Agenda Item # 5

CITY OF SUNNYVALE
REPORT
Planning Commission Hearing

November 28, 2005

SUBJECT: 2005-0026 City of Sunnyvale Study Issue: Precise Plan for El Camino Real Update

REPORT IN BRIEF

The Precise Plan for El Camino Real is now 13 years old, and many changes have occurred since its adoption, including a renewed interest for new development and changes in the market and economy. This report provides updated market information, discusses pertinent issues and recommends a framework for the updated Precise Plan. Council ranked this issue #2 for Community Development at the December 2004 Study Issue Workshop.

The Precise Plan for El Camino Real was adopted in order to better control the development and use of this important street in Sunnyvale. The first phase of updating the Precise Plan is to study several different options for the future of the street. This report offers alternatives to update the Precise Plan and includes a list of recommendations. Once a preferred alternative is selected, the Precise Plan will be updated and returned to the City Council for adoption.

Staff recommends approval of the attached framework (Attachment E) to update the Precise Plan which includes an updated vision statement and policies, the identification of new Opportunity Areas (or areas needing special attention), the creation of "nodes" of higher density at major intersections along El Camino Real, implementation actions (such as the preparation of guidelines to help provide direction for new projects), and prioritization of a list of uses that are encouraged and discouraged along El Camino Real. Staff also recommends that all properties within the Precise Plan area be rezoned to add the El Camino Real Combining District to augment the underlying zone and implement the provisions of the Precise Plan for El Camino Real. If Council approves the recommended framework, Staff will return to Council with a fully updated Precise Plan.

BACKGROUND

El Camino Real is the oldest major road in California, stretching from the Mexican border to Sonoma. It is, obviously, the oldest road in Sunnyvale and has had a major influence on the development of the City. It serves as both a

local street and a State Highway for the area. It provides the community and surrounding areas with many types of retail goods and services, including automobiles, electronics, and groceries. El Camino Real also connects Sunnyvale with other South Bay and Peninsula communities, although this role has diminished since the construction of U.S. Highway 101.

In the 1950's, El Camino Real in Sunnyvale was zoned for residential uses, but that gradually changed to highway-oriented commercial uses in the 1960's. In the 1970's, the City made major improvements to El Camino Real, including widening the street, installing a landscaped median and street lights. The 1980's brought a maturity to the street, with efforts to improve and preserve its aesthetic quality through more controlled signage.

In the 1990's, the Precise Plan for El Camino Real was prepared in order to provide a plan to enhance the economic and design quality of the street. The Precise Plan describes the vision for the street, with guiding principles for the type of development, describing areas of opportunity and providing design criteria. The initial goal of the Precise Plan was to prohibit uses that contributed to an unfavorable image including automobile repair facilities not associated with other uses and small stand-alone restaurants. The Precise Plan was adopted in 1993, and described ten Opportunity Areas along El Camino Real, each with specific design criteria and uses.

The update of the Precise Plan is timely to take advantage of the current interest in the El Camino Real corridor. The Precise Plan could also help strengthen retail uses along the street and stimulate redevelopment of underutilized properties.

EXISTING POLICY

Precise Plan: The Precise Plan is a guide for community development. The existing Precise Plan prepared a Vision Statement as part of the document (Attachment C). The Precise Plan provides detailed mechanisms for implementing the goals, objectives and policies of the General Plan for the El Camino Real properties. The Precise Plan is not a State requirement, so it can take many forms.

The purposes of the El Camino Real Precise Plan are to:

1. Advise interested parties about primary uses and other types of allowed uses on El Camino Real.
2. Identify locations and development standards for the primary and other allowed uses.
3. Provide incentives for developing the primary uses along El Camino Real.

4. Describe a vision and guidance for the character and identity of El Camino Real.

One aspect of the 1993 Precise Plan was the inclusion of "Opportunity Areas" as part of the Plan. These are areas with a high potential for change and for which the Precise Plan created opportunity for recycling with special requirements or land use incentives. The opportunity areas include older and/or vacant structures, single-family residential structures which have been converted to commercial use, under-utilitized parcels and areas which will contribute to the vision of El Camino Real because of their location, such as at gateways or entries to Sunnyvale.

In 1999, part of Opportunity Area 4 was amended to allow retail and residential uses; and, in 2003, a portion of Opportunity Area 3 was also amended to allow residential and retail uses.

Zoning: The El Camino Real (ECR) Combining District was created as a companion action to the Precise Plan in 1993. A combining district adds requirements or procedures to the base zoning. The ECR combining district is similar to the more common Planned Development (PD) combining district; both require a Special Development Permit for construction and new uses, and allow deviations to the dimensional standards of the underlying base zoning. The concept for El Camino Real was to rezone the entire street to either C-2/ECR (Highway Business/El Camino Real Precise Plan) or R-4/ECR (High Density Residential/El Camino Real Precise Plan). This action was to be taken to ensure the implementation of the Precise Plan; however, rezoning of the entire street never occurred. To date, only four sites have received this combining district designation.

The Municipal Code addresses the Precise Plan for El Camino Real (Sections 19.26.140-190) as a Combining District to the underlying zoning designation. A use or development must comply with both the Precise Plan and underlying zoning district provisions.

In general, the ECR Combining District provisions currently include:

1. Minimum lot size for non-residential is 1 acre
2. Minimum frontage length for non-residential is 200 feet.
3. Freestanding auto repair facilities are prohibited.
4. Freestanding restaurants less than 3,500 square feet are prohibited.
5. The C-2 zoning district requires a 70' front setback.

General Plan: Selected Goals and Policies of three General Plan sub-elements are listed below. Attachment D includes a comprehensive list of relevant Goals and Policies from the General Plan.

Community Design Sub-element:

Policy A.2: Ensure that new development is compatible with the character of special districts and residential neighborhoods.

Action Statements:

A.2.c: Continue to encourage infill development or redevelopment which is compatible with the use, density, setbacks, height and, where possible, the predominant building style and size of the surrounding district or neighborhood.

Policy A.3: Support measures which enhance the identity of special districts and residential neighborhoods to create more variety in the physical environment.

Action Statements:

A.3.b: Consider development of specific plans or design guidelines for the El Camino Real Commercial District and Mathilda Avenue corridor and study the feasibility of specific plans or guidelines for portions of Evelyn Avenue.

A.3.h: Encourage distinctive projects at major nodes which have a coherent spatial relationship and create dynamic spaces at these intersections.

Land Use and Transportation Element:

Policy C4.1: Maintain a diversity of commercial enterprises and industrial uses to sustain and bolster the local economy.

Action Statement:

C4.1.3: Promote commercial uses that respond to the current and future retail service needs of the community.

Policy N1.11: Recognize El Camino Real as a primary retail corridor with a mix of uses.

Action Statements:

N1.11.1: Use the Precise Plan for El Camino Real to protect legitimate business interests, while providing sufficient buffer and protection for adjacent and nearby residential uses.

N1.11.2: Minimize linear "Strip development" in favor of commercial development patterns that reduce single-purpose vehicle trips.

Socio-Economic Sub-Element:

Goal 5.1C: Endeavor to maintain a balanced economic base that can resist downturns of any one economic sector.

Policy 5.1C.3: Maintain an attractive business community.

Policy 5.1C.5: Support land use policies that provide a diversified mix of commercial/industrial development.

DISCUSSION

El Camino Real Conditions: El Camino Real is primarily a retail corridor with the types of businesses that typically are accessed by auto. These uses are typically "destination retail." The businesses located on El Camino Real are used by residents of both Sunnyvale and surrounding communities. Some of the uses found on the street include auto dealerships, restaurants, big box retail, hotels, commercial strip centers and grocery stores. El Camino Real businesses are different than those found in the downtown area, or those likely to be found in the redeveloped Downtown Mall. The downtown is a destination retail center where people may arrive in cars, but then walk throughout the area. This is different from the businesses on El Camino Real where people typically park in the off-street parking area in front of the business, then go into the place of business and then back in their car for the next destination. Certainly some residents walk to El Camino Real, however, the vast majority of patrons arrive by automobile or bus.

El Camino Real has served the residents of Sunnyvale and surrounding communities with a variety of commercial opportunities for decades. The street runs 3.8 miles through the heart of the City, surrounded on 3 sides by freeways (Highways: U.S. 101, State Highway 85 and Interstate 280). The distance from U.S. Highway 101 to Interstate 280 is roughly 4.5 miles, and El Camino Real cuts through the middle of that area and provides a vital arterial for the region as well as important commercial corridor which is well-placed for residents through the center of the city.

Another unique aspect of Sunnyvale's El Camino Real is that the auto dealerships are found in different locations along the entire length of the street. There is not a concentration, or "auto row", as found along Stevens Creek in San Jose/Santa Clara or Capitol Expressway in San Jose. Also, the extensive landscaping and street trees found along El Camino Real are not a street element found in those other locations.

There are several grocery stores located on El Camino Real. There are three major stores (two Safeway stores and one Albertson's) and some smaller stores which serve the ethnic communities.

There are three distinct segments to El Camino Real; the west, middle and east sections (See Attachment B for map of El Camino Real). Each area can be further described as follows:

West Side (From Mountain View City limit to Pastoria/Hollenbeck Avenue): This area is made up of a large retail complex which includes Safeway, as well as smaller properties with many types of commercial uses. There are five major auto dealerships (GMC/Pontiac, Lincoln-Mercury, Chrysler, Honda and Toyota/Scion) located in this area. There has been limited redevelopment in this area, but it has potential for redevelopment to occur given the age of the some of the buildings. There are a few large properties in this area (the auto dealerships, Cala Center, Cherry Chase center), which are successful developments and could provide the foundation for future improvements.

Middle area (From Pastoria/Hollenbeck Avenue to Wolfe Road): The middle area has experienced the greatest change over the past 10-15 years. New developments that have been built since the adoption of the Precise Plan include the Cherry Orchard commercial and residential development, the Jacobson property (with residential and commercial uses currently under construction), the location of Circuit City in a remodeled grocery store, the new Best Buy and PetsMart, and the expanded Acura dealership. Besides Acura, there are three other major auto dealerships in this area, including Ford, Nissan and Hyundai. Some of these developments are in locations defined as Opportunity Areas by the existing Precise Plan.

East Side (From Wolfe Road to Santa Clara City limit): The east end of El Camino Real is generally made up of smaller properties with less depth. There is an eclectic mix of uses along this stretch of El Camino Real, including trailer/mobile home parks, commercial centers, a sole auto dealership (Volkswagen) and high density residential developments. There are many stores, restaurants and businesses that cater to a variety of ethnic groups. The east end also has more residential properties located on the street.

<u>Market Forces:</u> The retail function of El Camino Real is critical to the City for several reasons. It provides a wide range of goods and services to people who live or work in the city. Also, retail businesses are an important source of sales tax revenue for Sunnyvale.

El Camino Real is dominated by auto-oriented commercial uses, including auto dealerships, auto repair, restaurants, hotels/motels, grocery stores and big box retailers. Businesses located on El Camino Real have consistently generated the largest amount of sales tax of any single geographic area of the City. In the peak years of 1999 and 2000, businesses on El Camino Real generated about 25% of the total sales tax generated in the city; for FY 04/05, they generated about 22%, or $5,412,598 of sales tax revenue .

The long-term economic stability of El Camino Real is affected by the changing retail environment. National retail trends have led to tremendous consolidation in the industry, leaving fewer retailers overall. In particular, the smaller retailer has become less common, as the mega stores or "big box" retailers have dominated the market. The result is difficulty in finding appropriate tenants to fill the smaller retail spaces along El Camino Real, and difficulty in finding sites large enough to accommodate the new "big box" retailers.

The demand from retailers for space along El Camino Real is strong. Its location through the center of the City makes it easily accessible from most Sunnyvale neighborhoods. The median income for households within one mile of El Camino Real is $87,500, which is slightly more than the County average, but over 50% above the State average.

Sunnyvale experiences some retail sales "leakage" (where residents leave the city to shop) in areas such as apparel, department stores, home furnishings, and appliance stores. It is expected that much of this leakage will be addressed by the redevelopment of the Town Center Mall in Downtown.

Currently, the greatest retail strength of the City is in auto sales. Per capita retail sales of new automobiles are almost double the County and State levels. The per capita sales for eating and drinking facilities are also higher than the County or State.

Many of the parcels on El Camino Real are small and/or shallow with fragmented ownership patterns (no single owner of several smaller contiguous properties). The type of retailers that function well on these smaller properties include the strip center type of businesses such as dry cleaners, small restaurants, gift stores, oil and lube service shops and fast food restaurants.

There are several large properties which are underutilized, but which already have a business with a long-term lease. As a result, redevelopment of many of these properties may not occur within the next 5-10 years. Based on information provided by businesses and property owners, the average lease on El Camino Real is approximately seven years, with smaller businesses working

with shorter leases. However, there are some major businesses with remaining lease terms of 20-plus years. Low lease rates on some sites with long-term terms make reinvestment in the property less feasible.

Other Communities' Efforts to Improve El Camino Real: Other communities are preparing plans or concepts on how to improve El Camino Real within their boundaries. Communities along the Peninsula (Daly City, Colma, South San Francisco, San Bruno, Belmont, San Carlos and Redwood City) are working with Caltrain and SamTrans to develop a blueprint for remaking El Camino Real into a "Grand Boulevard", a transportation destination which promotes pedestrian access, train ridership and concentration of development near the train stations.

These efforts are laudable, but cannot be repeated in Sunnyvale because the layout of those communities is different from Sunnyvale. Sunnyvale has a Caltrain station which is located approximately ¾ miles from El Camino Real, but within easy walking distance to historic Murphy Avenue and the upcoming redeveloped Downtown Mall. Planning efforts have been initiated (and will continue to be made) to make the area around the Sunnyvale Caltrain station a "destination", which encourages alternative transportation modes, where people get out of their cars and spend their time walking from place to place.

El Camino Real in Sunnyvale, however, is not located close enough to the Caltrain facility to have a direct tie-in to the train station. Nor is it close to the Downtown area to tie into those existing and planned uses. In fact, although pedestrians use El Camino Real, it continues to serve best as an auto destination area. It is the location where people go to purchase large items such as cars, electronics, furniture, groceries, etc. As a result, the idea of continuing the "Grand Boulevard" concept down the Peninsula into Sunnyvale is questionable. This report considers including elements of the "Grand Boulevard" design concept into the Precise Plan (such as creating mixed-use "nodes" around the major intersections along El Camino Real), but not the wholesale inclusion of those types of design concepts.

Opportunities: El Camino Real has many opportunities to improve the existing feel of the street, to build on the changes that have recently occurred, and to continue making the street an important asset to the City. Opportunities may include:

- There are many older buildings which are likely candidates for redevelopment.

- Traffic is constant along El Camino Real, and is made up of both local and regional trips. New, well-designed projects and retail businesses can help capture those potential customers.

- El Camino Real is unique from neighboring cities because of the extensive landscaping and building setbacks.

- Major retail businesses have moved to Sunnyvale (Best Buy, PetsMart) and businesses have redeveloped their property (Circuit City, Toyota, Jacobson property). These types of improvements can bring a "buzz" to the street and can encourage other improvements.

- Downtown Sunnyvale is going through major changes with the development of the Downtown mall and potential redevelopment of the Town and Country area. Although not immediately adjacent to El Camino Real, there may be ways to tie together the these major retail areas of the city.

- The housing market has been explosive during the past few years. This has caused interest in residential projects along El Camino Real. This interest can aid in bringing new development to the street.

- El Camino Real is not only a major arterial road through the city, but also a community road used by residents who live close by. The sidewalks, landscaping, streetscape and building design can enhance the value to local residents, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

- In many locations along El Camino Real, the properties back up to existing residential uses. This can create a conflict in the type of uses and development that occur on El Camino Real properties. Close proximity to residential can also allow easier access for residents to the businesses along the street.

Vision: The conditions and opportunities of El Camino real suggest an update may be needed to the Vision statement in the Precise Plan. The vision statement could address the primary purpose of El Camino Real, the types of businesses that are desired, which areas may need enhancement or need to be encouraged for upgrade, and connections to the rest of the community. The vision could also describe the desirable features that should be added and retained and described the general urban design principles that are valued for this street. Circulation, both vehicular and pedestrian could be addressed in a vision statement. Undesirable uses that detract from the vision could be

identified. Lastly, the vision statement could address the strategies for achieving the vision. Attachment E is the "Framework for Update of Precise Plan for El Camino Real" and includes a proposed updated vision statement.

Zoning and Other City Tools: There are several tools available to maintain and create the type of street envisioned by the Precise Plan. Listed below are seven tools that could be used in this effort:

1. *Land Use:* Controlling the use of property is a basic zoning tool which can be used to guide development. A key element is to select desirable uses which meet defined objectives, while limiting those that do not meet that vision. Attachment B includes maps showing existing uses in 1993 when the current Precise Plan was adopted and a map showing current uses found along El Camino Real.

2. *Development Criteria:* These provide specific development standards for form, function and design of new projects as they relate to El Camino Real. This zoning tool is used in all zoning districts and defines limitations and requirements for: setbacks, landscaping, minimum lot size, and parcel width.

3. *Design Guidelines:* There are several unique aspects to development opportunities along El Camino Real. It may be useful to develop guidelines specific to each aspect which could include the following:

   a. *General Design Guidelines:* Although the City does not have a defined architecture style, the properties along El Camino Real have general design elements which should be continued, unless specified otherwise in the Precise Plan. Those elements include well landscaped front areas, building setback from the street, consistent signage and relatively low buildings. Design guidelines could influence the form, function and proximity of new projects as they relate to El Camino Real. At major intersections, required front setbacks could be reduced to create a more intimate feel along the street which could create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

   b. *Streetscape Guidelines:* These guidelines would establish design guidelines for the streetscape, including landscaping, building massing, on-street parking and pedestrian-friendly aspects of the street. Allowing fewer curb cuts along El Camino Real would encourage cross property access and parking which integrate the businesses along the street. Providing guidelines for access and parking along the street would provide for more rational location of curbside parking, and could include provisions for on-street

parking, driveway access for shared parking situations and access for those properties with residential uses. Such criteria would also include loading zones of auto dealerships.

c. *Big Box Guidelines:* The recent Best Buy and PetsMart project has been criticized by some members of the public as a poor example of the type of design and architecture wanted on El Camino Real. The creation of guidelines for reviewing future similar-type projects would assist future developers in understanding the criteria and would give the public confidence that future projects will be reviewed on known design criteria. Guidelines could require smaller buildings to be located close to the street in order to reduce the sea of parking commonly found with big box retail.

d. *Strip Center Guidelines:* There are several examples of strip centers along El Camino Real which do not add interest to the street. In some cases, however, a strip center may be the only feasible development alternative because of the narrowness of the property. The development of guidelines for these types of development can ensure they are designed in context with the entire street and add value to the area.

e. *Adjacent Residential Properties:* El Camino Real has many commercial properties which back up to existing residential neighborhoods. This often creates a conflict with those residents, especially as properties redevelop. Options to address this issue include:
   i. Create unique requirements for each type of development as it relates to the adjoining properties. These may include height, setbacks, solar access, fence height, noise standards and allowable noise generating uses.
   ii. Continue to require any retail development to gain access only from El Camino Real and not from an adjoining neighborhood street.
   iii. Consider allowing mixed use projects, which have residential uses adjacent to existing residential properties, with access from the neighborhood streets.

4. <u>Opportunity Areas:</u> This tool was used in the existing Precise Plan, and could be used in the updated document. The Opportunity Areas could target properties which are underutilized or in poor condition. Specific guidelines could be described for individual properties, and incentives or special considerations could be included to meet the goals of the Precise Plan.

5. *Nodes:* Nodes could be targeted areas along El Camino Real which could be locations of higher density, mixed use developments. The concept would be to provide these node opportunities at major intersections along El Camino Real which would foster a more integrated development design. An example of the type of development envisioned at a node is the Cherry Orchard project.

6. *Incentives:* Another way of bringing business and development interest to the street would be to reduce fees, speed up the processing timing, or reduce zoning requirements of a project.

7. *City Improvements:* One way of identifying El Camino Real is through entry features such as gateways, banners and decorative entry signs. The median landscaping and street tree program are also City improvements that contribute to the image of El Camino Real.

FISCAL IMPACT

Preparation of the Precise Plan is covered in the Planning Division budget. An updated plan for El Camino Real would likely encourage new investment in properties along El Camino Real. It should have a beneficial impact on City revenue through both property and retail sales taxes.

CONCLUSION

El Camino Real is an important aspect of the city, both in terms of community identity and usage, but also because nearly 25% of sales tax revenue originates from businesses found on the street. El Camino Real, as it currently exists, has both strengths and limitations. The Precise Plan goal would be to build on the strengths and overcome the limitations. Concepts of ways to improve the street include the "Grand Boulevard" concept being pursued by other communities, having specific design guidelines, creating opportunity areas and nodes, and allowing incentives for new development or redevelopment.

El Camino Real Strengths: El Camino Real has several aspects which help make it a successful retail corridor through the City, including:

- *Location:* El Camino Real's greatest strength is its central location. The close proximity of El Camino Real to the existing residential areas as well as downtown and employment centers provides the businesses along the corridor an excellent opportunity to succeed.

- *Diverse Mix of Uses:* The street also enjoys a diverse mix of uses, which change and adapt as market forces and the economy changes. There are

regional uses such as auto dealers and big box retailers, as well as small businesses which serve a specific ethnic sector of the local community. This diverse mix of uses strengthens the economic stability of El Camino Real, and helps it survive and prosper through dramatic changes in the local economy.

- *Identity:* El Camino Real is recognized throughout the community as a major retail corridor. Residents view it as an easy place to shop, with relatively easy access and abundant parking. To some, it is identified as "auto row". Overall, its physical image, due to the quality landscaping, is a positive factor which stands in stark contrast to the image of El Camino Real in other cities.

El Camino Real Limitations: There are a few aspects of El Camino Real which create limitations for the success of the street as a commercial corridor, including:

- *Property Size and Ownership:* Many properties are too small for successful redevelopment. In addition, most of these properties have been owned by one individual or a family trust for many years, and that entity may not be motivated to redevelop a property or acquire adjacent parcels necessary to create a developable site.

- *Adjacent Residential*: Another critical factor in the continued use and potential upgrading of property along the street is the proximity of existing residential uses immediately behind the properties on El Camino Real. A large number of commercial properties back up to residential properties. Site planning, potential noise and increased activity levels affect the use and development adjacent to residential properties.

- *State Control:* El Camino Real is a State Highway (Highway 82), which means Caltrans maintains the road, intersections and grades along the entire stretch of the street. The City and Caltrans have a good working relationship, but issues such as landscaping, driveway locations, banners, etc. are subject to Caltrans approval.

- *Freeway Competition:* When El Camino Real was the main north and south road linking communities along the Peninsula, it logically became the location of retail establishments serving the entire South Bay (i.e. auto dealers). Since construction of the Highway 101 freeway, such uses have gradually migrated to sites along the freeway where they enjoy better visibility and regional accessibility.

PUBLIC CONTACT

A public outreach meeting was held for El Camino Real property and business owners on October 4, 2005. The purpose of the meeting was to explain the Precise Plan purpose and to elicit community input. Individuals attending the meeting have vested interest in the success of the street, and have perspectives which are valuable in forming any guidelines for development or redevelopment. A list of the issues discussed at the meeting is attached (Attachment G), and can be summarized as follows:

- Continue to allow curbside parking on El Camino Real
- Create big box guidelines
- Relax setback requirements for development in the Precise Plan
- Consider reducing certain requirements of new development projects, such as requirements for public art and extensive landscaping.

A subsequent community outreach meeting was planned for October 19, 2005, but unfortunately the meeting did not take place due to a noticing error. Later, staff contacted interested parties to apologize for the confusion and to get any feedback they had on the issues.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Framework for Update of the Precise Plan for El Camino Real (Attachment E) which includes a vision statement, goals, policies and implementation actions, and further develop the features of the revised plan for subsequent adoption by City Council.
2. Pursue the "Grand Boulevard" design criteria for El Camino Real.
3. Do not adopt any changes to the existing Precise Plan for El Camino Real.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Alternative 1, to approve the Framework for Update of the Precision Plan for El Camino Real (Attachment E) which includes a vision statement, goals, policies and implementation actions for the update to the Precise Plan for El Camino Real and further develop the features of the revised plan for subsequent adoption by City Council. Alternative 1 will:

- Create a vision and update policies for development along the corridor
- Describe new Opportunity Areas
- Create nodes for higher density development

- Prepare new guidelines for development and redevelopment along El Camino Real
- Prepare to rezone all properties to include the ECR Combining District designation.

The attached Framework for the Precise Plan (pages 7-19) includes place holders to further develop specific guidelines for the nodes, opportunity areas and specific land uses. The attached Framework for the Precise Plan also includes pages for each of the Opportunity Areas and Nodes that will be further developed in the next phase of this study.

El Camino Real has been a vital asset to the City of Sunnyvale for years, and the purpose of a revised Precise Plan is to continue to build on the successes to date and to have guidelines to ensure any new improvements meet the goals of the City. The approach considered in this report is to update the Precise Plan, maintaining several concepts from the existing Precise Plan, and to build on the success found along the street. It is understood that El Camino Real businesses are generally auto-oriented. Staff does not see this auto-oriented character changing, and that will be acknowledged in the design criteria and guidelines. There will be an effort, however, to bring a focus to certain key intersections along El Camino Real to add more vibrancy and to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment where people can park their cars and visit several stores in a complex. These areas, or nodes, can build on the success found at existing similar developments on El Camino Real, such as the Cherry Orchard center at Mathilda Avenue.

There are still many options for improvement and redevelopment along the street. There are several properties which are in fair or poor condition which, if left unimproved, can affect the development potential on adjoining properties. Most of these areas will be identified as Opportunity Areas, which can offer planning incentives such as higher density allowances and/or reduced setback requirements.

The development of properties or the redevelopment of buildings should not occur without sufficient planning controls and policies in place. The Precise Plan should include guidelines for the types of redevelopment and new development which is likely to occur over the next 10 years. Guidelines will address:

1. Big box buildings
2. Adjacent existing residential use compatibility
3. Streetscape design
4. Parking standards on El Camino Real
5. Strip center development

6. Parcel mergers
7. Mixed use design

The Precise Plan should also address the type of uses the City wants to encourage and discourage along El Camino Real. The original Precise Plan from 1993 was created to address the increase in stand-alone fast food restaurants and "quick-lube" auto service businesses. These issues may not be the same faced today, and are not likely to be those faced in 10 years. As a result, the document needs to provide flexibility to maintain its relevancy. Staff feels it is important to have a document that is flexible enough to work with changing market forces, but also specific enough to provide long-term guidance to development along the corridor. As a result, a list of use types that are either encouraged or discouraged will be included in the Precise Plan.

The recommended Alternative 1 does not include the adoption of the "Grand Boulevard" design of El Camino Real. As discussed in the staff report, the physical layout of the City of Sunnyvale is different from those cities currently pursuing the Grand Boulevard design. Staff has incorporated elements of this type of design into Alternative 1, specifically with the use of nodes at three major intersections in the city. These nodes, although not at train stations as found in other communities, would encourage a higher density, pedestrian-friendly design potentially incorporating a mix retail, housing and office uses.

Staff considers the Precise Plan document an important planning document, one which will guide new projects and the redevelopment of property along El Camino Real for years to come.

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Attachments

A. Study Issue paper
B. Maps of El Camino Real
C. 1993 Precise Plan Vision Statement
D. General Plan Goals and Policies
E. Framework for Update of the Precise Plan for El Camino Real
F. Public Meeting Comments

NUMBER CDD-31

PROPOSED COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

For Calendar Year: 2005

New X

Previous Year (below line/defer) _____

Issue: Precise Plan for El Camino Real Update

Lead Department: Community Development

General Plan Element or Sub-Element: Land Use and Transportation

1. What are the key elements of the issue? What precipitated it?

This study is an update to the Precise Plan for El Camino Real. The Precise Plan was adopted in 1993 and identifies ten different opportunity areas along El Camino Real that were especially ready for private redevelopment or are important to shaping the vision for El Camino Real. The purposes of the Precise Plan are to:

1. Describe the vision for El Camino Real.
2. Advise interested parties about the primary uses and other types of allowed uses on El Camino Real.
3. Identify locations and development standards for the primary and other allowed uses.
4. Provide incentives for developing the primary uses along El Camino Real.

Current development trends and recent development projects along El Camino Real suggest a need to update the 1993 plan and determine if opportunity areas should be added or revised to: protect existing uses, accommodate new uses, attract investment and/or provide new economic vitality.

El Camino Real is the major commercial corridor in the city. El Camino Real generates approximately 25 percent of the total sale tax revenue for the City, almost exclusively from consumer retail sales. El Camino Real should be strengthened as a major provider of retail services and as a major sales tax producer. El Camino is also a primary transportation route through the city that provides members of this and other communities a strong sense of Sunnyvale's image and values.

The City participated in Joint Venture Silicon Valley's "Main Street Silicon Valley" project. A total of twenty cities, two counties, and four transportation agencies all of whom are apart of the El Camino Real/Monterey Highway corridor study area, collaborated on this Joint Venture Silicon Valley project to create a shared vision for the El Camino Real/Monterey Highway corridor. The shared vision includes

addressing issues such as development patterns, economic function, community identity, streetscape design and land use. The review and evaluation of the current 1993 El Camino Real Precise Plan could work in tandem with the "Main Street Silicon Valley" project. El Camino Real is also designated a high priority corridor for transit by VTA.

2. **How does this relate to the General Plan or existing City Policy?**

Land Use and Transportation

Action Statement C1.1.1 Prepare and update land use and transportation policies, design guidelines, regulations and engineering specifications to reflect community and neighborhood values.

Policy N1.11 Recognize El Camino Real as a primary retail corridor with a mix of uses.

Policy N1.11.1 Use the Precise Plan for El Camino Real to protect legitimate business interests, while providing sufficient buffer and protection for adjacent and nearby residential uses.

Community Design Sub-Element

Action Statements

2.5A.3a. Encourage diversity and develop programs to emphasize the unique features of special districts and neighborhoods.

2.5A.3b. Consider development of specific plans or design guidelines for the El Camino Real Commercial District and Mathilda Avenue corridor and study the feasibility of specific plans or guidelines for portions of Evelyn Avenue.

3. **Origin of issue:**

Council Member(s): _____

General Plan: _____

City Staff: Community Development Department

Board or Commission (identify name of the advisory body from the list below): Planning Commission

(Arts, Building of Code Appeals, BPAC, Child Care, Heritage, Housing and Human Services, Library, Parks and Recreation, Personnel and Planning)

Planning Commission ranked this study issue 1 of 12 for 2005

Board or Commission ranking comments:

4. **Multiple Year Project?** **Yes___ No _X_ Expected Year Completed** 2005

5. **Estimated work hours for completion of the study issue (use 5 or 8-hour increments):**

(a) Estimated work hours from the lead department	350
(b)Estimated work hours from consultant(s) if applicable:	
(c)Estimated work hours from the City Attorney's Office:	25
(d)Estimated work hours from Finance:	
(e)Estimated work hours from other department(s):	
Department: Public Works	50
Department: Finance	20
Department:	
Total Estimated Hours:	445

6. **Expected participation involved in the study issue process?**

(a) Does Council need to approve a work plan? **Yes ___ No _X_**

(b) Does this issue require review by a Board/Commission? If so, please list below: **Yes X_ No ___**

Planning Commission

(c) Is a Council Study Session anticipated? **Yes X No ___**

(d) What is the public participation process?
Will include businesses and property owners on El Camino Real to obtain input; standard notification of public hearings with Planning Commission and City Council.

7. **Cost of Study: Please mark appropriate item below.**

X Costs covered in operating budget –Community Planning and Economic Prospe

___ Costs covered by project - <project name>

___ Budget modification needed for study - <$ Amount>

Explain below what the additional funding will be used for:

8. Potential fiscal impact to implement recommendations in the Study approved by Council, if any:

Mark a range for the items below:	$500 or none	$50K or less	$51K - $100K	$101K - $500K	$501K or more
Capital expenditure range	X				
Operating expenditure range	X				
New revenues/savings range	X				

Explain impact briefly:

9. Staff Recommendation for this calendar year:

"For" Study _X__ Explain:
The reason for the recommendation is to take advantage of current interest on the El Camino Real corridor and to strengthen retail uses along El Camino Real and stimulate conversion of underutilized properties. The Precise Plan for El Camino should be updated to reflect current land uses and serve as a guide for future uses to developers and City staff. Currently, there is much interest from property owners to invest in properties along El Camino. A number of proposals conflict with the guidelines of the current Precise Plan. El Camino Real is the major commercial corridor in the City. The most intense commercial development should be concentrated near major intersections. Under-developed areas between major intersections may be candidates for conversion to high-density residential or mixed use, provided that such development does not negatively affect small businesses or adjacent low-density residential neighborhoods.

The Community Development Strategy identified the El Camino Real as an action area that demands more than the type and level of community development services currently being delivered throughout the City. An action area requires a proactive approach to community development. Updating the Precise Plan is part of the strategy of improving El Camino Real.

"Against" Study ___ Explain. If staff suggests that this study should not be considered again in the future or deferred at this time, please include this in your explanation:

No Recommendation ___

Note: If staff's recommendation is "for study" or "against study", the Director should note the relative importance of this Study to other major projects that the department is currently working on or that are soon to begin, and the impact on existing services/priorities.

Reviewed by

Department Director 11/5/04 ***Date***

Approved by

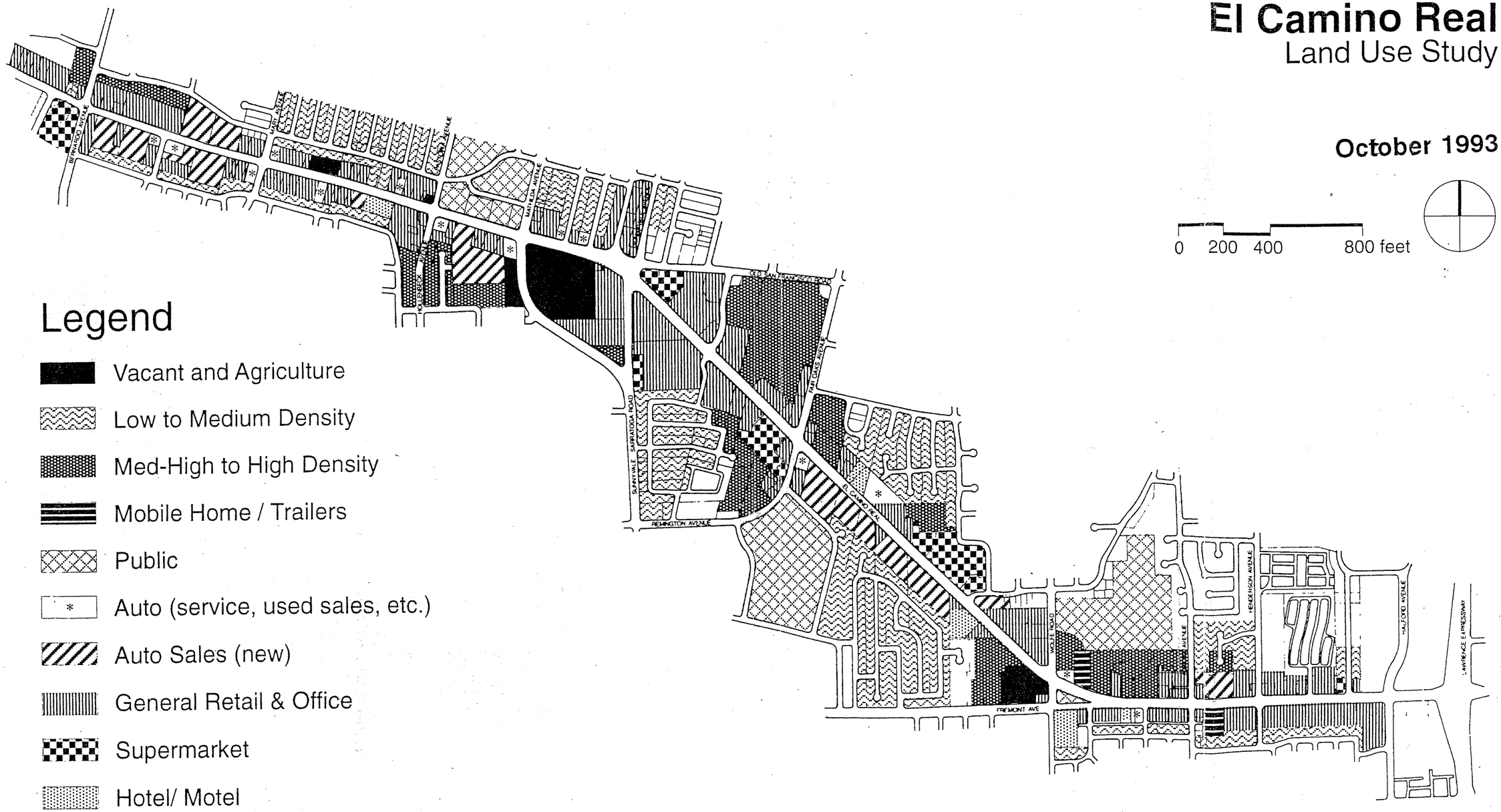
City Manager 11/9/04 ***Date***

ATTACHMENT B
Page 1 of 2

1993 Precise Plan

El Camino Real
Land Use Study

October 1993



Legend

- Vacant and Agriculture
- Low to Medium Density
- Med-High to High Density
- Mobile Home / Trailers
- Public
- Auto (service, used sales, etc.)
- Auto Sales (new)
- General Retail & Office
- Supermarket
- Hotel/ Motel

2005
El Camino Real
Land Use
Legend
ECR Land Uses
RETAIL
AUTO DEALER
AUTO REPAIR
HOTEL
MIXED
OFFICE
SPU
RES
SF
OTH
EL CAMINO REAL
MATHILDA
OLD S.F.
REED
MARY
EL CAMINO
REAL
FREMONT
SUNNYVALE SARATOGA
WOLFE
85
82
0 500 1,000 2,000 3,000