

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.