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January 14, 2019

San Mateo City Council
330 West 20th Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403

Re: January 22, 2019 City Council GPU Study Session

Dear Mayor Papan and Honorable Members of the City Council:

First, I applaud you for calendaring the January 22nd, General Plan Update (“GPU”) Study Session. It is an important time for you to revisit, and hopefully update, directions earlier given concerning the GPU process and timing. Many of us who attended the December 17th GPU Subcommittee meeting, including Subcommittee members themselves, were disappointed by various aspects of that meeting and the process that led up to it. I addressed my concerns to Ms. Kojayan, the Community Development Director, on December 18th (Attachment A) and will not further discuss them here.

As I write this without the benefit of a Study Session staff report, I actually find myself free to suggest, for your consideration, some alternative perspectives concerning the GPU’s content and process; and in particular, the draft Vision statement. I hope that you will have the patience to consider what I have written and to find ways to incorporate these perspectives, as you deem appropriate, into your forthcoming recommendations.

At bottom, I wish for San Mateans to experience the fullness of what a thoughtful, adaptive, creative, and “appropriate for its time” GPU process can offer. In particular, I seek a Vision upon which San Mateans generally can agree, that focuses on the community’s human aspirations, and not the technical machinations of a rote land-use regulatory regime.

With that in mind, I offer the following six observations and perspectives for your consideration:

Innovative Disruption. Given the rate and magnitude of recent changes in the community and the region – and sizable challenges anticipated for the future – this GPU requires **innovative disruption**. It should not be a “check the box” exercise. It is time for blowing through what have

become “traditional,” but self-limiting, modes of thinking about what San Mateans need/deserve at a human level. Innovation, creativity, and forward-thinking should be embraced. The Vision should be neither encyclopedic nor issue driven, but should embody those human values upon which the General Plan’s goals and policies can then comfortably rest.

Iteration. The Vision should be an **iterative** document, **subject to reassessment and evolution** as the GPU proceeds. The current Vision process should be considered “beta testing,” because at this early stage in the process, the knowledge base (data) and the patterns of thought (philosophy and values) are at their most embryonic states. As the process continues, reasoning, creativity, and opportunities for collaboration will ripen, leading to more thoughtful, generative outcomes. For example, a meaningful Vision will be informed by San Mateo’s unique geographic limitations and opportunities, which cannot be understood until after the land use and transportation scenarios are considered.

Inclusiveness and Representative Government. The Vision should **represent the City as a whole**, not just the self-selected few, who, thus far, have elected to participate. It is incumbent on the City and its representatives to seek out and carefully listen to those significant segments of the community that for any variety of reasons have been unable to participate or don’t appreciate the opportunity presented by having their voices heard. Outreach is a challenging process, and in the absence of a miracle “fix,” I would implore you to exercise empathy and account for underrepresented populations who are not vocal but whose futures will nonetheless be impacted every bit as much as those who are adept at playing the political game.

Complexity. San Mateo is a city, not a suburb.¹ Accordingly, San Mateo faces many of the same issues that larger Bay Area cities are confronting. Addressing those issues is difficult, because **cities are complex systems**. There is **nothing linear about the process of effective, comprehensive planning**. Every feature touched, every problem addressed, and every solution proffered, has the potential to impact everything else. Complexity must be acknowledged to faithfully carry out the City’s charge to competently plan for its future.

Aspiring Vision in Human Terms. The Governor’s Office of Planning and Research suggests in its 2017 Guidelines that a Vision should inform decision-makers about **community values**. Looking ahead to the year 2040 is a daunting task. So much has changed so fast recently; how can we possibly anticipate the next twenty years? One way is to stick to the fundamentals; and to seek out and listen to your community. Planning, first and foremost, is about helping us live healthy

¹ Hillsborough, Woodside, Los Altos Hills are suburbs, predominantly characterized by single family houses, no appreciable commercial centers, and minor civic infrastructure. San Mateo, by contrast, is roughly the size of Pasadena.

lives in a sustainable community. So ask yourself what **values** make for a more **livable and sustainable community**?

The Future, Like it or Not. San Mateo is not unique in what it faces. Most communities in the Bay Area are addressing the same issues: housing availability and affordability, traffic and transit, climate change, business sustainability, fiscal soundness, education, health and quality of public services, to name a few. The same issues also are being addressed throughout the U.S. Cities of all sizes are experiencing population growth, which is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Public infrastructure has aged beyond its useful life and is not being replaced, even though new infrastructure must be created to meet growing populations. In response, governments at all levels are looking to new sources to assist in supporting this needed infrastructure. The issues are so severe that the State of California is evidencing a willingness to step in to legislate solutions to problems that local and regional governments fail to address. And jurisdictions in the U.S. and Canada are testing radical new approaches to chronic housing and traffic problems. The issue for San Mateans, looking to 2040, is whether we are going to purposefully guide our destiny, as best we can, or wait for others to do it for us?

Below, I elaborate upon each of these observations and provide additional supportive facts, examples, and commentary, as well as pose some questions that I hope you find stimulating. Please bear with me. While some of my points may be disagreeable to some, my hope is to elevate the level of discourse which takes both patience, and time (presentation increasingly rare commodities in this day and age).

By Way of Introduction

To introduce myself, to those of you whom I may not have met, I am a land use lawyer representing the Bohannon Development Company with respect to its interests at the Hillsdale Shopping Center. I also am an almost 30 year resident of San Mateo. Thus, the purpose of this letter is every bit as personal, as it is professional.

What I am suggesting is a framework for thinking about the GPU process, and its Vision, in particular, to allow us all to collaborate in creating a community, empowered to address the complex **human issues** that San Mateo faces, not just manage modifications to its land use regime.

Over the holidays, I had the pleasure of reading *Our Declaration - A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality*, a brief, but elegant tome, by Danielle Allen, professor of government at Harvard University and director of Harvard's Center for Ethics. *Our Declaration*, published in 2014, opens its Prologue:

The Declaration of Independence matters because it **helps us see** that we **cannot have freedom without equality**. It is **out of an egalitarian commitment** that **a people grows** -- a people that is capable of protecting us all collectively, and each of us individually, from domination. [*Emphasis added*]

In my mind, the Vision is a “close relative,” in its process and content, to the Declaration of Independence. The Vision requires **thoughtful assessment, and careful deliberation**, to yield an appropriate outcome.

In the end, I believe that a Vision – one that is ours to embrace – must appeal to three of our intelligences. First, it must be intellectually rigorous, coherent, and cohesive. Second, it must emotionally appeal to our hearts, as fundamentally human, generous, and compassionate. Third, it must move us toward action (physically) as we seek to make San Mateo the place that we envision.

I hope you consider these principles in light of the following elaborations/musings on the six points raised above.

1. “When in the course of human events” – The Need for Disruptive Innovation

“Disruptive innovation” is a term coined by Clayton Christensen, a professor at the Harvard Business School, to describe the process by which a product or service takes root, initially in a simple application, at the “bottom” of the market, that then relentlessly moves upward until it displaces those businesses unwilling to adopt it. A clear example is the iPhone. It never was simply a telephone. It was always something more. It had in it an emergent quality, designed to change how, when, and where we communicate.

In the planning context, I would describe disruptive innovation as **an approach that changes how we think about planning**, by moving it above and beyond the cold metrics of land-use regulation **to an aspirational realm** of providing, as best we are able, Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness to all San Mateans, whether residents, employees, or business owners.

As we consider the appropriate approach to crafting a “disruptive” Vision, I can’t help but offer a few more of Ms. Allen’s observations on the Declaration of Independence:

What *kind* of text have I got in front of me? ... In fact, the Declaration is just **an ordinary memo ... that announces and, thereby, brings about a change, while also explaining it** ... To recognize that a text, like the Declaration of Independence, is a memo is just to see that a piece of writing is **helping to organize a**

group of people ... We all work all the time with the basic tools used in the Declaration -- principles, facts, and judgments -- in order to set a course in life. ... The art of democratic writing starts from just those ingredients ... Principles, facts, and judgments: the Declaration **takes the ordinary and makes it extraordinary**. [*Emphasis added*]

Of course, I'm not suggesting that the Vision need reach the exalted heights of the Declaration of Independence. But, I do believe that the process of curating the Vision can, like the Declaration, help engage, organize, and inspire the community. And, as Allen observes, "the art of democratic writing demands of its practitioners the aspiration to write **to any and all, for any and all**. It is a philanthropic art: it requires **affection for humanity**."

2. Iteration

There is more than abundant reason to suggest that any Vision, developed in the near term, be considered "provisional." We don't know what we don't know from the many San Mateans who have not been heard. We don't know enough to even think about how the Vision might incorporate the needs and desires of those too young to be heard, and for whom the Vision is designed. We don't know how to properly weigh and balance the disparate needs and desires of succeeding generations. Should the voices of Baby Boomers dominate in the creation of a 2040 Vision when they very likely won't live to see the results? Have we asked all the "right questions" to help create a humane, aspirational Vision? As to those questions already asked, is the information produced sufficient? If not, why not? Does the data beg further inquiry?

Considering a draft Vision "provisional" doesn't necessarily imply significant additional work, unless subsequent work shows that we "got it wrong" the first time. Iteration simply suggests that we view the Vision "lightly." It should not unnecessarily limit or foreclose inquiry on new issues and concerns as they arise in the subsequent process of updating the General Plan.

3. Inclusiveness & Representative Government

Two additional thoughts from Professor Allen regarding the Declaration:

The Declaration brings to light the incandescent magic of human politics: the fact that it is possible for people, with ideas, conversations, and decision-making committees ... to weave together an agreement that can define our common life. Paradoxically, **it is the combining of ideas with process ... that makes for the wondrous nature ... of the text**. [*Emphasis added*]

[P]olitical order emerges from the human need to gather together peaceably. A multitude organized politically becomes a people. [A] “people” was thus simply a group with shared political institutions. [*Emphasis added*]

If there is to be a true Vision for San Mateo, one that defines our common experience as a “people” (i.e., a community), it should be derived from an inclusive process. Obviously, the “public process” preceding the current draft Vision suffered from a number of constraints – time, access, number of participants, and perspective – topping the list. This is not to fault City staff or its consultant. They structured a “traditional” process, with a truncated timeline (designed, undoubtedly, to beat the 2020 election cycle), and accompanied by common practices for community outreach.

Not surprisingly, the outcome reflects the process’s limitations. Less than 1% of the City’s population participated and it could not fairly be said that those who did participate were representative of the City’s diversity. There was a single gathering at which Spanish translation was available, although many complaints were heard that the translators were too few and not necessarily up to the task. But, as unrepresentative as the participation may have been, one simplified and inaccurate “cartoon” of the process has emerged: the NIMBYs v. the YIMBYs – that is, how much housing, where to put it, how dense and how high. Having attended five outreach gatherings myself (only one as a participant), I will confirm that the participants had an opportunity to be heard, the “summaries” from the conversations were, with one exception, fairly represented to the room, and the participants generally departed with a better understanding of the issues than that with which they arrived. Regretfully, the framing of the outreach process was more targeted toward issues (regulations) over aspirations (humanity) and neglected to mention, let alone highlight, the complexity and interconnectivity of the issues being addressed. You also should recall that the outreach participants were self-selected. Many, if not most, arrived with some sort of agenda, whether NIMBYs, YIMBYs, transit advocates, child and/or elderly advocates, and the like. Only those who chose to be heard, were heard.

But the City is creating a Vision for the year 2040 – twenty years hence. By my rough assessment, as a participant, the generations represented included, in descending order: Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964; aged 54 – 72 in 2018), Generation Xers (born between 1965 and 1983; aged 38 to 52 in 2018), Millennials (born between 1981 – 1997; ages 21 – 37 in 2018), with a scattering of Generation Z “Post Millennials” (born after 1997; ages 20 and younger). We already know each succeeding generation evolves with its own economic fortunes, aspirations, and tastes.

For example, in November 2018, the Federal Reserve Board issued a paper in its Finance and Economic Discussion Series – “Are Millennials Different?” – confirming that Millennials (the largest living generation in the U.S. since 2016), while more racially diverse, better educated, and

more likely to defer marriage, are less well off than members of earlier generations, with comparatively fewer assets and less wealth. Consequently, their consumption preferences (e.g. housing, vehicles) differ significantly from earlier generations.

In all likelihood, those who participated in the prior outreach process will continue to be those actively participating at forthcoming hearings on the Vision. My concerns for approaching a representative Vision center on the previously identified issues of inclusivity and representativeness – who is measuring, who speaks for the young, etc.

To be perfectly clear, I am not advocating “scrubbing” what has transpired to begin again. There is significant value in the information that has been generated. The difficulty lies in understanding whether the information is representative of the community’s views.

4. Complexity

On April 25, 2017, The Conversation² published a short piece by two Australian academics, entitled “Cities are complex systems—let’s start looking at them that way.” The authors make two critical points for our consideration:

The way we design our cities needs a serious rethink... Cities are **highly complex, yet we are not thinking about them that way...** [W]e need to **explore new knowledge and new approaches.** Current descriptive and disparate approaches to the review, analysis, and design of our cities need to be challenged.

The **profession and politics** of the built environment continue to **operate within discipline silos.** Planning, architecture, engineering, transport, water, power, commercial and retail development, urban design, community services and more are all dealt with in relative isolation. The links between them are only examined as necessary, or as legislatively required... As a result, **our cities are a legacy of incremental solutions,** last minute decision-making and competing urban priorities... **Managing complexity** in city design **is challenging.** [*Emphasis added*]

Complexity theory or systems thinking has been an academic discipline for decades. You may have seen it referenced in the context of economic forecasting, business modelling or climate

² Curated by professional editors, The Conversation is a nonprofit media outlet that offers informed commentary and debate on a broad spectrum of policy issues

change. Only recently have experts begun to consider its application to city planning. To me, it has not arrived a moment too soon.

Attachment B is a purposely simplified Venn Diagram, with accompanying notes illustrating system complexity. Complexity theory debunks the notion that you resolve issues, one at a time, in linear fashion. Why? Two reasons:

1. Issues usually are not independent; they are interdependent. They are part of a system which you must understand at an appropriate level to develop an appropriate response.
2. Failure to comprehend systems in operation leads to “fixes” that may themselves initiate unforeseen consequences, because a “fix” in one domain may trigger an “upset” in another domain, leading to a need for further, and sometimes more troublesome, fixes elsewhere.

The interdependent domains of housing and transportation easily illustrate the point.

For example, how do residents choose between driving to work or taking transit? The answer is affected by planning policy. Housing proximate to transit encourages transit.

So far, so good. But there’s a related question: how close is transit and at what service levels does it operate between home and work? It turns out that transit agencies determine service based on usage. Fewer passengers = lesser service = a bit of a “chicken and egg” problem. If you allow for more housing at transit hubs, it will generate greater ridership, thereby improving service, which, in turn, will draw more ridership. This eventually will take cars off the road and reduce local traffic and greenhouse gases (GHGs) – two more elements of the complex system.

Another traffic solution is embedded in the distribution of land uses. If you live proximate to work, you can elect to walk or bicycle between destinations. These alternatives to automobile usage are generally more affordable. That means more disposable income remains available to residents for housing or other spending. For this reason, and others, the way we think about housing “affordability” is undergoing an evolution in academic circles as experts are finding that combined housing and transportation expenses are a more reliable indicator of housing affordability than considering housing expenses alone.

By the way, there are other elements affected by the housing/transportation analysis. If housing is proximate to both transit and retail, fewer automobile trips are occasioned. The proximity of housing to retail likely will lead to increased sales, securing more tax revenues for the City, jobs for local workers, and sustainability to local businesses.

So far, we can see how two interdependent issues actually affect other elements of city living – traffic, GHGs, retail sales, City tax revenues, job and business sustainability. We could go further to discuss improved City services and community health, but you get the picture.

I only regret that the City's outreach effort did not attempt, more explicitly, to tie these elements together. I strongly suspect that an introduction to complexity theory would have taken the Vision discussion in a different direction, or a minimum, given it a more robust coherence.

Another reason to allow for iteration!

5. Aspiring Vision in Human Terms

I reviewed *A Vision for San Mateo in 2030*, prepared in 2010, to get a sense of how San Mateo has traditionally approached its Vision. (See [Attachment C](#)). Unfortunately, it falls wide of the mark of “inform[ing] decision-makers about community values.” It is rich in the use of platitudes, superlatives and self-congratulations (e.g. “the **preeminent** city in San Mateo County,” “focus of civic **pride**” and “**distinguished** downtown”), vacuous descriptors (“lending to its **charm**” and “**friendly**, neighborhood shopping centers”) and word choices suitable for other places in bygone eras (“**wholesome** neighborhoods,” “**suburban** character,” “**wholesome** environment, and shaded, tree lined streets”) [*All emphasis added*].

The word choices suggest environments similar to those found in sitcoms of the 1950s and 1960s, such as Mayberry, North Carolina (*The Andy Griffith Show*), Springfield (the *Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*), Mayfield (*Leave It to Beaver*) or Hilldale (the *Donna Reed Show*). Moreover, the 2030 Vision is given over to references to various “solutions/programs” which are often halfhearted (“The City is **committed to doing what it can to provide housing** that is affordable to all”) or not reflective of the values of the community. [*Emphasis added*]

The draft 2040 Vision statement, in many respects, is an improvement ([Attachment D](#)), but is still wide of the mark. The community's values are obscured by the attempt to frame solutions to problems not clearly defined.

So we have two problems -- the absence of a declaration of values and the placement of solutions prior to defining a clear problem set.

For a different approach, consider the following introduction to the City of Fullerton's Vision:

“The Fullerton Vision provides a sense of **purpose and mission**, and **sets the tone** for the Fullerton Plan's goals, policies and actions. The Fullerton Vision establishes a **community-based foundation**

which captures the qualities, values, and characteristics of the City of Fullerton, now and in the future.” *[Emphasis added]*

For some time, our team has been reviewing general plan vision statements from cities throughout the State of California, and beyond, to better understand how a vision statement might be crafted to elevate not only the discourse involving the Vision, but the proposed goals, plans, and policies that will bring it to fruition. In short, we have been looking for inspiration. After reviewing dozens or more vision statements, we found one that surpasses the others. It is from Portland, Oregon and reads, concisely, compassionately and elegantly, as follows:

Portland is a **prosperous, healthy, equitable and resilient** city, where **everyone has access to opportunity** and is engaged in shaping decisions that affect their lives. *[Emphasis added]*

Portland’s Vision further is elaborated in five Guiding Principles, briefly built on the descriptors of the city as “prosperous, healthy, equitable and resilient.” (See Attachment E)

I believe that Portland’s model is better for the following reasons:

1. I assume, without confirmation, that Portland's leadership made the determination to seek broad consensus on fundamental human values, in its case – prosperity, health, equity and resilience – to establish a strong value foundation for subsequent goals and policies. Who could be against such fundamental values? Consensus on values, of course, does not mean to suggest that there will not be disagreement over what the values mean and/or their relative priorities. But, at least you have a single point of embarkation.
2. The four values, to paraphrase Prof. Allen, aspire “to write to any and all, for any and all,” reflecting “an affection for humanity.” You easily can infer that the values were designed to embrace the future for the children who grew up in Portland, the empty-nesters seeking to downsize, the single parents trying to make ends meet, public service providers (teachers, police officers, firefighters), residents with disabilities, artists and artisans, the working poor, and so on. These words stimulate our intellects, open our hearts, and impel us toward action.
3. Please note that nothing in Portland's Vision reflects on how to establish, supplement, diminish, or amend a land-use regulatory regime. It is about **humanity** and **sustaining an environment** in which humanity might thrive.

How much more conciliatory, coherent and cohesive a process might the GPU be, if founded on a humanitarian vision, referencing values over generalized land use solutions?

Using Portland's values as a base, who amongst us would object to prosperity, health, equity, and resilience as fundamental values of our community? Would we also be willing to embrace diversity and inclusivity as added values? If we cannot reach consensus on values so fundamental to our continued existence as a community, we should understand that now.

Yes, this is more than land-use planning. If we are fundamentally divided on values, no GPU can offer a cure. A community reconciliation process would likely be the first order of business.

6. The Future, Like it or Not

San Mateo is in a housing crisis which only threatens to get worse if its housing policies are not radically changed. None of this should be a surprise. The City's own Economics section of the October 9, 2018 Existing Conditions Report contains the data to substantiate the condition. From 2000 to mid-2018, San Mateo's population grew by 13% while its household growth increased by only 5.0%. In other words, in this 18 year period, household growth was less than one half of the population growth. From 2008 to April 2018, the median single-family home price more than doubled from \$800,000 to \$1,663,000. Only 13% of employed San Mateans worked in San Mateo. Moreover, almost half of San Mateo's housing stock was built prior to 1960. The City's consultant forecasts a need for 10,000 new residential units in the 2040 Plan horizon. We believe that such a forecast is low by almost half. Woods and Poole Economics, Inc., cited in the same Existing Conditions Report, estimates job growth for San Mateo County, which if extrapolated for the City, using the City's metric of 1.37 jobs per household and a 5% vacancy factor, suggests new housing demand in the 2040 Plan horizon of more than 14,000 units!

We have done our own calculations of potential housing sites in the City and find that, under existing constrained height and density standards, even the 10,000 unit increment presents Herculean obstacles to fulfillment. Clearly, 14,000 units is even further out of reach.

It does not require a great deal of sophistication to see that the California legislature is heading in the direction of mandating, through State law, that cities take responsibility for their housing shortfalls. Even the true "suburban" communities soon will find themselves being held to task to supply significant funding for future housing, even if not located in their jurisdictions. This may take a few years, but massive change regarding State housing policy on local housing production is clearly is on its way.

What is more alarming, as we all know, are the consequences of the housing production shortfall. This takes us back to complexity theory. What keeps San Mateo diverse and inclusive is rapidly

being lost. Long-term residents are being forced to relocate to more affordable communities, while retaining their local jobs, generating increased transportation costs, more regional traffic, and more GHGs, resulting in a reduced quality of life. At the end of 2017, San Mateo reported in its Annual Element Progress Report, Housing Element Implementation, a Regional Housing Needs Allocation (“RHNA”) shortfall of 1,855 units. ([Attachment F](#)). Correspondence from the City to ABAG in successive years of 2011 and 2012 sought to reduce San Mateo's housing obligations as follows:

It should also be noted that **residential densities, building heights** and floor area ratios in the City of San Mateo **are fixed by voter initiative**, so increasing densities beyond the generally designated maximum of 50 units/acre (other than through the use of State mandated density bonus provisions), and building heights in excess of 55 feet would **require a vote of the people**. [*Emphasis Added*]

Are we really to believe that the City will get a “pass” on meeting its regional housing obligations, because it has accepted a self-serving housing policy? What if all our neighbors were to take the same path in this crisis? Think Brisbane! Is that the desired image for San Mateo County’s **pre-eminent City**? That we palm off housing production on our neighbors to the detriment of our most vulnerable residents?

Let’s take this one step further. The City has a finite amount of land available for housing. Every site that is developed at less than the optimal heights and densities reduces the City’s resilience in responding to changes in housing demand. Recently constructed “55’/50” projects³ remove land from the potential housing inventory and cause the loss of housing potential. You may have noticed that as housing inventory is further constrained, those at risk are not just low or moderate income residents, but now include formerly “comfortable” middle class families. And, when the change comes to “right the ship”, that lost resiliency, previously mentioned, only will be cured by allowing **very high densities** and **very high buildings**!

But an alternative path has begun to present itself. In fact, it became the stuff of national new headlines in December, 2018 – ban single family zoning! That’s what Minneapolis did just last month. Former single family districts now allow for triplexes AS OF RIGHT! The following is from Policy 1 of the Minneapolis 2040 Plan ([Attachment G](#)):

The **population** of Minneapolis is **growing**. **Housing demand exceeds supply** in many areas of the city, which has resulted in **rising rents and sales prices**. Increased demand for housing is accompanied by **demographic changes** that affect the types of

³ 55/50 projects refer to projects that are 55’ in height at densities of 50 units/acre due to Measure P’s constraints.

housing Minneapolis residents will need between now and 2040. The **people** of Minneapolis and the region as a whole are **becoming older and more culturally diverse**. In many parts of the city, aging single-family home dwellers do not have the option to move into multifamily housing close to their established social support networks. This further restricts access to single-family homes for households with growing families who desire that housing type and would prefer to stay in the city... [*Emphasis added*]

But this is not just a Minneapolis phenomenon. Vancouver is pursuing a similar path. Portland has initiated a similar process. And the Oregon House Speaker has proposed the abolition of single family zoning in cities throughout the state. (See bibliography for links to relevant reportage.)

I have a problem with this approach as it affects traffic. More multi-family creates higher parking demand and local street traffic. It is relatively worse for the environment in terms of GHGs. But, if a community is not prepared to accept transit-oriented housing, with requisite densities and heights, this is the “next best thing.”

Where would the City find itself in 2040, if continuing the “status quo” only hastens disruption of a most undesirable sort? And, how can you reconcile all this with the values that should characterize our aspirational Vision?

Conclusion

The preparation of a General Plan is one of the few occasions when a city’s leaders have an occasion to evaluate and chart a course for the city’s future, using humanitarian considerations, first and foremost, which then are translated into a land use regulatory regime. This charge should not be taken lightly. Nor should it be reduced to a perfunctory “check the box” formula, which might be defensible in more certain, more stable, less disruptive times. The “burden” of a more comprehensive review, based on relevant data, supported by coherent thought, and tempered by humane considerations, for the benefit of the community as a whole, will redound to the benefit of all of San Mateo’s residents, business owners, and employees for years to come.

I have been a student of public policy since my undergraduate days and a public policy practitioner for 45 years thereafter. I have come to the conclusion that the single most valuable characteristic of leadership is generosity — the ability to apprehend the needs of others and, without asking, to establish pathways for others to pursue their own successes.

This GPU is an opportunity for you to prove your leadership. San Mateans will support your efforts, if pursued diligently, thoughtfully, and compassionately. It is all in your hands.

Sincerely,



Timothy A. Tosta

Epilogue - the Elephant in the Room

At the end of Tuesday, December 31, 2020, the land use constraints of Measure P will be no more. While its proponents/supporters again have gathered sufficient signatures to put a successor measure on the November 2020 ballot, neither the extinguishing measure nor its problematic successor, are relevant to the pending GPU undertaking – with one significant exception. That exception pertains to the fact that, since 1991, residential development in the City has been constrained by the low heights and modest densities, which have created unintended consequences and severely limited the City's resilience to accommodate future growth and to preserve existing affordable housing for our residents. The consequences of these policies can and should be evaluated. These consequences constrain the potential locations, shapes, and forms of housing in the City's future, as well as the City's incipient, demographic and socioeconomic diversity.

The effort to place a "Measure P successor" on the 2018 ballot was a failed attempt to foreclose the depth and scope of examination needed to produce a quality GPU, appropriate for this time and these circumstances. We cannot and should not allow the current GPU review to be truncated or eviscerated by a very uncertain future ballot measure. If your work is done generously, thoughtfully, and thoroughly, the evolving GPU should prevail over the narrow, impactful, and proscriptive policies, embedded in the "Measure P successor."

Cc: The Honorable Members of the San Mateo Planning Commission
Drew Corbett, City Manager
Kohar Kojayan, Community Development Director
Ronald Munekawa, Chief of Planning
Julia Klein, Principal Planner

Enclosures

Table of Attachments

Attachment A: Letter from Tim Tosta to Kohar Kojayan

Attachment B: Venn Diagram

Attachment C: A Vision of San Mateo in 2030

Attachment D: Draft 2040 Vision Statement

Attachment E: Portland Vision Statement

Attachment F: San Mateo RHNA Shortfall

Attachment G: Minneapolis 2040 Single Family Zoning Ban

Attachment A: Letter from Tim Tosta to Kohar Kojayan

Subject: General Plan Update - Observations/Suggestions

I wanted to share some observations, and offer a few of suggestions to improve the process, following last night's Subcommittee meeting.

Observations

The attendance was impressive for a Monday evening prior to the holidays. Still, City staff should have anticipated that many people would want to voice their opinion and, consequently, allowed sufficient time for both public comment and Subcommittee deliberation to take place. With respect to the deliberation phase, if the Subcommittee is to serve its purpose, it needs to have the necessary time and resources to review all of the information provided by the consultant, City staff, and the public.

Last night's meeting left me (and others with whom I spoke) with an unequivocal impression that the Subcommittee didn't believe that it had the time or resources to fulfill its perceived obligations with respect to the GPU Vision. Leaving such an impression undermines both the Subcommittee members' and public's confidence in the GPU process. The "political optics" were not good.

Suggested Improvements

1. The deadline for inclusion of public comments in the Subcommittee's packet should be set only after staff publishes its staff report to the deliberating bodies (Subcommittee, PC or Council). With respect to yesterday's meeting, staff advised us that public comments were due on December 6, However, the staff report didn't issue until December 11th. How is the public expected to provide informed comments on a draft Vision, if no one has seen it?
 2. Documents submitted by the public after the packet is finalized should be posted on the Strive San Mateo site prior to the meeting. Right now, the site says "Note: Several public comments were submitted to City staff after the packet was finalized. These comments will be distributed to the Subcommittee under separate cover." If these comments are available to the Subcommittee, they should be made contemporaneously available to the public, so the public has an opportunity to respond to other commenters.
 3. All GPU meetings, including community meetings, should be videotaped and the videos should be posted in a timely manner.
 4. Subcommittee meetings should be expanded to a minimum of three hours in length or more as circumstances dictate. Two hour meetings are for both public comment and Subcommittee deliberation are proving deficient. The impression is being created that these are events that just need to be "gotten through" (a check the box approach).
 5. Public commenters should have at least three minutes to speak. Two minutes is insufficient to address issues of the magnitude presented by the GPU. Yes, folks one doesn't like,
-

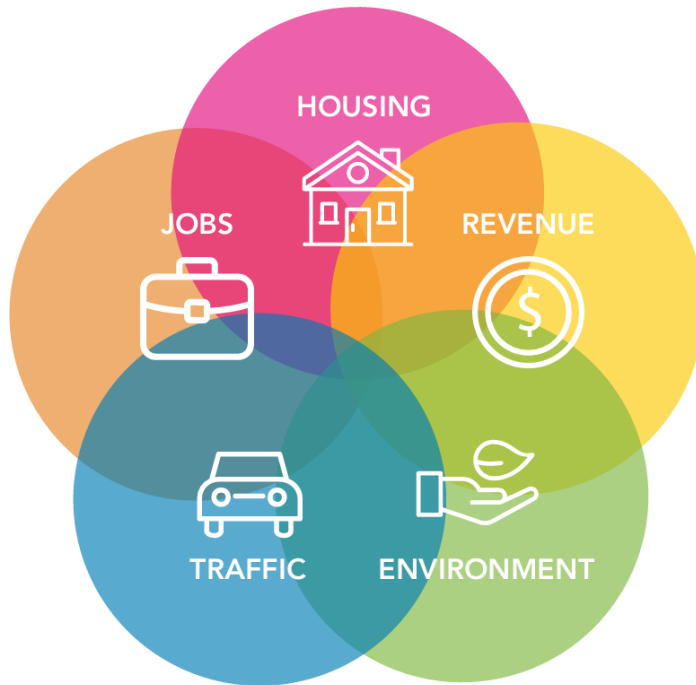
or have nothing relevant to add, will eat up time. That's the process. While the Subcommittee may recover some time, it loses the insights of those with extremely pertinent things to offer.

6. Increase the consultant's budget so that it has the resources to provide decision-makers with the type of comprehensive information that is necessary/appropriate to inform their decisions. More on this shortly.

7. Schedule a second Subcommittee meeting on the Vision prior to Planning Commission review in January. The purpose is to allow sufficient time for Subcommittee members to deliberate, as there's value in the public exchange of ideas. Otherwise, the Subcommittee meetings become much relevant to the process.

This is sent to you in a constructive spirit. I hope that you and your colleagues will receive it in that way.

Attachment B: Venn Diagram



REMEMBER:

Making a decision in one of these areas affects other areas at the same time. So look at the impacts of planning decisions across the entire spectrum.

HOUSING

- Where housing is built impacts traffic patterns both locally and regionally
- Housing can become "more affordable" by locating it near transit nodes
- Housing construction supports jobs in the community

REVENUE

- Retail sales can be driven by increased density of housing in a community
- Retail sales can be increased by mixing retail with office and housing in the same location
- Improved retail sales supports increased jobs
- Revenue is required for the city to maintain and plan for the future

ENVIRONMENT

- Balancing jobs and housing in the same community reduces car trips and green house gas emissions
- Increasing density for housing on sites allows for more open space to be included in developments
- Building housing next to transit encourages walkability and enhances quality of life

TRAFFIC/TRANSIT

- Locating housing near transit minimizes additional traffic
- Transit stations are good locations for increased density and diverse land uses

JOBS

- Adding jobs to a community can impact traffic if there is not a jobs housing balance in the area
- Communities with a diverse mix of housing and transit are more attractive for businesses and employers

Attachment C: A Vision of San Mateo in 2030

A Vision of San Mateo in 2030

In 2030, San Mateo is the pre-eminent city in San Mateo County. It has balanced commercial and residential growth, with a distinguished downtown and viable, wholesome neighborhoods. It is driven by a solid, healthy economic and financial base, and it is the cultural center of San Mateo County.

A closer look reveals these portraits of the City:

- ◆ Residents and workers in San Mateo enjoy an excellent quality of life.
- ◆ The City's residential neighborhoods are known for their exceptional quality and suburban character. They attract families of all sizes and types. The neighborhoods offer a high level of public safety, a wholesome environment, and shaded, tree-lined streets. The City is committed to doing what it can to provide housing that is affordable to all.
- ◆ San Mateo's diversity is a focus for civic pride. The City welcomes people of all ages, incomes, ethnic and racial groups, religions, and creeds.
- ◆ High-quality design enhances the City's reputation. Street trees line the El Camino, US 101 is screened by soundwalls and dense shrubs, wide sidewalks attract pedestrians, and distinctive entry points distinguish the City from all others on the Peninsula.
- ◆ Parks and open spaces frame the City on the east and west, from Shoreline Park on the San Francisco Bay shore, to the rolling hills near Sugarloaf Mountain. Creekside parks and open space areas show the high value the City places on its natural resources.
- ◆ Recreation is important to San Mateans, and the City offers a wide variety of recreational programs that include social services, child care, cultural arts, and programs for all ages, from youth to seniors.

- ◆ Downtown San Mateo provides for a pedestrian-friendly environment lending to its charm as a traditional center of the community. In the next years, the blend of historic buildings and new development will provide for a mix of retail, entertainment and housing opportunities. Central Park will provide a unique opportunity as an open space, recreational and cultural resource for the downtown, as well as the entire community. The downtown will remain a focal point of the community, both as a reminder of its historic heritage, and as a harbinger of San Mateo's role as the pre-eminent City in San Mateo County.
- ◆ Clusters of offices, retail businesses, and multi-family residential developments attract visitors and residents to the Downtown, Mariner's Island, the SR 92 corridor, and the areas near the Hillsdale and Hayward Park train stations. The Hillsdale Shopping Center is the most successful regional center on the Peninsula. The Bridgepointe and Bay Meadows developments provide an exciting mixture of residential, office, and retail uses that complement adjacent neighborhoods and business parks. Friendly, neighborhood shopping centers such as Twenty-Fifth Avenue, Forty-First Avenue, and Shoreview tempt residents with their wares.
- ◆ A wide variety of transportation choices are available to San Mateans to make it convenient to travel to work and school, shop, obtain services, and to recreate. Caltrain offers convenient access to workplaces and recreation areas throughout the Peninsula, from San Francisco to San Jose and to BART. Express busses connect to BART stations providing access to the airport and the East Bay. SamTrans busses provide frequent and convenient service, and local streets and roads carry drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians smoothly and safely across the City.
- ◆ San Mateo maintains a strong economic vitality while continuing to strive for a balance between jobs and housing. Finance, insurance, and real estate remain the basis of a healthy City economy, coupled with strong retail sales, auto sales, attractive new hotels, and a modern, state of the art telecommunications infrastructure. The City's revenues have been growing faster than inflation.
- ◆ The City of San Mateo is a leader in addressing the environmental effects of Climate Change. The City maintains an active role in promoting, educating and conducting Sustainable practices throughout the San Mateo community. Development in the City of San Mateo occurs in a sustainable manner through the use of Green Building techniques and best practices.

This General Plan will set in motion those policies that will enable San Mateo to reach this vision by 2030. By adopting this plan, the City is committed to achieving this exciting future.

Attachment D: Draft 2040 Vision Statement



DRAFT General Plan Vision Statement

In 2040, San Mateo:

Housing

1. Offers a range of housing types for all ages and abilities that are affordable to all income levels.
2. Facilitates higher density housing and increased job opportunities near transit nodes and along transit corridors.

Circulation

3. Provides safe and efficient options for walking, biking, transit, and personal vehicles, including travelers with special needs, and takes advantage of emerging transportation technologies and services.
4. Features convenient, non-motor vehicle connections to all parts of the city and has minimal cut-through traffic on local streets.

Jobs and Economy

5. Balances job growth with housing production.
6. Is home to businesses that offer jobs that pay living wages to people with all types of educational and vocational abilities.
7. Has a variety of retail, service, restaurant, entertainment, office, educational, and industrial enterprises, and helps local businesses of all sizes succeed.

Community Life

8. Requires new development to incorporate high-quality design and community amenities such as childcare and open spaces.
9. Values the city's historic character, tree-lined streets, and well-maintained infrastructure.

Parks and Public Spaces

10. Supports public art, parks, and recreation programs that foster community health and add to the city's vibrancy.
11. Is a diverse and welcoming city that provides recreational and social opportunities equitably throughout the city to meet the needs of all community members.

Sustainability

12. Is a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change, and building community resiliency.

Attachment E: Portland Vision Statement

2035 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Vision

Portland is a prosperous, healthy, equitable and resilient city where everyone has access to opportunity and is engaged in shaping decisions that affect their lives.

Guiding principles

Not just where but HOW Portland will grow.

The Comprehensive Plan includes five Guiding Principles to recognize that implementation of this Plan must be balanced, integrated and multi-disciplinary. The influence of the Guiding Principles is seen throughout the Plan as they shape many of the individual policies and projects.



Economic Prosperity

Support a low-carbon economy and foster employment growth, competitiveness and equitably distributed household prosperity.



Human Health

Avoid or minimize negative health impacts and improve opportunities for Portlanders to lead healthy, active lives.



Environmental Health

Weave nature into the city and foster a healthy environment that sustains people, neighborhoods, and fish and wildlife. Recognize the intrinsic value of nature and sustain the ecosystem services of Portland's air, water and land.



Equity

Promote equity and environmental justice by reducing disparities, minimizing burdens, extending community benefits, increasing the amount of affordable housing, affirmatively furthering fair housing, proactively fighting displacement, and improving socio-economic opportunities for under-served and under-represented populations. Intentionally engage under-served and under-represented populations in decisions that affect them. Specifically recognize, address and prevent repetition of the injustices suffered by communities of color throughout Portland's history.



Resilience

Reduce risk and improve the ability of individuals, communities, economic systems, and the natural and built environments to withstand, recover from, and adapt to changes from natural hazards, human-made disasters, climate change, and economic shifts.

For more information on how the Guiding Principles are used, please see About the Plan and Chapter 1: The Plan.

Attachment F: San Mateo RHNA Shortfall

ANNUAL ELEMENT PROGRESS REPORT Housing Element Implementation (CCR Title 25 §6202)

Attachment 1
page 3 of 8

Jurisdiction City of San Mateo
Reporting Period Date Jan. 1, 2017 - 2017 Date Dec. 31,

Table B
Regional Housing Needs Allocation Progress
Permitted Units Issued by Affordability

Enter Calendar Year starting with the first year of the RHNA allocation period. See Example.		2016	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total Units to Date (all years)	Total Remaining RHNA by Income Level
Income Level	RHNA Allocation by Income Level	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	
Very Low	Used	0	12	37							49
	Restricted										
	Non-restricted	0	0	0							810
Low	Used	23	3	0							26
	Restricted										
	Non-restricted	0	0	0							443
Moderate	Used	68	2	4							94
	Restricted										
	Non-restricted	0	0	0							436
Above Moderate		1,242	490	172	424						1,076
Total RHNA by CDD											
Enter allocation number:		3,100	591	189	455						1,245
Total Units											1,855
Remaining Need for RHNA Period											

Note: units serving extremely low-income households are included in the very low-income permitted units totals.

Attachment G: Minneapolis 2040 Single Family Zoning Ban

Plan Policies

POLICY 1

Access to Housing

Increase the supply of housing and its diversity of location and types.



The population of Minneapolis is growing. Housing demand exceeds supply in many areas of the city, which has resulted in rising rents and sale prices. Increased demand for housing is accompanied by demographic changes that affect the types of housing Minneapolis residents will need between now and 2040. The people of Minneapolis and the region as a whole are becoming older and more culturally diverse. In many parts of the city, aging single-family home dwellers do not have the option to move into multifamily housing close to their established social support networks. This further restricts access to single-family homes for households with growing families who desire that housing type and would prefer to stay in the city.

Areas of our city that lack housing choice today were built that way intentionally through zoning regulations and racially-restrictive federal housing policies during the first half of the twentieth century. Today, our city reflects those past policies which determined, based on their race, where generations of Minneapolis residents had access to housing. These policies and regulations left a lasting effect on the physical characteristics of the city and the financial well-being of its people. Areas of Minneapolis with higher densities and a mix of land uses experienced disinvestment, in part because banks were

not lending in these areas. On the outskirts of the city, a post-depression development pattern emerged with little variation in housing types and density, and few areas for commercial development. Today, the zoning map in these areas remains largely unchanged from the era of intentional racial segregation. This comprehensive plan is an opportunity to foster inclusive communities free from barriers to housing choice.

Housing cost and housing choice, including diversity of housing location, and diversity of housing type, all influence the guidance found in the Future Land Use and Built Form maps. Strategies outlined below each address the issue of housing choice in a different way. The Built Form map on its own cannot affect housing cost, but allowing for growth is a prerequisite to addressing market rate housing production as well as affordable housing production and preservation. Allowing for an increase in the overall housing supply is intended to result in overall lower housing costs than would occur if no more supply was built. The intent of each of these built form strategies is outlined below.

- Increase housing choice and housing supply by allowing multifamily housing on select public transit routes, with higher densities along high-frequency routes and near METRO stations.



Plan Policies

- In neighborhood interiors that contain a mix of housing types from single-family homes to apartments, increase housing choice and supply by allowing new housing within that existing range.



- Increase housing choice and supply by allowing the highest-density housing in and near Downtown.



- In neighborhood interiors farthest from downtown that today contain primarily single-family homes, increase housing choice and supply by allowing up to three dwelling units on an individual lot.





ACTION STEPS:

The City will seek to accomplish the following action steps to increase the supply of housing and its diversity of location and types.

- a. Allow housing to be built in all areas of the city, except in Production and Distribution areas.
- b. Allow the highest-density housing in and near Downtown.
- c. Allow multifamily housing on public transit routes, with higher densities along high-frequency routes and near METRO stations.
- d. In neighborhood interiors that contain a mix of housing types from single family homes to apartments, allow new housing within that existing range.
- e. In neighborhood interiors farthest from downtown that today contain primarily single-family homes, achieve greater housing supply and diversity by allowing small-scale residential structures with up to three dwelling units on an individual lot.
- f. Encourage inclusion of units that can accommodate families in new and rehabilitated multifamily housing developments.

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Supplemental Reading

News articles related to the removal of single-family zoning:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/13/us/minneapolis-single-family-zoning.html>
- <https://slate.com/business/2018/12/minneapolis-single-family-zoning-housing-racism.html>
- <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-minneapolis-single-family-zoning-20181219-story.html?fbclid=IwAR1e-mA5Byn2BSXPzhf371fmjncqJbnPwN4VXDmaHbaJ8JTZv0ajSTE68nY>
- <https://slate.com/business/2018/12/oregon-is-looking-at-ending-single-family-zoning.html>
- <https://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/2018/12/editorial-a-potential-game-changer-for-housing.html>
- <https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2018/12/oregon-house-speaker-proposes-to-abolish-single-family-zoning-in-many-urban-areas.html>
- <https://www.wwk.com/news/2018/12/19/if-oregon-bans-single-family-zoning-it-will-change-how-portlanders-live/>