

El Camino Real Corridor Advisory Group Meeting Notes

9/4/2014

Initial Feedback from CAC (6:35-6:55)

- Would have preferred 5 story maximum but appreciate that council-directed 6 stories will require exceptional community benefits.
- “Exceptional Open Space” is vague
- Liked requirement for transitions to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Liked requirement to avoid balconies over-looking residential neighborhoods.
- Overall document was generally reassuring.
- Was worried with EIR statement that certain impacts “can be mitigated.”
- Some concern about requirement for 100% ground-floor retail, that it could lead to over-supply of retail and too many vacancies.
- Likes the focused strategy, which provides a focused location where neighbors can meet and pedestrians and businesses can congregate.
- Likes idea of moving buildings toward the street and reducing setbacks to better engage the street.
- Likes requirements for ground-floor retail.
- Likes rules for transition.

Presentation (6:55-7:15)

Discussion (7:15-9)

Land Use

- Question: Is outdoor dining allowed?
Answer: Outdoor dining would be permitted on private property
- Question: Who would control additional sidewalk width if it’s provided?
Answer: It would be an easement granted by property owners to the City
- Residential on ECR is a problem
 - Transit doesn’t serve residential well, since there is no work along ECR to go to
- Concern that too much housing will not provide “points of attraction” – would prefer office
- Others like mix of uses
- Question: What about school impacts?
Answer: All housing needs to pay the school district
- Even if payment to schools is made as mitigation for housing, it could take too long to expand or build new ones. Building a new school is difficult, and there should be parallel growth between schools and housing.
- Huff and Springer are full.
- Others think there is sufficient space in existing school districts.
- New apartment housing may be targeted for those without children, but over time the number of children in those units could increase.

- What is the preferred balance for housing vs. jobs vs. retail? There should be a long-term balance.
- There should be an effort to make community aware of new El Camino Real Precise Plan.
- There should be a way for the City to be more proactive in attracting development, and actively encourage what is desired by the community.

Development Regulations

- Concern that guidance to match nearby character could encourage poor architecture. Guidance should focus on matching scale, not necessarily character.
- Concern about the demand for water in new development.
- Likes clarity of guidelines with flexibility for community benefits.
- Want more guidance encouraging stoops.
- Likes guidance for high-ceiling ground-floor spaces. Like San Francisco law that provides 5 feet of height exemption for high-ceilinged ground-floor spaces.
- Concern that dense landscaping screening parking is a safety concern.
- There should be special guidance for buildings to encourage them to “hold the corner.” Discourage or don’t allow parking lots at corners.
- Support for pedestrian pass-throughs.
- Windows and doors on the ground floor are important.
- Likes Village Center setback standards that require some setback but don’t allow too much setback.
- The Plan should have minimum plaza design criteria

Signage

- There’s a value in signage that has character and memorability, and that isn’t cookie-cutter.
- Signage should be oriented to pedestrians and enhance the pedestrian environment.
- Uniformity can become dated, so there should be an encouragement of diversity in style.
- There should be guidance that signage in Village Centers should be more pedestrian-oriented.
- Suggestion to expand Downtown sign standards to all Village Centers, and not just Castro/Miramonte Area.
- Signage should serve both pedestrians and automobiles.

Transit

- Concern about bus dedicated lanes for El Camino Real (VTA project). Prefers to use automobile for errands.
- A CAC member reported data that bus ridership along El Camino Real is high, even compared to Caltrain.
- Prioritize crosswalks at bus stops, and/or coordinate bus stops with crosswalks.
- Support for bus-bulbs.
- Bicycle lane shared with bus pull-out is challenging for bicyclists. Would like consideration of bicycle lane that runs to right of bus-bulb, creating a sort of “bus island.”

Vehicles

- Like the 30-35 mile per hour design speed and glad it's not higher.

Pedestrian Facilities

- 2,000 feet between crossings of El Camino Real is too far.
- The plan should have a goal of pedestrian safety.
- Include goal for maximum distance between crossings of El Camino Real in Village Centers, such as no more than 600 feet.

Bicycle Facilities

- It should be OK for developer to provide bicycle parking in the public right-of-way, defined to be in the planter zone.
- Need clearer statement about vision for gradual transition to on-street bicycle facilities on El Camino Real instead of on-street parking.

Urban Design

- There should be a stronger design palette for the public realm including items such as street lights, street furniture, and paving details. This could be identified as an implementation item in the Plan.
- Perhaps consistent Scarlet Oaks along all of El Camino Real may not be the appropriate tree species.
- There is support for diversity of tree types along El Camino Real, perhaps supporting the focused strategy by concentrating particular, unique tree types at Village Centers.
- Support for London Plane as street tree.
- Ensure that street tree planting palette supports sense of character, gateways, and placemaking.

Parking

- Interest in retaining on-street parking in front of small businesses.
- It is uncomfortable to parallel park on El Camino Real.
- Provide better sight-lines around parked cars for turning onto and off of El Camino Real.
- Off-site parking requirements should allow for people to cross the street. Crossing El Camino should be as reasonable for those who park as it is for people who ride transit or are on foot. Concern that restriction against parking lots across the street would limit opportunities for shared parking.