

Menlo Park El Camino Real and Downtown Specific Plan  
Community Workshop #3  
17 September 2009

Public Comments:  
Additional Comments Post-Community  
Workshop (thru 28 September 2009)

**Rogers, Thomas H**

---

**From:** Heineck, Arlinda A  
**Sent:** Friday, September 18, 2009 10:48 AM  
**To:** Rogers, Thomas H  
**Subject:** FW: Downtown Vision  
FYI

Arlinda Heineck  
Community Development Director  
701 Laurel Street  
Menlo Park, CA 94025  
(650) 330-6715  
aaheineck@menlopark.org

---

**From:** R [mailto:rrrp67@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 17, 2009 3:22 PM  
**To:** \_CCIN  
**Subject:** Downtown Vision

Dear Council Members,

I'm interested in the proposed "changes" for the downtown MP area but will not make tonight's meeting (Sept 17th). On balance I feel there are good ideas surfacing. However, I frankly do not see a need to move toward 5 story buildings and then wonder where all the people will park (Note, I usually walk or bike to downtown/church/etc.). If I want 5 story ambiance I can move to RWC or PA. They have it and it is not full.

My second area of concern is what is missing? Lost on me is how much retail we think this area can afford/accept/support? The City lost car sales tax revenue which won't be replaced by boutique shops and grocers. But some revenue replacement is a reason for this and developers want this, it is what they do, so what else do we get from this? Likewise, we are confined to limited space and El Camino Real (the route to all this retail) is not getting any larger. The "market" area, Plan 2, seems an interesting idea but again I urge you all to consider some devevelopment is OK but why are we pushing the limits?

A concrete canyon will certainly make downtown different. Is that all the change we are looking for?

Sincerely,

Russ Peterson  
Felton Gables neighborhood  
Felton Drive

CC: Craig  
Planning

RECEIVED

September 18, 2009

SEP 21 2009

MENLO PARK CITY COUNCIL  
701 Laurel St.,  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

RECEIVED  
CITY CLERK'S OFFICE  
CITY OF MENLO PARK

SEP 22 2009

CITY OF MENLO PARK  
BUILDING

Dear City Council:

Last night I attended the workshop for the "Extended Plan" for Menlo Park. I was amazed, disgusted, appalled and angry! I was there because I am a modest owner of property on Santa Cruz Avenue.

In 1960 I started my major appliance business on Santa Cruz Av. I chose Menlo Park for three reasons: there was no appliance competition, the schools had an excellent reputation, and I liked the downtown village atmosphere. My appliance store was on the street for 30 years. I liked to shop on the street because I knew the owners and the employees of most of the retailers on a first name basis as did our customers..

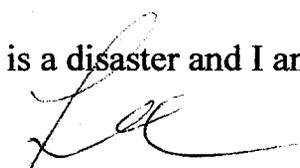
When I was president of the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce in 1976-77 our chief goal was to help alleviate the parking problem in downtown. With the approval of the City Planning Commission and the City Council we proposed funding off street parking on Oak Grove Ave by removing some old houses. The plan was opposed by some real estate firms and the Bank of America. The Chamber's plan went down to an overwhelming defeat.

According to the moderator there will be an increase in population in the 6 square blocks of 1,500 due to the increase in the heights of buildings that will either house offices or residents. There will be unsightly and inconvenient high rise parking garages everywhere. If there is an increase in the population of 1,500 my estimate is that there will be 1,000 MORE cars to deal with.

The Extended Plan will make an overcrowded city instead of the village atmosphere we all enjoy today.

City Council, I think the Extended Plan is a disaster and I am not alone.

Sincerely,

  
Lee Boucher

## Rogers, Thomas H

---

**From:** Elizabeth Lasensky [elasensky@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 19, 2009 8:00 PM  
**To:** Rogers, Thomas H  
**Subject:** More comments on El Cam/Downtown Specific Plan

Hi Thomas,

I would like to add the following comments to any that I might have already given for the El Camino/Downtown Specific Plan (or is it the other way around?).

- \* We need more mixed income housing, including senior housing, in the plan
- \* El Camino needs curb cuts for buses. That would make it safer for buses to stop and load/unload passengers. If It's not too late, the 1300 El Camino site should have a curb cut there.
- \* We are including too many hotels in the mix. It's doubtful that there is enough market for all of them, the ones we already have and the Bohannon one that isn't yet permitted.

I think that's it for now.

Thanks,  
Elizabeth Lasensky

**Rogers, Thomas H**

---

**From:** Carole Grace [CaroleGrace@isp.com]

**Sent:** Sunday, September 20, 2009 8:45 PM

**To:** Rogers, Thomas H

**Subject:** Downtown visioning

Hi Thomas,

I did end up filling out the questionnaire at last Thursday's meeting....good luck with the handwriting! I'd like to add/clarify some comments.

**Traffic:**

On the question about traffic on Santa Cruz, both of the options maintained parking along Santa Cruz. I would strongly favor eliminating parking along Santa Cruz and replacing the lost parking with a parking garage located in one of the city lots. We need a parking garage downtown that can accommodate employees of downtown businesses, so that they don't have to re-park their cars in the middle of the day, we need wider sidewalks to accommodate outdoor cafés and pedestrians, and we need a safer route for bicyclists. It has taken a long time for the trees to grow on Santa Cruz, so I really wince at removing them. I'd like to keep the center trees, and add new trees along the wider sidewalks after the parking is removed, and eliminate parking so that it's safer for bicyclists.

I don't really like the idea of a permanent outdoor market structure; I prefer the flexible parking plaza idea for a space that could be used in multiple ways.

I know the consultant estimates that traffic delays on El Camino will increase from 4 to about 5 minutes if all the proposed development happens, and that we'll only save about 8 seconds if the parking on El Camino is eliminated, but any extra time sitting in traffic feels like an eternity- especially on a hot day in the sun. Can't we just try eliminating those parking places on a trial basis at least? I'd love to experience the extra 8 seconds! By the way, the trees along El Camino are a huge help in providing both shade and calm.

Whatever happens with high speed rail, I am eager to see grade separations and electrified trains- especially after being awakened every night these past couple months by the caltrain horn! East/ West connectivity can't be effectively achieved without grade separation.

**Open Space:**

I really like the idea of the paseo, and actually prefer that idea to pocket parks. Parks are useful if well located- Fremont park gets used a lot because it is across from both Draeger's and Peets, so people take there food/drinks there to enjoy outdoors. I really couldn't tell from the planning posters whether there were enough green spaces, or whether they were well placed.

I also love the suggestion of adding a plaza and pedestrian tunnel at Middle!

**Buildings:**

My husband and I are wondering why it is economically feasible to build 2-3 story buildings on Sand Hill, but the consultants are saying that isn't the case downtown. I really don't mind 4-6 story buildings downtown, especially if you include wider sidewalks, and tall street trees. The "village" quality can be maintained by choosing architecture that is more small town/ residential looking rather than sleek high tech glass and steel. Building articulation and balconies also help keep the massing from being overwhelming.

Use the rooftops! If you look up in Menlo Park...you'll see a lot of really ugly HVAC equipment. Clean up the sky line, use the roof tops for gardens and or cafes instead of utilities. Getting the HVAC off the rooftops will also eliminate a lot of the ambient noise- especially at night.

Thanks for the opportunity to give input!

Carole Grace  
100 Garland Drive  
Menlo Park, CA

9/21/2009

## Rogers, Thomas H

---

**From:** Cortland Bohacek [cortland@bohacek.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 20, 2009 9:46 AM  
**To:** Rogers, Thomas H  
**Subject:** Specific Plan workshop

**Attachments:** menlo.PDF; ATT00001.txt



menlo.PDF (179 KB) ATT00001.txt (66  
B)

Hi Thomas,

Thanks again for the opportunity to attend the workshop. My main comments center around parking. However, I would also like to know if any increase in FAR has been considered for the existing multifamily zoning districts that ring the downtown. Increased density in these areas seems to me to be something that would not only promote private investment, but would help to revitalize the deteriorating multifamily housing stock and provide significant opportunity for inclusionary housing (BMR's).

Kind Regards,

Cortland

## Rogers, Thomas H

---

**From:** Kristin Kuntz-Duriseti [kristin.kuntz.duriseti@gmail.com]

**Sent:** Wednesday, September 23, 2009 2:32 PM

**To:** Rogers, Thomas H

**Subject:** ECR/Downtown development Plan

Dear Thomas,

I just returned from visiting one of my favorite stores along Santa Cruz Ave and was very distressed to hear of her disappointment with the ECR/Downtown development plan process. She is someone who not only operates her business in MP, but lives here as well. I know that our city staff has tried very hard to engage our community and advertise the process events. So, it was very disturbing to me that she feels the process has been "secretive." I wonder what is amiss when one of our merchants has not felt adequately informed, and I am concerned about what that might indicate as we move forward. I know she is involved in our community, so it can't be that she has just taken a backseat to all this until now.

I don't share all her viewpoints, but it is of the utmost importance to me that she feel as included in the process as possible.

While I don't want to speak for her, I thought I would pass along the concerns I heard.

1. Real concern that higher density retail would lead to higher rents for current merchants.
2. Concern that independent retailers would be replaced by "chains."
3. Loss of MP "charm" that draws current customers. Multiple story structures would negatively impact that customer base.
4. Loss of convenient parking.
5. Trees in parking lot and along Santa Cruz would be sacrificed and replaced with something less appealing (e.g., more concrete).
6. Evidence that expanded parking lots in Redwood City have not resulted in more customers, but rather less.
7. Dislike of the proposed closing of Chestnut St. and negative impact on deliveries, business access, etc.
8. Questions regarding the vacant dealer lots along El Camino Real, e.g., turn them into parking garages.
9. Concern that hired consultants don't fully understand the Menlo Park character (since they are from out of town).
10. Belief that the process has been "secretive."

Again, I don't necessarily share or endorse these viewpoints, but she feels ignored, so I felt it was important to communicate them.

I do have some personal comments as well:

1. My big shtick is making sure that the plan is undeniably bike friendly. I am a bit concerned about the lack of details regarding how bike friendly features will be implemented.
2. Given the methods used to solicit input, I am concerned that the viewpoint of harried and overstretched residents, e.g., parents, is somewhat underrepresented.
3. I also think we are missing a voice from what I would imagine to be a sizable population

of young persons, i.e., college students and recent grads. Having a "draw" for them would give the downtown additional vibrancy.

4. I \*do\* like the idea of a plaza, but clearly the concerns of local businesses need to be responded to (see #7 above)
5. I'd like some reassurance that our current trees will be protected or at least replanted.
6. I want to see the tops of the parking structures green and landscaped as a rooftop garden or park, maybe even with a cafe extension from a lower level restaurant.

I look forward to your response. I would be happy to communicate information to the merchant in question.

Sincerely,  
Kristin

**Rogers, Thomas H**

---

**From:** Couperus [couperusj@sbcglobal.net]  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 26, 2009 10:30 AM  
**To:** Nancy Couperus  
**Subject:** Menlo Park Downtown Plan  
**Attachments:** EmergingPlanAnalysis.doc

Attached is a "revised" description and analysis of the Emerging Plan with regard to Downtown -- as unveiled at the September 17th Final Community Workshop.

This is intended to replace the previous "Fact Sheet", which contained opinion and commentary in addition to facts and suggested that the project was a "fait accompli". The Emerging Plan is still subject to change.

Another important meeting -- In addition to the three meetings at which the Emerging Plan will be discussed, a public meeting on the Downtown Menlo Park Parking Study will be held on Wednesday, October 7th, at 7pm in the Menlo Park Presbyterian Social Hall, 700B Santa Cruz Avenue.

Noteworthy -- Although vacancy rates never remain static, recent newspaper accounts of neighboring downtown vacancies put Redwood City at the top of the list at 27% (S.F. Magazine), Palo Alto downtown at 14%, Mountain View between 7-8%, Los Altos at 5.9% and Menlo Park at 5% (according to the Los Altos Town Crier). Do we really want to follow Redwood City and Palo Alto's development patterns?

Nancy

# The "Emerging Plan" - An Analysis

With reference to the Downtown portion of the Plan  
(As unveiled on September 17th at the Final Community Workshop)

## SUMMARY

1. The underlying premise of the Downtown Plan is that surface plaza parking is not being utilized for its "highest and best use". Therefore, high-density infill development should be planned for.

Convenient surface parking, however, is critical to the success of retail and service businesses. Being able to access a store's front or back entrance easily has been important to patrons and to the businesses that serve them. Parking garages are least preferred by customers, as witnessed in any town that has both surface plaza parking and garages. The first spaces to fill up are the surface parking spaces.

The additional time required by customers to access surrounding businesses from parking garages has been well documented - proving that these facilities create inconvenience for their users and create an incentive for the shopper to do their shopping elsewhere. In addition, many female shoppers (who comprise the majority of service customers) harbor security fears in these structures, adding to the incentive to shop elsewhere.

2. The Plan proposes the replacement of at least 90% of the surface parking plazas on the Oak Grove side, replacing them with two parking garages - one behind Flegel's and one behind the post office - and a mixed-use building on the plaza between Crane and Chestnut.

On the Menlo Avenue side some surface parking would still be available, although greatly reduced with a loss of 109 spaces. Every plaza, except Plaza 8, would have a mixed-use or retail building on it. This would create more parking demand while at the same time reducing the surface parking area available.

The inclusion of this "mixed use" on public lands represents a re-zoning of these "P" zones.

3. **Specifics** - plaza by plaza

**Plaza 1** (Post Office Plaza): A parking structure is proposed over 80% of the plaza - two levels below grade and three levels above. One strip of surface parking would remain with 45 spaces.

**Plaza 2** (between Crane & Chestnut): A mixed-use building is proposed to cover the entire plaza, removing 95 surface parking spaces.

**Plaza 3** (behind Flegel's): A parking structure is proposed - 1.5 levels below grade, two levels above with town homes on top - to cover the entire plaza. A proposed "pocket plaza" would replace the remaining surface parking near the cleaners.

**Plaza 4** (Draeger's): A mixed-use building is proposed in this plaza, adjacent to Evelyn Street. It would reduce surface parking by 25 spaces and restrict access from Evelyn Street.

**Plaza 5** (in back of Posh Bagel): A mixed-use building is proposed in this plaza that would reduce surface parking by 25 spaces and remove parking immediately behind the buildings.

**Plaza 6** (behind Wells Fargo Bank): A "Covered Market" is proposed in this plaza. (This is an idea proposed by the consultants that would be similar to covered markets in major cities with separate vendor stalls that are permanently rented to selected vendors). This structure would border Chestnut Street, removing another 25 spaces of surface parking as well as the focal point provided by the heritage oak tree that anchors the current Sunday Farmers Market.

*The current Sunday Farmers Market should not be confused with this Covered Market.*

It is also proposed that Chestnut Street would be closed to vehicular traffic on the Menlo Avenue side to create a "Paseo". This would eliminate most of the on-street parking on this section of Chestnut.

Moreover, vehicle access to Plaza 6 would be compromised with the closure of Chestnut on this side, a further effect of which would be to impact necessary access by vendors to the Sunday Farmers Market.

*Loss of easy access, loss of space in Plaza 6, and the benefits of the focal point provided by the shade tree, would put the Sunday Farmers Market at risk in combination with the direct competition provided by a permanent Covered Market.*

**Plaza 7** (Trader Joe's): The proposed "Covered Market" would extend into the Trader Joe's parking plaza, reducing surface parking by 34 spaces and directly competing with Trader Joe's on a daily basis. The "paseo" on Chestnut would prevent vehicle access to Plaza 7 from Chestnut and Trader Joe's parking area.

*Again, this represents a conversion of public property to directly compete with existing businesses.*

**Plaza 8** (In back of Walgreen's): The only plaza with surface parking unchanged. However, this area is also designated as the location of a possible "boutique hotel."

4. The proposed widening of the sidewalks on Santa Cruz Avenue would eliminate diagonal parking. *This could also result in the removal of the median trees.* The proposed plan would remove 48 parking spaces on Santa Cruz Avenue.

5. The net gain and loss of parking in the plazas and along Santa Cruz Avenue is summarized in the following table:

**DOWNTOWN PARKING SPACES**

	Existing	Proposed	Net Gain (Loss)
<b>Plaza 1</b>	249	† 510	261
<b>Plaza 2</b>	95	0	(95)
<b>Plaza 3</b>	212	†† 370	158
<b>Plaza 4</b>	105	80	(25)
<b>Plaza 5</b>	150	125	(25)
<b>Plaza 6</b>	136	111	(25)
<b>Plaza 7</b>	94	60	(34)
<b>Plaza 8</b>	145	145	0
<b>††† On Street</b>	138	90	(48)
<b>Total</b>	1324	1491	167

- † 465 spaces in Parking Garage and 45 surface parking
- †† All spaces in Parking Garage and no surface parking
- ††† Parking spaces along Santa Cruz Avenue

6. The economic consultant stated that revenues for the General Fund would increase 4% as a result of the build out.

However, if major stores, such as Draeger's or Trader Joe's, were to leave Menlo Park because of the construction of new buildings and the loss of surface parking, the 4% increase would be eliminated and sales revenues from the remaining businesses would decrease.

The year-round nature of a Covered Market would render existing businesses non-viable. This Covered Market would be in addition to the approved 50,000 square foot grocery use on El Camino Real.

The economic consultant did not mention the impact on the current businesses from construction, a lengthy process (perhaps 18 months or longer) that could drive out businesses that depend on cash flow to operate. Patron loyalty could be affected when Downtown areas become inaccessible due to ongoing construction. New shopping patterns could occur, taking customers away from the existing businesses.

7. According to the consultant, 1500 more people would be added to Downtown under the proposed plan. That would add approximately 1,000 more cars to the downtown.

There was no discussion of the infrastructure that would be required to support this, such as schools that are currently at a maximum, police, fire, etc.

8. The plan proposes that the current two-story height limit on buildings in Downtown be changed to three-story. This change would result in turnover of properties for redevelopment - the secondary consequence of which would be the elimination of a number of small independent businesses that could not afford the higher rents.

9. Wherever mixed-use or retail buildings are constructed, not only do they remove essential surface parking, but their very occupancy increases demand over what it was before. Thus, they deliver a double whammy in terms of parking impact, unless underground parking is made a requirement for any new buildings.

10. The imposition of the Downtown Plan would alter the character of the Downtown, changing it to a big city rather than a small town ambiance.

## Rogers, Thomas H

---

**From:** Vincent Bressler [vincent@missionctrl.com]  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 26, 2009 3:42 PM  
**To:** Riggs, Henry  
**Cc:** Kadwany, John; Rogers, Thomas H; Rich Cline; Boyle, John C; Brandell, Cherise E; Heineck, Arlinda A  
**Subject:** Re: Specific Plan description & communication

John and Henry,

Clearly a lot of decisions remain, particularly about ECR. I expect that the planning commission will have a lot to say about what is ultimately done. During the last oversight committee meeting, I suggested a meeting structure that will facilitate public input during planning commission meetings. Thomas has the page that I created.

I believe that by opening up the PC meetings to the public as much as possible and having as many of meetings as we need, we can get through this process and give the city council something that they can vote for.

Vince

Henry Riggs wrote:

> John,  
>  
> You expose an ongoing gap in general understanding the project  
> schedule. As I understand it, the consultants have been focusing on  
> the visible impacts of a built out Specific Plan-in-progress, holding  
> many (previously discussed) related elements in background to be  
> fleshed out in the next several months. In other words, your issues  
> have not been glossed over, they are yet to be brought to the front of  
> the table. It's my opinion that there was nearly too much to follow  
> just in height and use issues - more charts to cover FAR tiers and  
> proposed fee rates would have been deadly to an inclusive public  
> workshop.  
>  
> Having said that, your points can be a reminder to the OOC and staff  
> to make sure the process does not fall short. In particular, we all  
> need to be involved in constructing these many "features" and I expect  
> we will contribute other specific policy and/or zoning ideas.  
>  
> I agree that the Almanac can be of assistance, and more importantly  
> our City website must keep citizens informed of the 21 month process:  
> remember the consultant is not even half way through. I will recommend  
> some sort of project outline be published so this is more understandable.  
>  
> Henry  
>  
> On Sep 26, 2009, at 1:20 PM, John Kadwany wrote:  
>  
>> Dear Vince and Henry-  
>>  
>> I'm writing about the pace of the transition to the Draft EIR process  
>> and the lack of clear communication of the Draft EIR basis. Like  
>> others attending Workshop #3, I was able to absorb only a few major  
>> features of the proposed Specific Plan. For example, I have a strong  
>> interest in parking but could only pick up a few of the details.  
>> Features I asked about, which I was told are to be included (e.g.  
>> decoupling of parking from residence purchase), are not shown on the  
>> posters. It's taken me a while to absorb just the downtown details,  
>> like the new station area, let alone the rest.  
>>  
>> The efficiently organized posters are dense and schematic. The

>> average person, even with decent color printouts, will find these  
>> challenging to process. There is no narrative, like an executive  
>> summary, which helps interpret key topics, such as the financing of  
>> new buildings. Even with readable graphs, you have to work hard to  
>> figure out the story being told.  
>> If you blow up the posters online they lose resolution and much  
>> becomes unreadable, e.g. the bike network.  
>>  
>> A more extensive approach would have been for the consultant to  
>> provide a tutorial in the basics to workshop participants, with ample  
>> supporting materials. Simply "offering" these posters with limited  
>> opportunity to understand and process the information may count as  
>> "outreach," but is incomplete communication. For those who didn't  
>> attend the workshop, the availability of the posters at the City web  
>> site is not a proactive method to promote public awareness and  
>> understanding. Most features haven't been explained in terms of  
>> function, benefits and costs. Nowhere is it  
>> stated:  
>> Here's a goal, here's how these features help achieve that goal. Or,  
>> Here's a constraint, here's why A and B go together.  
>>  
>> This lack of communication may create some people's sense they are  
>> not being listened to. A downtown clerk said to me, about the Santa  
>> Cruz Ave and new Station Area Plazas, "They obviously don't take  
>> public transportation" -- weekday bus routes appear to go right  
>> through each. Perhaps there's an obvious answer, I don't know, but I  
>> haven't heard that, and don't know where to point for explanation.  
>>  
>> Perhaps the Almanac will describe the Plan more completely. But the  
>> consultants, or somebody, could be providing more in terms of why  
>> various features make sense and what they are supposed to achieve.  
>> People don't understand these are options and how they might be used  
>> in City development strategies requiring more elaboration, funding,  
>> and approval over the years.  
>> SC Avenue strategy should better include an economic vision of the  
>> types of stores and lease expectations. I'm concerned that a plan  
>> involving cement and zoning is expected to fulfill economic goals  
>> driven as much or more by local lease rates. Our hardware store,  
>> e.g., relies on their landlord's largesse and a special use agreement  
>> for the whole space.  
>>  
>> Far less detail is provided for ECR than downtown, yet it is the  
>> urgent need, with problems of parking and traffic. I've suggested in  
>> my Workshop comments that more aggressive parking strategies (as in  
>> other  
>> communities)  
>> are possible for ECR residences, particularly on the southeast side.  
>> We should also consider more refined FAR standards for large  
>> buildings, as well as block standards to increase walkability around  
>> new projects. For example, a suggested 4+ story FAR I've seen is:  
>> 70%/35%/15% for floors 3-5. Such approaches may be necessary for good  
>> building design, and may also require aspects of a Form Based Code  
>> approach. Broad design issues, and the format of SP criteria, need to  
>> be discussed now, before the DEIR, because the amount and  
>> configuration of public space influences building and parking as key  
>> DEIR inputs. Once the EIR train gets going, it will anchor us to  
>> nominal choices and crowd out alternatives.  
>>  
>> Sincerely,  
>> John  
>>  
>> PS I'm writing to you as members of the OOC. Please raise these  
>> issues at the next meeting. Thanks very much. Thanks also to Staff  
>> and P&W for continued excellent progress, critical comments  
>> notwithstanding.  
>>

>> cc: Rich Cline, John Boyle, Cherise Brandell, Thomas Rogers, Arlinda  
>> Heineck  
>>  
>>  
>>  
>  
>  
>

## Rogers, Thomas H

---

**From:** Patti L Fry [pattilry@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 27, 2009 12:25 PM  
**To:** Rogers, Thomas H  
**Subject:** ECR/Downtown Specific Plan feedback

Thomas,

Having been out of country and missing the Workshop #3, I was quite disappointed and extremely frustrated by the lack of material available at this point in the visioning process. The materials online are unreadable - too small but when enlarged they are too blurry. There is no summary. There is no discussion of how certain elements came to be included or not, and why they were placed where they were. There are not multiple scenarios as has been frequently requested, and yet certain things are marked as "potential". The charts have no commentary to aid comprehension. I realize this is not your fault, but you can help the city address this problem. It is quite disappointing, particularly at the point when the community should be very clear on what the specific plan would be BEFORE the EIR and ZOA/GPA processes commence. All of the above is characteristic of a process that is not as friendly, open, inclusive as hoped, and certainly not in any way designed to build consensus. There is time to do this, but such a step is not part of what the process appears to be right now.

Because the questionnaire online is a pdf file that cannot be filled in and submitted electronically (geez, guys!!!), I am providing input the hard way by recreating the questions in part (*italics*). I fear that input from others will be missing because of the challenges obtaining and reading the material and providing input. We can do better.

### Public Space

1. *Adequate diversity of public spaces?* -- Not Really. Diversity should not be the primary goal. Usability and appropriateness of public spaces should be. The plazas seem too small. They could be of various sizes, but usable for benches, cafe seating, interaction, modest events, even play.
2. *Sidewalk options?* - Neither. I prefer closing off most of Santa Cruz, making it available for large plaza, walking, shopping. See below.
3. *Additional changes?* - The paseos seem narrow and the plazas very small. The goal should be usefulness, not just decoration. I'm unable to comment further because I can't read what's on the charts.

El Camino does need much wider sidewalks, setbacks of buildings from street. There must be a buffer from this highway; parking provides some of that and I think it must stay UNLESS there are major setbacks between the street and sidewalks where pedestrians will be.

### Building Character

4. *Appropriate character and massing*
  - a. *Downtown?* - Not Really. Need to set back buildings from street and upper floor needs set back more.
  - b. *El Camino Real?* - No. Buildings are too tall, too urban. Could have exception on height for senior housing and hotel only. Need to set back buildings from street and upper floors need set back.

In both areas, the examples look too urban and are too vertical with adequate setbacks or variation.

### Land Use Economics

6. *Height tradeoff for revenue and vibrancy?* - Vibrancy comes from the uses, not the height.

There are other ways to get revenue, including promoting uses such as retail. Certain amenities might be considered community investments and funded through taxes to preserve character if necessary.

#### Connectivity and Traffic

7. *Adequate enhancements to east-west pedestrian and bicycle connectivity?* - No. I don't see any improvements to bicycle connectivity anywhere. The pedestrian connectivity isn't obvious either.

8. *Increased travel time tradeoff for vibrancy?* Not of this magnitude (30% increase). More traffic congestion will diminish vibrancy.

9. *Parking distribution* - Doesn't make sense. The parking problems are most acute where the boutique hotel is placed, which would aggravate the problem even more, and the market obliterates key parking in that same area.

Parking near the church is at the opposite end of where needed. Note that townhome residents over parking near the church are unlikely to want to vacate their spaces in the evenings and weekends when the church would most need the space. Not a problem to me, but might make sharing impractical.

10. *Additions or changes* -

- Close off Santa Cruz, making Oak Grove and Menlo one-way streets with bike lanes. The bike lanes are sorely needed, and the concept of closing off downtowns and creating one-way streets has been highly successful and popular in European cities and American ones like Boulder, CO.
- Do not put a boutique hotel downtown, especially in the most congested area.
- The market should not be in the Trader Joe's parking lot - it will kill that fine store!
- If there were an indoor market, place it at the train station and include commuter standup breakfast and tapas-style food options. We just enjoyed a great one in Madrid near the Plaza Mayor.
- El Camino needs retail. The current Big Five shopping area should be primarily destination retail like furniture/lighting stores.
- Minimize general office that generates traffic, no revenue. Exception - small offices for local business people, nonprofits.
- Putting residential uses next to the train doesn't make sense to me. Transit-oriented development could be promoted a bit further away to shield residences from noise and air pollution associated with transit. Some suitable areas are not in the study area, but are well within walking distance of transit (even just another block away or opposite side of train tracks).
- The fiscal analysis needs to be very careful about mixing economic benefits (sales tax or TOT revenue) with impact fees that are related to increased costs
- The entire project needs to consider the potential ADDITIONAL allocation of housing units from ABAG/state based on increased development beyond current General Plan limits.

*Participation in Vision Plan and Specific Plan Processes* - I've participated in most of the sessions.

Patti Fry  
Menlo Park resident  
650-322-7054

September 28, 2009

## Comments on Short-Range and Long-Range Development of Menlo Park

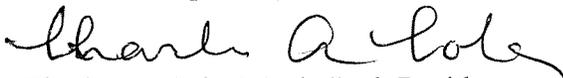
At the well-done El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan Workshop #3 held on September 24, 2009 I spoke from the point of view of a Menlo Park Traffic Commissioner from roughly 35 or so years ago, as well as a resident from 1964 on. Since those days, at least in my memory, little has changed in downtown Menlo Park and, beyond under-grounding of power lines and improved signaling, little on El Camino Real itself.

Certainly the development of the east side of El Camino has been effectively carried out (but with open spaces remaining to be filled), as has business and residential development beyond the boundaries of downtown, thanks to effective staffs in the Planning and Building Departments.

But today is today is today. After 40 years there is still time to review what has happened in surrounding cities—working south to Palo Alto, Mountain View, Los Altos, Sunnyvale, Cupertino, and even Los Gatos. Consider the architecture, facility usage, and parking facilities, above and below ground and time and cost for construction. Look at Stanford University and El Camino Real northward. The most important question of all, I think, is whether downtown Menlo Park is to remain Old Town, become New Town, or arrive at something in between. Another way is to ask whether downtown is to retain its “character” or be transformed into a “vibrant” space with vastly expanded and different usage. (Because parking needs are the kernel of the project, there may be no alternative: fix the Old Town or build the New Town.)

A principal person at Workshop #3, responding to my question during the viewing period, said no financial analysis has been completed. An important part of that analysis would be calculation of estimated opportunity costs for various components of the project. Off hand, at least five sets of opportunity costs could be estimated: (1) short-term costs for developers, (2) long-term costs for merchants (clearly the most difficult calculation of all because of so many unknowns and dependence on performance of so many outside players), (3) financial costs and returns to the City, (4) project management costs, and (5) visitor costs in time and effort to move about the town as well to measure, like (or not like), and use its “vibrant” space. A sixth opportunity cost would be the choice of parking garages dug from above the surface or dug with almost no breaking of the top surface (which would offer more possibilities for surface mini parks).

Large too-long-unfilled holes dug in the ground to support construction of subsurface parking garages are a problem here. Perhaps techniques used in sub-surface coal mining to avoid disturbing the top surface can be adapted to Menlo Park’s needs. Here again Menlo Park should look elsewhere to identify usable technology. C. C. Meyers in Sacramento might be one place to look for what can be done with time-sensitive innovation. Here again you calculate the opportunity costs: dig a deep long-lasting open hole or cut inward from below without disturbing the surface except at the entry point—and then tie that opportunity cost to others already calculated—especially merchant long-term gains or losses.



Charles A. Cole, Menlo Park Resident  
1120 Cascade Drive  
Menlo Park, CA 94025-6675  
Phone: 650 854 4190; Email: chascole@stanford.edu

Aug 20-09  
San Mateo, CA.

City of Menlo Park  
Planning Dept.

Mr. Rogers.

RECEIVED

SEP 07 2009

CITY OF MENLO PARK  
BUILDING

Having attended many meetings over the years on this proposal, that proposal.

The one before us, I will not support. The taking away of surface parking to build housing and multi story parking garages is not in the best interest of our merchants and property owners.

I would suggest working on the El Camino empty land which is ready for development, before they destroy the downtown.

(over please)

Do, people living in  
the general area, really  
want, bigger, taller, structures  
up + down Santa Cruz ave.

Do we need more  
Traffic, smoke, congestion,  
as you know, our side  
streets are tight, to add  
more Traffic.

all the above, The real  
reason, being more sales tax  
more property tax and a feel  
good City Council, which in  
turn awards larger <sup>Salaries</sup> ~~salaries~~  
pensions, overtime to keep it  
all under control. While the  
small merchants leave, and  
you hope the big boys move  
in to fill the empty spaces.  
as always  
John Chapple

**Rogers, Thomas H**

---

**From:** ag lee [aglarpc8@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, August 21, 2009 11:59 AM  
**To:** Rogers, Thomas H  
**Subject:** FW: Downtown parking observations & questions

*A friend who has been attending the Downtown community planning meetings suggested that I share my parking observations with you:*

On Menlo Avenue on weekdays, the street parking spaces along the "south" side are filled mostly with long-stay vehicles. Just a block from Santa Cruz Avenue shopping, this side of the street has prime parking space, not time-limited. Consequently, early-arriving downtown employees can park close to businesses--all day.

Sometimes I see a driver is wearing a Trader Joe's employee-shirt. Other less easily identified employees of other downtown businesses may also be using this on-street parking while at work.

In addition, on-street parking by downtown employees extends beyond Menlo Ave, at least to Live Oak. When spaces are taken by employees, neither shoppers nor residents' visitors can use those spaces.

Do city parking plans adequately accommodate both customers and employees? What is the current and future status of employee parking?

Employees are an important component of our downtown business success.

Aldora Lee  
Menlo Avenue  
Menlo Park, CA

---

Hotmail® is up to 70% faster. Now good news travels really fast. [Try it now.](#)

cc: CMgr  
Comm Dev

RECEIVED

SEP 15 2009

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE  
CITY OF MENLO PARK

September 12, 2009

City Council of Menlo Park

RE: Zoning Change for El Camino Real

Dear Members,

As owners of several properties in Menlo Park, including 820-824-826 Santa Cruz Ave., we would like to express our concern about the Zoning Change proposed by your staff.

A copy of the letter circulated titled "Preserve Downtown!!" (enclosed), we would like you to know that we are in full accord with the views expressed in the letter.

Please, do not change Menlo Park. Let's keep it as beautiful and convenient as it is now.

Sincerely,

  
Joan Asborno

  
George Asborno

RECEIVED

SEP 15 2009

CITY OF MENLO PARK  
BUILDING

## **PRESERVE DOWNTOWN !! - Open Letter to Menlo Park Residents and Businesses**

Are you aware that a planning process is underway to change the very character of Menlo Park - a change from the present village character to a big city ambience?

A zoning change is being proposed that would enable high-density development by allowing 3-story buildings in the Downtown area, and 4 and 5 story buildings along El Camino Real.

To support this extra density, the proponents of high-density development want to add more parking capacity by constructing multi-storied parking garages on the existing surface parking plazas. And, on the remaining surface plazas they propose building high-density mixed-use buildings (residential/retail, residential/office). Eliminating the convenient open surface parking, which provides easy access to stores, will impact shoppers and change the character of the downtown.

Experience in other communities has shown that customers prefer the ease of surface parking that brings them to the front or back door of a business. Experience has also shown that multi-story garages can increase walking distances to reach desired stores and increase traffic congestion on the streets that provide entrance to the structures.

The transition to more urban high rises will drive out smaller independent businesses that will be unable to afford the high rents that will need to be charged to pay for redeveloped properties. Inevitably, they will be replaced by national chains -- the only businesses that will be able to afford the higher rents. As "Hometown Peninsula" states: One-of-a-kind retail businesses and service contribute greatly to making the (Menlo Park) downtown unique.

The change in the building heights, the issues associated with the parking structures, and the loss of the existing plaza surface parking areas for community activities such as the Farmers Market would result in a drastic change in our friendly village character and push it towards the look and feel of a big city.

Who benefits from over-development? Obviously, the developers do, but not necessarily the residents or local businesses.

Look around at neighboring cities - Palo Alto and Redwood City - and decide if you want Menlo Park to be over-developed in the way that these two cities have been moving, as calls for mixed-use, high-density residential, over-sized buildings have been the order of the day.

Think about the quality of life that you as a resident now enjoy, and imagine how over-development in your Downtown area will affect your quality of life in the future if the development interests prevail.

If you too are concerned about this potential drastic change to the character of Menlo Park, please visit our website [www.preserveMPdowntown.org](http://www.preserveMPdowntown.org) to see what you can do about staying informed and making your voice heard.

And, if you can, attend the Final Community Workshop on Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup> -- 7 - 9 PM at 700B Santa Cruz Avenue (enter from rear parking plaza, behind Ace Hardware).

**Rogers, Thomas H**

---

**From:** Roger Burnell [rburnell@arnellent.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 17, 2009 4:53 AM  
**To:** Rogers, Thomas H  
**Subject:** STANFORD PARKING STRUCTURE

**Dear Thomas - thank you again for the valuable discussion yesterday.**

**Here, as promised, is a set of photos I prepared for the Los Altos Downtown Study. After conferring with Stanford, we had thought that Peter Walker Partners had designed this, and that Condon-Johnson had built it. However, I later learned that Watry designed it, and that C. Overaa did the construction.**

**By chance, I came across (via Google) a design that Watry did for our (Menlo Park) Plaza #3, incorporating much more urban design elements. The internet images are NOT marked with ANY DATE nor any reference to a study report, so I do not know what document it came from, nor when. Do you happen to know?**

**In any case, it does appear that you or someone (the church?) in Menlo already has been introduced to Watry, and by all measures, they are surely the "right" (proven) choice, or at least the most formidable candidate.**

**Regards,  
Roger Burnell**

=====



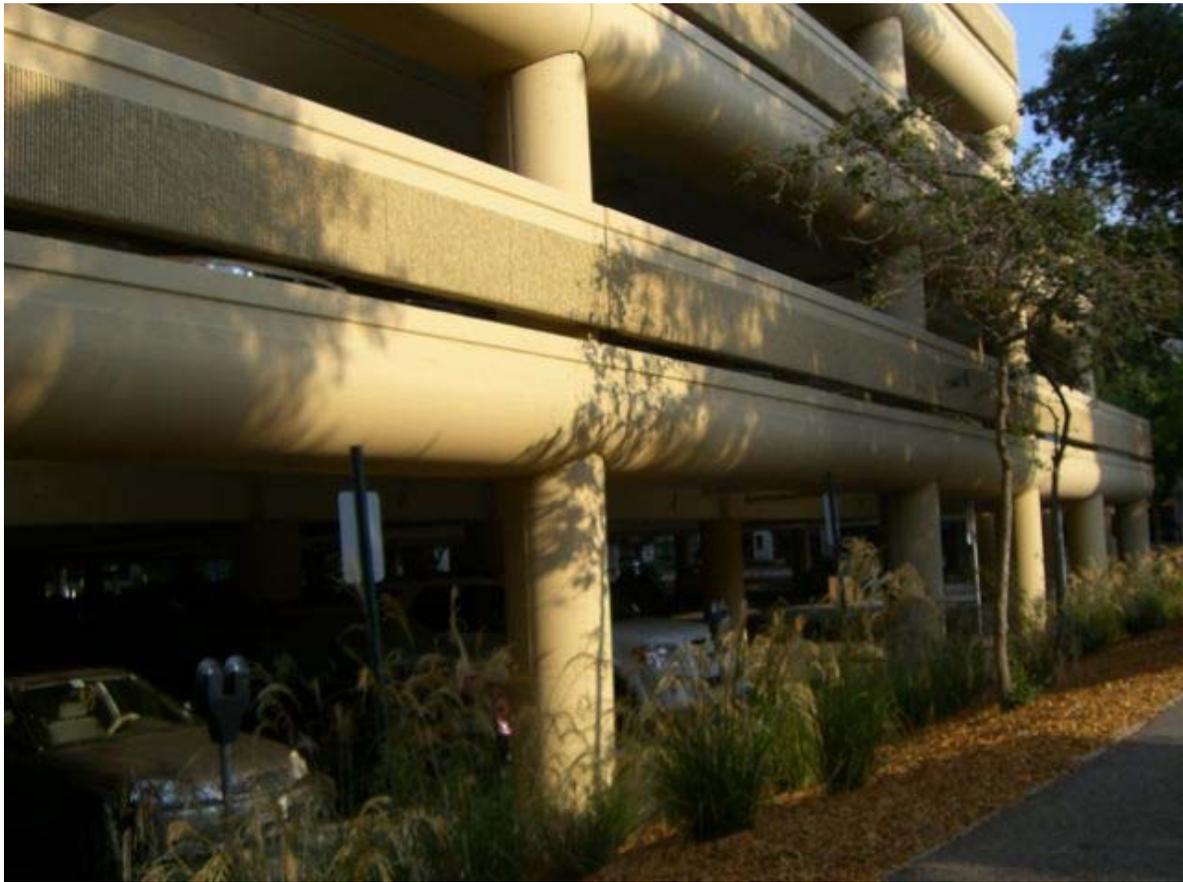
CIMG1315.JPG



CIMG1317.JPG



CIMG1319.JPG



CIMG1321.JPG



CIMG1322.JPG



CIMG1323.JPG



CIMG1325.JPG



CIMG1329.JPG

**Rogers, Thomas H**

---

**From:** Heineck, Arlinda A  
**Sent:** Friday, September 18, 2009 11:24 AM  
**To:** Rogers, Thomas H  
**Subject:** FW: Comment: El Camino Real/Downtown Menlo Park Specific Plan

Thomas: Not sure if you saw this one earlier. Linda

Arlinda Heineck  
Community Development Director  
701 Laurel Street  
Menlo Park, CA 94025  
(650) 330-6715  
aaheineck@menlopark.org

---

**From:** Gary Eggers [mailto:garygrin@pacbell.net]  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 10, 2009 7:25 PM  
**To:** \_CCIN  
**Subject:** Comment: El Camino Real/Downtown Menlo Park Specific Plan

Members of Council,

Approximately 3 years ago, Menlo Park approved zoning for professional office condominiums at 695 Oak Grove Avenue (on the periphery of Plaza 1), to allow medical/dental services to be provided. Practitioners moved to Menlo Park to provide services for people from MP, the North and South Bay as well as out of state regions.

We urge you to consider that patients should expect to receive expert professional care to enhance their quality of life. Some appointments are scheduled because patients seek relief from emotional and/or physical pain and limitations, some because patients come for well visit follow-up, which anyone would prefer to be the reason for their visit.

We urge all who review the plan to be presented on Sept 17<sup>th</sup>, to keep in mind the needs of patients and how important it is to include accessible parking areas so that these Menlo Park residents and visitors are well serviced. Preserve parking in Plaza 1 and in other plazas that currently provide parking for medical/dental patients and others who would benefit from having accessible parking close to the businesses visited.

Regards,

Gary G. Eggers, DDS, INC  
Jo Eggers, RN, BSN

## Rogers, Thomas H

---

**From:** Margaret Petitjean [MPetitjean@webtv.net]  
**Sent:** Friday, September 18, 2009 6:30 PM  
**To:** katham3@aol.com  
**Cc:** stophorns@webtv.net; info@mtc.ca.gov; Holtk@samtrans.com; Ron.Ries@fra.dot.gov; r9.info@epamail.epa.gov; senator.simitian@sen.ca.gov; rosejg@co.sanmateo.ca.us; mchurch@co.sanmateo.ca.us; Taylor, Charles W; McClure, William; Rojas, Glen; Steffens, Kent D; Rogers, Thomas H; spaethling@pbworld.com; \_Planning Commission; city\_council@city.palo-alto.ca.us; atherton@ci.atherton.ca.us  
**Subject:** Re: latest re horns from Caltrain rep

Dear Kathy: Re the Mercury article on horns I promised to send, this is still on BATN together with most of the letters and articles on this issue going back to about the year 2000.

It was at the end of 2000 that one of our M.P. transportation commissioners, Jon Scott, an attorney, saw a letter I had written and took up the cause together with a neighbor of his at Mills Court named Jon Katz, M.D. who was a neurologist at Stanford. He knew of the raise in blood pressure from the stress of these horn blasts which could lead to all kinds of health problems, including strokes.

We three went around one Saturday morning for just an hour or two and gathered signatures on a petition which went to the City (who lost it) and to the Joint Powers Board of Caltrain. Then about 50 people from several cities on the Peninsula showed up before the MP City Council and at a Joint Powers Board meeting to complain about horns.

There followed an attempt to lower the horn volume by taking the horns from the top to the bottom of the train, with a promise to place a shroud around them sending the noise forward along the tracks. (I believe 100' is the requirement.)

We had been working with our legislators and other officials in Washington and an amendment to the Swift RR Act after years of hearings from all over the country resulted in a commitment to an upper limit rule to the horn volume (which used to be measured at 140dB+-now down to 110) and the ability of cities to install supplementary safety measures at the crossings in order to create "quiet zones". Caltrain was against this since they had plans for grade separating all along the Peninsula and our city acted as though the railroad wasn't there and weren't willing to foot the bill and take on any liability.

My involvement goes back to 1962. I have letters from our legislators including one from Congressman Pete McCloskey, (who had been my employer, while he was practicing law in Palo Alto on Welch Road). He stated that this was a human rights issue. Unfortunately, our cities did not pursue our rights. Menlo Park failed to apply for available funding for and then refused, in writing, any grade separations to eliminate routine horn blasting.

For your purposes there doesn't seem much point in going back farther than the history listed on BATN or MSN Train Horn Complaints.

As things stand now, it is claimed that Caltrain may not survive without HSR funding to complete the grade separations and revert to electric from polluting diesel trains. If they otherwise do meet their 2025 plan (see on their website at [www.caltrain.com](http://www.caltrain.com)) we will still have many more trains, probably separated from vehicles, with or without high speed rail. This will require catenaries, cutting back illegally placed trees, etc. and adding rails.

Some of us believe that horns result in deaths. They paralyze the unprotected like "deer in headlights". Testimony was given by a 27 year old male walking on Alma to the Palo Alto Station from Menlo Park when a horn blast caused him to lose all muscle control. He couldn't move and thought he was going to have a heart attack. This has happened to people in cars. Even train passengers are wearing ear plugs and people told us that they were unlocking their seatbelts and car doors to be ready to jump out when trapped on the tracks which is happening often, especially at Ravenswood in Menlo Park.

As you know a Santa Clara Environmental Safety employee was trapped on the tracks at Whipple in Redwood City this week and was killed by an express train Traffic had stopped suddenly for a fire truck. One man in Menlo Park at Ravenswood had the gates come down and damage his car as an express raced by on the other track. At Ravenswood pedestrians, bicyclists, cars and buses dart out from every direction causing cars to slam on their brakes and trapping cars behind them on the tracks. Hence the need to separate the tracks from vehicles.

We need the statistics of how many express trains were involved in the deaths this year along the Caltrain Corridor. Most of them were pedestrians Even those ruled as suicides might have jumped out of the way if not frozen in fear or with shell-shock from the horn blasts.

Most people involved with H.A.L.T (Homeowners Against Loud Trains), which was started in the 70s, by Mr. Busby in MP, and the doctor and lawyer who circulated the petition later have left town.

Where were the city officials and lawyers when Caltrain kept increasing the trains and then added express trains racing through while warning that the horns would increase - all without environmental impact studies? Where are the lawyers who might file the biggest class action lawsuit ever on behalf of the injured neighbors of the railroad from the acoustic trauma of HORN BLASTS?

According to the years-old E.I.S of the Horn Rule there were over 2 million people "severely" affected. This was filed in the Federal Register acknowledging that the Rule requiring the routine horn blasting would be at the expense of the raiIside residents. Who is going to represent them in the name of "safety" to their persons, their very lives and their property? Who will be held accountable for such an insane rule that injures millions for the dubious benefit of a few?

A Public Utilities Commission

official said it was poor planning to put housing up against this heavy rail corridor. In another comment docket statement a Federal Railroad Administration official stated that the health of the raiIside residents was dependent upon the choices the cities make at the crossings. It is incredible that we have city officials and expensive consultants promoting more housing alongside the air and noise polluting tracks based upon a few comments of people or commissioners who don't have the experience of trackside existence.

A Stanford music professor with whom I spoke this week said he once was an expert witness in a case where a train engineer sued for loss of hearing from horns. Of course, train staff are supposed to wear hearing protection, but that is the least of it. He said he had written to someone in the subject Mercury article o horns but didn't get a reply. Unfortunately such blasts affect the whole nervous system.

I am interested in your efforts to lessen the latest onslaught of the assault of the horns after they reversed everything we had worked on for decades. However, they are not as loud as they once were but they are more frequent and just as nerve-wracking.

The engineers will always have the discretion on the sounding of the horns. They want electrification and grade seps. Until they get them they'll blow out our brains - legally! Without another Act of Congress this public health hazard will enlarge. This weighs heavily on the health care issue.

At present I am not able to delve into my old files due to vertigo which is one of the effects of the 48 years of acoustic trauma from the trains. If you need more old stuff or the meeting in order to pursue the noble cause of abating the horn noise let me know. In the meantime I hope to recover my equilibrium after the relocation of the horns. Good luck to everyone else who suffers.

Margaret Petitjean