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December 4, 2018

Mayor Bonilla and San Mateo City Council
330 W. 20th Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403

Dear Mayor Bonilla, Deputy Mayor Papan, and Councilmembers Freschet, Goethals, and Rodriguez:

RE: San Mateo General Plan Visioning

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the San Mateo General Plan Visioning.

Greenbelt Alliance is the San Francisco Bay Area's leading organization working to protect natural and agricultural landscapes from sprawl development and help our cities and towns grow in smart ways to make the region great for everyone. We are the champions of the places that make the Bay Area special, with more than 10,000 supporters and a 60-year history of local and regional success.

The General Plan will shape the future of our community for years to come, as it establishes the overall vision for the neighborhoods throughout the city. This is an exciting opportunity for San Mateo to provide meaningful solutions that addresses the region's interrelated challenges of housing affordability, transportation and sustainability. The Plan can create a more climate-friendly, sustainable future, strengthen our local economic, and improve the quality of life for everyone in our community.

As you consider the the vision of the General Plan, we urge you to consider the following recommendations:

1. Create Homes

Job growth in the Bay Area has far outstripped housing supply. This is leading to an escalating crisis in housing affordability, squeezing out longtime residents. According to recent data from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, from 2011 to 2015, only one home was built for every eight new jobs across the Bay Area.

2. Thriving Neighborhoods

The Plan can help shape more vibrant and attractive community focused areas , by encouraging a compact design that take advantage of heights, making efficient use of land. These types of neighborhoods strengthen local businesses' customer bases, provide more options for transit-friendly living, and bring life to empty sidewalks. It will help meet the needs of people of all ages and reflect the strong and growing preference for walkable communities.

3. Create homes we can all afford

The lack of housing opportunities is particularly acute for our low-income neighbors. It is critical that the city ensures that homes are available for a full range of needs and incomes by creating inclusive and diverse neighborhoods.

When people are no longer able to afford to live in communities near jobs and transit, they often move to less-expensive neighborhoods at the edges of the region and beyond. This creates additional traffic, congestion, and pollution and creates new sprawl pressure in these edge communities, threatening the greenbelt lands that benefit us all.

4. Set Bold Goals for Transportation

Everyone who lives and works in San Mateo deserves to have an array of sustainable transportation choices—where walking, biking, and transit are safe and accessible and driving is not the only option. All people should have the opportunity to live close to where they work to avoid lengthy commutes on our congested roads to find an affordable place to live. These approaches will reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, improve community health, and reduce traffic and congestion. The General Plan should include bold targets for the reduction of Vehicle Miles Traveled per person as well as vehicle mode-share goals for increasing the share of trips made by walking, cycling, and transit.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to make San Mateo an even better place to live.

Sincerely,



Kiyomi Honda Yamamoto
South Bay Regional Representative, Greenbelt Alliance