



**Menlo Park Neighborhood Association position statement for the vacant properties in Menlo Park bounded on the north by Congress Street, on the east by the Santa Cruz River, on the south by 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and on the west by Mission Road/Grande Avenue (Map attached)**

**Revised December 4, 2012**

---

### **Summary**

Shaping this document is the unique historic position of Menlo Park as the Birthplace of Tucson and the longest continually farmed and occupied area in the US.

With the assimilation and remediation of vacant land in Menlo Park on Tucson's west side, the size of Tucson's downtown has doubled. The construction of the Modern Streetcar is underway, and the long promised revitalization of downtown is becoming a reality. Menlo Park represents a significant portion of this burgeoning development zone.

Proposition 400, which led to the creation of the Rio Nuevo Project, was approved in 1999 and includes the area at the eastern base of "A" Mountain. Prop 400 directs the Rio Nuevo Project to be "a multi-faceted development project, including cultural and recreational amenities and improvements, unique historic re-creations, new and expanded museums, and mixed-use developments." Realization of this vision of historical re-creations is already underway in the form of Tucson Origins Heritage Park (TOHP). The rich cultural heritage of Menlo Park is embodied in the completed construction documents already drawn up for TOHP. As designed, TOHP showcases historically significant activities of the area. Under the direction of Friends of Tucson's Birthplace a major component of TOHP, the Mission Garden, is currently under development.

The extension of specialized elements and features of Downtown into Menlo Park presents an opportunity to create an environment which welcomes residents as well as visitors, and creates a sense of historical place, community, and a vibrant community of local businesses, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly spaces, and interesting attractions. Menlo Park residents have a definite vision of how this opportunity can be realized.

## Our Vision

Development of the land inside the above-described boundaries shall be driven by “Smart Growth” principles. Smart Growth advocates regional architecture, native landscaping, green building principles, transit-oriented development around streetcar stops, a range of housing that includes affordable housing for working class families, a variety of housing types and styles, enjoyable public spaces for people of all ages to enjoy, historic preservation/reconstruction sites, and a public market (Mercado) that offers small, locally-owned businesses.

The site shall host many residential and local retail opportunities around both the modern streetcar line and designated public spaces. The streetcar line, a linchpin for development of the neighborhood, enters Menlo Park via Cushing Street over the new Luis G. Gutierrez bridge and loops through the west side along Avenida del Convento, Congress St., and Linda Ave.

A permanent Mercado adjacent to the streetcar line on the south side of Cushing St. near the Luis Gutierrez bridge would give local vendors, artisans, restaurateurs, and other entrepreneurs an attractive, affordable, place to conduct business. The Mercado should be designed in conjunction with other highly desirable destinations, such as museums, bookstores, a boutique hotel, and an interpretive center for TOHP. The site should include space for nonprofit and community groups, a weekly farmers’ market, and a park where children can play and elders can rest comfortably. A well-designed Mercado will become an exciting destination for Tucsonans and visitors who value locally owned businesses and could include a tourist information center for the Santa Cruz valley area.

The site should have a cultural center with a permanent fiesta park to host family events, as well as regional historic and cultural celebrations, such as El Dia de San Juan. The park shall include an equestrian performance arena with links to equestrian trails and must be visible and accessible from Congress St. and/or Mission Road/Grande Ave.

The site shall have housing that remains affordable for working class families. Developers must bring an affordable housing strategy to the Request for Proposals (RFP) stage of the process to ensure that a substantial amount of housing remains permanently affordable to people earning 80 to 125 percent of the Tucson Area Median Income. Strategies may include smaller and simpler units with shared facilities (e.g. common laundry), partnerships with non-profits, partnerships with downtown employers, and alternative forms of ownership, such as community land trusts and limited equity cooperatives. All affordable housing shall be fully integrated with market-rate housing.

While we understand that the planning for the development of the land north of Cushing St has been accomplished and approved, the Menlo Park Neighborhood Association (MPNA) must be invited to and participate in the design/development processes prior to actual construction.

Menlo Park residents recommend the following development and design principles for the described area. The Menlo Park Neighborhood Association pledges to be as flexible as possible with these principles if the above goals are accomplished.

### **Land Use**

The vacant acreage shall include the following uses: viable local retail, residential, a Mercado, community facilities and unique public spaces, especially historic preservation/reconstruction projects.

- Residential uses shall be located throughout the development in various forms to create a human presence
- Locally owned business and retail shall be located throughout the development, typically on the ground floor with residential space or spaces above
- Ecologically/historically sensitive restoration of historical resources
- Historically accurate landscape restoration that encourages environmental education, international ecotourism, and invites non-invasive, passive community recreation

### **Design**

Architectural design should be consistent with and honor the existing architecture of Menlo Park (Craftsman, Bungalow, Mission Revival, Art Deco, Adobe Territorial styles, including the Mercado District which is currently under construction.) All visible building materials should reflect Tucson's historic building materials (adobe, burnt adobe, black basaltic "A" Mountain rock).

- Building heights should be at a maximum of no more than 50' feet along Congress Street and Avenida del Convento and gradually decrease towards the southern and eastern boundary. Heights should be reduced along the perimeter of TOHP, especially the Convento
- Public Art (locally designed and approved and consistent with design overlays)
- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building standards strongly encouraged
- Universal design encouraged for some units
- Staggered building heights with a maximum height of 50 feet
- All event areas, plazas and public buildings shall be handicapped accessible
- Development plans should consider the mitigation of traffic noise emanating from I-10

### **Parking**

- Parking requirements should be minimal and some cases should not be required (i.e. for residential units in proximity to the street car stop)
- Contained, small-business oriented parking areas – interior
- Underground or semi-underground parking
- Underground or encased, hidden, camouflaged parking structures
- Angled street parking

- Surface parking shall be located in the rear of business and/or residential structures.

### **Circulation**

- Street car stops should be surrounded by transit-oriented local businesses
- Street car line shall extend to Congress and be considered for future extension by the City
- There shall be interior walkways that connect each project site to the Santa Cruz River, to Congress Street, to Avenida del Convento, and Tucson Origins facilities
- Streets shall have wide sidewalks and reduced vehicular travel lanes to slow traffic and to encourage pedestrian activity
- Reducing the speed and volume of traffic on South and North Grande, and throughout the neighborhood shall remain a funding and implementation priority of the City
- Streets shall be designed to be bicycle friendly

### **Residential**

- A minimum of 15 to 30 percent of housing units shall be affordable to the working class (80-125% of Area Median Income), depending on proposed densities
- Residential units shall be dispersed throughout the site
- Residential units are encouraged above retail
- Live-work units are encouraged
- Various residential types are encouraged to allow housing choices
- Private yards shall be kept minimal to encourage use of and allow for larger open area, naturally landscaped public spaces
- Plans for apartment buildings shall be submitted to the MPNA prior to the City of Tucson approval authority to assure that diversity of apartment types is maintained, i.e. senior, family, market rate, affordable, student.

### **Commercial**

- Mercado should anchor the development and have the following:
  - A charter that benefits the public good
  - Only locally owned businesses and foster the creation of new businesses
  - Should anchor the creation of a market district that has places to gather including a venue for music and festival, for people of all ages; the market district should offer additional market-related activities such as museums, a seasonal farmers market and places for kids to play and adults to relax
  - A food court housing locally owned eateries and a public seating/picnic area
  - Should incorporate other interested local farmers markets into the design of the market
- Boutique hotel, neighborhood cantina, bookstore, businesses with extended hours and a financial institution are desired
- Dispersed office uses are encouraged

### **Landscaping and Open Space**

- Planned development shall include a carefully designed balance between landscaped open space and building density.
- The Sonoran Desert Park, the area extending eastward from the Tucson Origins Heritage Park to the Santa Cruz River and extending from the southern edge of Mission Garden to 22<sup>nd</sup> Street/Starr Pass Blvd. must be maintained as an open space parkland area, as it is essential to native plant and native wildlife connectivity, and because it is situated on top of land fill it is unsuitable for any type of constructed infrastructure. Open space is the highest and best use of this area. As a native vegetation park adjacent to a major downtown area it will be unique in the United States.
- All planted landscaping elements should consist primarily of native vegetation.
- Landscape elements shall complement and blend in with TOHP and the development to the west of this site
- Vegetation should be utilized to shade buildings and pedestrian spaces
- Open, inviting and park-like space adjacent to the Santa Cruz River should be enhanced and maintained
- San Juan Steps for equestrian and pedestrian access to the river shall be incorporated
- Trees shall line all streets and pedestrian paths, irrigated by reclaimed water
- Restoration of riparian vegetation on Santa Cruz River

### **Approach**

- Multiple builders – a variety of styles that fit into a comprehensive plan congruent with Menlo Park historic architecture
- Retail and residential development projects, whether privately funded or taxpayer funded should be submitted to the MPNA for review and comment prior to submittal to the approval authority

### **Linkages and Buffers**

- There shall be a minimum of two stations for the street car line with one being near Congress Street and existing bus lines
- Shall be consistent with west side design principles, which stress strong connectivity to neighboring developments and the greater downtown
- Shall provide safety and security for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Artwork at the West End street car station shall be on Congress St.

### **Green Building/Energy Efficiency**

Green building principles shall be incorporated into the overall design, following LEED Standards to increase the marketability of the development and serve as a model for other areas.

### **Neighborhood Resources and Neighborhood Protection**

Use of the remaining vacant land shall provide community amenities for Menlo Park neighborhood. Developers shall mitigate the negative impacts of increased development and density (traffic, crowding, access to parking during festivals, increased

property values, etc.) in the Menlo Park neighborhood. The Menlo Park Neighborhood Association therefore desires the incorporation of the following amenities for the neighborhood:

- Public market/Mercado
- Prevention of obstruction of solar rights, consistent with current legal and community concerns, is essential
- Gathering space/amenities for families and elders
- Affordable housing
- Art studios with community art resources (kiln, pottery shop, painting studios)
- Wireless outdoor internet to be available in parks and plazas
- The completion of Tucson Origins Heritage Park.

### **Unacceptable Elements**

- No big box buildings
- No buildings higher than 50 feet.
- No national chains, such as fast food/drive thru's, or stand-alone drugstore/pharmacies
- No obstruction of view to cultural amenities, e.g. the Convento, "A" Mountain, Tumamoc Hill, St. Augustine Cathedral and Mission Garden
- No monotonous design
- No obstruction of viewsheds, with retention of full visibility of cultural amenities
- No construction of arena-type facilities that would create potential for increased noise pollution

### **Land south of Cushing Street**

- For land south of Cushing Street, an RFP process shall involve City planning staff and appropriate stakeholders: i.e. Friends of Tucson's Birthplace, and Menlo Park residents. The sale of land and/or sales tax from commercial development shall be used to fund construction and development of the voter-approved preservation of TOHP. TOHP includes the re-creation of the Mission San Agustin, Mission Garden, Carrillo House, Sonoran Desert Park, and the Native American Interpretive area.
- Create economically viable cultural facilities along the streetcar route west of the Luis Gutierrez Bridge and south of Cushing Street.
- Timing is a high priority. Performance clauses shall be created in a development agreement with the City to ensure that development keeps pace with the momentum of other current projects and the modern streetcar line.

## Conclusion

As we look to a dynamic future for downtown, Menlo Park residents believe it is critical that government and business leaders acknowledge and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Tucson's west side. Archeological excavations have revealed that the land near the base of "A" Mountain has been used for agriculture for over 4100 years, - the longest known history of cultivation in the United States. Menlo Park is indeed the birthplace of Tucson, and therefore the residents of Menlo Park believe it is incumbent on the City of Tucson to honor this fact through appropriate and innovative development of the neighborhood.

This position statement builds on previous statements and guidelines developed by and for Menlo Park including:

- 1) *Position Statement on Rio Nuevo (Westside) submitted by the Coalition of Westside Neighborhoods in August 1999*
- 2) *Position Statement on Traffic (June 11, 2003) developed at the June 2003 Charette on Traffic conducted with the Transportation Department and the Sonoran Institute and submitted to the City of Tucson Transportation Department*
- 3) *Position Statement on Cultural/Commercial Area of Rio Nuevo (Westside) submitted by MPNA on April 13, 2004, developed at the Cultural/Commercial Charette of March 6, 2004*
- 4) *Position Statement on Open Space Surrounding Rio Nuevo Westside, unanimously adopted on March 8, 2005 and submitted to Rio Nuevo Office and Hargreaves Associations.*
- 5) *Position Statement for the vacant City owned land near Congress Street and I-10, previous drafts, 2012*

