



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DIVISION

MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

INTRODUCTION

This Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 and its applicable Guidelines, as amended. It is an informational document prepared to inform the decision-makers and the general public of the potential environmental effects associated with the proposed project at 201 El Camino Real and 612 Cambridge Avenue.

The City of Menlo Park will use this Mitigated Negative Declaration in its decision-making process on the proposed project.

The conclusion of this Mitigated Negative Declaration is that the proposed project, with mitigation measures, would not generate any significant direct or primary physical impacts on the environment.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION

The project consists of adjacent properties located at 201-211 El Camino Real (hereafter referred to as 201 El Camino Real), 612 Cambridge Avenue and a portion of Alto Lane. The property located at 201 El Camino Real is located in the El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan (Specific Plan) area and is zoned within the Specific Plan as ECR-SW (El Camino Real South West). The property located at 612 Cambridge Avenue is not located in the Specific Plan area; it is located in the R-3 (Apartment District) zoning district.

The property located at 201 El Camino Real is improved with an existing one-story, approximately 6,032-square-foot commercial building and seven parking spaces, and an open parking lot with 28 parking spaces. The property located at 612 Cambridge Avenue is improved with an existing multi-family building with four rental units constructed in 1917. This residential building has no on-site parking and utilizes four of the 28 spaces in the adjacent parking lot associated with 201 El Camino Real pursuant to a parking agreement.

The proposed project would demolish all of the existing improvements and construct a new, approximately 25,283-square-foot, three-story, 38-foot tall, mixed-use development over two levels of subterranean parking on 201 El Camino Real and two detached townhouses on 612 Cambridge Avenue. The mixed-use building would include 12 residential units (totaling approximately 17,951 square feet, including allocated common area), two of which would be below market rate (BMR) units. The two detached townhouses would total approximately 3,564 square feet and would be market rate. The ground level of the mixed-use building would be developed with approximately 7,331 square feet of space dedicated to accommodating a mix of restaurant and retail uses. The ground level would also include a small residential lobby. A total of 59 parking spaces, including mechanical lift parking, would be provided in the two-level subterranean parking garage, accessible from Cambridge Avenue, which would satisfy the City's parking requirement of 59 spaces for the project.

To accommodate the project, the applicant is requesting abandonment of Alto Lane, the public right-of-way that currently serves as an alley that separates the two parcels comprising 201 El Camino Real and which dead ends into the property to the north, 239-251 El Camino Real. The parcels would be merged so that the proposed improvements would not cross any property lines.

The project site currently has three curb cuts on Cambridge Avenue, including Alto Lane, the parking lot entry, and the 612 Cambridge Avenue driveway. These would be replaced with a single curb cut providing access to the subsurface parking garage, located along Cambridge Avenue.

The project's mixed-use component complies with the Specific Plan's design standards and guidelines. The structure is oriented toward the northwest corner of El Camino Real and Cambridge Avenue, consistent with the goal of enhancing commercial vitality along El Camino Real. This design permits a number of features that are intended to both promote a sense of community and respect the residential character of the surrounding neighborhood, such as providing new retail and restaurant space, below grade parking, and native landscaping.

The proposed architectural style utilizes contemporary Monterey-Spanish forms. Details include metal standing seam roofing and barrel roof tiles, and wrought iron railings and fabric awnings rendered in clean, bright, modern, and eco-functional manners, which are compatible with, and sensitive to, the surrounding environment, solar orientation, neighboring residences, and adjacent El Camino Real businesses. A publicly accessible landscaped paseo would separate the townhouses from the mixed-use building to provide open space and help reinforce the transition from the commercial and multi-family building to the surrounding Allied Arts neighborhood. The open space area includes tables, chairs, bicycle racks, and large planters.

The project requests a public benefit bonus for the mixed-use component in order to allow for a building with a floor area ratio (FAR) of approximately 1.46 (i.e., 25,283 square feet) instead of the maximum base FAR of 1.1 (i.e., 19,034 square feet) or an additional 6,249 square feet, and an increase in permitted residential density to allow approximately 31 units per acre (i.e., 12 units) instead of the base density of 25 units per acre (i.e., nine units), or an additional three units.

The project requires approval of a vesting tentative map to merge the existing SP-ECR/D lots, abandon a portion of Alto Lane, and create a two-lot subdivision for condominium purposes, with 12 residential units, one restaurant space and no more than three retail spaces on one lot, and two townhouses on the second lot. Architectural control is required for compliance with Specific Plan standards and guidelines at the 201 El Camino Real property, and at the 612 Cambridge Avenue property, a use permit is required to demolish the existing one-story, four-unit residential development and construct two detached townhouses on a substandard lot with respect to lot width. The proposed project also requires approval for the removal of two heritage trees (which has already been granted) and approval of a BMR housing agreement for compliance with the City's BMR housing program. The City's BMR housing program requires the project to provide 10 percent of the proposed 14 housing units or 1.4 units as affordable. Because the proposed project is providing two BMR housing units on site, the additional 0.6 (difference between 2 units and the required 1.4 units) is proposed as the public benefit for the project. This public benefit bonus is proposed to allow for increases in development maximums per the Specific Plan.

Construction is estimated to span 15 months, which is typical for a project of this size. Demolition is likely to commence in approximately mid-2021. The remaining time would include construction of buildings, excavation for a subterranean parking garage, on-site improvements, and off-site improvements. Construction would include deep pile foundations, which would include the use of pile driving and jackhammers. The project would be subject to the City of Menlo Park Municipal Code requirements for allowable noise and hours of construction contained in Chapter 8.06 of the Municipal Code.

FINDINGS AND BASIS FOR A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

The Planning Division has reviewed the Initial Study for the project and finds the following:

1. The project will not generate significant adverse effects on the water or air quality, greenhouse gases, or increase noise levels substantially.
2. The project will not have any significant adverse impacts on the flora or fauna of the area.
3. The project will not significantly degrade the aesthetic quality of the area.
4. The project, with mitigation measures, will not have any significant adverse impacts on traffic, land use, population and housing, public services, and infrastructure.
5. In addition, the project will not:
 - a. Create impacts that have the potential to significantly degrade the quality of the environment.
 - b. Create significant impacts that achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals.
 - c. Create impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable to a significant degree.
 - d. Create environmental effects that will cause significant adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

It may, therefore, be determined that the potential environmental impact of the project will be less than significant.

INITIAL STUDY

A copy of the Initial Study on which the findings for a Mitigated Negative Declaration has been based is available on the City web page (<https://menlopark.org/1383/201-El-Camino-Real>). To request a hard copy of the IS/MND, please call (650) 330-6702 or email mapruter@menlopark.org.

REVIEW PERIOD:

The review period is from September 3, 2020 through October 2, 2020. All written comments regarding this Negative Declaration must be received by the City of Menlo Park Planning Division, 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, California 94025, no later than 5:30 P.M., October 2, 2020.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

This Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 and its applicable guidelines, as amended.

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