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July 17, 2019

Chair Whitaker and Members of San Mateo Planning Commission

330 W. 20th Avenue

San Mateo, CA 94403

Via Email: PlanningCommission@cityofsanmateo.org

Subject: General Plan Study Areas

Dear Chair Whitaker and Members of the Planning Commission,

The Sustainable Land Use Committee of the Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club advocates on land use issues like the General Plan (GP). We understand that you will be addressing possible study areas of the GP at your July 23, 2019 meeting. We are pleased to provide comments on proposed Study areas.

1. Study Area One – Transit Nodes and Transit Corridors:

We strongly recommend that high-density transit-orientated development (TOD) be a key factor in selecting the main study areas. This should include the areas around the three train stations and the El Camino Real corridor. Please see our Guidelines for *Downtown and Station Area Plans* as well as the Guidelines for *TOD Residential/ Mixed Use Projects* at <https://www.sierraclub.org/loma-prieta/guidelines-and-resourceshttps://www.sierraclub.org/loma-prieta/guidelines-and-resources>.

Density is needed to encourage and increase transit use and active transportation modes use, which are necessary to meet the City's Climate Action Plan goals, to improve our response to the climate crisis.

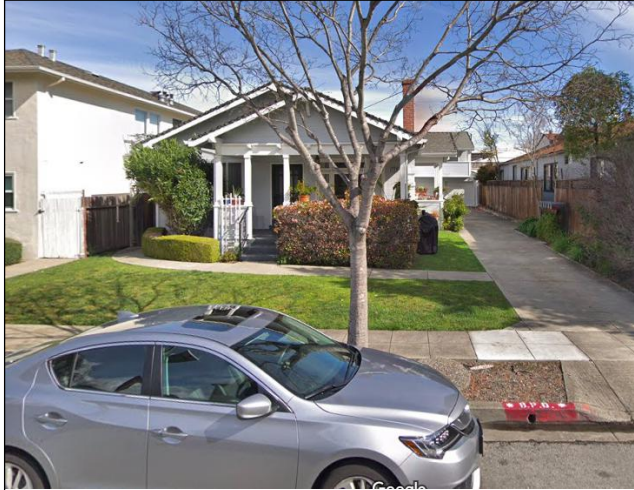
2. Study Area Two- Existing Single Family Home Neighborhoods and Middle Housing:

We recommend that you also consider "Middle Housing" which accommodates some increase in density in several areas that are now zoned for single family residential.

Middle Housing consists of multi-unit housing types such as duplexes, tri-plexes, four-plexes, bungalow courts, and mansion apartments that are not bigger than a large house, that were often integrated throughout most walkable pre-1940s neighborhoods, often integrated into blocks with primarily single-family homes, and that provide diverse housing choices and generate enough density to support transit and locally-serving commercial amenities.

Attached, also, are two brief articles on this emerging concept for increasing housing availability and affordability in a city. It proposes the idea of reconsidering single-family zoning to allow duplex, tri-plex, and even four-plex housing in certain single-family neighborhoods to increase housing options (much as accessory dwelling units today allow a single-family property to support more than one unit).

It's a concept that is beginning to be adopted in cities across the country. It seems like an idea worth considering as a way to increase housing overall in San Mateo, while maintaining the "small town feel" many current residents prefer, without building many more large multi-story projects which seem to draw residents' ire. A few local examples of where this has been successful are shown below.



1120 Chula Vista Ave, Burlingame - 4 UNITS



222 South Idaho Street, San Mateo – 3 UNITS



313 Elm Street, San Mateo – 3 UNITS



22 De Sable Road, San Mateo – 2 UNITS



2615 Garfield Street, - 2 UNITS

Allowing duplexes triplexes and fourplexes in some single-family neighborhoods can help address the housing crisis of both availability and affordability on the Peninsula. This will have significant environmental benefits, as it will reduce the long-distance commuting and traffic congestion that arises from workers needing to commute from long distances, even from the Central Valley.

Such neighborhoods already nicely exist in parts of San Mateo such as along Glendora and Shasta Drives, but more areas should allow such development, as this will benefit the City and the environment.

3. General Consideration – Economic Impacts of Increasing Density Incrementally:

There are also significant financial benefits to the City of carefully increasing density in San Mateo. This is an issue that the Commission should seriously consider as it looks to the future economic viability of the City of San Mateo. See the attached articles from Strong Towns for more information.

- [The Real Reason Your City Has No Money](#) (5-min article) - Has an example of the geographic profit and loss map of a city, which demonstrates why compact, mixed-use, walkable development is good for city budgets.
- [Value Per Acre Analysis: A How-To For Beginners](#) (7-min article) - This shows one way to quantify the fiscal productivity of land in a city in a true apples-to-apples comparison.

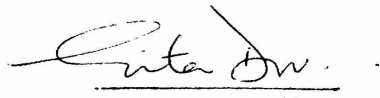
The following is longer as it is an informative series:

- [The Power of Growing Incrementally \(a series\)](#) - A discussion of the traditional development pattern vs. post-war American suburban sprawl and why the former is sustainable and the latter isn't.

We believe that planners, elected officials and the public should be provided information on the economic sustainability implications for the city as part of the general plan study areas, an area that seems to be largely sidelined in the planning process.

We look forward to participating in this important process for the City of San Mateo as it moves forward.

Respectfully Yours,



Gita Dev, Co-Chair

Sustainable Land Use Committee, Sierra Club Loma Prieta (SCLP)

Attachments: *Characteristics- Missing Middle Housing*

How to Regulate – Missing Middle Housing

Cc James Eggers, Executive Director, SCLP

Gladwyn D'Souza, Co-Chair, Conservation Committee, SCLP

Katja Irvin, Co-Chair, Conservation Committee, SCLP