

## **CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

#### **STAFF REPORT**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 2014**

#### **4. STUDY SESSION**

##### **4.1 San Antonio Precise Plan Draft Guiding Principles, Development Standards, and Programs**

##### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) review and comment on draft San Antonio Precise Plan materials, including guiding principles, development standards, and administrative programs.

##### **PUBLIC NOTIFICATION**

A courtesy notice was sent to property owners and residents within 300' of the Precise Plan area. Meeting notices were also provided to interested parties. In addition, the meeting agenda is advertised on Channel 26 and the agenda and this report appear on the City's website and San Antonio Precise Plan website.

##### **MEETING PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Study Session is for the EPC to review and comment on draft San Antonio Precise Plan materials. Staff will forward the EPC's comments to the City Council for their Study Session, tentatively scheduled for June 24, 2014. EPC and Council input will help staff refine Precise Plan content for the public draft Precise Plan, anticipated to be released over the summer.

## BACKGROUND

At their February 4, 2014 Study Session, the City Council endorsed a preferred Precise Plan alternative. Council supported the EPC's recommendations on circulation, urban design, and land use options for the alternative, with some additional direction. Key Council input included:

### *Circulation*

- Primary, separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities through San Antonio Center, roughly along the Hetch Hetchy corridor (east-west) and aligned with Pacchetti Way (north-south).
  - New pedestrian/bicycle crossings of San Antonio Road and Showers Drive crossings aligned with the Hetch Hetchy corridor, but no midblock crossing of El Camino Real for the north-south path.
- Improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities on public streets.
- Separated bicycle facilities on California Street and Showers Drive, as long as it does not require a “road diet” (e.g., vehicle lane removal).

### *Open Space and Active Frontages*

- A linear greenway along the Hetch Hetchy right-of-way (ROW) through San Antonio Center and the west side of San Antonio Road, building on the Merlone Geier Phase I project improvement.
- A smaller landscaped bicycle/pedestrian connection on the east side of Showers Drive, connecting to the Hetch Hetchy greenway.
- A new centralized open space in San Antonio Center and within the Precise Plan area parcels located on the north side of California Street.
- Active frontages/use areas aligned with open space, public streets, and other primary bicycle and pedestrian pathways.

*Land Use and Heights*

- Enhanced regional retail uses as fundamental use of San Antonio Center.
- Additional uses in San Antonio Center to complement but not supersede primary regional retail uses.
- A specific mix of mixed-use office and residential uses on the north side of California Street, closest to the San Antonio Caltrain Station.
- A soft cap of up to six stories in Mixed-Use Center locations; heights up to four stories in Mixed-Use Corridor areas next to the central open space and in key transition areas around the Precise Plan area.

Additional Council comments included concerns about interaction between bicycles and vehicle parking areas; support to study a tiered floor area ratio (FAR) or similar program assigning requirements for public benefits; and the need to manage traffic to avoid gridlock in the area.

**ANALYSIS**

The February Council endorsements included three fundamental elements of the Precise Plan: **circulation improvements, open space development, and targeted land use vision**. These elements combine to create an overall vision to transform the area while enhancing its role as a regional shopping destination.

Since February, the Precise Plan team has defined guiding principles and studied specific infrastructure designs, programs, and standards to help achieve these principles and core elements. Based on this work, staff began preparing initial draft Precise Plan content and has identified the following additional topics for EPC input.

Guiding Principles

The following draft principles were developed based on General Plan goals and policies, the San Antonio Visioning Process, and from the current Precise Plan process. They expand on the ideas endorsed with the preferred Precise Plan alternative and provide the foundation for developing other Precise Plan content.

### *Overall Land Use and Character*

- Revitalize the Precise Plan area as an attractive and vibrant mixed-use neighborhood with strong linkages to surrounding areas.
- Allow a flexible range of land uses throughout the Precise Plan area, including local- and regional-serving retail, residential, office, commercial services, educational, and open space uses.
- Preserve regional retail as a focal use, particularly within the San Antonio Center.
- Maintain spaces for diverse, neighborhood-serving and small businesses and organizations to support neighborhood goods and service needs.
- Prioritize higher-intensity, transit-oriented uses, including mixed-use office and residential development, in locations closest to area transit services.
- Focus pedestrian-oriented, ground-level “active uses” adjacent to open spaces, major internal connections, and public streets with enhanced streetscapes.
- Establish requirements linking new higher-intensity development with defined public benefits oriented toward broad community benefit.
- Facilitate incremental improvements and comprehensive redevelopment achieving fundamental Precise Plan land-use objectives, open space, and cohesive, well-integrated circulation improvements.

### *Site and Building Design*

- Organize the Precise Plan area around a range of new, landscaped connections and high-quality public and private open spaces.
- Design and locate buildings to engage streets and incorporate varying and visually engaging facades.
- Create well-designed, flexible buildings to accommodate a range of uses over their lifetime.

- For areas abutting public open space and existing residential neighborhoods, ensure new development limits visual and noise impacts on these areas.
- Encourage new development to preserve views from public viewsheds.
- Ensure new development increases tree canopy in the area.

### *Mobility*

- Provide comfortable and convenient connections through the Precise Plan area, improving access to nearby neighborhoods, cities, and other destinations.
- Focus infrastructure investment on bicycle and pedestrian improvements to support viable alternatives to vehicle trips.
- Improve the pedestrian environment with smaller, more walkable blocks and prioritized improvements along open space and public streets.
- Improve bicycle facilities with separated bicycle lanes prioritized in key locations on public streets and within the Center.
- Improve intersections with baseline bicycle and pedestrian crossing improvements.
- Encourage improved ridership and access to transit services through building design, pedestrian and bicycle access improvements, enhanced transit station amenities, and development-provided transit incentives.
- Balance vehicle access needs with nonvehicle improvements and prioritize trip-reduction measures in the Precise Plan area.
- Provide convenient and accessible bicycle parking.

### *Parking*

- Set parking ratios at levels consistent with parking demand and considering the uses sharing the parking, access to transit services, and tenant space size.
- Encourage the sharing of parking across multiple sites and tenants to allow businesses to pool parking resources.

- Encourage consolidated, centralized parking structures wrapped by residential or commercial uses or in underground garages to facilitate a park-once experience in the Center.
- Ensure clear wayfinding is provided for vehicle access to parking areas, with garage and service bay openings focused in alleys and at the rear of buildings.
- Improve the experience of walking and to and through parking areas.
- Monitor parking use and neighborhood impacts over time and adjust parking standards and programs, as needed.
- Minimize driveway curb cuts and potential conflicts with pedestrians and bicyclists.

**Question No. 1:** Does EPC support the draft guiding principles?

**Option:** Modify, add, or remove any of the guiding principles.

### Development Standards

This section discusses key development standards to implement the Precise Plan's guiding principles and complement the circulation plan. These standards will establish requirements for building locations, heights, and relationship to future street frontages in the Precise Plan's two main subareas, which roughly align with the two main General Plan land use designations for the Precise Plan area – Mixed-Use Center and Mixed-Use Corridor. They differ from design guidelines, which define expectations but generally provide greater flexibility for implementation.

This report identifies a core group of initial standards and focuses on the strategies and expectations to be achieved through these standards. Final draft site and building standards are still being analyzed and input from EPC, Council, and stakeholders will be incorporated into the public draft Precise Plan standards.

Many of these standards differ significantly from existing zoning in the area because they are trying to achieve a significantly different character than historic development patterns. EPC review and comment on these strategies, diagrams, and working draft standards will help ensure they achieve objectives for future change in the Precise Plan area.

## Design Standard Context

1. **Circulation Network:** Over the long term, the planned grid of improved public streets and new connections is expected to both organize and fundamentally change the layout of the area. The most significant change is planned for the regional retail focus area where internal connections will have a more street-like appearance to provide pedestrian improvements and bicycle facilities. The main objective of the network is to improve access to and between businesses, open space areas, and other important destinations. Later sections of this report identify key questions for the circulation plan.

2. **Street Types and Active Frontages:** The Precise Plan will define at least five street types for the circulation network, and identify required active frontage locations on these streets and connections. The Precise Plan will include typical street design standards.

Other building character standards and guidelines, including for active frontage design, will integrate new development with their street frontages. These elements will be applied primarily to new development.

3. **Frontage Lines:** The frontage lines for each street type are typically the adjacent curb or landscape buffer location on Precise Plan area



streets. Draft standards define building setbacks to these “frontage lines” to establish where buildings should be located in relation to street improvements. Additionally, they allow setbacks to be discussed in cases where property line locations may change and/or future connections may not end up being located next to property lines.

#### *Draft Design Standards*

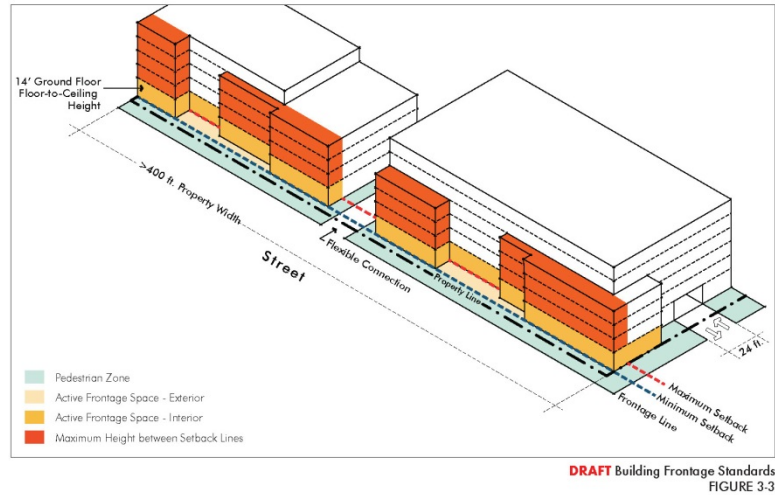
4. **Block Length:** The Precise Plan proposes a maximum block length of 400'. Where existing blocks exceed this standard, a new internal street or connection will be required with any new development; example locations are shown above. This block length allows for larger regional retail buildings, but the Precise Plan would permit exceptions if an applicant can demonstrate a larger block length preserves the viability of a specific regional retail use while still addressing other walkability objectives.
5. **Minimum and Maximum Setbacks:** The Precise Plan uses these setback standards to ensure buildings engage streets/connections, active frontages, and open space locations in keeping with the Precise Plan's urban design objectives.

The draft standards require portions of proposed buildings to be located within a certain distance of the frontage line. The draft setbacks vary by the frontage locations. They are integrated with the Precise Plan's pedestrian standards, and include:

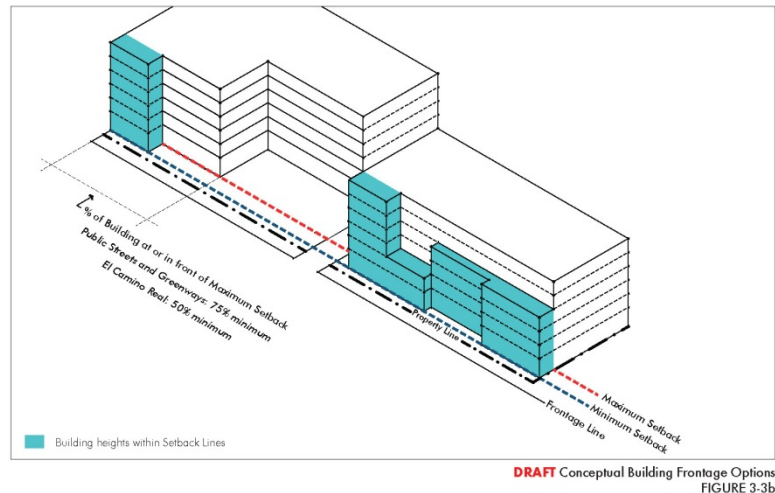
- *Major Public Streets and Greenways*—Seventy-five percent (75%) of the front building wall area must be within 18' to 28' of the frontage line. These street types include the majority of designated active use frontages. The setbacks bring new development, including both interior and exterior active-use areas, closer to pedestrian pathways in order to encourage activity on those frontages.



This differs from typical existing conditions, where street frontages are primarily occupied by surface parking and zoning standards have not encouraged or in some cases allowed buildings closer to streets.



- Neighborhood Streets* – Buildings should be located within 24' to 34' of the frontage line. These setbacks are consistent with minimum setback requirements for recent multi-family residential projects and will help transition to existing residential neighborhoods.



- San Antonio Center Internal Streets and Flexible Connections* – There are no minimum and maximum setbacks for these frontages, except what may be required based on street design standards and the Development Review Process. These include main internal access roads and future connections achieving smaller blocks. These streets generally have no required active frontages. They also serve a variety of roles such as loading/deliveries, bicycle/pedestrian connections, etc. It would be difficult to specify build-to standards to fit all cases.
- El Camino Real* – Fifty percent (50%) of the linear facade must be located within 18' to 28' of the frontage line. The El Camino Real frontage standards will be similar to the El Camino Real Precise Plan standards.

The above graphic shows conceptual examples of how block length, setback, and height requirements work together to shape how a building relates to the street. Other design guidelines will provide more direction on architectural design and massing. The Precise Plan will also include standards for active frontage character and design, similar to the El Camino Real Precise Plan.

6. **Heights Between Minimum and Maximum Setbacks:** Setback and height standards are important tools in the Development Review Process to ensure pedestrian-scaled massing. The Precise Plan's strategy is to generally limit massing to a maximum of four stories in the area between the minimum and maximum setback lines. In locations where up to six-story buildings are allowed, this means taller building areas will be set back further from the street and/or will step back from shorter building areas.

The Precise Plan will include guidelines or standards for allowing portions of taller building areas (above four stories) to be located closer to the street (see examples in the above graphic). This flexibility would allow interesting, taller building elements such as corner towers or other features providing design variety along the street. The Precise Plan will also identify areas with more specific design standards and/or limitations, such as adjacent to the central open space.

**Question No. 2:** Does the EPC have any comments or recommendations on the development standard strategies or working draft standards?

**Options:**

1. Modify, add, or remove a draft standard or strategy.
2. Identify standards where greater flexibility is recommended. *Note: Based on EPC input, the Precise Plan team can draft revised standard language (e.g., a wider setback range) or translate a standard into more flexible policy or guideline language.*

**Circulation Plan**

The circulation plan would create a street grid of smaller blocks throughout the area. The goal of the new street network is to improve pedestrian and bicycle connections on public streets and within the San Antonio Center to achieve better connections in the Precise Plan area and to surrounding neighborhoods and cities.

The bicycle and pedestrian circulation plans attached in Exhibit 1 have been updated to reflect Council's February endorsements and provide important information on proposed primary and secondary connections. Achieving these circulation objectives will require changing public streets and/or creating new connections through private property.

### *Typical Public Improvements*

The Precise Plan team has developed the following list of typical improvement standards for the public ROW:

- 6' standard bicycle lanes, where feasible.
- 5' to 6' bicycle lanes with 3' buffers for separated bicycle facilities.
- 14' pedestrian zones on major public streets, including approximately 8' sidewalks and 6' streetside landscape buffers. *Note: Additional pedestrian paving and landscaping will typically occur on-site, in building setbacks.*
- 18' pedestrian zones on El Camino Real to extend the Merlone Geier Phase I improvements of 12' sidewalk and 6' planter strip.

These standards improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities over existing conditions. However, the Precise Plan team has found improving these facilities will both require additional public ROW and take time to implement because they are largely dependent on redevelopment occurring. A summary table of public street improvements and anticipated dedication needs is included in Exhibit 1.

### *San Antonio Road*

Aside from El Camino Real, San Antonio Road is the most heavily traveled road in the Precise Plan area. It serves as a major commuter route, but also provides direct, local connections to Los Altos and Palo Alto. The street design currently focuses on vehicle travel, and Council has directed that the pedestrian environment be improved and bicycle lanes be added.

The Merlone Geier Phase II development proposes to address Council direction by providing a minimum 8' sidewalk and 6' wide landscape strip on the project frontage and constructing 6' wide bicycle lanes on both sides of San Antonio Road from El Camino Real to California Street. This will primarily require land

dedication on the Phase II frontage and a mix of lane/median adjustments in the existing ROW.

In order to extend pedestrian improvements beyond the Phase II frontage, dedications to expand the public ROW would also be needed from future development. On the east side of San Antonio Road, this includes continuing Phase II's 7' dedication. On the west side of San Antonio Road, it will require a minimum 2' dedication.

The Phase II improvements would address February's Council direction for San Antonio Road. However, a high priority has been placed on separated facilities for bicycle travel. As a result, even with the endorsed improvements on Showers Drive, the plan may not adequately address guiding principles and objectives for north-south connectivity to adjacent cities, including destinations such as schools.

**Question No. 3:** Does the EPC support adding or modifying north-south connectivity for the Precise Plan area from San Antonio Road and/or Showers Drive?

**Options:**

1. San Antonio Road North-South Connectivity—San Antonio Road provides direct north-south access, but is a relatively high-speed and volume roadway. Providing a separated bicycle lane would provide a more protected facility, but also require significant ROW changes beyond what is proposed as part of the Merlone Geier Phase II project. If supported, this would be a long-term project, requiring comprehensive redevelopment and even larger land dedications on the west side of San Antonio Road.
2. Showers Drive North-South Connectivity—Showers Drive is a relatively low-volume roadway. A separated bicycle lane is already endorsed, but this facility does not directly connect Showers Drive to streets on the south of El Camino Real. This option would require additional bicycle improvements, most likely on El Camino Real, to connect to Showers Drive to more southerly streets such as Jordan Avenue. This option would require coordination and agreement from Los Altos and Caltrans to construct improvements to close the gap.

### *California Street*

California Street is a major access point to San Antonio Center, provides connectivity to the Palo Alto bicycle bridge, and also becomes a local access road connecting to nearby residential neighborhoods and the downtown.

The Merlone Geier Phase II development also proposes California Street improvements, which can be replicated along the Precise Plan frontage. The Phase II development includes a 5' land dedication to upgrade the existing bicycle lane to a separated bicycle lane and create a 13' pedestrian zone in the public ROW.

To provide the bicycle and pedestrian improvements beyond the Phase II frontage and in the public ROW on both sides of California Street, the 5' land dedication would be required of new development on both sides of the street. Lane width and median adjustments may also be needed at pinch points closer to Showers Drive where additional dedications may not be as feasible due to site conditions.

Proposed Precise Plan improvements will be coordinated with the California Street Feasibility Study, a separate City project scheduled to begin in July 2014 to study bicycle and pedestrian improvements between the Precise Plan area and downtown.

### *Showers Drive*

Showers Drive is one of the lowest-traffic-volume streets in the Precise Plan area. It provides vehicle access to regional retail uses on both sides of the street but is also part of the transition area into surrounding residential neighborhoods. Under typical conditions, the Precise Plan team has determined the existing public ROW would need to be widened through 3' dedications on both sides of the road. These dedications would allow the existing bicycle lanes to be upgraded to separated bicycle lanes and provide wider sidewalk zones within the public ROW.

### *El Camino Real*

El Camino Real is a major Caltrans roadway which is under Los Altos jurisdiction. The Mountain View ROW begins at about the curb line on the north side of El Camino Real. The Council did not endorse bicycle facilities or new crossings of El Camino Real along the San Antonio Center frontage. As a result, there is a heightened need for high-quality east-west connections through the San Antonio Center and on other public streets, as discussed above.

To provide a consistent pedestrian condition, the Precise Plan will extend the existing pedestrian improvements along the Merlone Geier Phase I frontage to Showers Drive. This includes an approximately 12' sidewalk and a 4' to 6' landscape strip, and may require a 10' dedication be provided by future development.

### *Hetch Hetchy Greenway*

At the February Study Session, Council endorsed separated bicycle and pedestrian pathways through the San Antonio Center along the Hetch Hetchy ROW, including new crossings of San Antonio Road and Showers Drive for these improvements. This strategy was supported largely because of its interior location (away from higher-volume public streets). At the time, it was thought these facilities could be located on or partially on the Hetch Hetchy greenway.

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) owns the Hetch Hetchy ROW and the underground pipeline transmitting potable water through the area. The surface land is typically improved and used by adjacent properties in the San Antonio area, and would continue to serve that purpose except with different improvements under the Precise Plan vision.

In outreach after the February Study Session, staff learned the SFPUC is looking into a new overall policy for recreational uses on their ROW. The SFPUC has asked the City to remove any Precise Plan proposal for bicycle facilities on the ROW while this policy work is being done. A new policy may not be finalized before the Precise Plan is complete.

The design of the bicycle improvements along this corridor affects the look and feel of the area, as well as how the different travel modes interact. Input is needed on the desired configuration of the east-west bicycle connection through the San Antonio Center in case the SFPUC adopts a policy restricting bicycle facilities on the Hetch Hetchy ROW.

**Question No. 4:** Does the EPC support a modified east-west bicycle connection through San Antonio Center?

### **Options:**

1. Separated Bicycle Lane—This option would keep pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle traffic separate, but require a wider internal street adjacent to the Hetch Hetchy ROW. This option would provide a protected facility for

bicycle travel, but increase the amount of paved street area and could introduce greater conflicts between pedestrians and faster-moving bicycles.

2. Shared Bicycle and Vehicle Street— This option would mix bicycle and vehicle traffic within a narrower street containing painted bicycle improvements. It is similar to the Merlone Geier Phase II proposal, which includes green-painted “super sharrows,” special materials, curb bulb-outs, parallel parking, and other measures intended to clearly identify the bicycle facility within the shared roadway and calm travel speeds for all modes.

EPC input on the previous two circulation questions and the following general question will help finalize details for the circulation plan.

**Question No. 5:** Does the EPC recommend the endorsed bicycle and pedestrian improvements and required ROW dedications, or modifying the improvements on San Antonio Road, California Street, Showers Drive, and El Camino Real?

**Options:**

1. Pedestrian Zone— Widen the pedestrian zone within the public ROW.
2. Bicycle Facilities— Add or enhance bicycle facilities within the public ROW.
3. Reduced Facilities— Reduce the typical improvements included in the Plan.

Special Development Processes and Programs

Administrative processes are needed to implement Precise Plan principles, standards, and required improvements. This section provides an overview of a proposed strategy to allow redevelopment under General Plan intensities, while ensuring the Precise Plan’s circulation, open space, and land-use objectives are satisfied.

*Master Planning*

The Precise Plan area includes many larger sites with existing low-intensity commercial development, where additional development could occur under the maximum FARs in the General Plan, particularly if supported by new structured and/or shared parking facilities. Preliminary development feasibility analysis has found development projects using General Plan intensities would be financially feasible, including projects with structured parking. Feasibility and detailed

public benefit analysis is ongoing, and requires final input on physical improvement requirements and mitigation costs.

Many of these sites require either cooperative development between two or more property owners to realize Precise Plan objectives and/or have long-term tenants that increase the likelihood of incremental infill development versus comprehensive redevelopment. The proposed master plan strategy would be required in order to develop at General Plan intensities and will help address these conditions.

- On single-ownership sites the process would allow a property owner to pursue comprehensive or incremental development using General Plan intensities through a master plan that demonstrates how the overall project and any incremental phases will comply with the Precise Plan's fundamental infrastructure requirements and land-use objectives. See Exhibit 3 for examples of how Precise Plan improvements could be phased, especially in the San Antonio Center.
- In multi-ownership locations, the process would provide a mechanism for different property owners to work together to achieve Precise Plan requirements and allocate responsibility for shared amenities and improvements.

The master plan process would define minimum requirements and objectives, but would also provide flexibility for a developer to propose alternative ways of implementing the Precise Plan if they demonstrate super design, subject to City approvals.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The EPC's input will be forwarded to the City Council. The City Council meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 24, 2014. The Council will provide guidance on content for the public draft Precise Plan. The draft Precise Plan will be released in July/August 2014.

The Precise Plan public draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be completed in August 2014. An EPC meeting will be held in August/September 2014 to discuss the environmental document. A separate EPC meeting is anticipated for review of the draft Precise Plan.



## CONCLUSION

The Precise Plan team is seeking EPC input on the following topics:

- Does the EPC support the draft guiding principles?
- Does the EPC have any comments or recommendations on the development standard strategies or working draft standards?
- Does the EPC support adding or modifying north-south connectivity from the Precise Plan area for San Antonio Road and/or Showers Drive?
- Does the EPC support a modified east-west bicycle connection through the San Antonio Center?
- Does the EPC recommend the endorsed bicycle and pedestrian improvements and required ROW dedications, or modifying the improvements on San Antonio Road, California Street, Showers Drive, and El Camino Real?

## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This is an informational report only and is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies). Environmental review of the eventual draft Precise Plan will be conducted as part of the project in conformance with CEQA requirements.

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803-05-21-14SR-E

- Exhibits:
1. Draft Circulation Graphics and Improvements
  2. Draft Development Standards Graphics
  3. Example Development Phasing Plans