

Summary of El Camino Real Precise Plan Meetings

Current Conditions: Sept. 18, 2013 (EPC) & Oct. 15, 2013 (City Council)

These meetings covered issues, opportunities and current conditions of the ECR Plan area. Major comments and direction out of these meetings included:

Development Character

- The ECR Plan should clearly define “key locations.”
- The ECR Plan should support neighborhood-accessible goods and services.
- Activity centers should be located at major cross-streets, have existing retail and should build on existing assets, such as strong tenants or good transit accessibility.

Transportation

- Development should optimize transit usage and TDM requirements.
- Provide innovative parking strategies.
- Street parking is important for businesses and buffers pedestrians.
- El Camino Real is difficult to navigate as a pedestrian, especially accessing destinations on other sides of the corridor. Sidewalks need to be comfortable and wide.
- El Camino Real is not a safe place for bicyclists, but many use it anyway.

Other issues

- Local businesses have challenges, including finding affordable space and getting through the permitting process.
- Public benefits should be significant, certain and serve a large population.
- Land use regulations should be flexible to support viable development.

Focused Strategy: Jan. 22, 2014 (EPC) & Feb. 4, 2014 (City Council)

These meetings included a discussion of the land use and transportation strategy for the ECR Plan. There was also review and summary of the Public Workshop, held on January 11, 2014.

- The major direction provided at these meetings was the endorsement of the Focused Strategy, including:
 - Village Centers (areas of higher intensity, more commercial activity, and a higher level of investment in pedestrian improvements)
 - Neighborhood Corners (areas for small commercial services accessible to neighborhoods and a higher level of pedestrian improvements)
 - Corridor Areas (areas for mix of land uses and moderate pedestrian improvements)
- Include different levels of allowed FAR, with increasing requirements for public benefits.
- Include a range of special standards to help revitalize small parcels.
- Prioritize bicycle improvements along Latham Street, but consider ways to make improvements to El Camino Real more viable over time.
- Need for uniformly good sidewalks, safer crossings, and improved access to the corridor from surrounding neighborhoods.
- Concern about car-oriented uses (such as drive-throughs and gas stations) along the corridor, especially near downtown and activity centers.
- Use caution in implementing reduced standards (such as open area and parking requirements) to activate small parcels; better to allow for shared open space and parking among small property owners.
- Continue established precedent of single-story maximum height difference from adjacent rear properties, variation in heights, stepped-back upper floors, and broken-up facades.
- Focus intensity to major activity centers, but also ensure that new development in these centers does not overwhelm surrounding neighborhoods and maintains a variety of building heights.

- Highest-priority benefits include pedestrian/bicycle improvements (prioritized to Plan area), public/shared parking facilities, parks and open space (prioritized to context area of the Plan), and below-market-rate units provided on-site in addition to in-lieu fee requirement.

Plan Refinement: April 2, 2014 (EPC) & May 20, 2014 (City Council)

These meetings covered draft Plan strategies, standards and intensities

- Concern over how intensities would be affected when the State Density Bonus Law was applied to projects.
- EPC recommendation to limit the FAR at Village Centers to five stories and 2.3 FAR, and even lower at the Escuela/El Monte Village Center. City Council support for 2.3 FAR and up to 6 stories in Village Centers, as long as there is adequate buffer and transition to neighborhoods.
- Support for Medium Intensity Area and Castro/Miramonte Area heights and FARs.
- Support for small-lot strategies such as standards to encourage lot consolidation and targeted standards for small parcels.
- Publicly accessible open space and neighborhood connections are better than private open area.
- Review and support for draft Guiding Principles.
- Concern about loss of commercial space on the corridor; Plan should try to maintain or replace commercial space as much as possible.
- Village Centers are gathering places, not necessarily places of higher intensity.
- Support for a phasing strategy for bicycle improvements on El Camino Real.