



*Loma Prieta Chapter serving San Mateo, Santa Clara & San Benito Counties*

November 9, 2015

City of Millbrae  
Members of the Planning Commission  
c/o Angela Louis, City Clerk  
621 Magnolia Avenue  
Millbrae, CA. 94030  
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Re: Suggested modifications to the MSASP for recommendation to Council

Honorable Chair and Members of the Millbrae Planning Commission:

At your November 2 meeting, you heard a lot of public comments to assimilate before the November 16<sup>th</sup> meeting in order to make recommendations to the City Council.

Here is a list of suggestions that we would like the Planning Commission to consider recommending to Council (endnotes explain the basis for our recommendation).

1. AFFORDABLE HOUSING: Council should not approve the MSASP until the Planning staff meets with the City Attorney, and outside real estate legal experts, if needed, to establish a legal way to implement the Plan with a guarantee that a net of 15% minimum affordable units, both for sale and rental, will be built within the MSASP and that in lieu fees are not acceptable to meet this requirement.<sup>1</sup>
2. TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION: Council should approve the MSASP with Conditions of Approval that:
  - a) all streets within the MSASP be designed as “complete streets” to reduce collisions and traffic fatalities . All streets, walks and intersections in the Plan should be designed to prioritize pedestrians first, transit second, bicycles third, shuttles fourth, and autos last.<sup>2</sup>
  - b) staff to work with CalTrans to redesign El Camino Real to be a “complete street” to slow traffic and improve pedestrian and bike crossing safety<sup>3</sup> and include a protected bicycle lane on El Camino through the Plan Area to improve bicycle mode share and safety.<sup>4</sup>

- c) the Plan include an alternative to add a new signalized pedestrian / bicycle at-grade crossing at El Camino Real and Chadbourne in alignment with the entrance to the future Serra galleria and the station entrance<sup>5</sup>.

3. PARKING: Council should approve the MSASP with Conditions of Approval that:

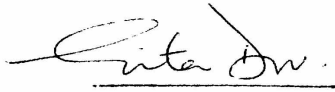
- a) the maximum amount of parking in new developments not exceed the recommendations in the MSASP for a TOD development.<sup>6</sup>
- b) the MSASP include a stronger Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program that includes a clearly identified auto travel reduction goal, interim goals, and a strong enforcement and monitoring mechanism.<sup>7</sup>
- c) all transit operators and developments in the MSASP must charge for parking (unbundled in residential and office, pay-for-use in commercial / retail / hotel).<sup>8</sup>
- d) developer's fees be set aside to pay for a Residential Parking Permit program, to protect neighborhoods from overflow parking created by new development and the station.<sup>8</sup>

4. OPEN SPACE: Council should approve the MSASP with a Condition of Approval that the Plan will include a specified minimum percentage of green open space on-site for use by residents, shoppers and employees.<sup>9</sup>

5. TRAFFIC STUDY: The Council should delay certification of the FEIR until the analysis of traffic impacts are restudied to take into account the reduction in traffic that will result from:

- a) a stronger Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program
- b) reduced parking
- c) redesign of the Plan's circulation system, including El Camino Real, to make pedestrian and bike safety the highest priority as the station area develops - pedestrians first, transit second, bicycles third, shuttles fourth, and autos last<sup>10</sup>

Respectfully submitted,



Gita Dev  
Gladwyn D'Sousa  
Co-chairs Sierra Club Sustainable Land Use Committee  
cc Christine Dilorio, Community Development Director

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## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> The MSASP includes a minimum requirement of 15% affordable housing, but the very first proposed development - TOD #2 - does not include any affordable units because they claim they are legally exempt because their units are rentals. Staff has tried to circumvent this exception by adding a Community Benefits section to the MSASP based on density bonus negotiations. This leaves the % and income levels of affordable units at the mercy of “voluntary” negotiations between the city and the developer and does not include an effective mechanism to get the housing actually built. The Community Benefits section should be tweaked to mandate 15% affordable units as an absolute condition for any density bonus. Other Community Benefits can be negotiated separately. **This change must be made before the Plan is approved or the city loses most, if not all, of its leverage over the developer on affordable housing.**

An alternative to the density bonus approach is “Land Value Recapture” which we explained briefly in Sierra Club’s October 29 letter to the Planning Commission.

The city can justify requiring affordable housing as a Community Benefit in recognition of the value added to the property by the city’s upzoning the land for higher density development. The Palmer Court Decision limiting inclusionary zoning for rental developments should not apply to the MSASP as the city should be able to clearly show the nexus between upzoning the property and the increase in value of the land received by the developer.

An alternative to including BMR units in the developer’s housing mix is for the developer to purchase another property within the MSASP that is suitable for building the equivalent of 15% free-standing affordable units in partnership with a reputable non-profit developer.

<sup>2</sup> Traffic generation in the Plan Area can be reduced by a redesign of the traffic circulation routes within the whole MSASP to emphasize pedestrians first, transit second, bicycles third, shuttles fourth, and autos last in accordance with BART’s Station Area Plan Guidelines. This will encourage people to walk, bike, or take transit rather than driving and will reduce traffic congestion. This priority is in keeping with the goals of the MSASP, but is not reflected in the proposed Plan.

<sup>3</sup> El Camino Real is one of the most dangerous arterials in San Mateo County and the number of travel lanes and traffic speeds should be reduced and all intersections designed for maximum safety. The best way to do this is to redesign El Camino Real as a “complete street” per NACTO Urban Streets Guidelines <http://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/>.

CalTrans in collaboration with the Grand Boulevard Initiative has agreed to consider NACTO as a standard for the redesign of any State highway (such as El Camino Real) that runs through the urban, developed portions of a city. Cities can no longer say they have no control over El Camino Real because it is under state jurisdiction. Caltrans is willing to consider a city’s desires when designing an urban

street. The FEIR totally ignores the use of Nacto Guidelines in the MSASP and instead uses older outdated standards to analyze traffic impacts and suggest mitigations that favor the auto over all other modes of transportation.

A redesign of El Camino can slow traffic and improve pedestrian and bike crossing safety so that people west of El Camino will be encouraged to walk or bike to the station rather than drive. The success of the MSASP is dependent on improving the safety and visual appearance of El Camino Real so pedestrians will feel comfortable in the area and will want to walk to shop in the retail shops facing El Camino which will contribute to sales tax revenue to the city.

<sup>4</sup> Bike routes should be visually separate from vehicular traffic, and physically separated with a barrier on all heavily-traveled streets (El Camino Real and Millbrae Avenue). The Sharrows shown on El Camino Real are inherently unsafe and should only be considered for low-density, light vehicle traffic streets.

<sup>5</sup> A pedestrian crossing at Chadbourne will allow SamTrans to establish a convenient new bus stop at Chadbourne for southbound buses and eliminate the need to redirect the buses across El Camino at Victoria to California Drive then back across El Camino beyond Millbrae Avenue. It will also direct bus passengers to the future entrance to the galleria and through the galleria which may entice them to purchase items in the galleria retail shops thus contributing to the galleria's financial success and adding to the city's sales tax revenue.

<sup>6</sup> Table 5.4 on page 5.17 of the MSASP recommends minimum off-street parking requirements. We recommend that these minimum requirements be considered a cap on parking so developers will not be able to provide more parking than is reasonably needed at a TOD. Reduced parking can reduce traffic congestion by encouraging drivers to use alternate modes of transportation to get to the station. Page 5.16 of the MSASP states that minimum parking ratios can be further reduced if strong TDM measures are implemented. TOD #2 far exceeds these recommendations and excess parking will encourage people to drive, thus exacerbating traffic congestion. Shared parking is one way to provide parking using fewer spaces.

<sup>7</sup> A strong Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program with clearly identified goals and a strong enforcement mechanism can dramatically reduce traffic congestion. The MSASP should require developers to hire a consultant with trip reduction expertise to assess feasible mode share/trip goals for the area (e.g. Nelson\Nygaard's work for Mountain View resulted in 45% drive alone mode share goal). We suggest a goal of 50% or more reduction is a reasonable goal in this location. The Plan includes a good section on TDM strategies on pages 7.11 through 7.14, and the Plan requires public reporting of trip results to Council at least once a year, but the Plan does not require adjustments to the TDM Program if goals are not met. Compliance should be required and adjustments should start with a "reinvestment

clause” where the first step to address noncompliance is to invest in stronger measures.

<sup>8</sup> Paid parking is a TDM strategy that is effective in encouraging auto users to consider alternatives to driving, thus reducing traffic congestion. Charged parking can encourage walking, biking, carpooling, and transit over driving and can help pay for garage construction and maintenance over the long term. An additional reason to charge for parking is that BART/Caltrain parking will not be free, and commuters will park for free in nearby residential / commercial spaces including Urban Republic’s and Serra’s retail spaces if parking is free in those developments. To assure against overflow parking into adjacent neighborhoods, all developers should participate in a Residential Permit Parking Program to limit unpermitted parking on nearby neighborhood streets. The MSASP has a provision for setting up a Residential Permit Parking Program if needed.

<sup>9</sup> Why is a reasonable provision for open space not included in the Plan? Higher density development only works well when design in conjunction with nearby and accessible open space. The most livable cities in Europe and the USA incorporate open space as an integral element of the cityscape. Almost every city on the Peninsula includes on-site open space requirements. The Plan should require developers to provide public green open space on-site for use by residents, shoppers, and employees. Dense developments without landscaped open space are less desirable places to visit and live in. Green open space also helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions by absorbing CO<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>10</sup> The proposed traffic mitigations in the FEIR (including restriping for additional turn lanes) are based on overly conservative traffic projections based on auto-priority Level of Service (LOS) at intersections and will increase the chance of pedestrian and bicycle collisions and fatalities. LOS is considered an outdated method for analysing traffic impacts for a TOD area. Auto-priority is not considered appropriate for TOD.