



CONNECTMENLO

menlo park land use & mobility update

Menlo Park General Plan and M-2 Zoning Update General Plan Advisory Committee Meeting #5 Summary

General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) Meeting #5 was conducted on February 12, 2015 (6 – 8:30 pm) in the Oak Room of the Arrillaga Family Recreation Center at 700 Alma Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

GPAC MEMBERS PRESENT

Peter Ohtaki, City Council (Co-chair)
Harry Bims, At-Large
David Bohannon, At-Large
Vince Bressler, Planning Commission
James Cebrian, Parks and Recreation Commission
Kristin Duriseti, Environmental Quality Commission
Adina Levin, Transportation Commission
Roger Royse, At-Large
Katherine Strehl, Planning Commission
Michele Tate, Housing Commission
Matthew Zumstein, Bicycle Commission

CITY STAFF AND CONSULTANTS PRESENT

Justin Murphy, Assistant Community Development Director
Deanna Chow, Senior Planner
Leigh Prince, City Attorney's Office
Jessica Alba, Nelson Nygaard
Charlie Knox, PlaceWorks
Rosie Dudley, PlaceWorks
Yiu Kam, PlaceWorks

MEETING PURPOSE

The primary purposes of the meeting were to: present GPAC members with findings of the Existing Conditions Reports, with an emphasis on circulation; receive comments about issues relating to circulation in Menlo Park; present and receive feedback on the Preliminary Draft Preferred Alternative for land use; preview upcoming public engagement events; and consider recommendations to the City Council and Planning Commission.

PlaceWorks Principal Charlie Knox welcomed everyone and conducted the meeting presentation, which included the following review topics and issues for discussion:

- Project Recap
- Existing Conditions Reports (with a presentation from Jessica Alba of Nelson Nygaard on circulation issues)
- Draft Preferred Alternative

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- Preview of Workshop 3 & Open House 3
- Recommendation to City Council and Planning Commission

As the presentation progressed, Charlie Knox solicited feedback from the GPAC members and members of the public on the various topics of the meeting. See the project website for a copy of this presentation:
www.menlopark.org/connectmenlo

COMMENTS

Committee members and members of the public were asked to provide feedback on: the Existing Conditions Report, with an emphasis on circulation, and the Preliminary Draft Preferred Alternative for land use, and then make a recommendation to the City Council and Planning Commission.

GPAC COMMENTS

Were the studies for the El Camino Real Corridor separate from these Existing Conditions Reports for the General Plan and M-2 Zoning Update?

Consultant/City Response: These studies were separate, but will be rolled into the General Plan. Whatever the outcome of the El Camino Real corridor process, it will be included in the updated General Plan.

Since self-driving vehicles are likely to completely change how roads operate, it is important for the General Plan to consider them.

Consultant Response: The General Plan will account for a number of alternative modes as part of its multimodal goals and policies, including walking, transit, bicycling, and self-driving vehicles. There are other technologies, as well, that will influence transportation. For example, improved electric bikes that provide acceleration assistance will make bicycles a more viable transportation option in hilly areas.

Will the roadway categorization influence the surrounding zoning designations?

Consultant Response: Usually it is the opposite, with the surrounding zoning designations influencing the choice of roadway categorization. Zoning changes are occurring as part of the General Plan Update, and this will inform the eventual roadway typologies.

Are there statistics for corridors similar to those in Menlo Park, for which 80 percent of the traffic is pass-through? Given that Willow serves as a collector for the Dumbarton Bridge, how can Menlo Park affect the 80 percent of pass-through traffic? Are there strategies to alter travel paths, including potentially working with neighboring cities? Menlo Park could look into time-based restrictions or time-based bridge tolling to influence behavior.

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Consultant Response: Regional collaboration will be essential to addressing traffic issues in the long term.

In conventional development, cut-through traffic was prevented through creation of cul-de-sacs and other non-connecting street layouts that help funnel traffic on to collectors and arterials; however, this approach results in low levels of pedestrian, bicycle and transit connectivity. Additionally, new mapping apps are allowing people to find cut-through routes more easily. The General Plan should consider these issues and find ways, such as traffic calming, to discourage cut-through traffic without resorting to low-connectivity street patterns.

Consultant / City Response: Large city blocks will be divided into smaller blocks to allow pedestrian connections, and also provide access for bicycles and potentially cars as well. The General Plan will seek to discourage cut-through traffic, but there are certain locations within the M-2 Area where it would be appropriate to disperse traffic. Improved street designs can discourage cut-through traffic and/or speeding.

Level-of-Service (LOS) has previously been the primary metric of transportation planning, but there are now other metrics that are considered, such as total Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) or mode-share goals. The General Plan should consider and recommend other key metrics instead of, or in addition to, LOS.

Consultant Response: A single metric will not be sufficient. It will be necessary for the City to consider how it is performing in comparison to the region using metrics that are context-sensitive. For instance, expected VMT values may be different in different areas. A comprehensive approach that considers greenhouse gas emissions, travel time, and mode split among other metrics will be more instructive than simply evaluating travel time at a particular intersection. Vehicle ownership is another potentially instructive metric that is connected to a sense of place and levels of parking provision; for instance, near Santa Cruz Avenue, people are less likely to need a car. Another important factor to consider is preventing parking from spilling over into residential neighborhoods.

Speed limits along roadways have historically been set based on how fast cars are already traveling, as opposed to what level of speed is safe or best for quality of life along the street. The General Plan should set as a goal creating streets that are designed to encourage vehicles to travel at an appropriate speed.

Consultant Response: State of California guidance is to continue setting speed limits based on roadway performance. Speed limits also depend on how many vehicles the roadway is expected to accommodate. Changing the design of streets will not necessarily permit new speed limits until vehicles are actually traveling at a slower speed. Nevertheless, it will be important to consider going forward how streets can be designed to encourage their desired function.

Certain streets are grandfathered into Menlo Park's design standards and do not include sidewalks, and the residents in those areas desire to keep the current street designs. Given that zoning drives the classification of roadways, how would these roadways be categorized and could these street types be preserved with a zoning overlay? What will it mean that the General Plan gives a street a particular designation? Traditionally, such designations are tied to the surrounding zoning and the layout of the street, including landscaping.

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Consultant Response: Zoning categories would be specific enough to address specific streets and preserve the character of individual neighborhoods.

The General Plan should consider people-mover systems, their costs, and the funding mechanisms to understand what are realistic options.

Consultant Response: SkyTrain is an example of a people-mover style transit system that is instructive for considering potential challenges. It is important that the General Plan be realistic in considering what types of infrastructure are feasible during its period of applicability, such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

What companies are currently using shuttles to transport employees to Menlo Park? Currently, these shuttles are driving into parking lots to pick up passengers.

Consultant Response: Menlo College, Facebook, and Stanford are among those that provide shuttles that pass through Menlo Park.

Remove the sign for Dumbarton Bridge/Highway 84 at the Willow Road exit on Hwy 101 so traffic is not encouraged to use Willow to get to the bridge.

City Response: The signage will be reviewed during the Hwy 101 / Willow interchange process.

How can Menlo Park address the issue that it has relatively little influence over larger regional roads and highways that are under the jurisdiction of Caltrans? Additionally, the decisions of other jurisdictions can influence how roadways in Menlo Park are used. The goals and policies section of the General Plan should include a section about regional transportation that includes ideas both internal and external to Menlo Park, such as negotiation with neighboring cities and specific options.

Consultant Response: Spillover traffic is an issue that Menlo Park will have to address through regional collaboration. Changing commute patterns will influence traffic and transportation as subsequent generations respond differently to driving and the use of single-occupancy vehicles. New technologies and applications can help change the balance of different modes and encourage shorter trips. Additionally, improving freeway access and performance can help prevent regional cut-through traffic, since drivers use Menlo Park roadways to avoid freeways. These will be addressed in the goals, policies, and programs.

The following suggestions were noted but did not lead to a response:

- Update what transportation impact fees can be used so roadways are improved overall, not just at intersections due to Level of Service.
- A means to increase multimodal transportation along major arterials is to post live travel time signage showing how long driving to certain destinations will take, thereby encouraging people to use alternative modes of travel. Retail along Willow Road may be challenging, and the idea would need to be tested to determine whether retail should be located there or focused elsewhere.

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- A parallel route to Willow Road, as well as new open spaces, including a dog park, should be considered.
- Pursue activating the Dumbarton Rail if housing is approved.
- Programs like the Safe Routes to School should be considered not just for students going to school, but for ensuring safe routes to other destinations as well, including neighborhood-serving services and retail, including grocery stores and community centers.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Cut-through traffic problems are currently particularly pronounced in Belle Haven, and population density will play an important role. Belle Haven residents feel these issues are not currently receiving enough attention. Residents feel that the City needs to shift how it prioritizes projects to see results, especially where fatalities have occurred.

City Response: Projects that will be funded within the next 18 months will begin to address these issues. The City recognizes that improvements to Chilco Street are a priority. The City has \$50,000 to initiate a new process of planning for this roadway from a fee that was paid very recently. The City recognizes that a southwest connection and bike lane are important; however, it has lacked the resources until recently to work on the design. Other roadway projects typically operate on a five-year capital improvement program, and projects have to be designed and approved, which can be a long process. Projects currently underway include improvements to the Willow/US 101 interchange, as well as the Willow Road and Sand Hill Road signal interconnect projects to improve flow.

What is the City's response to an anticipated 6,000 new jobs in relation to housing? There is need for a jobs/housing balance.

Consultant/City Response: The City is addressing employment and housing needs through the Guiding Principles, Goals and Policies, and the preferred land use alternative. In addition, there are currently approximately 700 units in the pipeline.

Fergus O'Shea of Facebook makes an announcement: Facebook has purchased the Prologis property and would like to build 2,000 new housing units on the Prologis site (similar to what was shown in Alternative 2) and 1,500 units of housing for its interns on the existing Facebook East campus. A portion of the housing built on the Prologis site is intended to meet the below market-rate unit requirements. Facebook will consider what location and mix of housing and retail makes sense. Together with the units proposed in the Preliminary Draft Preferred Alternative, Menlo Park could have 4,500 new housing units.

Will some or all of the residential units built by Facebook be limited to Facebook employees? Will they be deed restricted? What will the mix of unit types be?

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Facebook Response: Housing at Facebook's East campus would be limited to Facebook employees. Facebook is not far enough along in the process to know what the exact mix of the other housing types would be on the Prologis site.

Bayfront Expressway is currently difficult to cross, and more than one solution is needed to address this issue.

Consultant Response: A tunnel under Bayfront Expressway will be opening in six weeks. Additional pedestrian infrastructure on Willow Road will be both needed and more likely to occur if it becomes a mixed-use corridor. It will be important to carefully design these crossings, with an emphasis on pedestrian visibility.

Impacts from additional housing in the M-2 and Belle Haven areas, including increased school enrollment, increased water use, and the capacity of Willow Road, need to be analyzed.

Consultant Response: These various issues will be taken into consideration as the General Plan and M-2 Area Zoning Update proceeds in parallel with the Urban Water Management Plan Update, which represents the City's planning effort for water use.

As these plans are implemented, it will be important to consider impacts and potential complications from factors such as the existing train tracks, potential Native American sites, other cultural resources, and flood risks. How will these be mitigated?

Facebook: Facebook is aware of these potential factors and has retained an archaeologist. Facebook is also considering designs for a potential levee and will conduct studies regarding the funding of its construction and is coordinating with the ongoing SAFER Bay effort.

The property of owner of parcels on Willow Road at the intersection of Newbridge Street makes a request: Consider allowing these parcels to be mixed-use so the sites can include a grocery store and/or other retail with housing above.

Consultant/GPAC Response: The GPAC agreed to this request.

The following suggestions were made but did not generate a verbal response:

- Facebook's proposal addresses the creation of the live/work/play environment that has been discussed at prior meetings. It locates housing near retail and jobs, and includes affordable housing so that people working in new retail will be able to live in the area. Ideally, the retail close to Willow Road will capture some of the pass-through traffic and Belle Haven residents will have good access to walkable commercial centers and public gathering places. Belle Haven needs more housing and this proposal addresses that. The Preliminary Draft Preferred Alternative provides retail close to Belle Haven, improves access, and builds on existing retail and neighborhood gathering spot at Hamilton and Willow Road.
- Currently it takes 45 minutes to an hour to get through the willow corridor due to traffic. With so many new housing units, there isn't a guarantee that residents would be mostly walking. It will be necessary to further study impacts on traffic and impacts on schools, city council & planning commission recommendations

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The GPAC recommends the Draft Preferred Alternative based on the input of the community and the GPAC members, with the following changes¹:

- Incorporate the land uses announced by Facebook.
- Change parcels at Willow Road and Newbridge Street to allow mixed-use.

¹ In addition to the changes listed, some other graphic refinements were made to the map for clarity purposes, such as removal of the red ground-floor retail areas on mixed-use sites, since mixed-use denotes retail is allowed.