



City of Sunnyvale

Meeting Minutes - Final

Sunnyvale El Camino Real Corridor Plan Advisory Committee

Thursday, January 23, 2020

6:00 PM

Neighborhood Room, Recreation Center,
550 E Remington Drive, Sunnyvale, CA
94087

Regular Meeting - 6 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Assistant Director of Community Development Andrew Miner called the meeting to order in lieu of a Chair, which has yet to be appointed. He noted the general rules for a Board and Commission applies to this Commission.

ROLL CALL

Seven Members present. Steve Zornetzer, the new representative for the Sustainability Commission, and Ken Hiremath, the new representative for the Housing and Human Services Commission, introduced themselves.

Sue Harrison was nominated as the Chair and the vote was unanimous. she took the role as chair from this point forward.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

GENERAL BUSINESS

[20-0230](#)

General

- a. New members
- b. Changes in State law regarding housing

Senior Planner Jay Lee introduced himself as project manager for the El Camion Real Specific Plan. He and Mr. Miner discussed Senate Bill 330 and its impact on the Specific Plan. Mr. Lee explained that the previous zoning strategy established a development reserve for each node and segment and no additional housing could be added once the reserve is exhausted . However, Senate Bill 330 prohibits development reserves for housing. Therefore, staff updated the zoning strategy to

provide specific maximum densities for each site.

Chair Harrison asked staff whether every property can still be zoned for mixed use development due to this new law. Mr. Miner noted that Senate Bill 330 does not allow local jurisdictions to down zone a property. Most of the properties within the Specific Plan area are zoned C-2 (Highway Business), which allows for residential uses. Therefore, most properties will still allow for mixed-use development.

[20-0207](#)

Project Update

- a. Status of EIR
- b. Status of Specific Plan

Mr. Lee provided an update on the work completed to-date including the completion of several technical studies and reports and community outreach efforts such as workshops, Planning Commission and City Council study sessions, and forming the El Camino Real Plan Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee. Mr. Lee also provided an update on the status of the Specific Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report, and noted that due to Senate Bill 330, the City adjusted the zoning strategy as described earlier. Mr. Lee then summarized the direction staff has received from City Council, which selected Residential Plus Alternative, which allows for 6,900 additional housing units above the existing condition. City Council has also expressed a desire to maintain ground floor retail throughout the corridor and incorporate form-based zoning.

Chair Harrison asked staff to elaborate on form-based zoning. Mr. Lee responded that traditional zoning focuses on segregating land uses while form based zoning focuses on design and massing of buildings. Mr. Miner provided the 45 degree daylight plane requirement as an example of a form-based development standard.

[20-0231](#)

Key Issues

- a. Changes to Specific Plan to respond to State laws
- b. What will remain the same in the Specific Plan
- c. Vision statement
- d. Design criteria

Mr. Lee noted that the current vision statement is long and explained the need for a shorter vision statement to be consistent with other specific plans. Mr. Lee introduced the proposed vision statement: "Support and enhance community serving retail and provide significant new residential options while advancing

sustainable goals and by improving transportation safety and mobility choices.”

The Committee refined the vision statement by changing “sustainable” to “sustainability” and removing “by”.

Mr. Zornetzer asked if affordable housing is included and staff confirmed that it is required with all housing developments.

Mr. Lee noted the revised Guiding Principles, which have not changed in content but were re drafted to provide clearer and consistent statements.

Mr. Lee shared that one of the goals of the Specific Plan is to maintain the retail and commercial character of El Camino Real.

A member of the public asked staff how the higher density might impact the local residents by increasing the demand for parking and making it more difficult to access everyday neighborhood services due to lack of available parking. Mr. Miner noted that staff is evaluating how the City can provide and maintain these services and support a strong economy while minimizing impacts on parking. Mr. Miner added that the Specific Plan will promote commercial uses that primarily support the local economy and have lower parking demands, and reiterated that City leaders are adamant on keeping retail on El Camino Real.

ECRPAC member Chris Figone noted that the long-term land use strategy should adapt to time and change to the retail market. Mr. Miner clarified that the Specific Plan will allow for a variety of retail uses.

A member of the public asked if the market study, which is several years old, will be updated. Mr. Miner responded that although the City will not complete another market study due to funding, staff reviews more recent market studies done for other plans, meet with developers and economic specialists, and regularly communicates with the Economic Development Manager Connie Verceles to see if the study for this plan is still relevant and better understand the current market.

Mr. Lee discussed the nodes and segments strategy and how the units were allocated in each node and segment in the zoning strategy prior to Senate Bill 330. Mr. Miner added that the allocated units could not be shared or traded between the nodes and segments.

A member of the public asked how the units were allocated and how staff determined the density for each site. Mr. Miner responded that the number of units generally correspond with the size of the node or segment. Mr. Lee added that the previous strategy was to allow 54 dwelling units per acre on all parcels in the nodes and 36 dwelling units per acre on all parcels in the segments, and use development caps to limit the overall level of development. Sites would develop on a first-come, first-serve basis until the development reserve is used up. However, Senate Bill 330 prohibits development caps, so staff adjusted the zoning strategy to provide a maximum density for each parcel. Although fewer parcels would be allowed to redevelop as a mixed-use development, they would be able to redevelop at a higher density approaching 68 dwelling units per acre.

Mr. Lee provided more details on how staff went through each parcel and determined which sites would be allowed to redevelop at a higher density. Mr. Lee explained that staff adjusted the zoning strategy so that the total number of units allowed by the Specific Plan and analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report would stay the same.

ECRPAC member Steve Pavlina expressed appreciation for the Specific Plan but also expressed concern that development projects may have a negative impact on nearby communities and result in significant controversy similar to the project at Vallco Park. Mr. Miner noted that the Specific Plan is not yet finalized but will focus redevelop to opportunity sites that are further away from single-family neighborhoods and closer to intersections and major bus stops, which will hopefully minimize controversy with nearby residents. Staff is seeking to balance the demand for housing and sensitivity to existing developments, and provide a variety of densities while avoiding spot zoning.

Principal Planner Amber Blizinski added that not all properties will redevelop at high densities due to minimum lot size requirements. Mr. Miner added that the maximum density can only be reached by providing community benefits.

A member of the public asked how much population the Specific Plan could potential add. Mr. Miner noted that it is difficult to determine how many people will occupy the 6,900 additional units that could potentially be built and added that the population added depends on a number of factors, including the size of the units. Mr. Lee added that the Environmental Impact Report will estimate how much population would be added.

Mr. Lee continued his presentation and discussed the key design criteria for development along El Camino Real, which have been evaluated by staff and vetted by City Council. Mr. Lee discussed various topics including mixed use development, high commercial bays, 15 foot front setbacks and build-to lines with a strong public realm and pedestrian zone, step backs on the 4th floor and above, 45-degree daylight plane, transition to low-density residential by stepping down developments, and podium style underground parking.

Mr. Miner noted that developments will be allowed to vary the density throughout a site and Mr. Lee mentioned the development at 481 South Mathilda Avenue as a good example of how to step down to low-density residential development.

Mr. Lee provided an example of what higher density developments could look like on El Camino Real. Mr. Lee presented models drawn by the consultant to illustrate the maximum bulk and massing of developments that would be allowed by the potential development standards in the Specific Plan.

Mr. Lee provided a summary of the key changes in the Specific Plan. Fewer parcels in the nodes will allow for mixed use development but at a higher density of 68 dwelling units per acre and the maximum density in the segments was reduced from 36 to 32 dwelling units per acre, which results in the same overall level of development approved by City Council. Mr. Miner added that a higher maximum density allows for apartment developments rather than townhomes, which may not be desirable along El Camino Real in the nodes.

Mr. Figone asked whether property taxes influenced the City's decision to increase the density and Mr. Miner responded that although staff is considerate of economic and fiscal impacts, staff prioritizes land use and planning considerations in making recommendations.

A member of the public asked whether staff has considered a moratorium on hotels and Mr. Minor responded that a moratorium is not necessary, but the Specific Plan will focus on retail and residential uses over offices for El Camino Real.

A member of the public asked how the Specific Plan and the proposed density compare to what Mountain View and Santa Clara are allowing. Mr. Miner responded that Mountain View has already completed their plan and Ms. Blizinski added that the proposed level of development is similar between Santa Clara and Sunnyvale.

A member of the public expressed that it is not necessary to step back the upper floors of buildings. Mr. Miner agreed that it is not always necessary, but emphasized the importance of high-quality architecture.

Mr. Lee concluded the presentation by summarizing the following key aspects of the Specific Plan:

- State housing law limits local discretion;
- To meet S.B. 330 and Specific Plan goals, the Specific Plan allows higher density on fewer properties;
- The Specific Plan utilizes incentives based zoning;
- One of the priorities is to maintain the existing retail character, especially in segments;
- Not all properties will redevelop;
- Design standards will control the height and massing of buildings and help ensure sensitivity to neighbors; and
- Higher density would result in similarly looking buildings (smaller units and affordability by design).

Mr. Pavlina asked if the requirement for objective standards will require the City to provide specific requirements for each parcel. Mr. Miner responded that the City's policies and guidelines will need to be more specific and objective and provided examples. Ms. Blizinski added that local jurisdictions cannot deny projects for discretionary reasons if the project meets all objective standards.

A member of the public asked the requirements from Senate Bill 330 sunset after five years. Ms. Blizinski explained that some requirements will sunset in 2025, but the State may extend the timeline of these requirements until the State determines that enough housing has been built.

[20-0229](#)

Next Steps

Mr. Lee discussed the following next steps in the Specific Plan process:

- February 7: Council Strategic Session
- March: Community outreach and PC study session
- April: Release Draft Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report
- May: Public comment

- June: Revised Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report and board/commission hearings
- July: Council adoption

A member of the public asked about the public noticing the City is conducting and Ms. Blizinski responded that owners and residents within 2,000 feet of the Specific Plan area will receive a notice by mail. Ms. Blizinski added that anyone interested in the project could sign up to be placed on the interested parties list to receive email updates.

Mr. Figone asked what types of community benefits will be required for additional density and how the incentives the developers receive will be rewarded. Mr. Miner indicated that the City has utilized a community benefits program in the Lawrence Station Area Plan and Peery Park Specific Plan. The community benefits program specifies the incentives a developer would receive for the community benefits the developer agrees to provide.

A member of the public asked if the State density bonus will allow an exemption from the 45 degree plane requirement. Ms. Blizinski responded that it is in the developer's interest to not exceed the daylight plane and upset the neighborhood. Mr. Miner added that staff could require developers to provide a proforma with their application if the requested concession from the State density bonus directly conflicts with the City's regulations to justify why the concession is necessary.

ECRPAC member Tim Oey expressed support for the use of form-based code and emphasis on retail, and asked whether the Specific Plan will address lowering the speed limit and replacing on-street parking with buffered bicycle lanes. Ms. Blizinski responded that staff is evaluating transportation improvements and Mr. Miner added that the City is looking into implementing a continuous bicycle lane through El Camino Real.

Ms. Blizinski noted that the Environmental Impact Report will include a traffic analysis report which will include the vehicle miles traveled.

Commissioner asked about schools and staff responded that the City has no say about schools and the State imposes their fees for schools and sets the decisions regarding schools.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Harrison adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.