

## East Whisman Precise Plan Community Workshop #2 Summary

German International School of Silicon Valley  
310 Easy Street, Mountain View, California  
**December 3, 2016, 9:00AM-12:00PM**

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On Saturday, December 3, 2016, the City of Mountain View hosted the second community workshop related to the East Whisman Precise Plan, with the goal of garnering specific feedback on proposed land use alternatives, building heights, housing unit mix, and the character of key activity centers of the Plan Area (Middlefield Station and the Village Center). The workshop was held at the German International School from 9 am until 12 pm. The event was attended by approximately 30 community members and interested parties, and was facilitated by City staff and the consultant team. It should be noted that attendees of this workshop included more business representatives and property owners than Workshop #1.

The workshop opened with a short introduction from Lindsay Hagan, Project Planner for the City of Mountain View, describing the Precise Plan process, timeline, and project goals. Ms. Hagan's opening was followed by a short greeting from Mountain View Mayor Pat Showalter. Mayor Showalter discussed the importance of participation and collaboration in the process, and the value of staying engaged in the planning process. After the mayor's welcome, Tim Rood of Community Design + Architecture, project consultant, discussed the differences between the three proposed land use alternatives (including estimates of key metrics). Finally, Eric Yurkovich of Raimi + Associates, project consultant, presented a brief overview of the two workshop exercises. The introductory presentation and a video of the workshop are available on the project website: <http://www.mountainview.gov/eastwhisman>. (Alternative video link is: <https://youtu.be/CBLCYRc-j4Y>)



### Workshop Goals and Exercises

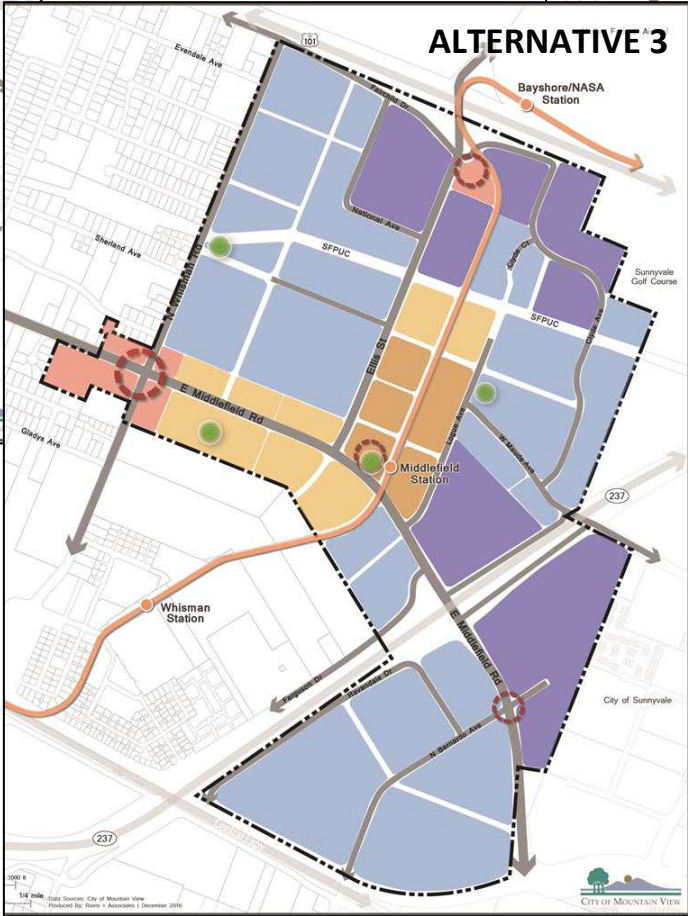
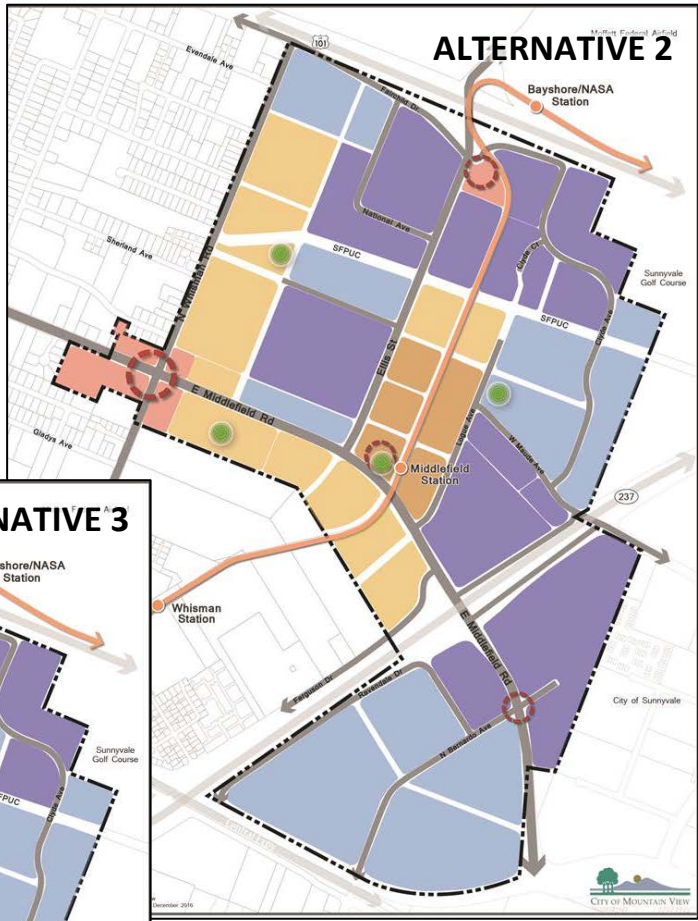
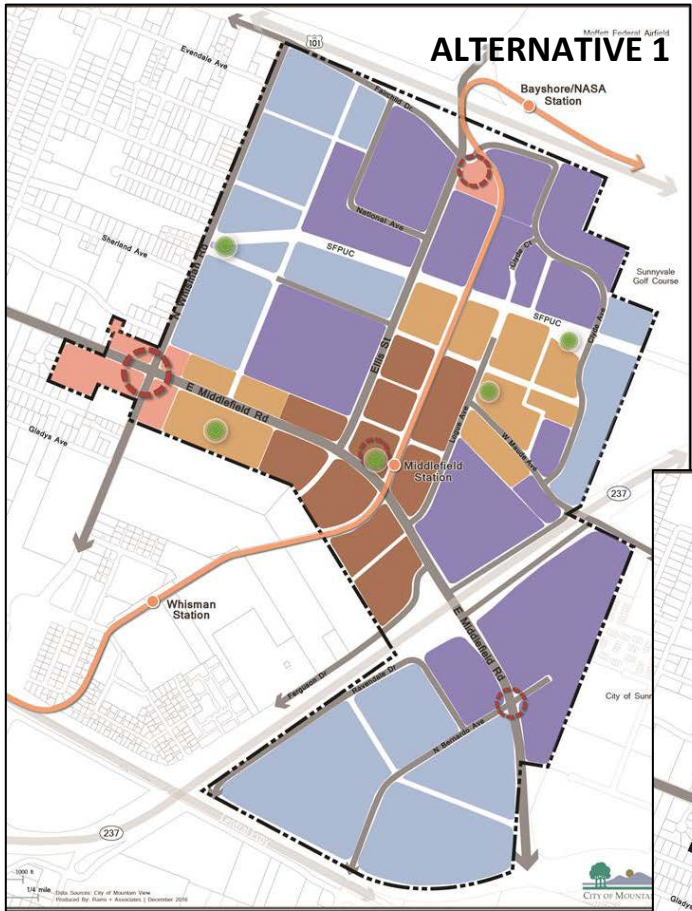
For this workshop, the City set out to achieve the following:

1. Consider land use alternatives and discuss a preferred alternative.
2. Provide preferences for other plan area improvements/components.
3. Discuss the character of two focus areas: the Village Center and Middlefield VTA Station.

To achieve these goals, the workshop was split into two exercises:

1. **Development Alternatives.** Workshop participants were divided into small groups of five to seven community members and asked a series of questions about three land use alternatives for East Whisman. Questions included:
  - a. *Do any of the alternatives represent your vision for East Whisman? Do you have other ideas that are not shown?*

# EAST WHISMAN PRECISE PLAN LAND USE ALTERNATIVES



**LEGEND**

- Lower-Density Residential (up to 4 stories)
- Medium-Density Residential (5-6 stories)
- Higher-Density Residential (7-8 stories)
- Mixed-Use Village Center / Retail (1 to 3 stories)
- Lower-Intensity Office (up to 4 stories)
- Higher-Intensity Office (5-6 stories)
- VTA Station
- VTA Light Rail Line
- East Whisman Precise Plan Area
- Retail Location
- Conceptual Park Locations

- b. *Where should the tallest buildings be allowed in East Whisman? Should building heights greater than eight stories be allowed near the Middlefield Station?*
  - c. *Should residential development be required in specific areas of East Whisman?*
- After the small group discussions, participants completed an individual questionnaire.
2. **Focus Areas.** The second exercise allowed workshop participants to discuss two distinct locations within East Whisman – the Middlefield Station area, and the Village Center at the intersection of N. Whisman Rd. and E. Middlefield Rd. Participants discussed the following questions:
    - a. **Village Center.** *What alternative best represents your vision for the Village Center?*
    - b. **Middlefield Station Area.** *Do the preliminary statements provided represent your vision of the Middlefield VTA Station area (within a 10-min. walking distance)? What makes the best transit-oriented places?*

In addition to the feedback heard at the workshop, the City of Mountain View hosted an online survey from December 16, 2016 to January 2, 2017 to gather additional input from those community members or stakeholders unable to attend. The same questions from the workshop were asked in the online survey, accompanied by the same visual exhibits. A total of 149 participants completed the survey and a summary of the results are provided as Appendix 1 to this report.

## Exercise #1: Development Alternatives Discussion

In the first exercise, participants were arranged in six small-table groups to discuss the three land use alternatives over the course of an hour. Each table included a facilitator, whose role was to manage the small group discussion to ensure that everyone had a chance to speak and share their ideas. Each group appointed a reporter to record and capture the top ideas from group members (and to complete a summary report-back worksheet). The following concepts were drawn from the report-back worksheets: (see Appendix 2 for copies of the report-back worksheets)

- **Land Use Alternatives.**
  - Account for and address the traffic impacts of higher density development/more residents. (3 groups)
  - Need high-quality transit service for new residents/employees to use light rail. (2 groups)
  - Desire for condominium/ownership opportunities. Make efforts to accommodate residents in all phases of their lives. (2 groups)
  - Create continuity of development character, especially along Ellis Street. Make sure the corridors are addressed in a comprehensive way such that a similar character or feel dominates the whole length. (2 groups)
  - Desire for more retail to support new residential. Make sure enough retail locates within the Plan area. (2 groups)
  - Allow moderate density housing near Middlefield Station. (2 groups)
  - Improve street connectivity to facilitate walking or cycling to work.
  - Make efforts to keep housing and office separate.
  - Create a ‘there-there’, a true neighborhood with a sense of community.
- **Building Heights.**
  - Allow the tallest residential heights near the VTA station (3 groups) or Logue Ave/Maude Ave (1 group).
  - Groups were split evenly on whether buildings near the station should be allowed to be greater than eight stories or less than eight stories.
  - Place tall buildings along the 101 or 237 freeways (5 groups), or Ellis Street (2 groups).
  - Allow four-stories along E. Middlefield Rd. (2 groups)
  - Locate taller buildings away from existing low-scale neighborhoods. Avoid an abrupt transition from existing to new structures.
  - Allow greater density to generate greater retail demand, and maybe attract a grocery store.
- **Regulatory Mechanisms.**
  - Strong support for housing (4 groups) and mixed-use development (3 groups) along E. Middlefield Road. (4 groups)



- Create clusters of residential and retail, making it possible to walk to shops/services. (2 groups)
- Desire to have flexible regulations in order to allow office uses to continue operating in areas that may become residentially zoned. (2 groups)
- Provide incentives to promote housing development.
- Don't assume current businesses will be around forever; make the Plan work regardless of whether existing businesses are there in the future.
- Preserve the low-scale, start-up office character of the Bernardo area.
- Allow mixed use for certain types of retail.



## Questionnaire Results

After the small group discussion, each individual workshop participant filled out a questionnaire, which were collected by table facilitators (28 total questionnaires were completed). A numerical summary of responses to the questionnaires are as follows:

### 1. Select the land use alternative that most closely aligns with your vision.

Alternative #1	Alternative #2	Alternative #3
7 votes	7 votes	7 votes

### 2. Should buildings heights greater than 8 stories be allowed near Middlefield Station?

Yes	No	If no, what should the maximum be?
8 votes	16 votes	4 stories: 6 votes 6 stories: 6 votes 8 stories: 4 votes

### 3. Should residential development be required in specific locations in East Whisman or should it be allowed throughout the Plan Area?

Flexibility	Residential Only	Minimum Neighborhood	Other
14 votes	4 votes	5 votes	2 votes

### 4. What mix of housing units do you envision in East Whisman? Note: This topic was not discussed at length within the groups by facilitators.

Small Unit Mix	Market Unit Mix	Alternative Unit Mix	Other
1 vote	2 votes	7 votes	13 votes (variations on Alternative Mix)

**5. Select and prioritize three plan area improvements or strategies for East Whisman.** Note: This topic was not discussed at length within the groups by facilitators.

Improvement or Strategy	Votes
Public Open Space	18
Affordable Housing	9
Pedestrian or Bicycle Facilities	18
Commercial Retail Space	7
Small Business/Nonprofit Facility	2
School or Education Facility	4
Childcare Center	0
Other (Write-Ins: Transit, Multi-Family)	3

After the report-back from the first exercise was completed, certain participants (chosen randomly by the placement of a sticker on the back of their seat) were asked to switch tables in order to mix up participants.

## Exercise #2: Focus Areas Discussion

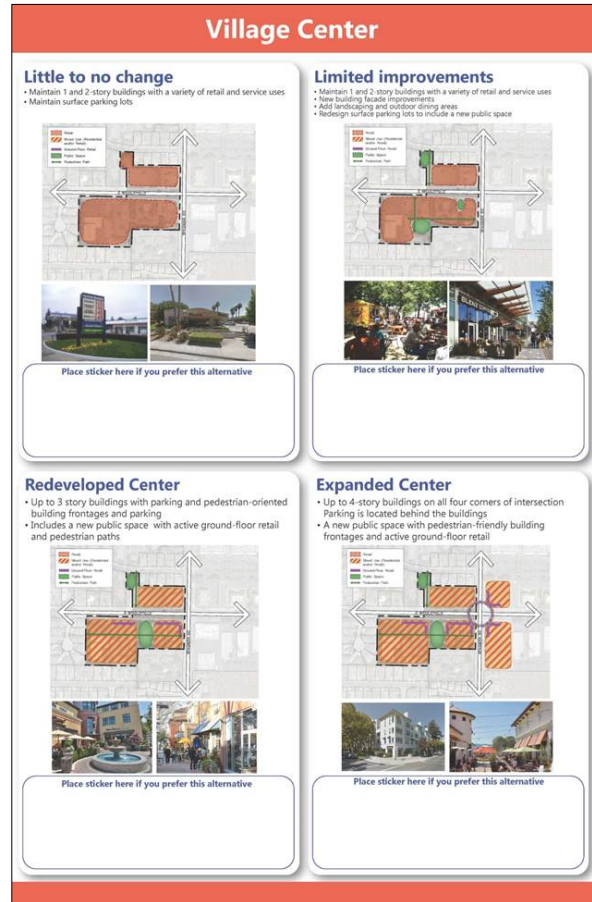
For the second exercise, each small group was given a large, printed map of the two geographic focus areas – the Village Center and Middlefield Station. The five group boards are attached as Appendix 3. The boards asked for specific feedback from participants on the focus areas. Markers and post-it notes were provided to add notes and ideas to the maps, and for drawing any additional concepts. Facilitators were present during the exercise to answer questions and provide background, existing conditions, and other relevant information. Finally, community members discussed their thoughts within their small groups.

## Village Center Board

The first board presented community members with four options for the future character and land use of the neighborhood retail area located at the intersection of N. Whisman Rd. and E. Middlefield Rd.:

1. **Little or No Change** – maintaining existing retail uses, 1 and 2-story buildings, and parking layout.
2. **Limited Improvements** – maintaining 1 and 2-story buildings with site and façade improvements; redesign parking to add open space.
3. **Redeveloped Center** – redevelop center in line with the Village Center concept from the General Plan at 3-stories with mixed-uses, ground-floor retail, and gathering spaces; focus development west of Whisman Rd.
4. **Expanded Center** – redevelop center and expand to all corners of intersection with up to 4 story buildings; include mixed-use, ground-floor retail, and gathering spaces.

Workshop participants were asked to place a sticker on the choice that best represented their vision for the Village Center. Any additional ideas were to be written on the board or on post-it notes. After explaining the different options, facilitators led a free-form discussion, prompted by the following question: **“What alternative best represents your vision for the Village Center (e.g. land uses, building heights, open space)? Do you have other ideas?”**



Overall, 80% of votes were between Limited Improvements and Redeveloped Center. No participants selected “No change.”

No Change	Limited Improvements	Redeveloped Center	Expanded Center
0 votes	11.5 votes	6.5 votes	5 votes

Other comments on the Village Center area included:

- Provide incentives to current owners to redevelop their properties.
- Avoid building too much density or bulk adjacent to existing residents. Include setbacks in any potential development towards the rear of the properties (near existing residences).
- Provide a greater diversity of vendors and services, especially a grocery store.
- Introduce a better tree canopy to create an inviting place (both along streets and within the shopping centers).



- Include more green space(s), especially in the back part of the vacant lot.
- Preference for the area to remain exclusively retail-focused, and not add residential.
- Concern about the viability of expanding retail across N. Whisman Rd., given its size and the current traffic congestion issues.
- Support for mixed-use in general along the E. Middlefield Rd.
- Work towards making both sides of N. Whisman Rd. more walkable and pedestrian-friendly.

## Middlefield Station Board

The second board presented community members with potential visioning statements for the Middlefield VTA Station – e.g. wide sidewalks, mix of uses, neighborhood retail, public open space, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian-oriented design. Facilitators framed the discussion with the following questions:

1. **Do the preliminary statements provided represent your vision of the Middlefield VTA Station area (within a 10-min. walking zone)? Are there other ideas we missed?**
2. **In your opinion, what makes the best transit-oriented places?**

Generally, the preliminary direction expressed on the board was well-received by participants, and their comments included the following thoughts and responses:

- Make the Middlefield Station a nice, inviting place - doesn't necessarily mean the tallest/largest residential building has to be built immediately next to the station; smaller, human-scale elements are more important (a rhythm of small shops, a fountain, a sculpture, benches, nice trees, a pedestrian paseo or plaza, etc).
- Require human-scale, good design and transparency, and minimum open space/plaza.
- Provide dedicated parking for light rail riders and/or clearer parking rules and regulations; it is not clear who is allowed to park there now.
- Provide residents and transit users with activities near the station.
- Improve connections to the station with trails and bicycle lanes (green striping).
- Major improvements are needed from light rail/VTA if they are truly transportation alternatives: more frequent trains, faster trains, more destinations, better timing with traffic lights.
- Mixed uses would promote more transit use (restaurants, supermarket, theater, etc).
- Shade, wide sidewalks, and trees are important to draw users.
- Incentivize live/work arrangements.
- Create multiple, interconnected green areas (a 'greenbelt').
- Welcome new retailers and don't be overly prescriptive about the minimum square footage or the explicit kind of use; Palo Alto has strip retail areas that are struggling partly b/c of onerous regulations.

### Middlefield Station

**Preliminary Direction**

- A neighborhood with a mix of high-intensity residential, office, and mixed-use buildings within a short walk of transit and community spaces.
- Allow the tallest buildings adjacent to the Middlefield Station.
- Improve station access with pedestrian and bicycle connections.
- Provide a neighborhood-serving retail area.
- Create a signature public open space for gathering and community events.
- Include new community-serving facilities, such as childcare.
- Build pedestrian-oriented buildings close to the street with active ground floor uses.

**Are there other ideas we missed? Write them below!**

**What makes the best transit-oriented places?**








**Other ideas:**

Additionally, participants identified key traits and examples of transit-oriented or pedestrian-oriented places they liked:

- *Key Traits:*
  - Include a diversity of uses (mix of uses), activities, and amenities
  - Use trails to connect transit to other nearby destinations
  - Provide appropriate space for the transit station
  - Have defined and clearly marked bike lanes
  - Declares itself as the place to be.
  
- *Examples of Desirable Transit-Oriented Places:*
  - Castro Street, Mountain View
  - Laurel Street, San Carlos
  - Santana Row, San Jose
  - Downtown Palo Alto
  - Ottawa, Canada
  - El Monte Shopping Center, Mountain View

## Conclusions

Some of the major takeaways of the workshop were:

- **Preferred alternative.** Differing opinions over the preferred alternative – voting split equally three ways.
- **Area intensification.** Recognition that greater density/intensity has benefits, such as the potential for more transit ridership, retail, and open space, but may also increase traffic.
- **Residential location.** New residential was generally seen as acceptable in the following locations: along E. Middlefield Rd. and around the Middlefield VTA Station. Keen interest that new residential be clustered in such a way as to create a ‘there-there’, or a real neighborhood(s).
- **Middlefield VTA Station.** Support for housing at or around the station area (with differing opinions over the appropriate heights and densities for any transit-adjacent development). Eight stories was generally seen as the maximum building height by a two-thirds majority of participants.
- **E. Middlefield Rd.** Support for mixed-use development along E. Middlefield Rd.
- **Ellis St.** Leverage Ellis Street as a real corridor; create a continuous character.
- **Office.** Intensified office was generally seen as acceptable in the plan area. Support for taller buildings along the freeways. Desire to keep some areas along Bernardo Avenue as low-scale, start-up spaces.
- **Retail.** Support for additional retail and greater diversity of services/vendors and a concern that any regulations or plan standards should be welcoming to retailers.
- **Adjacency.** Carefully design any development near existing residential neighborhoods with the right transitions/step-backs.
- **Land use approach.** Wide support for ‘flexibility’ in land use regulations; against requiring housing and allowing the area to evolve without being overly restrictive. Strong support for incentives to encourage transformation/redevelopment.
- **Housing unit types.** Create a place for a diverse demographic (singles, couples, families), including support for condominiums. Concern that small, rental units will lead to a more transient population.
- **Transit ridership.** Concern that VTA light rail might not be used by new residents/employees without improved service; not enough people would use it to lessen the impacts on the roadway congestion.
- **Plan area improvements.** Strongest support for open space, pedestrian/bicycle facilities, and affordable housing as priority plan area focuses.