



Mental Health Association of San Mateo County

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RE: San Mateo general plan visioning

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City of San Mateo

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Dear City Planners:

Mental Health Association of San Mateo County has provided services to our community for 60 years. Our direct service programs include housing, community support programs, social and recreational services, and educational activities to improve access to and services for individuals living with serious mental illness and/or HIV/AIDS. We have worked with the City of San Mateo staff and volunteers over the years and we feel that our connection with and knowledge of San Mateo and its residents has always been constructive. To that end we would like to weigh in on your current General Plan revision process to strongly support meaningful change.

On behalf of MHA's clients, staff, volunteers and community of support, we strongly believe that the revised Plan must address real and significant issues facing all of us as a community, in particular the need for the development of affordable housing for individuals at the lowest levels of income. Without that, and without the increase in affordable housing for low income individuals, our community will face potential devastation as homelessness increases and nonprofit employees are priced out of the community leaving a gaping hole in the safety net of services.

The Existing Conditions Report, on which the revised General Plan will be based, in no way reflects the impact that robust job growth with no accompanying building of housing has had on the community. This disconnect has led to the displacement of large numbers of former residents, especially our most vulnerable residents, who must find more affordable housing elsewhere, even while commuting to jobs in San Mateo. If San Mateo is to continue being a community that takes pride in its diversity, it must tackle the displacement of large numbers of people caused by the lack of affordable and all forms of housing

The General Plan's vision statement should be a forward-looking document that aims to solve the problems outlined in the Existing Conditions Report. This vision should be an active, goal-based document that helps SOLVE the land use challenges, not gloss them over.

Please include the following as guiding principles for the vision statement:

- Decreased traffic and greenhouse gas emissions: The cost of living in San Mateo is currently astronomical, mostly due to the high cost of housing. This means that service workers have to commute into San Mateo, from neighboring counties, which strains our infrastructure and pollutes our air.

- More room for open space: Greater density and heights will allow us to continue to grow while still maintaining our open space.

- Increased equity: Right now, the height and density limits make it almost impossible for affordable housing developers to build affordable housing, and even more challenging to develop housing affordable to individuals at the lowest levels of income. If we want to maintain our diverse community, we must continue to build housing that is affordable to individuals at all levels of income.

We hope you will take all these factors into consideration when revising the vision statement; we believe that the future of San Mateo as a thriving and diverse community depends on it.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important document and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,



Melissa Platte
Executive Director

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