



Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning
Mountain View, CA 94041

April 2, 2014

Rebecca Shapiro, Associate Planner
City of Mountain View
Community Development Department
City Hall, 500 Castro Street
Mountain View, CA 94041

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Report for the new San Antonio Precise Plan

Dear Ms. Shapiro:

The Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning, a group of Mountain View residents interested in promoting sustainable development of our city, would like to comment on the proposed scope of the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the new San Antonio Precise Plan.

Transportation and Circulation

Vehicle traffic: The EIR should specify the maximum carrying capacity of roads in and around this area at peak times. This limit is needed to prevent these roads from becoming gridlocked and effectively unusable. Restrictions should be put on development proposals in the area such that, after all possible vehicle-reduction measures have been applied, these traffic counts will not be exceeded. Constraints should be implemented for both public streets and those inside a development area (such as internally to San Antonio Center).

The EIR should list mandatory and effective traffic-mitigation measures that developers and occupants of both commercial and residential buildings can be required to use, such as deploying shuttles throughout the city (e.g., through a TMA); designing the development to encourage employees, residents, and visitors to use public transportation; providing incentives to employees to use this public transportation and disincentives for driving; providing opportunities for car-sharing and information about alternatives to driving.

Spreading out traffic over a more extended “peak time” interval should be implemented whenever possible, as electric utilities do to avoid having to build more “peaking power plants”.

The City should formally implement an ongoing program in the San Antonio area to monitor traffic caused by developments and to impose significant penalties for inadequate implementation of mitigation measures, similar to the thinking being applied to the North Bayshore area.

Non-vehicular traffic: This is a basic mitigation measure. The EIR should specify how to increase non-vehicular mobility by making it safe, attractive, and efficient for bicyclists and pedestrians to circulate freely to, from, and throughout both private and public property in the area. We understand that bicycle traffic to and from San Antonio Center has decreased substantially since Phase I was implemented. The reasons for this should be detailed and the information used in evaluating all subsequent project design proposals. Increased bicycle/pedestrian mobility is indicated both as a goal of the General Plan and as a critical traffic mitigation measure. “Safe routes to school” should be considered explicitly, as routes that children can use without being driven relieve a major cause of traffic congestion in all parts of town. Unfortunately, options for children to bike to their schools in Los Altos from this area have been decreased recently. This should be taken into account for future planning. A hopeful note is that unscheduled CIP project US-1 would result in the construction of dedicated bicycle lanes on San Antonio Road from El Camino Real to California Street, and this should be expedited to help make the San Antonio area more safe and pleasant for those on bikes.

The use of these roads by people passing through on their daily business, particularly from Los Altos and Palo Alto, should be considered. This means that evaluating traffic conditions along San Antonio Road up to a mile away from Mountain View, if our portion is acting as a bottleneck further along, is essential.

Circulation options on Pacchetti Way north of California Street deserve close evaluation, so that this road does not become a bypass for many vehicles escaping congested conditions on San Antonio Road. It might be necessary to put constraints on vehicular travel along this road.

Parking

Required parking for developments should be based on consideration of transportation alternatives such as those enumerated above. Residents need to know their streets will not be clogged by overflow from commercial development nearby. If parking appears to be sufficient and there is still spillover in residential areas, a permit system might be needed, and the City must be able to implement this quickly and with minimal financial impact on residents.

San Antonio Center should absolutely have a shared-parking policy based on mixed use in its new Precise Plan, as it and all other such areas in the City have always had. We understand that some formal study of this is underway. This policy should hold for all of San Antonio Center as well as any other mixed-use development area that arises in this Precise Plan area.

Air Quality

Air quality standards tie in with vehicle traffic issues and should be based on readings in the immediate area, and geared to the safety of residents and visitors, especially children. Development that increases vehicular traffic to the point of creating unsafe breathing conditions should not be allowed.

Trees, especially large native trees, should be encouraged within the area as an air-quality mitigation measure as well as making it more habitable. Streets and open spaces should be designed to maximize the tree population.

Noise

Commercial development at San Antonio Center must be designed so it does not create major noise pollution for nearby residents, or for visitors who want to use the public spaces without disruption.

Following are environmentally-related topics not specified for EIR review.

Land use and intensity

We suggest that it is fully appropriate to review FAR numbers in the General Plan on the basis of recent experience with traffic in the area. How many intersections are already LOS (Level of Service) F? Further redevelopment of the eastern part of San Antonio Center, and considerable development around its edges, is also being contemplated in the Precise Plan. All of this should be subject to physical constraints on traffic in the area as described at the start of this letter. We should not face a situation where traffic limits have been reached well before most of the redevelopment contemplated in the Precise Plan has occurred. Such a situation would not accommodate reaching the goals for the area that are described in the General Plan.

Neighborhood services

There has been an increasing lack of the neighborhood goods and services in San Antonio Center that are needed daily by area residents, relative to what was available several years ago. This trend in both Phase I development and plans for Phase II is a serious environmental, economic, and quality-of-life issue, as area residents are required to travel much further, often by car, to access what they need.

Although this area was designated a "village center", the recent mix of uses in the redeveloped area does not meet the definition. The redevelopment proposal for Phase II appears to make matters worse.

If smaller businesses providing a variety of everyday goods and services with lower price points will be eliminated by new development without consideration of the needs of the residents, there should be required mitigation, so that the area does not become a service desert.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Aaron Grossman

for the Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning