

**Community Development
Department**

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**El Camino Real Corridor Plan
Citizens Advisory Group**

Kevin Bondonno (Chair)
Marc Manuel (Vice Chair)
Roger Buckhout
Erin Callaghan
Stacy Huisman
Brian Jaffe
Stephanie Kolkka
Alma Montalvo
Elliot Rivas
Michael Smith

**October 04, 2017
Meeting Summary**

**7:00PM
City Council Chambers**

PRESENT: Chair Bondonno, Members Buckhout, Huisman, Jaffe, Montalvo, Rivas, Smith, Callaghan

ABSENT: Vice Chair Manuel, Kolkka

STAFF: Planning Manager Steven Turner; Lindy Chan; Diana O'Dell; Apollo Rojas

GUESTS: Sophie Martin, Dyett & Bhatia Consultant

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS: None

INTRODUCTIONS:

Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) member roll call. Introduction of new CAG member, Michael Smith, who replaced former member Muhammad Safdari.

PRESENTATION - Lindy Chan & Sophie Martin

Lindy Chan gave a presentation providing an overview of the El Camino Real Corridor Plan study process. Staff provided background on the phasing of the plan and outreach efforts, which included two community workshops, stakeholder interviews, two online surveys, door-to-door interviews with businesses, and six CAG meetings.

The structure of the plan is divided into five major sections: Mobility, Economic Vitality, Housing, Place-Making, and Implementation. The goal of the meeting was to obtain feedback on each section of the draft policy for Planning Commission consideration. (See [presentation](#)).

CAG DISCUSSION:

Presentation by Sophie Martin covered a section-by-section overview of the draft plan with breaks for CAG discussion on each section.

MOBILITY

Some felt the hierarchy should emphasize mobility and efficiency as the main objective. The plan is laid out in a way that makes all sections equal, where mobility may need more emphasis. When looking at tradeoffs between other topics, the plan should prioritize mobility because El Camino is a thoroughfare/corridor. Starting and stopping along El Camino is frustrating so it would be an important short-term step to involve Caltrans to implement signal timing. CAG encouraged staff to be flexible and try to implement trial-and-error techniques with the corridor where possible but to be mindful of the limitations of working with Caltrans on a State highway.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

The plan could do a better job illustrating what an “activity center” would look like to the public. Specific examples could be plazas, fountains, benches, places to walk around, and public seating. An activity center should be a community benefit that everybody can enjoy. Consider setbacks and orientation of buildings in relation to the activity centers since people may not want to sit at a café along busy El Camino. If you are removing on-street parking, then clarify how side streets will be effected. Ensure that side street businesses or on-street parking does overflow into the adjacent neighborhoods. Each activity center should be unique and celebrated. Activity centers could be a place where the plan can utilize trial-and-error.

Plan does not go into specifics because it would require block-by-block analysis and each activity center could be unique. Clustering of retail business supports existing businesses. There are trade-offs with creating a place people want to go versus creating a place too popular it may displace people. There are current informal parking agreements all along El Camino and the plan provides an opportunity to formalize these parking agreements to address parking concerns. Removing parking, replacing it off-site, and encourage loading/rideshare on the side streets are some of the strategies to offset the removal of on-street parking. Staff would further analyze the existing layout of side streets to determine how it could work.

HOUSING

On-site affordable housing is a priority (to the extent legally possible). There should be proper incentives to create affordable housing on-site instead of paying into a fund which may not result in immediate housing. Highest density makes most sense nearest to the transit center and activity centers. Childcare and affordable housing go hand-in-hand. Activity centers and housing would be a good mix. If you add retail to support the housing, then you encourage people to get out of their cars.

PLACE-MAKING

Love the concept of planting more trees and making El Camino more attractive. Keep in mind ADA compliance when designing the streetscape. Beautification is important for creating a sense of place. The CAG had a previous meeting with a flipchart that prioritized goals, which had aesthetics integrated into all aspects of the plan (mobility, housing, etc.). Aesthetics are an important part of the plan. Branding and wayfinding have been improved Downtown, so the plan should keep the same high quality standards and goals with El Camino. Activity centers can be named to help create identity and a buzz. Happy to see a public art component in the plan. CAG would like to see sculptures and murals provided by local artists to celebrate our local culture and history. Plan should make the most of unused spaces and it would be a good idea to remove fencing from Sequoia High School and better utilize this area for public open space.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation section does not have a specific year attached to it in order to keep flexible deadlines as it is unclear what specific studies are required for each implementation item. The plan itself would have a 10-20 year timeline. Short-term projects would typically be the most feasible and items that do not require the help of outside agencies. These can be items for which the city already has funding. (Ex. City has a grant from Caltrans for streetscape designs on a small segment of the corridor). The implementation timelines are flexible and could be completed earlier depending on the level of importance placed by the City Council or staff.

The first two years would have most impact and keep momentum of the plan going. Since our priority is mobility then any mid-term mobility items should be moved to short-term. Adjusting signal placement and signal timing are welcomed to the short term list. Add sidewalk washing to short-term list. The end vision of the plan should always be kept in mind when approving any development along the corridor.

Final Thoughts

We are proud of this plan, but the plan has to be approved outside of this room. CAG should remain involved in the process of selling the plan to the public and decision-makers and cannot allow the plan to be mischaracterized. It is important to communicate the values and vision of the plan. Recommend emphasizing the short-term projects that are easy to implement to get the most bang for our buck.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Matthew Self – It is a really solid plan. The vision is clear and ties back to the vision, which is important on selling the plan. Clearly stating the values is critical. I agree that mobility is the top priority but El Camino Real should be considered a destination as well as a thoroughfare. There a number of current housing projects being reviewed by the City, which will add new residents to the corridor. We want to prioritize moving people through the corridor. Out of all the things that are in the streetscape, parking is the least effective at moving people, but I feel that point did not come through in the plan. The plan should mention more about safety. There is evidence that adding bike lanes would reduce car accidents since people are more alert and move slower. I walk on El Camino occasionally and it is not pleasant or safe. There is going to be a lot of change one way or the other: new residents, new developments, and changes in retail patterns. We can try to ratchet down and be scared of change or we can embrace change and embrace a vision of where we end up and creating a plan to get us there.

Gita Dev – This has been an extremely successful committee. This plan is more coherent than most other plans I have read for El Camino Real. If we plan for the cars, then we will get cars. If we plan for pedestrians, then we will get pedestrians. If we plan for bicycles, then we will get bicycles. It is not enough to say mobility is critical – the plan should put in place a vision of how we will achieve this and embraces change. Zoning and parking are important elements in how we plan for mobility. There are housing developments in Berkeley where there is no parking, but there are car share services included in the rent. We need a vision where everyone uses shared parking. Daytime parking for commercial and nighttime parking for residential. Shared parking is very efficient because each parking space is expensive and more space is taken to park a car than to house a person, so we need to use that efficiently. Lower miles per hour does not necessarily mean lower throughput. Slower speeds make for a better pedestrian experience. In Mountain View, there is a focus on incentive zoning to allow more open space. Not every business is going to be able to pay the current expensive rents so the City should find incentives to allow for community based activities and non-profits.

Adrian Brandt – Plan does look really good. Menlo Park thought it was worth fighting for trees. The transformation of El Camino in Menlo Park has been amazing and the trees look beautiful. We should accelerate tree planting ASAP because they take time to grow. Caution against quick solutions that are not representative of the final plan as they might not be as successful and will hurt the adoption of the plan. The crosswalk at Winklebeck and El Camino makes no sense – remove it. We have to be courageous about parking elimination. Most businesses have 1-2 parking spaces on-street with only 1-hour parking. If a business is going to die based on two parking spaces, then we should question if that business is viable. Weigh the greater community benefits of walkability and livability with parking. Activity centers should be anchored by plazas. There is a direct tension with high traffic speeds and our goal to be a livable, walkable corridor. High speed traffic does not coexist with activity centers. Traffic can be slow and maintain volume. I would like to see the plan accelerate some of the medium and long term timelines. Let's move it along.

John Spotorno – Protected bike lanes are not beneficial if you cannot get to them. Intersections leading from the neighborhoods to El Camino are dangerous. I know that this stretches beyond the plan, but it would be important to analyze. There may be some new State legislation recently passed that could help some of the housing elements on El Camino.

Jimmy Hedges – Centennial Neighborhood Association chair – Was hoping for two lanes of vehicle traffic each way with an additional lane for transit. This could be useful because we are introducing more residential units on El Camino. Work has been done has been great, but it has not gone the direction I have anticipated. The changes in zoning will be challenged by people with lots of money and property. Trees are nice, but I hope we use recycled water. Do not know where the funding for the plan will be coming from as changing miles of road is very expensive.

Rick Hunter – Thank you for spending so much time on this on behalf of everyone in Redwood City. A lot of this plan is long term. How much was the future of automobile taken into consideration – autonomous/shared vehicles? Some experts say that peak automobile ownership will occur in three years and then ownership in this country will go down. If this plan is supposed to take place over the next 20 years, then it should take the future of cars into consideration.

Alexander Key – I am an architect and did some work in Calgary, which has an interesting zoning code with that allows for flexibility in development standards by providing incentives. A combination of standards add up to an equivalent of FAR (Floor Area Ratio), which provides more flexibility to adding bulk and height. It is a good system because certain sites are more unique or appropriate for height and it provides the developer with some flexibility. People of my generation are probably not well represented at these meetings, but there is a ton of pressure to find housing. Study last year from Berkeley said building affordable housing was twice as much effective at reducing displacement as other methods. I think housing is an element to creating a dense walkable city with an intimate sense of scale. Expecting third child!

Nick Athens– I like the plan, but if the reason for the plan is to get people to walk then connect the area to Downtown. The whole community could be walking by making the side streets walkable. Bend, Oregon has roundabouts that are safe with parks and fountains in the center. There are no stoppages and fewer accidents. Would this be feasible for Redwood City on El Camino Real?

- Public Comment Closed -

NEXT STEPS:

Planning Commission - November 7, 2017 (*tentative*).

City Council – December 4, 2017 (*tentative*).

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned, officially concluding the Citizens Advisory Group.