's fair share contribution, financing, scheduling, implementation responsibilities and lead agency monitoring should be fully discussed for all proposed mitigation measures.

Project Design

Please consider increasing the amount of proposed dwelling units to meet the site's maximum allowable density. The project should aim for a more compact development as it is located within a PDA - a designated infill site where greater housing density should be accommodated near major transit nodes. Table 2-2 - *Allowed and Proposed Development at the Project Site* of the Infill Environmental Checklist states that the development of 40 dwelling units per acre (du/acre) is permitted, yet the project proposes a density of only 25.5 du/acre. A development proposal significantly lower than the project's maximum allowable density will not meet the intent of the PDA and specific plan.

Please also consider reducing the proposed parking supply and/or dedicate spaces towards car-sharing programs. The project proposes the development of 1,005 parking spaces despite the requirement of 985 parking spaces by the City. For information about parking ratios, please see MTC's report, *Reforming Parking Policies to Support Smart Growth*, or visit the MTC parking webpage: http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/smart_growth/parking.

Vehicle Miles Traveled

We appreciate your phone call on July 12, 2016 to provide clarifying information regarding project specific VMT analysis. While we recognize that the City will not require VMT analysis of the project applicant, please be aware that a development of 25.5 du/acre would result in a greater regional VMT per capita than a development of increased intensification.

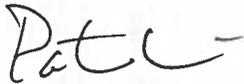
Encroachment Permit

Please be advised that any work or traffic control that encroaches onto the State ROW requires an encroachment permit that is issued by Caltrans. To apply, a completed encroachment permit application, environmental documentation, and five (5) sets of plans clearly indicating State ROW must be submitted to the following address: David Salladay, District Office Chief, Office of Permits, California Department of Transportation, District 4, P.O. Box 23660, Oakland, CA 94623-0660. Traffic-related mitigation measures should be incorporated into the construction plans prior to the encroachment permit process. See the website linked below for more information: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/developserv/permits>.

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Should you have any questions regarding this letter or require additional information, please contact Jesse Schofield at (510) 286-5562 or Jesse.Schofield@dot.ca.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat C" with a horizontal line extending from the end of the "C".

PATRICIA MAURICE
District Branch Chief
Local Development - Intergovernmental Review