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Sent: Sat, Apr 13, 2019 3:25 pm

Subject: Comments on existing Conditions report drafts

Many thanks to the General Plan Subcommittee for the expanded meeting and discussion of the revised existing conditions reports for this process. Even with the best preparation and intentions, it can still be a challenge to get every point across in 3 minutes, and to know how many of the issues raised will be carried forward by the committee. This email is to restate and expand on some points I was raising at the 3/27 meeting.

Expanded and improved information will only be useful in the GP process, and during the life of the plan, if it is clearly conveyed and everyone understands what it says - and doesn't say. When errors creep in, they tend to have a long life, quoted over and over, by people who do not question what the information says. Let's do all we can to avoid that trap.

Vulnerable populations - The way the economic conditions report presents vulnerable populations information is key, since we all want to be dealing with these needs in a fact-based way. I asked if some of the numbers presented in the narrative and in Table 7 could count the same responding person multiple times. The consultant said that was entirely possible. So it is easy to imagine the child who is living in a low income household of non English speakers being represented three times. Similarly, the low income senior with a disability but without a car is shown 4 times. A quick addition of the counts gives a total of as much as 85,000 +/-, which would mean that 80% of the city's population is in the vulnerable category. That seems to overstate the case considerably, just on the face of it. Let's be sure that the narrative and the table make it clear that these counts are not separate people, when viewed across categories.

Cost burdened - One number that puzzles me is the statement in the text (p.3) that "...approximately 37 percent of the population in San Mateo is a cost-burdened household..." First of all, I am taking population to mean persons. Is a person equal to a household, which would seem an odd definition? Or is this just language that needs improvement? When I look at Table 7, the cost burdened *households* are listed as 13.5%. That table column is headed percent of *population*, so how have the individual responses been translated into households, and how has that been equated with percent of population? And how does the 13.5 % in the table translate into the 37% in the narrative? Are you becoming as confused as I am? Shifting approaches and labels do not enable a reader to understand, and rely on, this information.

Without a car - Table 7 shows a count of 1,966, or 1.9% (of population) and labels that people without a car. In the circulation report, Figure 7 maps percentages of households with zero vehicles, shown by census block group. This may just be a first impression misunderstanding, but the map seems to show a relatively large number of households without a vehicle, in many parts of the city, up to a high of 23%. Even areas fairly remote from the transit corridor show that condition. Does this correlate with the relatively low count of less than 2000 without a car? Both seem to cite the same source, so this is particularly confusing.

Vehicle ownership is particularly important to understand, since traffic and parking are continuing hot buttons for our citizens. Even people who do not commute by auto seem to own them, which requires a place to store/park them. Let's be sure we have good data and understand what it means, as we make these vehicle-based decisions.

There are likely more places where changes in labels for data have altered the meaning. I was pleased to see that the (likely inconsequential) error in labeling 46' as the highest elevation in San Mateo (City Facts)

was re-named/corrected to say Elevation at City Hall, when I called it to Julia's attention. I had also questioned the average summer temperature and was told that reflected June, July and August, not the true summer of June 20 - Sept 20th. And I accept that June is usually cooler than September. Nevertheless, a clarifying renaming of the figures would have been helpful for the reader's understanding. Any data based report, as this General Plan will be, needs to avoid as many instances of unclear labels or unequal data as possible. Otherwise, the entire process, and final document will be subject to misunderstanding, error, and criticism.

Thank you for making transparency and clarity a major goal in your efforts.

Karen Herrel
San Mateo resident since 1963.