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Julia Klein, Principal Planner  
Lily Lim, Associate Planner

City of San Mateo  
City Hall  
330 West 20th Avenue  
San Mateo, CA 94403  
[generalplan@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:generalplan@cityofsanmateo.org)

cc: [sub-committee members]

RE: San Mateo general plan visioning

I am writing on behalf of the Center for Sustainable Neighborhoods to encourage you to frame the general plan revision as an opportunity to address several interlocking problems that pose a serious threat to the health and wellbeing of the city including a mounting housing crisis, a construction workforce shortage, a rapidly evolving retail market that threatens the health of retail in settings that lack sufficient local housing, and our need to address climate change more urgently. These are serious problems that should be accounted for in the Existing Conditions Report. Though serious, these problems are not intractable if explicitly confronted, and can be addressed in the context of an overall plan that aims to make San Mateo more livable for all of its residents and workers.

San Mateo enjoys huge benefits from his location within the Silicon Valley economy, but this same geographic context shapes many of the most serious problems the city faces too. The shortage of housing construction in Silicon Valley is distorting housing markets as far as 100 miles away and fueling a phenomenal amount of commuting. San Mateo, in the heart of the Silicon Valley, is currently part of the problem, but with effort could do better.

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

- Racial diversity: One of the greatest assets of San Mateo is our diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and languages. Latino communities are at the greatest risk of displacement, and have been for the past several years. Nearly 20% of Latino men work in the residential construction trades, a sector that has seen real wages decline by 40% on the last thirty years with devastating consequences for workers living in high cost areas.

- 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. If we want to maintain our diverse community, we must continue to build affordable housing. At the same time, we need to address the decline in real wages in the residential construction sector by establishing strong incentives for developers to ensure that workers building our new housing make a prevailing wage and have access to quality training programs.

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.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Frank, Executive Director