

**EL CAMINO REAL/DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN & THE GRAND BOULEVARD INITIATIVE,  
MENLO PARK**

**TOD TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL BRIEFING BOOK  
July 2009**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Please note: the City's project page (<http://www.menlopark.org/specificplan>) is a comprehensive resource for this project.

**a. Contact Persons**

City of Menlo Park

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Grand Boulevard Initiative

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**2. THE ASSIGNMENT**

**a. Summary of the Problem**

City of Menlo Park

Menlo Park is developing a long-term plan for the El Camino Real and Downtown areas. The completed visioning process (Phase I) has led into the preparation of a Specific Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report (Phase II). Environmental and fiscal review will be integrated into the process, so that potential benefits (such as tax revenue) and impacts (such as traffic) of different scenarios will be considered as the community develops the long-term plan. The completed Specific Plan will contain elements such as detailed land use regulations, design guidelines, infrastructure plans, and implementation measures. Broad public outreach and participation continues to be a key element of the project. This process will continue to engage a wide range of community members, including those who may not currently be involved in civic activities.

This project has its origins in the departure of several car dealerships from El Camino Real in the early-/mid-2000s, which created the perception of blight and significantly reduced the City's sales tax revenues. In addition, a 'one-off' project known as the Derry Lane Mixed-Use Development was approved by the City Council in 2006, but was subsequently the subject of a successful referendum petition, which also generally helped establish support for a comprehensive plan for the overall Downtown and El Camino Real areas.

Grand Boulevard Initiative

El Camino Real is the only major north-south arterial in San Mateo and northern Santa Clara counties. However the Corridor is characterized by outdated strip commercial development and a highway environment that is not friendly to transit users, pedestrians and bicyclists. In an effort to meet a growing wish by communities for an increasingly walkable, bike-friendly, transit-friendly, and sustainable way of life, the Grand Boulevard Initiative was formed to bring about regional planning for the El Camino Real corridor (one quarter of a mile on either side of the roadway)

through both San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties though a shared vision that links transportation and land use. The El Camino Corridor as

The GBI is a collaboration of 19 cities, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, Caltrans, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), the San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans), Joint Venture Silicon Valley Network, the San Mateo County Economic Development Association (SAMCEDA), the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the MTC, and representatives for labor, housing and the environment. This historic inter-jurisdictional collaboration represents a “coalition of the willing” that flourishes as a bottom-up regional planning effort, rather than approaching planning through the traditional top-down approach. This opportunity offers the strengths of collaboration where it is appropriate, as a complement to the unique knowledge which each jurisdiction has regarding the needs of its own community.

**b. Vision of the station built-out (images if available or written statement)**

The primary discussion boards from the most recent Community Workshop (#2 - 6/18/09) are on the project page (<http://www.menlopark.org/specificplan>). These are the most up-to-date visions for the project, which is still in progress.

**c. Top 3-5 questions to be addressed by the panel**

- Are the preliminary scenarios financially viable?
- What types of development are best suited to the primary opportunity sites (Stanford car lots)?
- How should El Camino Real corridor development distinguish itself from development Downtown?
- What types of public benefits can the community realistically expect to receive in exchange for these types of zoning changes?

**3. STATUS OF PLAN**

- a. Approval process (Planning Commission, City Council, etc.) - dates, outcomes**
- b. Environmental review**

The project completed a general ‘visioning’ exercise in 2008, and the Vision Plan ([http://www.menlopark.org/departments/pln/ecr-d/ecr-d\\_vision-plan\\_final.pdf](http://www.menlopark.org/departments/pln/ecr-d/ecr-d_vision-plan_final.pdf)) is the overall guide for the current Specific Plan process. At this point, the community has conducted two of the planned three workshops for the Specific Plan, and all workshop materials are available on the project page <http://www.menlopark.org/specificplan>. The consultant and staff are gearing up for the third workshop (9/17/09), at which a preliminary preferred alternative plan will be presented and evaluated. After that stage, the project will enter the environmental/fiscal review process, with a detailed EIR and Fiscal Impact Analysis being prepared. Final City Council actions are planned to take place by October, 2010.

**4. HISTORY OF THE SITE OR STUDY AREA**

The local weekly paper (The Almanac) recently had a good cover feature on past plans ([http://www.almanacnews.com/morguepdf/2009/2009\\_06\\_17.alm.section1.pdf](http://www.almanacnews.com/morguepdf/2009/2009_06_17.alm.section1.pdf)).

In addition, as part of the 2007 ‘pre-planning’ Speaker Series, Michael Dyett of Dyett & Bhatia analyzed past plans and related topics. Video of his talk and handouts are available on the Vision Plan page ([http://www.menlopark.org/projects/comdev\\_ecrdowntown\\_vp.htm](http://www.menlopark.org/projects/comdev_ecrdowntown_vp.htm)).

**5. TRANSIT**

- a. Current transit options and frequencies**

### Grand Boulevard Initiative

Public transportation along the Peninsula is provided by three agencies. In San Mateo County, the San Mateo County Transit District manages SamTrans, the public bus service, and Caltrain, the commuter rail service serving the Peninsula from San Francisco to Gilroy. In addition, the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) provides service to the northern portion of San Mateo County. In Santa Clara County, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) provides bus and light rail (LRT) service.

Current transit infrastructure and service on El Camino Real are significant. The five San Mateo County BART Stations, all located in close proximity to El Camino Real, provide for 20,700 weekday boardings. The 15 Caltrain stations located within one-half of a mile of El Camino Real account for 56% of system wide boardings. Bus service on El Camino is the backbone of both the SamTrans and VTA systems for both frequency and ridership. For SamTrans, 30% of all weekday trips either board or alight on El Camino Real/Mission St. VTA's recently introduced 522 Rapid service combined with Route 22 constitute approximately 20% of all weekday boardings in Santa Clara County. However, data from the 2000 census suggests that use of commute alternatives to the car (17%) is only slightly higher by residents in the corridor than for the counties (15%) as a whole.

#### **b. Planning and funding status of future transit upgrades or expansions**

### City of Menlo Park

The California High-Speed Rail project would not stop in Menlo Park, but the route could result in significant changes to the Caltrain right-of-way. Environmental analysis is currently being conducted by the California High-Speed Rail Authority that will result in preferred alignment details (number of tracks, elevated/at-grade/below-grade, etc.). The HSR project is generally controversial in Menlo Park- most of the feedback heard is negative, although there is some support.

### Grand Boulevard Initiative

The following are descriptions of two transit planning projects that are currently underway for the Grand Boulevard corridor. While only the Caltrain 2025 Program would have a direct benefit and impact to Menlo Park through improved Caltrain service, VTA's BRT project along El Camino Real may also potentially benefit Menlo Park as the Palo Alto terminus is within close proximity to the city of Menlo Park.

#### *Caltrain: 2025 Program*

Caltrain is currently in the planning phases for their Caltrain 2025 program, a cost-effective, comprehensive plan to expand the system's capacity while providing a measurably safer transportation network.

Caltrain's ability to expand is limited by the current track infrastructure, signal system, diesel-powered locomotives and some station configurations. Caltrain 2025 addresses these system limitations in two ways. First, Caltrain will implement key system improvements that include electrification of the main line and a new signal system to be complete by 2015. Second, Caltrain proposes to run a mix of conventional trains and electric multiple unit (EMU) trains on its right of way. EMUs are individually- powered, high performance vehicles used in urban transit and high-speed train systems around the world. Caltrain may be the first U.S. commuter railroad to operate the type of EMUs that are used internationally. These vehicles would be in service as early as 2015.

## *VTA: BRT Strategic Plan and El Camino Real BRT Project*

VTA is proceeding with plans to implement Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along several corridors in Santa Clara County. BRT is an enhanced bus service that offers many of the same attributes as rail transit, such as fast, frequent, and reliable service, a branded product, specialized vehicles, high-amenity stations, and real-time passenger information. The BRT Strategic Plan, which was completed in the spring of 2009, was intended to develop an integrated near-term BRT network throughout Santa Clara County to provide high quality service to areas not served by light rail transit. Specifically, the VTA BRT Strategic Plan was prepared to:

- Establish a framework for BRT implementation;
- Provide direction on related policy issues; and
- Serve as a vehicle to engage cities and stakeholders.

An assessment of new BRT services was conducted on six potential corridors within the Santa Clara Valley: Alum Rock, El Camino Real, King Road, Monterey Highway, Stevens Creek, and Sunnyvale-Cupertino. Three corridors emerged as the most promising alignments for near-term BRT implementation: the Santa Clara/Alum Rock corridor, the El Camino Real/The Alameda corridor, and the Stevens Creek corridor.

As a follow-up to the BRT Strategic Plan, VTA is planning to begin Conceptual Engineering for the El Camino Real/The Alameda BRT project later in 2009. This corridor stretches from the Palo Alto Transit Center to HP Pavilion and Diridon Station in San Jose, a distance of 16.6 miles. The target for the start of service for El Camino Real BRT in the Strategic Plan is winter 2013.

## **6. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA**

### **a. Physical Description**

- **Location**
- **Boundaries, size**
- **Land uses within the study area as well as surrounding areas (residential, commercial, industrial, institutional)**
- **Topography, vegetation, natural resources, drainage, natural or manmade barriers or development constraints**
- **Transportation and access**
- **Infrastructure and utilities – availability, location, capacity, condition**
- **Vacant land – location, ownership, history**
- **Special features, characteristics, and considerations**

The study area includes all commercial/mixed-use zoning district parcels in Downtown and along the El Camino Real corridor, as well as a few R-3 (apartment) parcels that are directly adjacent to the commercial/mixed-use parcels. The study area encompasses 327 parcels with a total net lot area of approximately 130 acres.

The highest-visibility opportunity sites are a collection of former car dealerships owned by Stanford University along the southern length of El Camino Real (east side only). These sites total approximately 8.6 acres, and several are still under lease to the car dealership owners until 2012/2013. Stanford intends to develop the parcels in a comprehensive manner, and does not plan to sell any of the land.

With the potential exception of possible historic buildings, there do not appear to be any significant environmental impacts (flooding, biological resources, etc.)

### **b. Demographics**

- **Overview of city and study area population trends**
- **Population size and distribution within the study area**
- **Age distribution, number of households, household size**

- **Educational levels**
- **Special features, such as university students or public housing residents**

### City of Menlo Park

The following information is taken from the Strategic Economics draft analysis:

*Population and household growth in Menlo Park has been slower than San Mateo County.* Between 1990 and 2000 Menlo Park grew at an average annual rate of .75 percent, while San Mateo County grew at a rate of .85 percent. Estimates from the data service Claritas show that Menlo Park's population declined by an annual average of .02 percent between 2000 and 2008, while San Mateo County was estimated to have grown .2 percent annually. All of these growth rates are low, reflecting the fact that San Mateo County and Menlo Park are largely built-out and have therefore experienced few additions of new housing and households.

*Menlo Park and San Mateo County have both experienced consistent increases in average household size, largely due to growing numbers of families with children.* Both Menlo Park and San Mateo County have experienced approximately 3.5 percent total increases in average household size since 1990. However, Menlo Park's household size remains lower than the County at 2.46 versus 2.78.

*The percentage of Menlo Park families with children has increased significantly overall since 1990 but this growth has slowed since 2000.* The percent of families with children in Menlo Park increased from 42 percent in 1990 to 49 percent in 2000, compared to 47 percent to 51 percent in the County. However, estimates by Claritas predict that there has been little or no growth in the share of families with children since 2000. The share of family households overall in Menlo Park has increased from 56 percent of all households in 1990 to 58 percent in 2008, while San Mateo County has held steady at 67 percent.

*The median household income and per capita income are higher in Menlo Park than San Mateo County.* The 2008 median household income in Menlo Park was estimated to be just under \$100,000, with a median per capita income of \$59,093. This compares to \$82,373 and \$40,224 respectively in San Mateo County. Incomes in Menlo Park and San Mateo County compare favorably against the entire Bay Area, in which median household income is \$72,630 and per capita income is \$36,766 according to 2005-2007 US Census American Community Survey three-year estimates.

*Menlo Park has attracted and retained younger people, families, and families with children, but experienced out-migration of its older population.* The share of the Menlo Park population under 18 grew by 3.4 percent during the period from 1990 to 2007, while the population 65 and older decreased by 3.2 percent. This matches with the earlier finding that the shares of family households and families with children have been increasing over this same period.

These trends are further clarified by examining the "cohort retention ratio" (CRR). A cohort retention ratio reflects the net impact of migration and mortality on an "age cohort," a group of people born within a given time period. In this instance the CRR shows the net percentage of the 1990 five-year age cohort members that exist in Menlo Park in 2000 relative to each cohort's size in 1990. The CRR shows that between 1990 and 2000 Menlo Park experienced major in-migration of people in the age cohort that was 20 to 39 years old in 2000, but lost older persons at a speed beyond that explainable by mortality. These trends help to explain the increasing share of families and children under 18 during this time, as the cohort aged 20 to 39 in 2000 is likely to have experienced high fertility rates during the preceding ten years.

Although Menlo Park experienced an influx of children and families between 1990 and 2000, it now appears that the population is stabilizing and that families with children are likely to stay in the city.

*An increasing share of the Menlo Park population is enrolled in school.*

The most significant increases occurred during the 1990s, while enrollment slowed as growth of the population under 18 slowed during the 2000s.

### Grand Boulevard Initiative

The following is a summary of demographic and housing information for both San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties and along the El Camino Real corridor. Information is taken from the US Census Bureau – Census 2000 and ABAG 2005 projections.

- 18% of the total population in both counties resides in the corridor
- Median household income in 2000 on the corridor was \$72,573, which is similar to the median household incomes of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties (\$70,819 and \$74,335 respectively)
- Median age for the corridor is 36.3. For each county the average median age in the corridor is slightly higher than the median age for that county.
- 21% of all households within both San Mateo and Santa Clara counties reside in the corridor
- About 30% of the households in the corridor are 1-person households, compared to 25% and 21% for San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, respectively.
- Approximately 30% of households are 2-person households for the corridor and for both counties
- 53% of the corridor is renter occupied compared to approximately 40% for San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.
- Land use on El Camino Real:
  - 40% is housing (27% single family and 13% multi-family)
  - 23% is industrial and retail/office/commercial

#### **c. Economics of the study area**

- **Employment types and trends**
- **Major employers**
  1. **Location**
  2. **Size – number of jobs**
  3. **Types of jobs**
- **Unemployment – level and trends**
- **Income data (individual and household)**

*Over one-third of Menlo Park workers are employed in Palo Alto, Stanford, and Menlo Park.*

US Census data shows that 32 percent of Menlo Park workers held primary jobs (their highest paying job in a given year) in Menlo Park, Palo Alto, or Stanford during the period between 2002 and 2006. These locations easily outstripped any other locations. Other primary jobs were widely dispersed throughout the Peninsula, Silicon Valley, San Francisco, and beyond.

#### **d. Housing Market (if relevant)**

- **City market conditions and trends**
- **Housing types within the study area – single family, multi-family, ownership, rental**
  1. **Location and number**
  2. **Age, condition, occupancy status**
  3. **Sales prices or rent levels**
  4. **Tenure of occupancy: current estimates and past trends**

- **Current and planned residential development**
- **Competitive or alternative residential locations**

### City of Menlo Park

The following is excerpted from Strategic Economics' draft analysis:

*The Study Area is well positioned within the region to capture housing demand from a variety of groups.*

The Study Area is located in close proximity to employment centers, regional transportation options, educational institutions, and Downtown's retail core. These attributes draw professionals, based on proximity to their offices or CalTrain, students, based proximity to Menlo College or Stanford University, and seniors who want to live in a walkable place with high-quality transit connections. The competitiveness of this location, combined with the housing type preferences of the various groups mentioned, shape the nature of housing demand within any given portion of the Study Area. For example, young professional singles or couples might seek apartments, empty-nesters might seek highend condominiums, and families with children might seek single-family homes and townhomes. There is demand for a wide range of for sale housing types in Menlo Park, including many types that have not been built in Menlo Park in recent years. A wide range of demographic and household types are drawn to Menlo Park thanks to its strong schools, good community facilities, village-like community atmosphere, and central location. These different household types demand a wide range of housing types. Recent construction has primarily consisted of single-family homes, including some small-lot single family homes. The character of this demand suggests a strong market for small-lot single family homes, townhouses, condominiums, and some apartments.

*There is demand for rental housing in Menlo Park, despite the lack of recent apartment development in the City.*

The desirability for housing in Menlo Park extends to rental households, especially since rental housing provides entry for young families and an attractive option for footloose young professionals. Rental supply and options are limited given that more than 85 percent of Menlo Park rental units are more than twenty years old. The Study Area is an ideal location to capture demand for new multi-unit apartment buildings because the site context is appropriate in Downtown and along El Camino Real, young professionals are able to access jobs via CalTrain, and the walkable, village-like atmosphere accommodates the preferences of seniors and younger households for easy, walkable access to amenities within a vibrant environment.

*While demand is strong for a variety of housing types, what is marketable in any given location will depend on site-specific characteristics.*

The Study Area spans a wide area, especially given the linear nature of El Camino Real. As a result, there are different physical contexts that will determine housing types appropriate in any given area. Properties fronting on El Camino Real are better suited to higher-density housing; properties facing the residential streets parallel to El Camino Real are better suited to townhouses and small-lot single-family homes. Properties near the CalTrain station are ideal locations for higher-density housing given the access to Downtown and CalTrain; properties within Downtown may be suitable for higher-density apartments, condominiums, or townhouses (depending on the context), but the scale must be appropriate.

### Grand Boulevard Initiative

There currently is a growing desire within communities for a more sustainable way of life that provides the opportunity to move away from the traditional vehicular dependent existence to one that is walkable and pedestrian friendly. This trend can be seen in the current market, as demonstrated by the current Park Broadway condominium complex which is currently selling at a pace that is 110% above the current Northern California average. This condo community is

located within walking distance to the shops and restaurants in downtown Millbrae, as well as near Caltrain, BART, and the freeway.

The State of California is also recognizing the need to curb sprawl and to focus on smart growth that provides for a reduction in vehicle miles traveled for community residents. In 2008, the State passed a law, SB 375, to curb greenhouse emissions through redesigning communities. Additional information on SB 375 can be found in Section 7b.

**e. Commercial development – current conditions and historical trends (if relevant)**

- **Retail**
  1. **Overview of area wide retail markets**
  2. **Retail development within the study area**
  3. **Location**
  4. **Size**
  5. **Type**
  6. **Tenant mix: goods and services offered**
  7. **Parking, access**
  8. **Lease rates and terms**
  9. **Physical condition**
  10. **Economic condition**
  11. **Unique competitive strengths and weaknesses**
- **Competition (nearby commercial areas) – size, type, age, condition, access, tenant mix, level of activity**
- **Office (as above, if relevant)**
- **Industrial (as above, if relevant)**

The following is excerpted from Strategic Economics' draft analysis:

*Retail sales have remained steady in the Study Area, from 2003 to 2007, despite the loss of the auto dealerships.*

While the Study Area is not growing as quickly as other markets in the region, it is still performing well. Although the Study Area has lost almost all of its auto sales over the last ten years, that loss has not affected sales in other retail categories. In fact, most of the auto dealers left during the period from 2003 to 2006, years during which the rest of the Study Area's retail performed well.

*The Study Area is comprised of two distinct retail districts: Downtown Menlo Park and El Camino Real.*

Downtown Menlo Park and El Camino Real are distinct markets. Downtown Menlo Park is a pedestrian retail corridor with unique stores, especially home furnishing stores and women's apparel. El Camino Real is an auto-oriented corridor with primarily local serving retail.

*Despite the Study Area's existing competitive advantage for grocery stores, there is not likely enough demand for an additional grocery store.*

The Study Area is home to three supermarkets, including a unique and upscale market, Draeger's. Brokers report that this cluster of grocery stores attracts residents not only from all over Menlo Park, but also from neighboring communities. Brokers also report that grocery store retailers recognize the depth of the supply of grocery stores currently Downtown and presently do not view the Study Area as a target area for locating additional stores.

*Brokers report that there is demand from high-end home furnishing stores, high-end women's clothing stores, gift stores, restaurants, and quick-service food establishments for space in Downtown Menlo Park.*

Recently, most of the interest in available spaces has been from restaurants and independent local retailers. This is a trend in many downtowns since most national and regional retailers are currently not expanding due to the economic downturn.

*Downtown Menlo Park holds a competitive advantage for independent retailers and small format regional chains.*

Almost all the retailers in Downtown are independent rather than national chain retailers. Downtown Menlo Park is insulated from pressure from national chains due to the proximity of Stanford Shopping Center and University Avenue in Palo Alto. Most national chain retailers do not want to open another store in Downtown Menlo Park, because it is too close to their other properties. This lack of a need to compete with chains for space, combined with the highly affluent and well-educated local population, positions Downtown Menlo Park as a strong market for unique independent retailers.

*Brokers report that there is demand from local-serving retailers, such as pharmacies, fitness centers, hardware stores, auto supply stores, and quick-serve food and coffee stores for space on El Camino Real.*

There is also demand for casual and sit-down restaurants. Brokers report that interest from national chain retailers is currently low as they grapple with shifting consumer demand and tight credit markets. However, interest from independent retailers has been filling that void. There is longer-term potential for medium-format national retailers on El Camino Real, like a home furnishing store, once the national economy recovers.

*El Camino Real's advantages for retailers are strong linkages to other communities on the peninsula, good visibility, and high traffic counts.*

Nevertheless, parcel sizes, and particularly shallow lot depths, could limit the types of retailers willing and able to locate on el Camino Real. Standard configurations and high parking ratios may be difficult to achieve, so retailers will have to consider alternative configurations. El Camino Real has the advantage of linkages with other communities, yet the challenge of shallow lots which may not support standard retail configurations such as large parking lots.

*There is an opportunity to target additional retail to young people and families with children.*

The demographic analysis showed that Menlo Park consistently has a higher number of households with children and that this trend is likely to continue due to high performing schools in the area.

*Streetscape, pedestrian improvements, and additional Downtown housing or office uses could enhance the success of Study Area retail.*

An increase in residents or office workers in the Downtown area is likely to have a direct impact on retail spending. Access and pedestrian improvements to the Downtown will also help draw more shoppers to the Study Area.

## **7. GOVERNMENT**

### **a. Federal government activity affecting the study area**

None of note.

### **b. State laws or activity affecting the study area**

#### City of Menlo Park

For the 2007-2014 Housing Element process, Menlo Park has a RHNA allocation of 933 units, as well as a 837-unit 'leftover' from the 1999-2006 planning period (1,830 units total). The City is conducting a Housing Element update, although it is not immediately active.

#### Grand Boulevard Initiative

In 2008, the California State Legislature passed a law, named SB 375, to curb and control greenhouse gas emissions through curbing sprawl. Redesigning communities to reduce vehicle miles traveled, such as from home to work or to the store, will be a major factor in reaching California's greenhouse gas reductions goals set out in the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32).

This law will direct the Air Resource Board to set greenhouse gas reduction targets for regions of the state and work with California's 18 metropolitan planning organizations to align their transportation, housing, and regional land-use plans with greenhouse gas reductions in mind. Under SB 375, builders would get relief from certain environmental reviews under California Environmental Quality Act if they build projects consistent with the new sustainable community strategies. In addition, cities would get extra time (eight years instead of five) to update housing plans required by the state.

AB 32 requires the California Air Resources Board to develop regulations and market mechanisms that will ultimately reduce California's greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020. Mandatory caps will begin in 2012 for significant sources and ratchet down to meet the 2020 goals.

- c. County, if applicable: type of government; departments or agencies affecting the area such as police, fire, or health departments; relevant policies; programs, plan and regulations.**

The project area is served by the Menlo Park Fire Protection District, which also serves the rest of the city, as well as Atherton and East Palo Alto.

**d. Local/Regional government**

- **Type of government/agency – structure; roles and responsibilities**
- **Sources of revenue; taxation**
- **Current plans affecting the study area, such as comprehensive plans, area plans, school system plans, capital improvement programs, etc.**
- **Laws and regulations impacting land use and development in the study area (note any unusual or constraining provisions)**
- **Agencies or departments with responsibilities in the study area; relevant local policies and programs (such as inclusionary zoning or subsidized housing program, economic development programs, social service programs, park ordinance, etc.)**
- **Local political representation: key issues; type and level of interest and activity**

Menlo Park is a general law city with a 5-member City Council, whose members are elected at-large. Individual Council Members hold the rotating, 1-year position of Mayor and Vice Mayor, and a City Manager administers the day-to-day operations of city government. The Planning Commission consists of 7 residents appointed by the City Council. The Planning Commission makes final actions (unless appealed to the City Council) on use permits, architectural control, variances, and minor subdivisions, and makes recommendations to the City Council on actions such as General Plan or Zoning Ordinance amendments.

Menlo Park has an active, educated, and engaged community, and development-related topics always generate a lot of interest/discussion.

- 8. Private Sector Involvement: Name, location, and briefly, the history, interests, policies, programs, resources, representation, and activities of each (as relevant)**
  - a. Neighborhood associations or community development associations active in or affecting the study area**
  - b. Schools, hospitals, churches, etc., within or affecting the study area**

- c. Financial institutions, foundations, major corporations active in or interested in the area**
- d. Business organizations**
- e. Others as appropriate (such as private social service providers)**

Aside from the unique Stanford University ownership discussed earlier, the only other major private entity of note is the Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, which owns several parcels on the western edge of Downtown at Santa Cruz Ave and University Dr. The Church is interested in a long-term redevelopment of these parcels as part of an overall campus, and has also expressed some interest in partnering with the City for a Downtown parking garage that could be used for both Church events and Downtown business patrons.

The Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce is an active and engaged in the Specific Plan process.

## **9. Additional relevant information**