Meeting Objectives

Provide information on the market analysis of new commercial uses and the feasibility of mixed-use development. The information will be useful to understand the economic opportunities and barriers of future development on El Camino Real and other future focus areas in the City.

Meeting Summary

This meeting was livestreamed and broadcast on the local Cable Channel, and the City of Santa Clara’s Facebook page and Youtube channels. Comments received through Facebook and YouTube during the meeting were posed to the meeting participants and addressed in the moderated discussion during the Study Session.

Presentation

A presentation was made by the City’s consultants for the El Camino Real Specific Plan. Jerry Keyser, a real estate economics specialist with Keyser Marston Associates and Christine Firstenberg, a retail/commercial specialist with Retail Real Estate Resource Group. The consultants presented on how ground floor commercial real estate can be successful and issues and the potential for attracting larger store commercial development.
Planning Commission/Community Advisory Committee Discussion

After the presentation, the Planning Commissioners and Community Advisory Committee members asked questions of the consultants and engaged in discussion. Highlights of the discussion were as follows:

- Is repurposing parking spaces for commercial uses in the future realistic.
- Service uses (e.g. childcare) how can we plan and design for them. Allow them as of right in the zoning code, subsidize them in the activity centers.
- What is the impact of requiring green space to retailers? (restaurants like it, not service tenants)
- Grocery stores are disappearing in Santa Clara.
- How do you attract a grocery store? (A grocery store tenant considers the trade area first. Typically, they want 20,000 people, which is about 10,000 homes to place a 40,000 square foot store.
- We should do a grocery/retail anchor study for the El Camino Real Specific Plan to see what is possible.
- A 30,000 square foot retailer is a good size for El Camino Real (e.g. a Sprouts is 30,000 square feet, a Trader Joes is 15,000 square feet)
- A variety of spaces to attract a variety of tenants.
- When we discuss retail we should separate out service retail versus the retail of goods.
- Need to balance the retail out.
- Quick serve retail in the Bay Area is not expanding as the salaries are low relative to the cost of living in the area.
- Density is important to make retail mixed-use work.
- Different types of retail need different types of environments.
- Support ethnic stores – prevent them from leaving. (If you zone them for commercial uses only it will keep the price of land down)
- Current small businesses are functioning on El Camino Real now, how do you retain them? (One strategy to preserve these uses is to zone them for retail uses only.)
- Cities do not have many tools to keep small businesses or commercial uses in general. The zoning code and design standards for mixed-use development are the two tools a city has.
- Design retail spaces so that they have the best chance at being leased.
- How do you get population density that reduces the number of travel lanes?
- You need to look at commercial in the whole City. The Related project is going to suck up a lot of commercial uses.
- Are there any instances/exceptions where a commercial use would locate mid-block and not at an intersection? (possibly, if there was an easy U-turn location and left turns into the site.)
- Residential versus commercial rent. A site analysis is so specific that rents can be drastically different.
- Some commercial landlords take a percentage of the tenants’ sales and charge a lower rent.
- What is the cost for installing a grease trap and venting in a mixed use development?
- Autonomous cars still need somewhere to park.
- Account for new hotels, they bring in tax money to the City.
- For a long-term plan – how do you plan for the future market that is unknown? (best guess based on economic studies. America is over retailed in general. Reduce the amount of retail required and place it in the right locations, at intersections and design it right.
- Save right sized parcels in good locations for an ancho tenant such as a grocery stores.
- Subsidize commercial space – what would the trade off be? Affordable housing?
- On-street parking on El Camino Real, it doesn’t really support the retail that has on-site parking as it is not quick to parallel park.

Public Comment:
- If retail loves intersections, is to much traffic a concern for retailers? Or to large of an intersection a concern? (As long as it’s convenient)
- Is it possible to have a trolley that will transport people from El Camino Real to Downtown.
- Move smaller displaced retailers to Downtown.
- Could housing be designed to be able to convert to retail space in the future?
- We need smaller places