

To: All Menlo Park Residents

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From: Dana Hendrickson, a 30-year resident of Central Menlo Park

Five Great Reasons To Defeat Measure M

On November 4 Menlo Park residents will vote on Measure M, a ballot initiative designed primarily to limit the future traffic impact of new commercial developments on eight vacant El Camino Real lots. While I agree traffic congestion and neighborhood “cut-thru” traffic are serious problems our city needs to rigorously address – especially due to the already large amount of nearby new construction in Palo Alto, Stanford and Redwood City, Measure M is a poor alternative to our current planning, evaluation and approval processes which are working well. Measure M proponents have declared their distrust of our city’s building regulations and council members, and claimed their initiative is needed to avoid “rush hour gridlock, massive office complexes, and the loss of real open space”. Fortunately, NONE of these claims are true. I do not share their sentiments or beliefs and am confident our representatives will guard against these negative outcomes, fairly and openly evaluate developer proposals, and negotiate the most favorable possible public benefits for our entire community.

Expect ALL supporters of Measure M to vote. Will you? If others don't vote against it, Measure M will surely win by default and all of us must live with the consequences. Please learn the facts about Measure M, understand its likely consequences, and help defeat Measure M.

Five Great Reasons To Defeat Measure M

Measure M is an unnecessary, arbitrary and unvetted initiative that would have unavoidable harmful effects on our entire community.

1. It would force major redesigns of two multi-use developments already stalled by this initiative and likely delay construction another two years. These residential/office developments would greatly increase the number of daily customers for our small downtown businesses yet add little retail competition, and the residential units would attract young professional couples, residents who generally do not add children to our schools and prefer commuting by public transit. These are all positive outcomes.
2. The Menlo Park planning process that governs new commercial development is clearly working well. A recent “worst-case” traffic analysis of Stanford’s project design indicated it might produce unacceptable cut-thru traffic in the Allied Arts neighborhood, and the city council has directed Stanford to revise its design and prepare a project-specific environmental impact report. This would include a more detailed analysis of traffic and mitigation measures. The City is also studying ways to improve the traffic flow in the entire El Camino corridor.
3. Menlo Park already loses more than \$5 million in city, fire district and school revenues EVERY YEAR the Stanford and Greenheart properties remain vacant.

4. An initiative campaign is a poor substitute for an open citywide planning process that actively seeks community input and feedback and includes multiple public hearings. Our community recently invested 4 years and \$1.7M in order to ensure that hundreds of residents, businesses, property owners, traffic consultants, architects, lawyers, city planners and Menlo Park council members contributed to our current Specific Plan for the future development of downtown and El Camino.

5. While many significant flaws and risks in Measure M have already been identified, the initiative ensures no changes can be made that “frustrate” its effects without additional ballot measures – for the next 30 years. It is unreasonable to restrict our city’s flexibility to more easily and quickly make appropriate adjustments as no one can reliably predict our city’s future needs.

What Is Measure M?

This ballot-zoning initiative creates additional tight restrictions on new commercial development, and for the next 30 years any modifications to these new regulations would require voter approval. Measure M reduces the amount of office space permitted on any site by 50% and introduces an unorthodox and potentially harmful metric for calculating open space; one not used by any other Peninsula city. Measure M does nothing to change building heights, mass, footprints and locations. This 12-page initiative contains explicit zoning codes never reviewed for mistakes or unintended consequences by planning staff, a legal team, the Planning Commission or our City Council members. Major changes in zoning code should require multiple public hearings; there were NONE on Measure M.

Why Measure M Exists

The majority of supporters for Measure M live either in or near the Allied Arts neighborhood. They want to force two property owners – Stanford and Greenheart – to dramatically limit the USAGE MIX of developments on their vacant El Camino parcels. While supporters make many unsubstantiated and questionable claims about Measure M, their primary concern is with future traffic. While this issue naturally resonates with all residents, Measure M is a sledgehammer approach that could increase future daily and commute traffic.

Measure M Claims

The authors of Measure M claim their initiative will preserve our city’s quality of life and encourage a more balanced mix of new developments. Do NOT be fooled by their scary and misleading messages that claim that Measure M ...

1. Limits the size of office development in the downtown area.

2. Promotes more small shops, restaurants and hotels.

3. Reduces traffic congestion and cut-thru traffic.
4. Helps maintain Menlo Park's small town look and feel.
5. Closes a loophole that permits balconies, terraces and rooftops to count as "open space"

The Truth is ...

1. Menlo Park's downtown zoning district centers on Santa Cruz Avenue NOT El Camino Real. No large buildings of any kind are permitted downtown.
2. The two developments targeted by Measure M would be located on vacant lots on the same side of El Camino as many existing office buildings.
3. Huge office buildings are neither planned nor permitted on El Camino. Simply look at the current design concepts and know that traffic consideration will likely reduce the size of the actual buildings.
4. Save Menlo from Gridlock is a hollow claim. Traffic will increase with any new development, and it would get worse if developers shift usage from general office usage either medical office or retail.
5. It is unrealistic and undesirable to promote new retail and hotels on El Camino. Menlo Park businesses already struggle to compete with downtown Palo Alto and the Stanford Shopping Center and there are already five hotels/motels on El Camino. Large retail would generate a lot of daily traffic. Think about Safeway.
6. El Camino Real is a state highway that lacks the charming small town character Measure M proponents claim will be destroyed. In fact, the most attractive places are not retail buildings but well landscaped office buildings.
7. Menlo Park's definition of open space is not a developer loophole. It's the same standard used by every other Peninsula city. Also, Menlo Park has already significantly increased the minimum amount of required open space for new commercial developments on El Camino.
8. Our community has already decided what it believes is balanced development and rejected the vision and regulations of Measure M.

Vote “No” on Measure M and ...

1. Our city will enjoy a more attractive and vibrant El Camino Real within three years.
2. Menlo Park can flexibly adjust its regulations as needed without years of divisive, costly and paralyzing ballot initiatives.
3. Eight unsightly vacant parcels on El Camino will be developed with attractive, multi-use developments that include generous amounts of open space.
4. Daily, peak hour and “cut-thru” neighborhood traffic will likely be less. If developers lose office space they are economically incented to use this space for retail and medical purposes. These generate more traffic problems than general offices.
5. Our city, schools and fire district will receive millions of dollars in annual tax revenues instead of just property taxes on unused lots.
6. Existing downtown small businesses will have many more daily customers (office workers) during the workweek.
7. Existing small businesses will have less new local retail competition. More retail space would harm current small business owners who already struggle to compete with hundreds of businesses in Palo Alto and the Stanford Shopping Center.

Vote “Yes” on Measure M and ...

1. Give up ALL the above benefits.
2. Encourage unbalanced development on El Camino, e.g., more family residential space means more school-age children and regional retail means more traffic.
3. Give our existing downtown small businesses greater retail competition. Do we really need more restaurants?
4. Discourage investments by bolstering Menlo Park’s “developer unfriendly” reputation (You do NOT see idle unused parcels on El Camino Real anywhere else on the Peninsula, NOT in Palo Alto, Redwood City or Mountain View. Ask yourself why.).

Measure M – Facts Matter

1. Both Greenheart and Stanford are known for building attractive, high quality developments compatible with and sensitive to site locations and host communities. View the most recent plans for these multi-use developments on El Camino Real at www.mpcdforum.com/greenheart-project.
2. Eight vacant parcels on El Camino have remained unused for 5 to 9 years. (Stanford's – with the exception of Tesla – since 2007 and Greenheart's since 2005). The current Measure M initiative has already delayed the Stanford project for a year, and its passage would further delay construction of redesigned projects another two years or more.
3. Each year-long delay in the two projects is estimated to annually cost Menlo Park between \$4 and 5 million in City, Schools and Fire District in lost tax revenues.
4. The actual traffic impact of Measure M will be determined by how Stanford and Greenheart respond to the loss of 50% of allowed office space. Most likely both will add medical offices, region-serving retail and family housing. These alternative uses could generate much more daily and peak-hour traffic.
5. Most of the planned apartments are small units designed for young single professionals, a class of residents who favor public transportation over cars and do NOT add children to our school district.
6. Less office space means fewer customers for existing small businesses especially if competitive retail is added. The loss of 200,000 square feet of general office space translates to more than 650 FEWER workers who could shop here and use our local restaurants.
7. Menlo Park has already significantly raised open space requirements on El Camino from 5% pre-Specific Plan to 20% for Greenheart's land and 30% for Stanford. ALL Peninsula cities include balconies and rooftops in their open space calculations in order to encourage developers to include more private open space on upper levels and build more attractive, less-box-like buildings.
8. Measure M does NOT reduce permitted building heights, mass and total floor space.

I encourage all Menlo Park residents to vote in November and invest enough time to understand the importance of defeating Measure M. Place your trust in the people who care for all of Menlo Park and its residents, not a minority with its own agenda.