



October 12, 2018

City of San Mateo
City Hall
330 West 20th Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403

Re: General Plan

Dear Members of the General Plan Subcommittee:

Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo works with communities and their leaders to create and preserve quality affordable homes.

We are thrilled to start this general plan process and look forward to working with you on solutions to some of the hardest challenges the city is facing. Much has changed since 2010. At that time, the region was still suffering from the recession, which took pressure off of our overheated housing market. Book and record stores are no longer the only retailers struggling to survive with online shopping. According to a 2017 report by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the region has set a new record for congestion related delays, which have gotten 80% longer since 2010.

And most importantly, between 2010 and 2016, 80,000 new jobs were created in San Mateo County, but permits were only issued for 8,000 new homes. This huge disparity has impacts throughout and beyond our sub region. Local workers who are unable to find housing options in our communities are forced to commute long distances, worsening traffic. Local businesses have difficulty attracting and keeping qualified employees. And low-income families—whose bread-winners work at grocery stores, preschools, and restaurants—are hit the hardest. For families who stay in the county, rising rents force them to double up—cramming more people into each room—and to choose between paying for food, medication, or housing. As others move out of the area, the inability to meet housing needs in San Mateo is creating tidal waves of displacement throughout the Bay Area. The timing of this process is critical and we strongly encourage the City to complete the process prior to 2020.

Our past does not need to be our future. HLC envisions San Mateo growing into an inclusive community where renters, retirees, people with disabilities, people of all races, people who grew up here, and everyone who works here has quality housing that they can afford. We want a variety of housing to meet the needs of current and future neighbors. We want a vibrant downtown and successful local businesses throughout San Mateo. We want safe and comfortable walking, biking, and transit access in our neighborhoods, downtown, and in shopping districts. And we want to achieve this while creating less traffic on 101 and 92 and an overall reduction in Greenhouse Gas emissions and other pollutants. In order to accomplish these objectives, there is no question that

higher densities and heights in areas located in proximity to transit are going to be required. San Mateo's General Plan Update offers an opportunity to make that vision a reality. Additionally, San Mateans, through this process, have the opportunity to lead by being model for other communities on how to address these critical challenges.

The best way to accommodate new neighbors and services is to promote higher density housing and commercial uses near train stations and along San Mateo's transit-rich corridors, like El Camino Real. The additional density will have other benefits, such as increasing transit availability and supporting a wider range of walk-to services. In turn, new households would be able to live without a car, which would reduce traffic impacts as well as household expenses.

Diverse & Affordable Housing. Encourage housing production for all levels of income and ability, and recognize that transit-oriented locations are more affordable in that they reduce household car use and expenses.

Jobs & Economic Opportunity. Recognize San Mateo's desirability as a business hub, with vibrant and accessible activity centers such as downtown and the Hillsdale Station area.

Livable Communities. Focus growth on transit-rich locations – to preserve existing single-family residential neighborhoods – and use the benefits of the growth to make San Mateo a better place to live, work, and play.

Equity. Promote transportation alternatives like walking, bicycling and public transit to reduce traffic and provide options for those without cars.

Fiscal Health & Effective Government. Harness growth to increase public revenues, and use compact development to reduce costs associated with constructing and maintaining public infrastructure.

Sustainability & Resilience. Promote urban development that uses less energy and water, and emits fewer greenhouse gases, by further integrating land use and transportation, and promoting green buildings and infrastructure.

We appreciate your efforts to make San Mateo a more equitable, sustainable, and vibrant city. We will be here to support you in that endeavor.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Stivers
Executive Director