



# **City of Santa Clara**

**Study Session**  
**June 2025**

**Revisions to the El Camino Real  
Specific Plan**

**Community Development Department**



# Agenda

- Project Background
- Overview of the Specific Plan
- Key Revisions
- Public Feedback
- Next Steps
- Q&A



# Background



**City of  
Santa Clara**  
The Center of What's Possible



# What is the project?

- A **Specific Plan** for El Camino Real in Santa Clara
  - Refine and implement the 2035 General Plan vision for the El Camino Real Focus Area
    - Focus Area – area identified in General Plan to accommodate growth
    - Priority Development Area – area designated with State for higher density, transit-oriented growth
- An **Environmental Impact Report (EIR)** to assess potential environmental impacts



# Background

## 2010 General Plan El Camino Real Focus Area

“The General Plan vision for El Camino Real is to transform this Focus Area from a series of automobile- oriented strip-malls to a tree-lined, pedestrian- and transit-oriented corridor with a mix of residential and retail uses.”





# Background

## How did we get here?

- **2010** General Plan Update changed corridor to residential / mixed-use
- **2017** – City Council direction to prepare Specific Plan to provide more detailed policies for new development
- **2017 – 2021** staff worked with consultant and CAC to prepare a draft Specific Plan
- **June/Sept 2021** – City Council direction to modify Specific Plan
- **March 2023**– Start of Phase 2 to revise the Specific Plan per Council direction



# Background

## City Council Direction on Revised Plan

- Prepare a **reduced density** Specific Plan to address community concerns over residential adjacency and the **impacts of higher-density development** (e.g. shadows).
- Retain enough development capacity (**4,400 residential units**) and elements of the prior Specific Plan to support mixed-use development





# Specific Plan

## Overview and Revisions



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# El Camino Real Specific Plan

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Vision + Framework

Chapter 3: Land Use

Chapter 4: Development + Design Standards

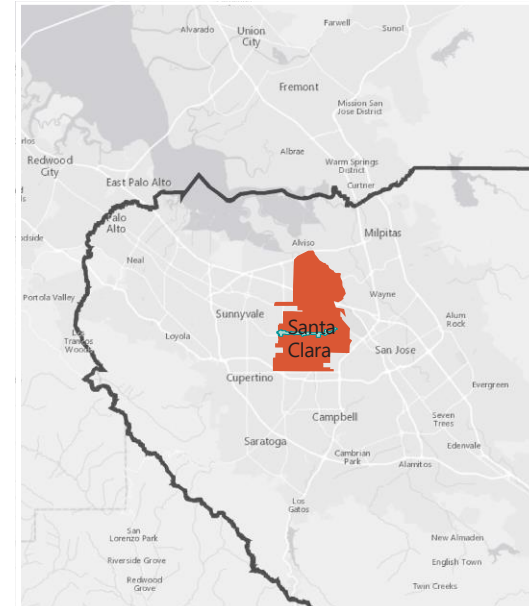
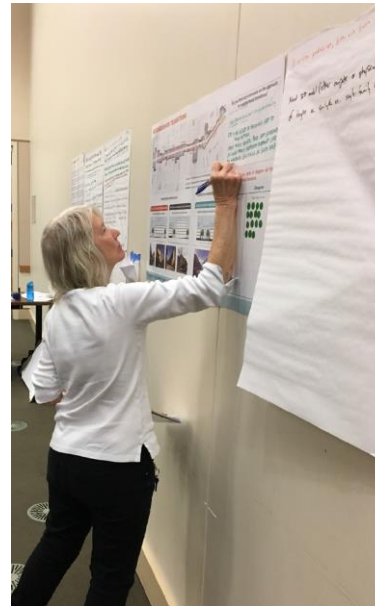
Chapter 5: Transportation + Public Spaces

Chapter 6: Implementation



# Chapter 1: Introduction

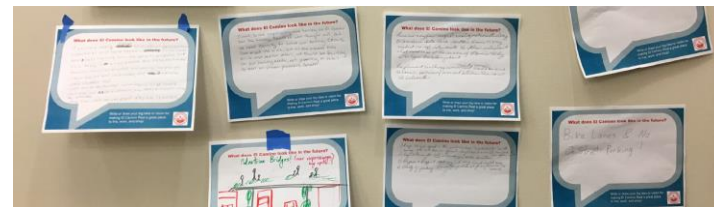
- Location and Plan Context
- Purpose
- Relationship to Other Plans
- Community Engagement Process





## Chapter 2: Vision + Framework

- Vision
- Desired Outcomes
- Planning Frameworks
  - Focus development at key activity nodes
  - Respect the character of adjacent neighborhoods
  - Create memorable public open spaces
  - Enhance connectivity
  - Improve multimodal access and safety for all modes
  - Promote a range of housing options





# Chapter 3: Land Use

- Land Use policies
- Land Use Plan (zoning map)
- Development growth potential
- Open Space Plan (existing and proposed open spaces)

## LAND USE

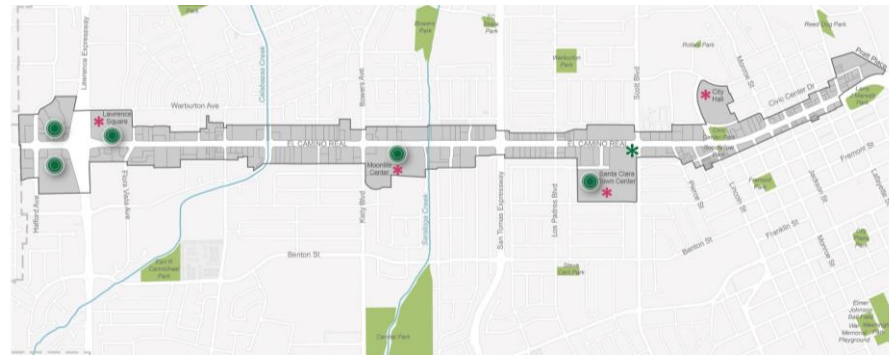
This chapter describes the future land uses in the El Centro Area Specific Plan Area. It provides broad policy direction for the range of future land uses envisioned along El Centro Blvd. Not every project must fulfill every policy goal, rather, future projects will contribute in different ways to the overall policy goals for the Plan Area. It also includes an overview of the three character areas along the corridor, including the intent or vision for each and associated land-use designations.

### 3.1 Land Use Policies

The policies below provide guidance about the intended mix and focus of land uses in the El Centro Area Specific Plan Area. They provide a policy base and framework for the design and location specific design standards and guidelines found in Chapter 4.

- 1. Use regulations.** Land uses in the Plan Area shall be consistent with the General Plan land use designations shown in Figure 2-3.
- 2. Activity Center nodes.** Support the transformation of development at major intersections to create dynamic and distinctive nodes that will enhance the character and function of El Centro Blvd as a shopping destination for both local residents and regional visitors. Encourage the clustering of community-oriented commercial services, housing, and community gathering places with pedestrian-oriented amenities that are accessible and walkable.
- 3. Diverse mix of uses.** Encourage a diverse mix of uses including retail, services, community facilities, lodging, and housing that will complement and support the economic vitality of the corridor.
- 4. Neighborhood services and amenities.** Support an increasing range of neighborhood goods and services such as grocery stores, pharmacies, banks, hardware stores, cafes, restaurants, and other amenities to allow people living along the corridor and in nearby neighborhoods to meet their daily needs there or within the day.
- 5. Small preservation.** Work to conserve existing small businesses in the Specific Plan Area, even as the character and use mix of the corridor change over time.
- 6. Street activating retail.** Encourage and reinforce areas of signage and active ground floor retail and other uses that engage and add interest to create a pedestrian-friendly and successful shopping environment, allow and encourage temporary pop-up retail and activate retail uses in underused retail spaces.
- 7. Building design.** Ensure that the siting, architecture, and design of buildings provide visual interest, integrate with the neighborhood, and create a pleasant, pedestrian-oriented public realm.
- 8. Neighborhood transitions.** Ensure that new development provides appropriate transitions in height, bulk, and intensity to adjacent residential neighborhoods along the corridor.

- 9. Levels and beautiful corridor.** Create a more vibrant and beautiful corridor through the addition of wider sidewalks, landscaping, trees, street furnishings, attractive buildings, and neighborhood gathering spaces that will create an environment where people want to be.
- 10. New places and public spaces.** Encourage a variety of publicly accessible, privately owned outdoor spaces, pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, and gathering spaces to meet the needs of new and existing residents, visitors, workers, and businesses.
- 11. Placemaking.** Incorporate placemaking into site design to create an engaging experience, develop corridor character, and connect or direct the community to local amenities. Various techniques may include private street and sidewalk patterns/colors, interactive landmarks, neighborhood names, and public art.
- 12. Visual public benefits.** Encourage that large developments provide visual public benefits and improvements, such as new parks and public spaces, pedestrian and bicycle improvements, and shared parking.
- 13. Community programming and events.** Allow and support special events conducted by local organizations, property owners, tenants, or other groups to activate the corridor and encourage social gathering.
- 14. Range of housing types.** Encourage a broad range of multi-family housing types and sizes, including small, medium, and larger residential units for a variety of different household types, sizes, and stages of life along the corridor.
- 15. Provision of affordable housing.** Encourage the development of affordable housing throughout the Plan Area with the goal of ensuring that at least 10% of new housing units along the corridor are affordable to lower and moderate income households.







# Land Use Plan Revisions

## Key Changes

1. Adds a new, lower density land use designation for townhomes
2. Reduced density along sensitive interfaces (proximity to single-family, particularly on the north side of ECR)
3. Revised Land Use Plan to be consistent with existing/recent entitlements
4. Reduced development potential - 4,400 residential unit capacity

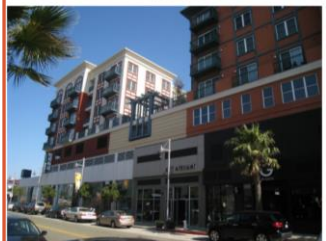


# Chapter 3: Land Use

## Revised Plan – 4 Mixed-Use / Residential Designations

### Regional Corridor Mixed-Use

- (Activity Center)
- 55-100 DU/AC
- Minimum FAR 0.2



### Corridor Mixed-Use

- 45-65 DU/AC
- Commercial frontage required at some locations



### Corridor Residential

- 26-45 DU/AC  
(4-story)



### Corridor Residential - Low

- 12-25 DU/AC  
(3-story)





# Regional Commercial Mixed Use

**Residential Density:** 55-100 dwelling units/acre

**Min Commercial FAR:** 0.2

**Allowed Height:** 5-6 stories

- Retail (1-story or ground floor)
- Ground floor commercial required along ECR
- Pedestrian-oriented frontages and facades
- 5-6-story multifamily housing
- Mostly structured parking
- Large publicly-accessible open space
- Significant public streetscape and pedestrian improvements







# Activity Center Conceptual Diagrams

Moonlite Center





# Corridor Mixed Use

**Residential Density:** 45-65  
dwelling units/acre  
**Allowed Height:** 4-5 stories

- Retail (1-story or ground floor)
- Commercial required in specific locations along ECR
- Medium-to-high density residential at smaller cross-streets
- Parking behind buildings, below-grade, or in structures
- Some shared open space





# Corridor Residential

**Residential Density:** 26-45  
dwelling units/acre

**Allowed Height:** 3-4 stories

- Low- to mid-rise residential building types (e.g. garden apartments)
- Commercial ground floor uses allowed and encouraged, but not required
- Garages, tuck-under, or below grade parking
- Applies to small- to moderate-sized parcels





# Corridor Residential - Low

**Residential Density:** 12-25  
dwelling units/acre

**Allowed Height:** 2-3 stories

- Townhomes
- Transition to adjacent single-family neighborhoods
- Applies to small, shallow parcels
- Commercial ground floor uses allowed, but not required

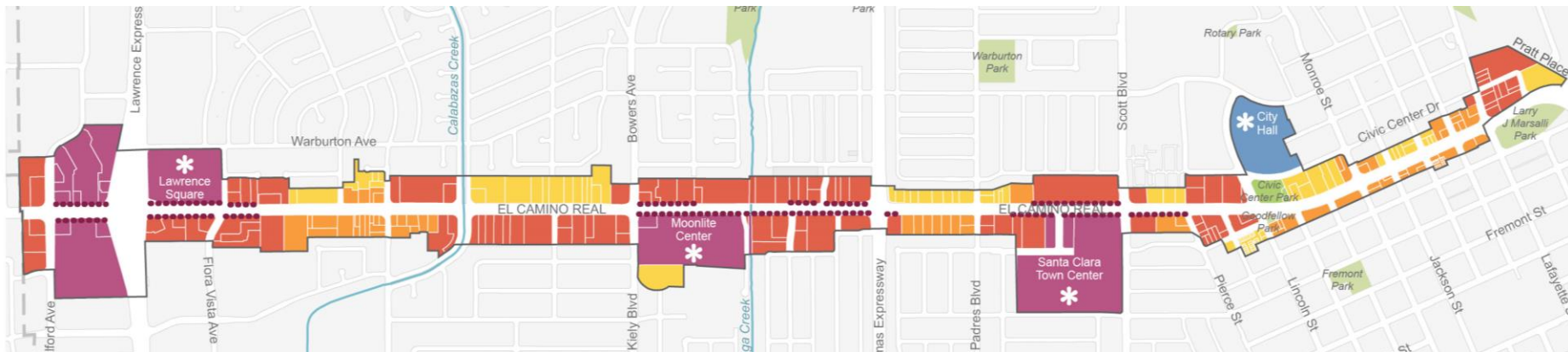






# El Camino Real Specific Plan

## New Land Use Plan



### Legend

- City Boundary
- - - Plan Boundary
- Parcel



Landmarks



Parks



Creeks

### Land Use Designation

- Regional Commercial Mixed Use
- Corridor Mixed Use
- Corridor Residential
- Corridor Residential - Low
- Public/Quasi-Public

### Commercial Overlay

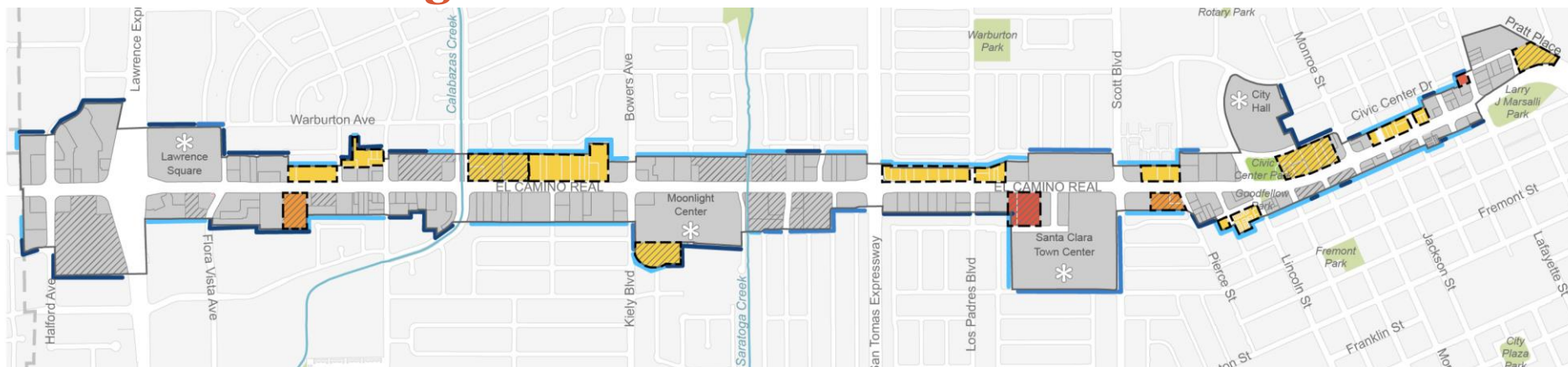
- Ground Floor Commercial Required





# El Camino Real Specific Plan

## Land Use Change Parcels



### Legend

- City Boundary
- Plan Boundary
- ▒ Parcels
- ▨ Recent/Pending Projects
- ▭ Land Use Change Parcel
- \* Landmarks
- ▒ Parks
- Creeks

### Land Use Designation

- Regional Commercial Mixed Use
- Corridor Mixed Use
- Corridor Residential
- Corridor Residential - Low
- Public/Quasi-Public

### Residential Adjacency

- Directly abuts a single-family residential parcel
- Across the street from a single-family residential parcel
- Directly abuts or across the street from a multi-family residential parcel



0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles





# Chapter 4 Revisions

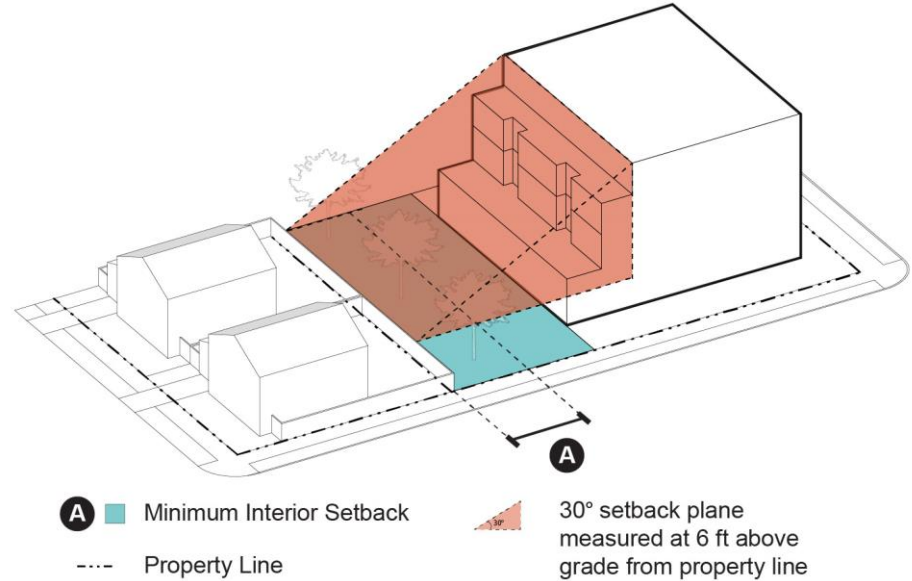
## Key Changes

1. Added development and design standards for the new Corridor Residential – Low land use designation
2. Revised neighborhood transition standards for North side of ECR-30-degree daylight plane
3. Minor revisions to development and objective design standards to align with recently adopted Zoning Code and best practices
4. Replaced site plan for Corridor Mixed Use (Morse Lane site)



# Neighborhood Transition Strategies

- Daylight Plane:
  - *30-Degrees on N side of ECR*
  - 45-degrees on S side
- Building setbacks
- Upper-story step backs
- Smaller scale/house-form building types and varied roof lines
- Orient windows and balconies away from existing homes
- Landscape buffers





# Shadow Studies

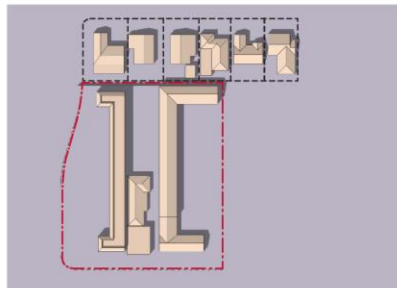
## Test Site – Morse Lane/ECR



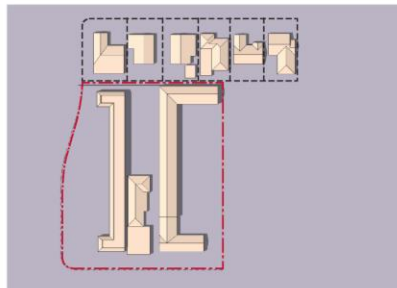


# Shadow Studies

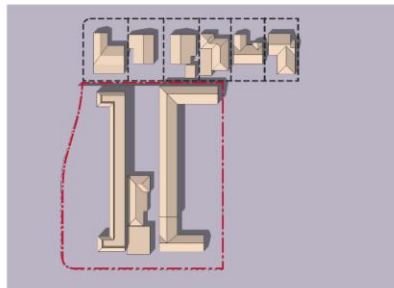
## EXISTING



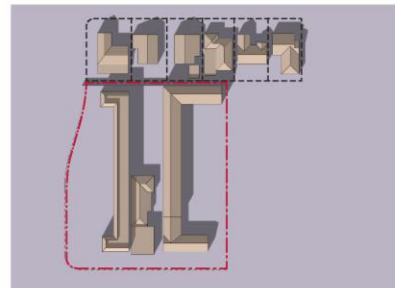
March 20 - Spring Equinox - 2:00pm



June 20 - Summer Solstice - 2:00pm



September 22 - Fall Equinox - 2:00pm



December 21 - Winter Solstice - 2:00pm



## FUTURE

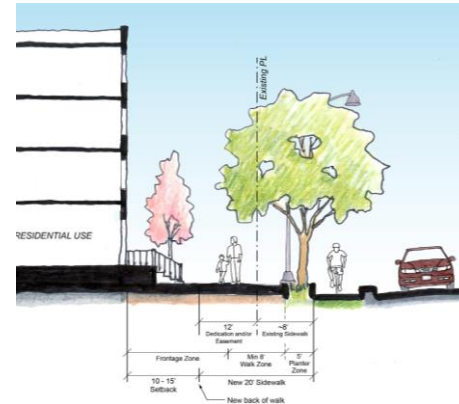






# Chapter 5: Transportation + Public Spaces

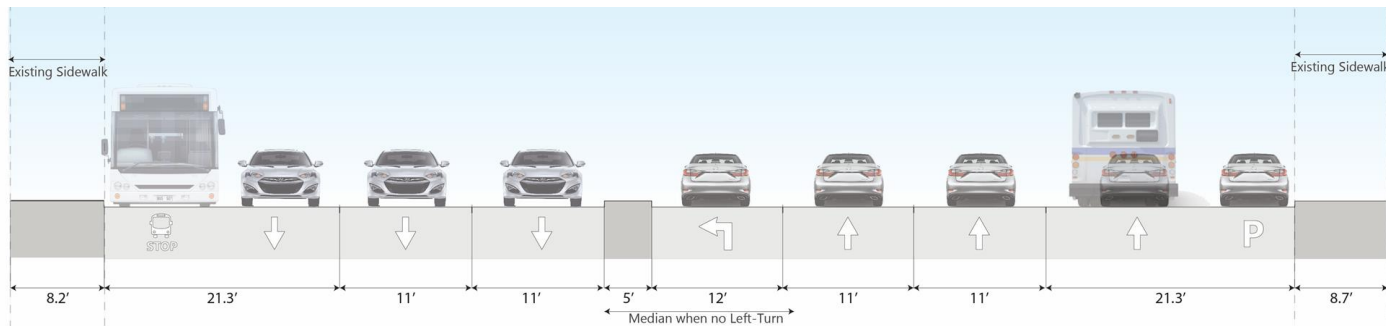
- Mobility Framework
- Proposed Bike Network
- Proposed Pedestrian Network
- Sidewalk and public realm standards
- ROW Concept for ECR
- Parking and curbside management



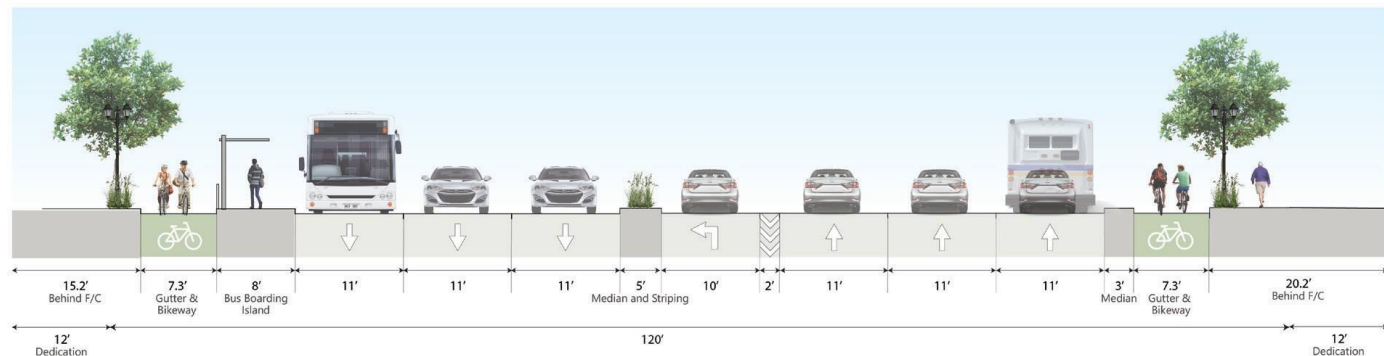


# ECR ROW Concept

## Existing Condition



## Future





# Chapter 6: Implementation

- Project Administration
- Community Benefits
- Implementation Actions + Programs
- Recommended Capital Improvements

- Water
- Sewer
- Stormwater
- Street reconfiguration
- Public realm

- Funding + Financing Strategy



Figure 6-1. Water and Sewer System Recommended Improvements



## Stormwater

There is the potential to improve stormwater drainage along I-5 corridor by installing permeable paving within the proposed cycle track as described in Table 6-4. Locations where this may be appropriate are identified by utility lines running between the proposed cycle track locations and the proximity to existing storm drain infrastructure. There are locations where permeable paving can be installed as the southbound side of I-5 corridor. In addition to where this, however, additional storm drain infrastructure would need to be installed. Permeable paving is feasible along the majority of the southbound side of I-5 corridor and is in the most part directly adjacent to existing storm drain lines in most cases.

The location of trees and rain gardens can be interdependent, but additional opportunities for rain gardens should be sought out at the natural low points along the I-5 corridor and where catch basins already exist to capture existing drainage. Catch basins in the two-foot buffer running along the cycle track will allow for the runoff from the roadway to enter into the stormwater system. The location of trees and rain gardens along the cycle track will allow for the runoff from the roadway to enter into the stormwater system. The location of trees and rain gardens along the cycle track will allow for the runoff from the roadway to enter into the stormwater system.

Table 6-4. Stormwater Capital Improvements

Project	Description	Estimated Timing	Responsibility	Cost Estimate
Permeable Paving in Cycle Track	Permeable paving may be placed in areas of the cycle track project to be placed through the corridor, including areas with existing storm drain infrastructure.	Complete as Complete Stormwater project is placed through the corridor	City	\$20 per sq ft of permeable paving
Rain Gardens	With lower utilities running along the southbound side, it is feasible to install rain gardens at low points along the I-5 corridor to capture stormwater.	Complete as Complete Stormwater project is placed through the corridor	City	\$20 - \$100 per sq ft of rain garden



# EI Camino Real Specific Plan

## Public Feedback

- Open House Workshop *Feb. 18, 2025*
- Draft EIR – *Spring 2025*
- Adoption Hearings – *Summer 2025*





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# EI Camino Real Specific Plan

## Next Steps

- EIR
- Adoption Hearings – September 2025







# Public Q&A

## El Camino Real Specific Plan



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