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Subject: Workforce and Environmental Justice... Solving our housing shortage in San Mateo

I will be unable to attend the San Mateo Nov 3rd public meeting on housing. Here are my observations, concerns and recommendations for an even better San Mateo.

In just my lifetime, world population has more than tripled. World population growth, high housing cost and traffic gridlock are closely related. Some of us have an emotional reaction to these factors, and want to “stop more people” from being near us. Paradoxically though, this quickly makes our housing/ jobs imbalance and traffic worries even worse. People are taking these new high paying jobs and commuting long distance to provide for their families. I would too in their shoes. Local governments have approved these new jobs, by approving workplaces. I’m glad they did. Remember the job market 2009 to 2014? Now we need to approve more workforce housing for these workers. I view this as a humanitarian and environmental mandate. *Workforce and Environmental Justice*.

Problem: Jobs/Housing Imbalance

- 1) Our severe housing shortage developed over decades and has created a humanitarian and environmental mess. San Mateo (and neighboring cities) approved massive amounts of office and technology workplace buildings. This has added tens of thousands of jobs... without adding adequate housing to shelter these additional workers. These are the good paying jobs America needs for a thriving economy and social mobility of working families. Now though, there is horrific traffic gridlock on our freeways. Our surface streets get jammed with commuters trying to navigate around the gridlock.
- 2) A typical “super-commuter” lives in Tracy CA and commutes 65 miles one way to the San Mateo area. That’s 130 miles roundtrip, 200+ work days per year. With 4 additional hours behind the wheel; equivalent to an additional 20 hour a week half-time job. I admire them for doing this to provide a decent income for their family. That’s 26,000 miles a year and 1,000 extra hours (another half-time job) behind the wheel annually! Yikes.
- 3) This is both a humanitarian and environmental crisis. And it gets worse if we don’t implement solution. Think *Workforce and Environmental Justice*.

Solutions: Let’s do the math.

- 1) One (1) Additional housing unit: If we build or housing unit a commuter (or maybe 2) can move to within 5 miles of their s job. This reduces their commute by a) 4 Hours a day, and b) by 120 less miles a day. This one new housing units saves this person 1,000 commute hours and 24,000 driving miles a year!
- 2) 10 new units: Saves 10,000 commute hours and 240,000 driving miles a year.
- 3) 100 new units: Saves 100,000 commute hours and 2,400,000 driving miles a year.
- 4) 1000 new units: Saves 1,000,000 commute hours and 24,000,000 driving miles a year.
- 5) 10,000 new units: Saves 10,000,000 commute hours and 240,000,000 driving miles a year.

Note: *These are real and direct humanitarian and environmental solutions to help real people and our planet. Workforce and Environmental Justice.*

Public Policy... How do we build more housing? *Workforce and Environmental Justice*. Here are just a few ways:

- 1) Simply build more housing. My economics professor was right. More supply really does bring down price too!
We already build workplace jobs centers and have approved more. Now we need to catch up on housing.
- 2) Accelerate building ADUs (In-law Units).
Relaxing parking requirements is the 1st step. Then look at which building codes to use. For instance, codes in effect when the home was built, of current codes. Important stuff.
- 3) Relax/Reduce parking requirements for new projects
Maybe even deed restrict parking
- 4) Eliminate parking requirements for projects near Caltrain and other transit hubs.
Already being done in San Francisco & Oakland
- 5) Require employers to build workforce housing, as a condition of workspace approval and expansion.
Already done in Europe and Asia for decades
FYI, employers can sub-contract to expert housing providers to make this happen. Not as tough as it sounds
- 6) Eliminate additional parking requirements for employer built housing near employment centers
- 7) Fast Track Approvals
Already being done in San Francisco & Oakland
- 8) Smaller Units
Very popular in Europe & Asia
- 9) Higher Density per acre
100 units/ acre is reasonable, especially in downtowns and near transit hubs
- 10) Increase heights
100 feet is reasonable, especially in downtowns and near transit hubs
- 11) Real and substantial density bonuses for building affordable units. Make affordable housing cost-effective, not punishment.
- 12) Think “workforce housing”
- 13) Let’s talk about all these factors. I’m sure we can brainstorm even more solutions.

In a nutshell... think *Workforce and Environmental Justice*.

Every new housing unit gets a commuter off the road and save 1,000 hours behind the wheel plus 24,000 highway miles a year!

All for now. Looking forward to talking with you and brainstorming more solutions.

Tom Thompson
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