

CITY OF SANTA CLARA **EL CAMINO REAL SPECIFIC PLAN** **POLICY PLATFORM**

LET'S MAKE EL CAMINO REAL MORE VIBRANT AND ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL! As a growing coalition of community members and organizations, we believe the El Camino Real Specific Plan can provide a long-term vision that enhances the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in Santa Clara.

SANTA CLARA COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

Santa Clara Community Advocates, Greenbelt Alliance, Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition, SV@Home, Silicon Valley Leadership Group

We believe the El Camino Real Specific Plan can provide a long-term vision that enhances the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in Santa Clara. To do this, we make the following recommendations:

A THRIVING CORRIDOR

The specific plan can help El Camino Real become a more thriving and attractive place by encouraging a mix of new homes and businesses along the corridor. This makes sense for both residents and local business. When residents live near job centers, businesses acquire regular local customers, strengthening their economic sustainability.

Inclusive and diverse neighborhoods are benefits to communities. They can be created when residents have convenient access to multimodal transit options. This activates and enlivens sidewalks, reduces noise for pedestrians, discourages empty and blighted properties. Residents of all ages value convenient access to multimodal transit options, and when homes are built near transit options, it creates inclusive communities for people of all income levels and gives life to empty sidewalks and vacant lots. Community members of all ages and abilities have demonstrated a strong desire for safe, walkable, and bikeable neighborhoods.

New development and future streetscape improvements should be focused to create nodes of interest and activity, particularly around stations for the VTA Rapid 522 bus and the future BART stop. Particular attention should be placed on strengthening connections to work centers and making El Camino Real a destination. Safe biking and walking facilities can connect people to destinations that are close by or to transit for longer trips. Multimodal transit options will allow people to park once and use other modes of transportation to reach their destinations. The plan should also include measures to ensure that local

businesses that currently anchor neighborhood activity along the corridor continue to thrive, and that current residents remain a vital part of our community.

HOMES WE CAN ALL AFFORD

Housing affordability is a crisis across the Bay Area, particularly as job growth far outstrips the supply of new homes. Santa Clara is in the process of adding thousands of jobs throughout the city but has not provided enough homes to accommodate these new jobs. To help the city address this growing imbalance, the plan should integrate at least 7,004 new homes along the corridor. 1,500 of these new homes have already been permitted and are moving forward. This will allow more people to live near their place of work and participate and invest in Santa Clara, rather than face grueling commutes to the edge of the Bay Area and contribute to regional traffic congestion.

Ensuring that homes are available for a full range of incomes and abilities is critical for creating inclusive and diverse neighborhoods along El Camino Real. Santa Clara County currently has a shortfall of more than 67,000 homes that are affordable to low-income residents. The average rent in Santa Clara for a two-bedroom apartment is currently more than \$3,300 per month, far beyond the reach of many families.

The plan should ensure that a minimum of 20% of these new homes are affordable to lower- and moderate income families, and it should include meaningful programs to achieve this target, including goals to support even deeper levels of affordability. For example, Santa Clara could establish an incentive program that rewards developers for providing affordable homes and identifies new affordable homes as the top community priority in the plan. This incentive program could also encourage a variety of housing options to increase affordability, including smaller unit sizes. Another tool the city could consider for incentivizing affordable housing includes public land dedications to facilitate the development of buildings that are 100% deed-restricted affordable, which

would allow for deeper levels of affordability including the most vulnerable of our neighbors who are at-risk of becoming homeless.

While the vision of vibrant new activity zones requires integration of residential and retail uses, opportunities for new and existing small businesses must be a part of this vision. The City should adopt a more flexible approach that promotes new homes as part of compelling mixed-use neighborhoods.

Increasing housing along El Camino Real should be a priority from an environmental and sustainability perspective as well. When employees can no longer live near where they work, they often move to the edges of the region, dramatically increasing traffic and placing additional sprawl pressure on our irreplaceable natural and working lands. Bringing Santa Clara's workforce closer to their jobs means less commuter congestion in a more commercially vibrant city. In addition, prioritizing higher density multi-family homes along the corridor can reduce water consumption by forty percent compared to single story homes.

Key Points for Housing Portion of ECR Specific Plan

- A housing-rich plan that would increase the housing capacity to 7,004 units and creates opportunities for complete mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhoods.
- A minimum of 20% of these new homes are affordable to low- and moderate income households.
- A robust incentive program to achieve deeper levels of affordability, including at the level of extremely-low income, such as Supportive Housing for people who recently experienced homelessness and homes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- A plan that acknowledges that, while the vision of vibrant new activity zones requires integration of residential and retail uses, retail requirements should be limited to specific areas along the corridor to promote commercial density and not deter residential development in other areas.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS OF ALL AGES HAVE A STRONG DESIRE FOR SAFE, WALKABLE, AND BIKEABLE NEIGHBORHOODS.

- A reformed set of standards for transitions and setbacks that make higher levels of density feasible throughout the corridor.

TRANSPORTATION CHOICES

All Santa Clara community members, whether they are using an automobile, walking or bicycling, should be able to safely and easily access treasured local businesses and services located on El Camino Real. Currently, El Camino Real is one of the most dangerous roadways in Santa Clara. It has a disproportionate number of collisions involving people walking and biking compared to other streets. This plan should create an El Camino Real which is a safe, lively and pleasant environment for walking, bicycling or driving an automobile.

To achieve this vision, the Santa Clara El Camino Real Specific Plan should include the following mode share goals for the corridor. At least:

- 15% of trips made on foot.
- 15% of trips made by bicycle and powered mobility, assistance devices including e-bikes, e-scooters, e-skateboards, and similar devices.
- 20% of trips made by utilizing public transportation.

These mode share goals reflect the growing trend, particularly among millennials and seniors, to choose

healthy, more sustainable travel options rather than driving alone. They also reflect more housing along the corridor, which makes short trips much more feasible for more residents. High targets are needed to help Santa Clara achieve greenhouse gas emission reductions as required by law while improving quality of life along the corridor. The plan should also include effective transportation demand management strategies to reduce vehicle miles travelled; interim targets and milestones; and measuring and monitoring systems to ensure progress. The targets recommended above are the same as in San Jose's Envision 2040 plan. Both cities should work in partnership toward shared goals.

The plan should integrate a robust suite of locally-appropriate smart sustainable transportation strategies to help accomplish its mode share goals.

We support the following changes to El Camino Real:

- The creation of a protected bikeway for safer bicycling and walking.
- Wider, accessible sidewalks.
- Removal of on-street parking on ECR
- The consolidation of driveways along the corridor as development allows.
- Streetscape improvements that create more places for people to enjoy. See the Green Corridor section.
- Safer infrastructure, such as protected intersections and additional safe crossing opportunities.
- Bike parking and safe bike infrastructure that will support achieving the goals of the plan and consistent with the City of Santa Clara's Bicycle Master Plan Update 2018.
- Subsidized transit passes for those living or working along the corridor.

The plan should consider new and emerging transportation technologies that can improve mobility and reduce the need to own or use an automobile. Smart parking management strategies aligned to the mode

share goals will create a more inviting environment for residents and people visiting the corridor.

The plan should remove on-street parking on the corridor in addition to reducing required parking ratios in line with its mode share targets. Additional strategies may be required, including unbundling of parking costs from rents, allowing shared use of parking structures, and accepting parking-in-lieu fees. Parking usage data should be gathered regularly to identify areas of underutilized on-street and off-street parking. With better infrastructure for biking, walking, and transit, and the future of autonomous vehicles, the need for parking is decreasing over time.

Together these strategies will provide more and healthier transportation choices for residents and visitors, reduce traffic and congestion, improve air quality, increase development potential, improve housing affordability, and ultimately foster a more walkable and bikeable El Camino Real.

A GREEN CORRIDOR

There are important streetscape changes that Santa Clara should include in the El Camino Specific Plan to achieve increased sustainability and quality of life.

The plan should include well-designed green features for relaxation and recreation, including pocket parks, rooftop gardens, and streetscape improvements such as street trees, lighted pedestrian pathways, and natural rainwater collection solutions. Bringing more natural elements into the corridor will help create beautiful, comfortable spaces which enhance the area's unique charm.

The park and recreation needs of the community in the El Camino Real Specific Plan area are underserved based on Trust for Public Land's park equity research, so increasing the park-likeness of the corridor should be a plan priority. Adding these elements will help provide a deeper sense of community, foster "eyes on the street" for increased safety, and offer many environmental benefits.

SUMMARY

The vision for El Camino Real needs to meet many goals: improving quality of life, improving sustainability, providing more housing and more affordable housing. The City of Santa Clara should adopt a policy of requiring canopy trees whose height is in scale with the street width. Santa Clara should discourage use of non-native palm trees along El Camino Real. The goal is to provide enough shade to reduce the heat island effect, while increasing the park-likeness along the El Camino Real.

The plan is a transition from an automobile-centric past to a walkable, bikeable, sustainable future.

Changing the land use along El Camino Real as described makes this future possible. For example, including housing featuring multi-family homes at five or more stories reduces water consumption per dwelling unit by sixty five percent compared to single story detached homes. Adding more housing and denseness make transportation work better, reduces vehicle miles travelled which reduces fossil fuel emissions and pollution and improves quality of life.

TO GET INVOLVED OR LEARN MORE, CONTACT SANTA CLARA COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

Santa Clara Community Advocates is a growing group of Santa Clara residents, working towards a long-term solution to create a more sustainable and equitable community for its neighbors. The group is supported by non-profit coalition members including Greenbelt Alliance, Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition, SV@Home, and Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

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