

# EL CAMINO REAL/DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN

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Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)  
Public Hearing  
Planning Commission  
June 6, 2011

# Meeting Overview

- Meeting Purpose
  - Provide an overview of the Draft EIR
  - Receive individual comments from Planning Commissioners and the public on the environmental analysis (*Note: comments not required at this time- can be relayed in writing through 6/20*)
  - Provide clarifications, if necessary to inform comments
  - Not intended to be a broad policy discussion (*to come*)
- Meeting Process
  - Summary Presentation
  - Public Comment on Draft EIR
  - Close the Public Hearing
  - Commission Questions of Staff/Consultant on Draft EIR
  - Commission Comments on Draft EIR

# El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan

- Multi-year process to establish a clear long-term plan for the El Camino Real corridor and Downtown.
- Specific Plan process preceded by an initial visioning exercise to define broad goals
- Extensive community engagement and documentation of process on project web page ([www.menlopark.org/specificplan](http://www.menlopark.org/specificplan))



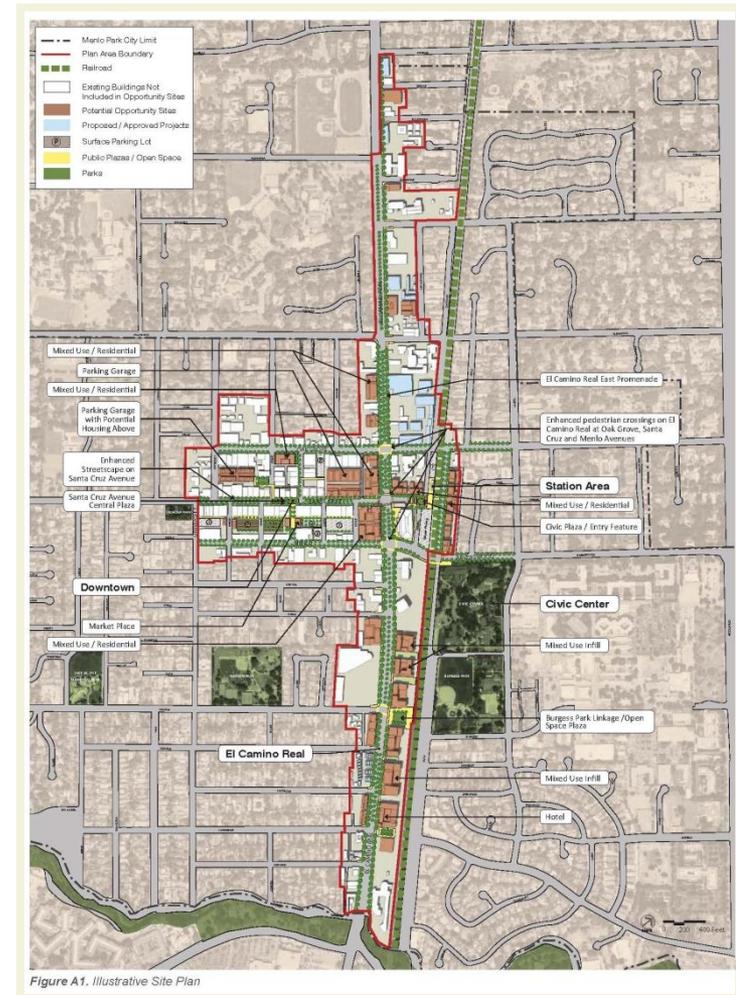
# El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan

## What is the Specific Plan?

- A clear and action-oriented plan for the next 20 to 30 years
- A detailed framework for public space improvements
- A strong foundation for private development
- Currently, a *draft* document

## What is it not?

- An individual private development project
- A final decision on every public improvement



# CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

- Highly structured by **State law, guidelines and court cases**
- Impacts need to be associated to **physical effects on the environment** – not social or economic impacts
- **Informational document** to disclose impacts to the public and decision makers
- Does not necessarily dictate outcomes – **communities can take into account other factors** along with projected environmental effects
- Need to consider **feasible alternatives** to projects
- Analysis must consider **cumulative impact** of project in combination with other pending/likely projects and growth

# CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

- Standard is not perfection, but “**adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure**”
- For plans, **analysis can be higher-level**, with additional project-level review potentially required in the future
- **Draft EIR** released for public review, and comments received included in **Final EIR**
- Draft EIR comments that address the adequacy of the EIR or the City’s compliance with CEQA **will be responded to and can potentially result in changes** to the Draft EIR; non-environmental comments will be noted

# CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

- **Impact discussions** typically fall into one of three classifications:
  - Less than Significant: Impacts do not exceed the relevant threshold/criteria
  - Significant -> Less than Significant: Impacts initially exceed the relevant threshold/criteria, but application of feasible mitigation measures reduces the impact to less than significant
  - Significant and Unavoidable: Impacts exceed the relevant threshold/criteria, and no feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce the impact to less than significant

# Environmental Topics

- Aesthetic Resources
- *Agriculture Resources*
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Seismicity
- Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change
- Hazardous Materials and Hazards
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning Policy
- *Mineral Resources*
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services and Utilities
- Transportation, Circulation and Parking

# Draft Specific Plan CEQA Process

- **Notice of Preparation (NOP)** - December 8, 2009
- **Draft Specific Plan** - April 7, 2010
- **Draft EIR** - April 29, 2011
- **Planning Commission Draft EIR Public Hearing** - June 6, 2011
- **Draft EIR Comment Period End** - June 20, 2011 at 5:30 P.M.
- **Final EIR** (to include applicable responses to Draft EIR comments) – Fall 2011 (*tentative*)
  
- Following close of Draft EIR comment period, Planning Commission and City Council will review and provide comprehensive direction on the Draft Specific Plan itself

# Draft EIR Summary

- *Note: Summary is high-level, pulling out key discussions*
- **Aesthetic Resources**
  - AES-3 and AES-4: Plan would allow new buildings that could change aspects of visual character and cast new shadows, but development regulations and design guidelines would limit the potential for negative effects (*Less than Significant*)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Air Quality**

- AIR-1: Emissions from construction vehicles and earth disturbing activities could result in an air quality violation (**Significant and Unavoidable**)
- AIR-2: The Plan would result in increased pollutant emissions from increased vehicle traffic (**Significant and Unavoidable**)
- AIR-5, AIR-6, and AIR-7: The Plan would locate new residences (“sensitive receptors”) near areas of existing elevated pollutants (El Camino Real and Caltrain), but additional analysis and filtration systems would mitigate this impact (Significant -> Less than Significant)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Biological Resources**

- BIO-1 and BIO-3: Construction activities could affect special status birds and bats, but preconstruction surveys and avoidance procedures would mitigate this impact (Significant -> Less than Significant)
- BIO-3: Project lighting could affect migratory or breeding special-status birds, but lighting reductions would mitigate this impact (Significant -> Less than Significant)
- BIO-6: Construction activities could affect special-status amphibians and reptiles, but fencing, training, and other actions would mitigate this impact (Significant -> Less than Significant)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Cultural Resources**

- CUL-1: The Plan could affect historic architectural resources, but site-specific evaluations and adherence to preservation standards would mitigate this impact (Significant -> Less than Significant)
- CUL-2, CUL-3, and CUL-4: Construction activities could impact or disturb archaeological resources, paleontological resources, or human remains, but studies, training, and other procedures would mitigate this impact (Significant -> Less than Significant)

- **Geology, Soils and Seismicity**

- Adherence to standard building code, grading and drainage requirements, and other existing regulations would reduce all potential impacts to less than significant levels.

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change**

- GHG-1: The Specific Plan would generate per capita greenhouse gas emissions at a rate (5.8 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e per service population per year) in excess of the BAAQMD threshold (4.6); mitigations would reduce this rate to 5.5, although this would still exceed the threshold (**Significant and Unavoidable**)
- GHG-2: The Specific Plan would comply with many plans, policies, and regulations relating to reductions in greenhouse gases; however, because the BAAQMD standard discussed in GHG-1, which was derived from AB 32, would be exceeded, the Plan is considered to conflict with plans, policies, and regulations adopted for the purpose of reducing GHGs (**Significant and Unavoidable**)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Hazardous Materials and Hazards**

- HAZ-1: Soil disturbance during construction could result in exposure to hazardous materials, but Phase I environmental site assessments and subsequent analyses/mitigations (if needed) would mitigate this impact (Significant -> Less than Significant)
- HAZ-3: Hazardous materials used during construction (i.e., fuels, lubricants, solvents) could be released through improper handling or storage, but implementation of best management practices would mitigate this impact (Significant -> Less than Significant)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Hydrology and Water Quality**

- Elements of the Plan and adherence to standard grading and drainage requirements and other existing regulations would reduce all potential impacts to less than significant levels.

- **Land Use and Planning Policy**

- LU-1: The Plan would not physically divide an established community, and in many respects would improve connectivity (Less than Significant)
- LU-2: The Plan would alter the type and intensity of land uses, but not in a manner that would be substantially incompatible with surrounding land uses or neighborhood character (Less than Significant)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Noise**

- NOI-1: Construction activities could result in noise impacts, but noise control activities (in particular for potential pile driving) would mitigate these impacts (Less than Significant)
- NOI-3 and NOI-4: Locating new residences near the Caltrain line could expose “sensitive receptors” to substantial noise and/or vibration, but acoustical insulation and/or vibration isolation techniques would mitigate this impact (Significant -> Less than Significant)
- NOI-5: The cumulative effect of the Plan and other future development would result in noise increases along roadways that are already in excess of relevant standards; mitigations such as new sound walls are not feasible in this case (Significant and Unavoidable)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Population and Housing**

- POP-1: The project would not displace existing housing or people such that replacement facilities elsewhere would be required (Less than Significant)
- POP-2: The Plan would not induce substantial population growth, either directly by proposing new housing, as the projected Plan area population growth would be well within overall projections for the city; The Plan would also not indirectly induce population growth through infrastructure improvements or job growth (Less than Significant)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Public Services and Utilities**

- PUB-1 and PUB-2: The Plan would not require new or physically altered police or fire *facilities* (*Less than Significant*)
- PUB-3: The Plan would result in some school enrollment from new residences, but this would occur concurrently with tapering of recent growth trends; in addition, the majority of new housing in the Plan area would be attached multi-family residences, which have lower student yield rates (*Less than Significant*)
- PUB-4: New residents and employees would increase the use of parks, but the overall ratio of park acreage per 1,000 persons would still exceed the relevant threshold; in addition, new plazas and open spaces would be provided within the Plan area (*Less than Significant*)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Public Services and Utilities**

- PUB-5: Development associated with the Plan would increase the demand for water supply, but the local water supplier (Cal Water – Bear Gulch District) would be able to serve these demands in normal year conditions; during critical dry year events or multiple dry years, water supplies could be curtailed system-wide (Less than Significant)
- PUB-6, PUB-7, PUB-8, PUB-9: The Plan would not require new facilities for water treatment, wastewater treatment, or landfills, nor would it exceed existing gas and electric supplies (Less than Significant)
- The associated cumulative impact for each topic is also projected to be less than significant

# Draft EIR Summary

## • **Transportation, Circulation and Parking**

- Analysis describes existing conditions (data from traffic counts) and then analyzes:
  - Project: Impact of entire Specific Plan development program being added to existing conditions (conservative analysis- more likely that plan area will be developed in phases due to disparate property ownership)
  - Cumulative: Impact of entire Specific Plan development program *plus* other approved/proposed projects within Menlo Park *plus* 25-year regional growth factor
- For intersections, analysis looks at whether project degrades a certain “level of service” category or exceeds a particular delay threshold
- For roadway segments, analysis looks at increase in traffic volumes and whether a percentage or absolute increase is exceeded

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Transportation, Circulation and Parking**

- TR-1: Traffic from Plan area development would adversely affect operation of area intersections:

Intersection Number	Impact
15	University Drive (North) and Santa Cruz Avenue would degrade from LOS D to LOS E in the a.m. peak hour (see Mitigation Measure TR-1a)
20	Middlefield Road and Glenwood Avenue/Linden Avenue would worsen the prevailing LOS F conditions (exceeding the threshold of significance) in both the a.m. and p.m. peak hours (see Mitigation Measure TR-1b)
25	Middlefield Road and Willow Road would degrade from LOS D to LOS E in the p.m. peak hour (see Mitigation Measure TR-1c)
33	Orange Avenue/Santa Cruz Avenue and Avy Avenue/Santa Cruz Avenue would degrade from LOS C to LOS E in the p.m. peak hour (see Mitigation Measure TR-1d)

Several mitigation measures (signalization, lane additions/modifications) proposed that would eliminate impacts, although their implementation cannot be guaranteed (**Significant and Unavoidable**)

# Draft EIR Summary

## • **Transportation, Circulation and Parking**

- TR-2: Traffic from Plan area development would adversely affect operation of area roadway segments:
  - 5. Oak Grove Avenue - Middlefield Road to Laurel Street
  - 6. Oak Grove Avenue - Laurel Street to El Camino Real
  - 7. Oak Grove Avenue - El Camino Real to Crane Street
  - 13. Santa Cruz Avenue - Avy/Orange to Alameda de las Pulgas
  - 14. Menlo Avenue - El Camino to Crane
  - 16. Ravenswood Avenue - Middlefield Road to Laurel Street
  - 17. Ravenswood Avenue - Laurel Street to Alma Street
  - 18. Ravenswood Avenue - Alma Street to El Camino Real
  - 28. Middlefield Road - Ringwood Avenue to Willow Road

Not possible to widen these segments; TDM programs would provide partial mitigation, but not quantifiable (**Significant and Unavoidable**)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Transportation, Circulation and Parking**

- TR-7: Traffic from Plan area development and cumulative development would adversely affect operation of area intersections:
  - 3 - El Camino Real and Glenwood Avenue/Valparaiso Avenue intersection as a whole in the p.m. peak hour and the eastbound and westbound approaches in the p.m. peak hour;
  - 6 - El Camino Real and Menlo Avenue/Ravenswood Avenue intersection as a whole and the eastbound and westbound approaches in both the a.m. and p.m. peak hours with and without the southbound right-turn lane;
  - 8 - El Camino Real and Middle Avenue intersection as a whole and the eastbound and westbound approaches in the p.m. peak hour and westbound approach in the a.m. peak hour;
  - 12 - Laurel Street and Ravenswood Avenue in the p.m. peak hour;
  - 15 - University Drive (North) and Santa Cruz Avenue in the a.m. peak hour;
  - 18 - Middlefield Road and Marsh Road in the p.m. peak hour;
  - 19 - Middlefield Road and Encinal Avenue in the a.m. peak hour; (*continued*)

# Draft EIR Summary

## • **Transportation, Circulation and Parking**

- TR-7: Traffic from Plan area development and cumulative development would adversely affect operation of area intersections:
  - *(continued)* 20 - Middlefield Road and Glenwood Avenue/Linden Avenue in both the a.m. and p.m. peak hours;
  - 22 - Middlefield Road and Ravenswood Avenue in both the a.m. and p.m. peak hours;
  - 24 - Middlefield Road and Linfield Drive in both the a.m. and p.m. peak hours;
  - 25 - Middlefield Road and Willow Road in p.m. peak hour;
  - 27 - Coleman Avenue and Willow Road in both the a.m. and p.m. peak hours;
  - 28 - Durham Street and Willow Road in the p.m. peak hour;
  - 29 - Bay Road and Willow Road in the a.m. peak hour; and
  - 33 - Orange Avenue/Santa Cruz Avenue and Avy Avenue/Santa Cruz Avenue in the a.m. and p.m. peak hours

Several mitigation measures (signalization, lane additions/modifications) proposed that would eliminate or lessen impacts, although for most, their implementation cannot be guaranteed (**Significant and Unavoidable**)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Transportation, Circulation and Parking**

- TR-8: Traffic from Plan area development and cumulative development would adversely affect operation of area roadway segments:
  - 5 - Oak Grove Avenue – Middlefield to Laurel
  - 6 - Oak Grove Avenue – Laurel to El Camino
  - 7 - Oak Grove Avenue – El Camino to Crane
  - 11 - Santa Cruz Avenue - University to Olive
  - 12 - Santa Cruz Avenue - Olive to Avy/Orange
  - 14 - Menlo Avenue – El Camino to Crane
  - 15 - Menlo Avenue – Crane to University
  - 16 - Ravenswood Avenue – Middlefield to Laurel
  - 17 - Ravenswood Avenue – Laurel to Alma
  - 18 - Ravenswood Avenue – Alma to El Camino
  - 19 - Middle Avenue – El Camino to University
  - 24 - University Drive – Oak Grove to Santa Cruz
  - 25 - University Drive – Santa Cruz to Menlo
  - 28 - Middlefield Road - Ringwood to Willow

Not possible to widen these segments; TDM programs would provide partial mitigation, but not quantifiable (**Significant and Unavoidable**)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Transportation, Circulation and Parking**

- TR-3 and TR-9: Traffic would increase on local freeway segments (both with and without cumulative development), but it would not exceed relevant standards (Less than Significant)
- TR-4: Transit ridership would be increased, but relevant agencies would have enough capacity to accommodate the additional riders (Less than Significant)
- TR-5: The Plan would affect pedestrian and bicycle operations and safety, but effects would generally be positive and would not result in substantial new conflicts (Less than Significant)
- TR-6: Parking supply in the downtown would be affected, but would not result in inadequate capacity (Less than Significant)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Impact Overview**

- Significant and Unavoidable **Project** Impacts

- Impact AIR-1: Implementation of the Specific Plan would result in increased long-term emissions of criteria pollutants associated with construction activities that could contribute substantially to an air quality violation.
- Impact AIR-2: Implementation of the Specific Plan would result in increased long-term emissions of criteria pollutants from increased vehicle traffic and on-site area sources that would contribute substantially to an air quality violation.
- Impact TR-1: Traffic from future development in the Plan area would adversely affect operation of area intersections.
- Impact TR-2: Traffic from future development in the Plan area would adversely affect operation of local roadway segments.

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Impact Overview**

- Significant and Unavoidable **Cumulative** Impacts

- Impact GHG-1: The Specific Plan would generate GHG emissions, both directly and indirectly, that would have a significant impact on the environment.
- Impact GHG-2: The Specific Plan could conflict with applicable plans, policies or regulations of an agency with jurisdiction over the Specific Plan adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of GHGs.
- Impact NOI-5: Implementation of the Specific Plan, together with anticipated future development in the area in general, would result in a significant increase in noise levels in the area.
- Impact TR-7: Cumulative development, along with development in the Plan area, would adversely affect operation of local intersections.
- Impact TR-8: Cumulative development, along with development in the Plan area would adversely affect operation of local roadway segments.

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Alternatives**

- CEQA requires identification of a reasonable range of alternatives to the project
- Alternatives should attain most of the basic objectives of the project and avoid/lessen significant effects
- Alternatives must be feasible
- “No project” alternative required

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Alternatives**

- Project objectives are made up of the Vision Plan Goals:
  1. Maintain a village character unique to Menlo Park.
  2. Provide greater east-west town-wide connectivity.
  3. Improve circulation and streetscape conditions on El Camino Real.
  4. Ensure that El Camino Real development is sensitive to and compatible with adjacent neighborhoods.
  5. Revitalize underutilized parcels and buildings.
  6. Activate the train station area.
  7. Protect and enhance pedestrian amenities on Santa Cruz Avenue.
  8. Expand shopping, dining and neighborhood services to ensure a vibrant downtown. (*continued*)

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Alternatives**

- Project objectives are made up of the Vision Plan Goals:
  9. *(continued)* Provide residential opportunities in the Vision Plan area.
  10. Provide plaza and park spaces.
  11. Provide an integrated, safe, and well-designed pedestrian and bicycle network.
  12. Develop parking strategies and facilities that meet the commercial and residential needs of the community.
- As well as the Specific Plan Guiding Principles:
  - Generate Vibrancy;
  - Strengthen the Public Realm;
  - Sustain Menlo Park's Village Character;
  - Enhance Connectivity; and
  - Promote Healthy Living and Sustainability.

# Draft EIR Summary

## • Alternatives

- Alternatives identified by comparing current densities/intensities of existing Zoning Ordinance and Draft Specific Plan to identify reduced intensity options:

	Project		Alternative 1 (No Project)		Alternative 2 (Reduced Project)		Alternative 3 (Reduced Commercial/ Retail Space)		Alternative 4 (Reduced Residential)	
	Quantity	% of project	Quantity	% of project	Quantity	% of project	Quantity	% of project	Quantity	% of project
<b>Residential (dwelling units)</b>	680	100%	320	47%	500	74%	680	100%	500	74%
<b>Retail (square feet)</b>	91,800	100%	60,588	66%	76,194	83%	76,194	83%	91,800	100%
<b>Commercial (square feet)</b>	240,820	100%	158,941	66%	199,881	83%	199,881	83%	240,820	100%
<b>Hotel (rooms)</b>	380	100%	251	66%	315	83%	315	83%	380	100%

# Draft EIR Summary

- **Alternatives – Key Findings**

- No alternative fully eliminates any significant and unavoidable impact
- No Project Alternative would lessen Air Quality, Noise, and Transportation impacts, but performs the same or worse with regard to Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change; also addresses fewest number of project objectives (vibrancy, pedestrian improvements, housing opportunities, etc.)
- Alternative 3 (Reduced Commercial/Retail Space) results in fewer daily trips than Alternative 4 (Reduced Residential)
- Alternative 2 (Reduced Project) is considered to be the “environmentally superior alternative”

# Meeting Overview

- Meeting Process
  - Summary Presentation
  - Public Comment on Draft EIR
  - Commission Questions of Staff/Consultant on Draft EIR
  - Commission Comments on Draft EIR
  - Close the Public Hearing
- **Draft EIR Comment Deadline: Monday, June 20 at 5:30 P.M.**
- Comments may be submitted to Thomas Rogers by email ([throgers@menlopark.org](mailto:throgers@menlopark.org)), letter (Community Development Department, 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park CA 94025), or fax (650-327-1653)
- <http://www.menlopark.org/specificplan>