



Planning for Menlo's Future

Spring/Summer 2015

What is the General Plan?

Think of the General Plan as a road map for planning the physical characteristics of our community's future development. It's a legal document required by the State of California for all cities and counties. It charts a course for where homes, businesses, roads, parks and open space will be in the future.

A General Plan has a number of required chapters called Elements, which focus on specific topics including Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety. They may be updated all at once, or by Element. The City is focused on the Land Use and Circulation Elements since the other Elements have recently been updated. The General Plan update process is also known as ConnectMenlo. Community members helped draft Guiding Principles that guide the General Plan goals, policies, and programs. These have community-wide application and address topics such as quality of life, jobs and economy, protection of neighborhood character, resource preservation, and circulation and mobility. They were reviewed by the General Plan Advisory Committee, Planning Commission and accepted by the City Council.



What is the M2 Area?

The M-2 Area is one of the zoning districts in the city that primarily allows for industrial land uses. The "M" refers to manufacturing, which once was the main activity in the area. The M-2 Area is generally bounded by Bayfront Expressway, the Dumbarton Railroad right-of-way, Marsh Road, and the East Palo Alto border. The zoning rules for the area are viewed as out of date, since they do not adequately respond to the types of uses that are in now in demand. The City Council established the M-2 Area as the focus of the ConnectMenlo General Plan Update because the area of the city has the potential for undergoing the most amount of change. Old industrial uses are no longer as popular and the demand for new land uses in this area is high. Land use changes in the residential neighborhoods of Menlo Park are not proposed.



How will roadway improvements, bike and pedestrian improvements, and transit be addressed?

The ConnectMenlo process is looking at citywide circulation improvements and will include goals, policies and programs to improve pedestrian/ bike facilities, transit service, parking programs, and address roadway congestion. The land use planning for the M-2 Area is taking the City's existing conditions into consideration and suggesting a mix of land uses close to each other and potential circulation improvements to create a live/work/play environment. As the process continues, these programs will be developed. Drafts will be presented to the community, the General Plan Advisory Committee, the Transportation, Bicycle, and Planning Commissions and Council, and then they will be finalized in the General Plan Update, anticipated to be reviewed by Council in July, 2016.

How do you move through the City of Menlo Park? The Circulation Element plans for how we walk, bike, drive and use public transportation to get to the places we want to go.



What land use changes are being considered?

Based on extensive community input, several scenarios, or "alternatives," for future land use have been created, ranging from keeping in place the level of development allowed under the current General Plan to a "maximum potential development" alternative that would allow additional office, life science, commercial services and residential uses in the M-2 Area to create a live/work/play environment. With the potential for new development, traffic and other environmental impacts on the community will need to be evaluated, and how new development will provide amenities desired by the community, such as transit, biking and walking improvements, and a larger grocery store and other new shopping and restaurant options will be considered as part of the ConnectMenlo process.

The maximum potential development scenario has been refined multiple times by the community, GPAC, Planning Commission and City Council at a series of public meetings over the past six months.

What is going to be done to solve the existing traffic congestion on Willow Road?



Most traffic on Willow Road is caused by regional commuting, connecting motorists between the East Bay, US 101 and surrounding cities. The City is working on a number of projects to help alleviate some of the congestion including adding a 3rd right-turn lane from Willow Road to Bayfront Expressway (towards Dumbarton Bridge) and adding a 3rd through-lane on Willow Road at Newbridge Street headed towards US 101 North. The City will also improve signal coordination on Willow Road between Bayfront Expressway and Middlefield Road through the County's SignalConnect project. We are also working with Caltrans on the design of the US 101/Willow interchange, which will add sidewalks, bike lanes, and eliminate the short merge areas that cause traffic congestion on Willow and the freeway.

How is ConnectMenlo different than the Belle Haven Visioning Process?

Belle Haven community members participated in a recent visioning effort led by the City of Menlo Park to identify neighborhood priorities, values, assets, and resources. This process engaged residents and stakeholders in identifying the highest-priority services and programs for the Belle Haven community and creating an action plan.

The ConnectMenlo process builds off of the Belle Haven Visioning Process and incorporates the ideas and requests generated during the visioning process into the list of "community amenities" that are being considered in the ConnectMenlo project to be tied to any new development in the M-2 Area.

What is the General Plan Advisory Committee?

The role of the General Plan Advisory Committee or, GPAC, is to help guide the ConnectMenlo process and serve as ambassadors to the community and communicate information about ConnectMenlo to other Menlo Park community members. The Committee is comprised of 13 members appointed by the City Council: two City Council members; three Menlo Park community members; and one member from each of the following six City Commissions: Bicycle, Environmental Quality, Housing, Parks and Recreation, Planning, and Transportation.

Members include:

Harry Bims, At-Large
David Bohannon II, At Large
Vince Bressler, At Large
Heidi Butz, At Large
James Cebrian, Parks & Recreation Commission
Kristin Duriseti, Environmental Quality Commission
Adina Levin, Transportation Commission
Ray Mueller City Council
Peter Ohtaki, City Council
Roger Royse, At Large
Katherine Strehl, Planning Commission
Michele Tate, Housing Commission
Matthew Zumstein, Bicycle Commission

Key Milestones:

Spring 2015 – Complete Vision

Fall 2015 – Complete Draft Elements

Summer 2016 – Adopt Update

What's Next?



The City of Menlo Park will be issuing a Notice of Preparation, or "NOP". This marks the beginning of the environmental review process. The proposed alternatives to our future development will be examined for its potential impact on our community. The NOP will give the public an opportunity to suggest what types of environmental impacts should be explored. This includes things like traffic, air quality, community character and noise. The NOP comment review period is tentatively scheduled for mid-June to mid-July 2015. Once the comment period for the NOP is closed, the consultant team will move forward with the preparation of the Environmental Impact Report or EIR. This document will also be available for public review and will be submitted along with the General Plan Update for Planning Commission and City Council review and adoption. Check our website for information about additional meetings and presentations over the summer.



The Plan's Guiding Principles

The Community helped the City identify a set of nine guiding principles to develop the General Plan Update. These reflect our community values and priorities for our future growth and development!

Stay informed!

Visit our project website:
www.MenloPark.org/ConnectMenlo

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