

January 22, 2014 Environmental Planning Commission Meeting Summary

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were four speakers.

Strategies

Three spoke in support of different parts of the Focused strategy, specifically pedestrian improvements, focused higher density and transit accessibility. One speaker, though supportive of the strategy, had concerns about impacts of the focused intensity and inquired about how the activity areas were selected.

Bike Facilities

Three speakers spoke in support of bike facilities on El Camino Real in addition to Latham and Church Streets. Two speakers offered that a two-way cycle-track on one side of the street could be a compromise to maintain parking on the other side.

Public Benefits

One speaker spoke in support of affordable housing, pedestrian and bicycle facilities and community facilities.

Mobility

One speaker expressed concern about the Highway 85 overpass, and requested a minimum distance between pedestrian crossings.

EPC DELIBERATION

STRATEGIES

The EPC voted unanimously to recommend the Focused strategy (7-0).

TOPIC 1: Ground Floor Land Uses

Recommendation: Concentrate retail and active frontages within activity centers and provide flexibility for a wide range of uses between them, including live/work and other residential. Auto-oriented uses may also be appropriate between activity centers.

Additional comments:

- Seniors should be able to live on ground floors between nodes
- Development should help to maintain existing businesses in their projects
- One EPC member had skepticism about service stations along any part of ECR

TOPIC 2: Pedestrian Improvements

Recommendation: Prioritize and set a very high standard for distinctive pedestrian improvements in activity centers and set a minimum improvement standard for areas between activity centers (7-0). This minimum standard should include wider sidewalks, improved lighting, a level walking surface free of obstructions (7-0).

Additional comments:

- Wider sidewalks could be up to 7 feet (plus 5 feet for tree-wells) where space is available
- Acorn lights provide a sense of place
- A unified style of improvements is a plus.
- Don't set the bar so high for the sections between activity centers that you cannot provide special improvements in the activity centers
- Public benefits should include money for streetscape upgrades

TOPIC 3: Bicycle Facilities

Recommendation: Support for a Latham Street/Church Street bicycle facility as opposed to an El Camino Real bicycle facility (6-1).

Additional comments:

- Long-term interest from one EPC member in a cycle-track (a dedicated, buffered bikeway) along El Camino Real.

TOPIC 4: Small Parcels

Recommendation: Aggregation of parcels should be considered a public benefit (6-1). 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 (5-2).

Additional comments:

- Create incentives to upgrade existing properties

- Sharing of open space and parking could include local off-sets

TOPIC 5: Adjacency and Transitions

Recommendation: Continue strong established precedent:

- Single-story maximum height difference between El Camino Real projects and adjacent rear properties (5-2).
- Variation in heights, Step back upper floors, Break up facades (7-0).

TOPIC 6: Height and Scale

Recommendation: 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. (7-0)

A narrow EPC majority supported the potential for development larger than 1.85 FAR and four stories in activity centers (the minority preferred a maximum of 1.85 FAR and four stories in activity centers and lower intensities outside activity centers). This would be consistent with General Plan language that allows development up to 3.0 FAR in key locations. In this case, “key locations” would be limited to suitable sites within activity centers. The EPC did not specify whether development as large as 3.0 FAR is appropriate for development in activity centers, only that it may be larger than 1.85 FAR. (4-3)

TOPIC 7: Public Benefits

Recommendation: Highest-priority benefits include pedestrian/bicycle improvements (prioritized to Plan area) (7-0), public/shared parking facilities (7-0), parks and open space (prioritized to context area of the Plan) (6-1), and below-market-rate units provided on-site in addition to in-lieu fee requirement (5-2). Frontage improvements, such as façade upgrades, were considered minimum expectations, not public benefits (7-0). A narrow majority did not consider green building requirements significant enough to qualify as public benefits (7-0).

Additional comments:

- Look into inclusion into a transportation management association, to optimize improvements, shuttle services and cooperation between developments.
- Benefits must be significant.