

## 2002 Survey Results

by Mary Jane Leon

The neighborhood survey conducted annually by the Barron Park Association was changed in content this year. Because Caltrans has selected Palo Alto for a pilot project on improving El Camino Real, the Board thought it was important to survey the neighborhood specifically on issues related to that project. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find an article on the city-wide meeting that was held June 1 on the proposals for El Camino. The results of the survey, described in this article, were very useful to the Board members who attended the June 1 meeting.

At the date of this writing, we have received 151 surveys, representing 10% of the Barron Park households. Responses to the individual questions break out as follows:

**How frequently do you walk for at least one block along El Camino Real?** Only four people said that they walk it every day or almost every day. About 50 each said they walked it between several times a month and never. Comments included "I bike," "for newspaper," and "why?"

**What are your reasons for not visiting El Camino locations more often?** The overwhelming majority (106) said it was because of lack of useful *types* of stores, but there was heavy response to all the reasons: uninviting environment, poor pedestrian access from neighborhood, difficulty parking, easier to drive to other locations. Of the 68 people who said that they feel uncomfortable walking along the street, most picked more than one of the following reasons: traffic noise, closeness of traffic, wind, dirtiness. Those who checked "Other" gave similar reasons, like safety, ugly, very unattractive, exhaust fumes, broken-down feeling, speed of vehicles, and homeless.

One person commented that he/she visits stores like Block Buster, Hollywood Video, Jamba Juice and Green Mail, but drives to them, and another noted "I do use El Camino locations, but usually in conjunction with other places by car."

**How comfortable do you feel crossing El Camino Real as a pedestrian?** Fifty said that they feel comfortable and confident crossing El Camino Real. More than 50 said that they find crossing the street somewhat uncomfortable or difficult, or that they avoid crossing the street as a pedestrian because they feel uncomfortable and unsafe. Only three said that they frequently have to cross the street, even though feeling uncomfortable and unsafe.

**I feel comfortable letting my children (older than 8) cross El Camino Real by themselves.** Yes got 23 responses, and No got 35. Many people wrote in n/a or marked "don't know." One commented "OK at 11 or older," another said "older than 10," and three mentioned that crossing guards make a difference.

**Where do you *predominately* shop for groceries?** There were a total of 224 responses to this question. Many people checked more than one option. The same number, 72, said they shop at mega-store in neighboring community or at a nearby Palo Alto store. The other options were liberally represented: Shop at store that is on my way home from work or other errand, 24; shop at local specialty food store, 15; shop at non-Palo Alto specialty food store, 14; shop periodically at mega-store with many intervening trips to smaller stores, 27.

**Have you adapted when you commute/go shopping/run errands to avoid peak traffic times on El Camino?** Occasionally, 26; often, 69; traffic not a serious problem, 16; traffic less of problem than rescheduling, 22.

### General Comments

General comments fell into three main categories: traffic, shops, and appearance.

**Traffic comments were:**

Do not make El Camino Real in Palo Alto as bad as it is in Menlo Park.

Traffic has influenced my travels greatly (this from a senior).

Traffic problems need to be resolved regionally with more mass transit.

No more traffic lights!

I have learned all the ways to avoid El Camino--side streets, or take Alma.

Any improvements to El Camino must not impede traffic. El Camino is our main route to anywhere else.

Crossing El Camino can be problematical in a car because of red-light runners including VTA busses!

Traffic is a problem.

Traffic is lousy!

El Camino SUCKS!!!!

Several people took the opportunity to comment on other problem streets than El Camino. For example:

We need a grade separation at Alma.

Arastradero is a big problem - it should be part of BPA scope. I hear rumors of multi housing for that street--represents more traffic.

El Camino to Whitsell on Barron is getting to be one way, with parking on both sides. We try to avoid by using Matadero.

Speeding on Maybell also during school hours.

#### **Comments about shopping were:**

Fred's Deli, Happy donuts, Walgreens are fine.

I miss Service Auto Parts, Future Fantasy.

Basically, lack of useful or attractive stores and shops.

El Camino is simply ugly and there are few appealing businesses. We do need a nice grocery store closer/within walking distance, such as the old All American.

We need a grocery market within walking distance. This driving everywhere is for the birds.

Would like to have stores within walking distance to BP to fill basic needs: groceries, environmental cleaners, Post Office

We need a grocery store. At least a bakery would help us with shopping and meeting our neighbors in BP we still need a grocery store in BP, not just a small store like Driftwood Deli.

Even if there was a store that we would go to, parking is difficult. Too far to walk home, especially with packages. We live almost 1 mile from ECR, deep into Barron Park.

#### **Comments about appearance were:**

Just cleaning up weeds would help. Driftwood/Creekside landscaping should be the model.

The El Camino Barron Park strip is very unattractive. The city of Palo Alto has abandoned any planning or any interest.

Would like to promote median of trees and plants on El Camino like Mt. View & Menlo Park. Our area of El Camino looks terrible.

More landscaping. Two liquor stores side by side??

Filthy street! Poor maintenance.