
ATTACHMENT 2

PUBLIC COMMENTS



From: Julia Klein
Sent: Monday, September 24, 2018 1:05 PM
To: 'Laurence Kinsella'
Subject: RE: General Plan comments

Hi Laurence,

Thank you for sending in your written comments. Your email will be provided to the General Plan Subcommittee and a copy will be placed in the General Plan project file along with any other public comments the city receives.

Also, if you have not already done so, please check out the General Plan Update website and take the online survey: <http://strivesanmateo.org>

If you have any difficulty accessing the online materials or have questions about the General Plan Update effort, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks,

Julia Klein
Principal Planner
City of San Mateo
(650) 522-7216
 Please consider the environment before printing this email.

From: Laurence Kinsella
Sent: Tuesday, September 18, 2018 10:27 PM
To: Julia Klein <jklein@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: General Plan comments

Dear Ms. Klein,

Some general and specific comments on the upcoming General Plan update:

That there be no more up zoning in the General Plan until the infrastructure is adequate and in place to handle it, including better (required) coordination of development with the school districts.

That in the City revisit fees, especially with the purpose to updating its fee structure as it pertains to parking in-lieu fees. All city fees (affordable housing etc.) should be updated as part of this process. The City of San Carlos recently did a study on parking in-lieu fees on the Peninsula that might offer some guidance.

That the City of San Mateo be mandated to do some regular counts as to Caltrain use by the TOD developments that it has approved and will approve in the future. All I see is Hexagon work that does not include Caltrain usage related to any of the past or new TOD development.

That, prior to or as a mandate for any GP update, Hexagon do a city wide projected traffic study based on any proposed up zoning and/or increase density in the city, including commercial.

That any proposed zero lot line commercial development have more stringent setback guidelines than is presently required, with light and air considerations that reflect some of the same concerns as those required in residential requirements.

That the neighborhoods, on the east side of El Camino, that are impacted by the City's TOD up zoning of the past 10 years or more now, receive some added benefit from the City to compensate in some fashion for the added parking problems, traffic congestion, noise and air pollution, higher crime rates, the soon to be Caltrain grade separations etc. and the overall general decrease in their quality of life and property values, that have been a direct consequence of the City's approving higher density on the east side of El Camino in San Mateo. Simple traffic calming measure don't amount to much of a help, and after the fact, regular bond measures to pay for the added demands of new development is particularly difficult for those on fixed incomes. Maybe other simple things like increased street sweeping taking on a higher priority on the east side of El Camino could be implemented. More services to the Eastside.

That there be a bigger setback from the freeways on any new development in the City of San Mateo, particularly on those along the 101/92 corridor. There are some state laws that require setbacks from freeways for residential development, due to air quality, but I don't see the City ever taking them into account. This may apply to the proposed Concar/Passages development, where Ross and Rite Aid are now located.

Thank you for asking for public comment.

Best,

Laurence Kinsella

From: Julia Klein
Sent: Monday, October 8, 2018 9:56 AM
To: 'Susan Shankle'
Subject: RE: General Plan 2040 comments

Hi Susan,

Thank you for your email. It will be forwarded to the General Plan Subcommittee and included in the General Plan project file as part of the public record.

Sincerely,

Julia Klein
Principal Planner
City of San Mateo
(650) 522-7216

 Please consider the environment before printing this email.

From: Susan Shankle
Sent: Tuesday, September 25, 2018 7:06 AM
To: Julia Klein <jklein@cityofsanmateo.org>; Lily Lim <llim@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: General Plan 2040 comments

Dear Planners,

I attended the General Plan presentation last night (9/24/18). The committee talked a lot about the "high quality of life" here in San Mateo. My main concern with the new General Plan is, how are we going to keep it that way?

Page 5 of the handout states that "By 2040, SM's population is projected to grow by another 28,000 people, requiring 10,000 new housing units just to meet this population increase."

Suppose we do ruin our beautiful bayside environment by covering it with high-rise apartments. They will all fill up immediately. Then what do we do? Right back to square one, except San Mateo will be unrecognizable.

I'm also very concerned about where the water is going to come from for unlimited population growth. I'm not hearing enough discussion about this water issue, and I would like some answers. We just got out of a 5-year drought, yet we continue to support unsustainable water usage.

At a July 16 City Council meeting regarding San Mateo building height limits, I spoke with one of the young proponents of massive affordable housing. When I asked him where all the water was going to come from for the thousands of people who will occupy these buildings, he stated that apartments buildings use a lot less water because there are no lawns.

It seems that no one has notified these pro-development groups that apartment buildings all have landscaping, and each occupant is still going to need water for drinking, bathing, cooking, dishwashers, pets, etc.

That meeting showed only two sides of the issue: status quo, or massive building. We MUST look at all the positions on this issue, and find compromises to figure out how to house our burgeoning population. When I was born in 1951, there were 2.6 billion humans. Today there are 7.5 billion. This is expected to double by 2050. Obviously, we need to be more realistic and more creative about managing our crowded planet. You may be very excited about doubling or tripling the population of our beautiful bayside community, but many of us are not.

Thank you,

Susan Shankle

San Mateo resident for 26 years, lifelong Bay Area resident

Citizen, Taxpayer, Business Owner and Voter

From: Julia Klein
Sent: Monday, October 8, 2018 9:50 AM
To: 'Keith Weber'
Subject: RE: GP Subcommittee Mtg. #1 - Comments

Hi Keith,

Thank you for your letter. It will be forwarded to the General Plan Subcommittee and will be included in the General Plan project file as part of the public record.

Sincerely,

Julia Klein
Principal Planner
City of San Mateo
(650) 522-7216

 Please consider the environment before printing this email.

From: Keith Weber
Sent: Tuesday, September 25, 2018 5:19 PM
To: Julia Klein <jklein@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: GP Subcommittee Mtg. #1 - Comments

Julia,

Attached please find my written comments that I made last night at the GP Subcommittee meeting. Please distribute to the committee and consultant.

Thank you,
Keith Weber

TO: General Plan Subcommittee
FROM: Keith Weber
RE: General Plan Revision Kick-off Meeting
DATE: September 24, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this valuable community discussion.

The Downtown Plan process which took place over the last 2 years was deeply disappointing. It was a process, it seems to me, that began with the premise that downtown is little more than an economic opportunity. The historic core - the symbolic center of our community and single most valuable asset - was left as an afterthought, when it should have been the starting point.

2019 marks the 125th anniversary of San Mateo's incorporation. We are a mature city with deep roots and a valued past. And that community value is imbedded in our built environment, both commercial and residential. A responsible vision for our future can only be achieved if it values our past as an expression of our community identity and our collective self respect.

If our General Plan is to be a long-range statement of community priorities and values developed to guide future public decision making, it needs a holistic and sustainable premise.

The first rule of the medical profession is "do no harm." If the committee begins with the premise that community heritage is an irreplaceable asset that should be preserved and protected, economic opportunity will follow.

An good example can be found in our current General Plan, which "***confirms the city's commitment that the protection, enhancement, perpetuation, and use of historic structures are of economic, cultural and aesthetic benefit to the city of San Mateo.***"

I hope, also, that if outside professional speakers will be invited to make presentations on transportation, development density, etc., that one evening be devoted to historic preservation consultants who can inform the public on the economic and cultural benefits of identifying, preserving and protecting our historic community assets.

From: Julia Klein
Sent: Monday, October 8, 2018 12:18 PM
To: 'Jan Stokley' <jan@housingchoices.org>
Cc: Leora Tanjuatco <leora@hlcsmc.org>; chelsea@snkids.org; keldridge@cbnorcal.com
Subject: RE: Information for the General Plan subcommittee

Hi Jan,

Thank you for your email and letter. They will be forwarded to the General Plan Subcommittee and will be included in the General Plan project file as part of the public record.

Also, we are looking into other opportunities to share information from other agencies and/or groups. Please let me know whether if your group is interested in this and if so, who I should speak with.

Thanks,

Julia Klein
Principal Planner
City of San Mateo
(650) 522-7216

 Please consider the environment before printing this email.

From: Jan Stokley <jan@housingchoices.org>
Sent: Wednesday, September 26, 2018 2:42 PM
To: Julia Klein <jklein@cityofsanmateo.org>
Cc: Leora Tanjuatco <leora@hlcsmc.org>; chelsea@snkids.org; keldridge@cbnorcal.com
Subject: Information for the General Plan subcommittee

Dear Julia,

It was nice to meet you at the first General Plan subcommittee meeting. As we discussed, Housing Choices is interested in supporting the participation of people with developmental disabilities in the process. Inclusion of people with cognitive, communication, and social disabilities requires somewhat more forethought than simply hosting a meeting at a physically accessible location (though that is, of course, also necessary).

With other community partners, we hope to support families and adults served by the Golden Gate Regional Center to have a voice in the process so that the blueprint created by the General Plan envisions a community in 2040 that is truly inclusive of San Mateo residents of all incomes and abilities. I believe there were other people at the initial meeting who would support such a goal, and I have taken the liberty to copy them on this email.

As a first step, I have created a housing needs assessment for this part of your community, which is attached, using data from the CA Department of Developmental Services. As you know, the CA Housing Element law requires the city to assess and plan for the housing needs of its residents with developmental disabilities, who experience the highest rates of housing discrimination of any protected class.

Please let me know how we can help you support an inclusive, community-building planning process.

Thank you.

Jan

--

Jan Stokley
Executive Director

jan@housingchoices.org

direct: 408.713.2613

cell: 408.391.9869

fax: 408.498.5242

898 Faulstich Court, Suite B

San Jose, CA 95112

www.housingchoices.org



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The Housing Needs of the City of San Mateo's

Residents with Developmental Disabilities

Introduction. The City of San Mateo faces a growing need for permanent supportive housing for people with developmental disabilities, who are diagnosed with, for example, autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, intellectual disability, and other conditions that severely impair functioning in the activities of daily living. Under California's Lanterman Act, the Golden Gate Regional Center provides the city's residents with developmental disabilities with the services they need to live successfully in integrated community housing. But without access to affordable housing, this is an empty promise.

Current Unmet Housing Need. According to the California Department of Developmental Services, the City of San Mateo is home to **956 people with developmental disabilities**, of whom **579 are adults and 377 are children**. Of the adult population, **only 58 (10%) live in their own apartment, while 217 (38%) are living at home with aging parents**. Three hundred and four (304) adults in the City of San Mateo live in a licensed facility.

Without access to affordable housing, many adults with developmental disabilities remain in the home of an aging parent or in a restrictive care facility, not by choice, but because of the lack of other residential options.

Demographic Factors Contributing to the Growth in Housing Need. The number of people with developmental disabilities in San Mateo County **increased by 35% in the decade since 2008**. Two demographic factors will continue to fuel this growth.

First, this growth correlates with a significant increase in the diagnosis of children with autism that began more than 25 years ago--now seen in a **dramatic increase in the number of adults approaching their 30s**. For example, San Mateo County now has **260% more adults with developmental disabilities in the age group 18 to 31 years compared to the age group 32 years to 41 years**, representing the first wave of the autism "tsunami" that is entering adulthood. Most adults with developmental disabilities in their 20s and 30s are still living at home, but as their parents reach their 60s and 70s, these families need to find permanent supportive housing options for their adult children with developmental disabilities.

Another demographic factor contributing to the unmet housing need among people with developmental disabilities is **the continuing gains in life span due to improvements in medical care and social services**. For example, as recently as ten years ago, there was a 36% decrease in the San Mateo County population of adults with developmental disabilities as they aged out of the group aged 42 to 51 years and joined the group aged 52 to 61 years of age. In contrast,



in March 2018, the group that is age 52 to 61 years of age is actually larger than the group that is age 42 to 51 years of age. Similarly, the number of adults living past their 62nd birthday is almost the same size as the group age 52 to 61. In just 10 years, the number of San Mateo County seniors (age 62 and older) with developmental disabilities has more than doubled.

Community Factors Contributing to the Growth in Housing Need. Dramatic rent increases in the City of San Mateo limit the ability of adults with developmental disabilities to move out of the family home or restrictive care facilities. Many rely on SSI benefits of only \$900/month, and those who work are often employed in low-wage, often part-time jobs. The San Mateo market rent can easily be three times the individual's gross income. Many adults with developmental disabilities are able to live in affordable housing with Independent Living Services or Supported Living Services provided by the Golden Gate Regional Center. But **affordable housing remains the missing piece of the puzzle.**

The lack of affordable housing takes a particular toll on the City of San Mateo's children with developmental disabilities. Overcrowding and frequent housing moves, associated with high housing costs, directly undermine the benefits of special education and other investments that would contribute to better long-term outcomes as an adult.

Solutions to the City of San Mateo's Housing Crisis for People with Developmental Disabilities. Although the Golden Gate Regional Center can provide supportive services to enable the city's residents with developmental disabilities to live in community rental housing, the Regional Center is unable to pay for the actual cost of housing. Over the past 21 years, a number of Silicon Valley cities have overcome this barrier by fostering **long-term partnerships between the Regional Center service system and housing developers who have set aside a percentage of units at specific properties for rent to people with developmental disabilities with resident supportive services funded by the Regional Center.**

This housing model works, but it requires the sustained leadership of cities like San Mateo to ensure that, as the City of San Mateo creates its blue print for the future and addresses its community's affordable housing needs, the city is intentional about including a percentage of rental units for extremely low-income people with developmental disabilities.

For more information about creating inclusionary affordable housing for San Mateo residents with developmental disabilities, both families with children and adults seeking to live independently, please contact Jan Stokley, Executive Director, Housing Choices, jan@housingchoices.org or telephone (408)713-2613 and visit us at www.housingchoices.org.

From: Julia Klein
Sent: Monday, October 8, 2018 11:07 AM
To: 'gd@devarchitects.com'
Cc: James Eggers; Sierra Club Chair Trans Gladwyn d'Souza; Ken A red; Schneider, Nancy; Wysong, Rebecca
Subject: RE: San Mateo General Plan - Sierra Club Guidelines

Hi Gita,

Thank you for your email and letter, and the Sierra Club's interest in sharing information; however, the agenda for the October 16th meeting has been set for a while now to allow the committee to review existing conditions reports.

Additionally, given that the subcommittee's role is focused on reviewing General Plan work products, staff is concerned that presentations by various groups during the subcommittee meetings may unduly delay the committee's work. If you have a presentation in PDF format that you would like to forward me, I can forward it to the committee along with other public comments.

We are looking into other opportunities to share information from other agencies, and perhaps your group's information may be more appropriate in an alternative type of setting. Please let me know whether if your group is interested in this and if so, who I should speak with.

Thanks,

Julia Klein
Principal Planner
City of San Mateo
(650) 522-7216

 Please consider the environment before printing this email.

From: Gita Dev <gd@devarchitects.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 27, 2018 10:31 PM
To: Julia Klein <jklein@cityofsanmateo.org>
Cc: James Eggers <james.eggers@sierraclub.org>; Sierra Club Chair Trans Gladwyn d'Souza <godsouza@mac.com>; Ken A red <k.abreu@sbcglobal.net>; Schneider, Nancy <hnschneider@astound.net>; Wysong, Rebecca <rebecca.wysong@gmail.com>
Subject: San Mateo General Plan - Sierra Club Guidelines

Dear Ms. Klein,

The Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter's Sustainable Land Use Committee would like to **present our "Guidelines for Downtown and Station Area Plans" to the San Mateo General Plan Subcommittee**, as it is regarded as a useful tool when revising and evaluating Specific and General Plans.

We believe it would be useful for the Committee as well as the community to hear the ideas in the Guidelines, which could be considered in the General Plan process.

Please review the attached brief letter and let us know how we can proceed.

Sincerely,

Gita Dev, Co-Chair, Sustainable Land Use Committee

Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

415-722-3355 gd@devarchitects.com



Loma Prieta Chapter serving San Mateo, Santa Clara & San Benito Counties

Julia Klein, Principal Planner
Planning Division
City of San Mateo
330 W 20th Ave, San Mateo, CA 94403
via email: jklein@cityofsanmateo.org

Subject: Sierra Club Sustainable Land Use Guidelines

Dear Ms Klein,

The Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter's Sustainable Land Use Committee would like to **present our "Guidelines for Downtown and Station Area Plans" to the San Mateo General Plan Subcommittee**, as it is regarded as a useful tool when revising and evaluating Specific and General Plans.

We believe it would be useful for the Committee as well as the community to hear the ideas in the Guidelines, which could be considered in the General Plan process.

We have had an opportunity to present this tool to you in the past and would like to mention that we have revised the Guidelines, since then, to bring them up to date. We would also like to meet with the City planning staff as well as your consultant to go over our revised guidelines in detail.

We propose a 10 minute presentation at the Sub-Committee's next meeting in October. A couple of our active members have mentioned this at the public meetings.

Thank you for your consideration and please let us know how we can proceed. As mentioned above, we are prepared to present as early as the October 16 meeting.

Sincerely,

Gita Dev, Co-Chair, Sustainable Land Use Committee
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter
415-722-3355 gd@devarchitects.com

Cc Gladwyn D'Souza, Chair, Conservation Committee
James Eggers, Executive Director, Loma Prieta Chapter
Ken A Abreu, Resident
Nancy Schneider, Resident
Rebecca Wysong, Resident

From: Julia Klein
Sent: Monday, October 8, 2018 9:49 AM
To: 'Maxine Turner'
Subject: RE: General Plan Subcommittee

Hi Maxine,

Thank you for your email. It will be forwarded to the General Plan Subcommittee and will be included in the General Plan project file as part of the public record.

Sincerely,

Julia Klein
Principal Planner
City of San Mateo
(650) 522-7216

 Please consider the environment before printing this email.

From: Maxine Turner
Sent: Thursday, October 4, 2018 4:40 PM
To: Julia Klein <jklein@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: General Plan Subcommittee

Hello Julia - Please ensure that the full committee gets a copy of this email. I thought this first meeting got off to a good start & thank the committee for listening so well.

I submit a few comments regarding the Committee logistics and suggestions to be added to the briefing book.

COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION:

Let me clarify that I understand the need to limit public input to 2 minutes. My more important point was that it is imperative to have opportunities for dialogue & follow-up amongst the committee and attendees to add or correct information from previous speakers and the committee.

Recommendations:

- 1) Reevaluate the schedule for number of meetings and whether the 2 hour limit to meetings is conducive to full discussion of issues. Perhaps organize more informal 'round table' discussion groups with opposing viewpoints at each table to debrief after each committee meeting.
- 2) Improve meeting logistics. The microphone set up did not work for public input & interfered with ability to present. It was uncomfortable to not know whom to look at when presenting and inconvenient not to have a place to put your notes while holding the microphone. The layout of chairs for the public did not allow for visibility with the committee or staff.

BRIEFING BOOK BIAS: Text in italics is content from Briefing Book.

Introduction: *San Mateo's vibrant Downtown, desirable neighborhoods, diversity of employment options, high quality public services, and recent developments such as Hillsdale/Bay Meadows and Station Park Green, make it an ever-popular place to live and work. San Mateans take pride in the*

community and are dedicated to maintaining and improving the city and its many distinct and diverse individual neighborhoods.]

Add words "authentic and historic" to description of San Mateo's vibrant downtown....

Housing Affordability: *Even with the high housing costs, the city population has increased by almost 5,000 people between 2013 and 2018, a trend that is expected to continue. By 2040, San Mateo's population is projected to grow by another 28,000 people, which would require about 10,000 new housing units just to meet this population increase.*

We will never make any progress if we just keep repeating, instead of challenging, the population assumptions made by real estate interests and regional agencies. To have any reasonable balance between job supply and housing demand, we need to look at both sides of the jobs/housing balance equation.

Public Transit: *The regional transit agencies are working on ways to improve service and increase ridership. The Caltrain electrification project now underway is expected to reduce travel time, as well as improve air quality. SamTrans is considering options for rapid bus service along El Camino Real between Daly City and Palo Alto, including through San Mateo.*

We need honest, specific data to determine whether the potential improvements to existing transit options can accommodate the projected population growth. Specifics, not vague wishes - how many new trains and increased capacity will actually result from the Caltrain electrification process?

Pedestrian and Bicycle Network: *Biking is popular in San Mateo, and a good bike network supports sustainability, active living, and public health. San Mateo's existing bike system connects residential neighborhoods and major roadways.*

I question whether the existing street network for bikes can be considered a good network, especially taking safety, as well as convenience, into consideration. Major improvements must be taken to increase bicycle and pedestrian use.

Parks & Cultural Resources: *Resources included on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places include the*

Ernest Coxhead House, the De Sabla Teahouse and Garden, the Hotel Saint Matthew, the San Mateo Main Post Office, and the National Bank of San Mateo.

Add the Downtown Historic District which includes parts of B Street and 3rd Avenue, the Glazenwood residential neighborhood and the 19th Avenue Park Eichler neighborhood.

San Mateo 10 years ago was a much more diverse, affordable and less congested city than it is now. This GP update needs to honestly evaluate who has benefited from the recent, unrestrained explosion of jobs and who has borne the negative impacts. And to honestly question (not just accept) if the 'talking points' of jobs-housing balance, high density TOD, & Caltrain electrification are truly solutions to the affordable housing crisis.

From: Julia Klein
Sent: Monday, October 8, 2018 9:50 AM
To: 'Keith Weber'
Subject: RE: General Plan Update - Key Issues/Priorities/Existing Conditions

Hi Keith,

Thank you for your letter. It will be forwarded to the General Plan Subcommittee and will be included in the General Plan project file as part of the public record.

Sincerely,

Julia Klein
Principal Planner
City of San Mateo
(650) 522-7216

 Please consider the environment before printing this email.

From: Keith Weber
Sent: Monday, October 8, 2018 9:14 AM
To: Julia Klein <jklein@cityofsanmateo.org>
Cc: Charlie Knox <cknox@placeworks.com>; City Mgr <citymgr@cityofsanmateo.org>; George White <gwhite@cityofsanmateo.org>; Drew Corbett <dcorbett@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: General Plan Update - Key Issues/Priorities/Existing Conditions

Julia,

Please distribute the attached letter to the General Plan Subcommittee and include a hard copy in the meeting materials for the October 16 subcommittee meeting.

Thank you,
Keith Weber

GENERAL PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE

Rick Bonilla, Mayor

Eric Rodriguez, Council Member

Amourence Lee

Adam Lorraine, Vice Chair

Ellen Mallory-Ulrich, Chair

Ramiro Maldonado

Clifford S Robbins

Subject: General Plan Update - Key Issues/Priorities/Existing Conditions

General Plan Subcommittee Members:

San Mateo has a wealth of historic resources that can be found in every corner of the city, from homes to storefronts, parks to public works, individual buildings and intact districts. They reflect important themes in the city's growth and development, including architecture, city planning, social history, ethnic heritage, and commerce. Collectively, they tell the story and define the character of our community, adding to the quality of life for all. These oft neglected community assets are recognized by our current General Plan as providing "economic, cultural and aesthetic benefit to the City of San Mateo," yet many remain unidentified and most are unprotected.

Listed below are several suggestions for General Plan priorities to reinforce city policies that support recognition and protection of our irreplaceable historic buildings and neighborhoods. The City Council, at their January, 2018 priority setting meeting, determined that these issues should be included in the general plan update process.

- **Review, update and complete the City of San Mateo Historic Building Survey**

In order to make informed planning decisions that support City policy goals, policy makers need baseline information on potential historic resources. Before buildings are torn down or altered, it is useful to ask if they have some significance to the community. Without critical information about our historic resources, bad decisions will inevitably be made.

Adopted by the city council almost thirty years ago, the 1989 Historic Building Survey was a significant achievement, but also limited and incomplete. It did not include many neighborhoods with a large number of older buildings that relate historically and have a high degree of architectural consistency.

Completing the historic resources survey at this time would accomplish a strategic direction identified by the Council in 2016 to "support efforts to improve residential neighborhoods and preserve and enhance neighborhood character." Leading cities from Palo Alto to Pasadena, San

Francisco to Santa Barbara have undertaken extensive historic resource surveys. Even Los Angeles recently completed a citywide survey, documenting 880,000 properties¹.

As development pressure increases, policy makers and the community at large deserve clear data about which structures have ‘historic’ value and if they deserve to be preserved. In the end, completing the survey will lead to better land use decisions and a more livable community. There are a number of highly qualified preservation consulting firms in the Bay Area capable of completing historic resources surveys².

- **Strengthen protection of the City’s Historic Resources and Downtown Historic District**

San Mateo’s historic resources, both individually and collectively, are perhaps the city’s most under valued asset. The zoning code and demolition ordinance offer some protection to individually eligible buildings and contributors to the historic district, but they are silent on potentially eligible buildings that have not yet been identified as historic. Moreover, there is no deterrent to “demolition by neglect,” a situation in which a property owner intentionally allows a historic property to suffer severe deterioration, potentially beyond the point of repair.

Other jurisdictions in California have established review and approval procedures for demolition permits for older structures that are potentially significant historical resources. The City of Sacramento, for example, has a mandatory investigation and review process for the demolition of structures 50 years or older that may be historically significant for purposes of CEQA but are not otherwise yet recognized as historically significant. And before issuing a residential demolition permit, San Francisco and San Jose apparently require complete CEQA review.

Even cities with reasonably strong protections are finding that in the Bay Area’s turbocharged housing market there is ample financial incentive to circumvent the law. Indeed, a January 7, 2018 San Francisco Chronicle report “**Homes in S.F., some historic, razed illegally**”³ reveals that developers and flippers are finding it more profitable to work around the law than to comply with it.

Adding sufficiently strong protections and stringent financial penalty provisions in the general plan, downtown plan, and zoning code will help deter unnecessary demolitions, retain architectural interest and serve to enhance the vitality of our downtown environment and residential neighborhoods.

¹ Los Angeles (<https://preservation.lacity.org/survey/>);
San Francisco (<http://sf-planning.org/historic-resources-survey-program/>);
Pasadena (<https://ww5.cityofpasadena.net/planning/planning-division/design-and-historic-preservation/historic-preservation/>)

²VerPlanck Historic Preservation Consulting (<http://www.verplanckconsulting.com/>)
Page & Turnbull (<http://www.page-turnbull.com/>)
Architecture + History (<http://architecture-history.com/>)

³See San Francisco Chronicle archives: <http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/ODN/SanFranciscoChronicle/Default.aspx>

- **Update and strengthen Downtown Retail Core & Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines**

The current guidelines have worked well and I support updating and strengthening them to help ensure compatible new designs that reference and respect their historic context. Developers of new infill projects or property owners renovating existing buildings in the downtown deserve the best up-to-date professional guidance available in order to produce top quality projects.

Revision of the existing design guidelines should be done by an architectural firm that specializes in the revitalization of historic buildings. Several Bay Area firms experienced in preparing historic district design guidelines are identified above. The general plan and the downtown design guidelines should reflect the fact that the protection and enhancement of our historic downtown buildings are community priorities.

All three of these suggested priorities - resource survey, resource protection, and historic district design guidelines - are essential components of both the general plan and downtown plan. As we articulate a community vision for our long term future and grapple with jobs, housing and transportation issues, we must not lose sight of the contributions of those who came before us and what they have left behind for our use, benefit and enjoyment.

I thank you in advance for including these priorities.

Sincerely,
Keith Weber
San Mateo, CA

CC:
Charlie Knox, PlaceWorks
Larry Patterson, City Manager
Drew Corbett, Finance Director
George White, Community Development Director

ATTACHMENT: ***Downtown Assets and Opportunities***, Guest Perspective, San Mateo Daily Journal 1/8/18.

Downtown Assets and Opportunities

“Great downtown!” exclaimed the post-it note at the pop-up workshop. Just one of many comments offered during the multi-year San Mateo downtown engagement process. But what makes a great downtown? What are the ingredients? The engagement process attempted to answer these questions and more. A variety of factors contribute to a great downtown, but one that I would venture plays an outsize role is the built environment and historic fabric.



Why, I wondered, was the historic district in downtown barely acknowledged during the engagement process? Why was this remarkable asset never a focused topic of discussion during the years of workshops, forums and pop-ups? Missing an obvious opportunity to celebrate the most notable aspect of downtown, the engagement process steered discussion toward intensifying new development, parking, bike lanes and pocket parks. All worthwhile, but they fall short without first affirming that the historic core is the urban and architectural context that gives downtown its authenticity. Let's take a moment to pause and reflect on just how important the downtown historic district and the historic buildings within it are to the future of the City.

Decades of San Mateo planning documents have reinforced the community's strong interest in respecting its existing historic and architectural character. The General Plan itself “confirms the City's commitment that the protection, enhancement, perpetuation, and use of historic structures are of economic, cultural, and aesthetic benefit to the City of San Mateo.” If so, why then was the historic character of downtown an after thought and not the starting point for planning outreach? Take a walk downtown and you will notice signs of neglect: dirty sidewalks, peeling paint and missing tiles. One is left to wonder if our preoccupation with an imaginary tomorrow has not betrayed the very character we claim to appreciate.

As development pressure in the downtown continues to mount we must not lose sight of the valuable contribution our historic buildings make to our downtown. It is worth keeping in mind that its collection of historic buildings is downtown's single most important characteristic, and a regional drawing card. It's an asset, that above all others, enables us to understand how downtown's authenticity can provide direction and inspiration for future development.

“There may have been a time when preservation was about saving an old building here or there,” Richard Moe, former president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation has said, “but those days are gone. Preservation is in the business of saving communities and the values they embody.”

During the first two months of 2018 the City Council will outline its vision and priorities for the next two years. Finalization of the Downtown Plan and revisions to the General Plan will soon follow. The Council has an opportunity to reconfirm priorities that celebrate and strengthen this irreplaceable asset for the benefit of current and future generations, business and community alike. We should expect nothing less.

To show your support for historic downtown San Mateo, call, email or write the City Council: by phone (650-522-7049) or visit their website (<https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/55/City-Council>) for email information.

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