

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council:

My name is Nancy Schneider, I am a longtime homeowner on Edinburgh Street on the west side of El Camino. I live in one of those vast yellow single-family zoned areas. I will not be able to attend the August 19 meeting to give my views in person.

I have been following the General Plan Update process from the beginning and attended the study area workshop, the last subcommittee meeting, and the Planning Commission meeting on July 23. I listened to the Planning Commission's discussion about the study area map and agree with many of the concerns that the Commissioners raised. Like several of the Planning Commissioners I was distressed that touching single family zoning (especially on the west side of the city) had already been taken off the table. I was also dismayed that the staff report to the Planning Commission didn't acknowledge that there was interest shown by some of us for looking at that. We cannot say saving "neighborhood character" is more important on the west side of the city than on the east or is more important than addressing our housing crisis. Not so long ago that was a code phrase for discriminatory housing policies and practices. We are still living with the consequences of those.

At this point in the process everything should be considered if we want to live up to the values shown on the vision statement. It is not equitable to only consider change and growth in certain parts of the city. There are ways to increase the number of housing units without putting eight story buildings next to a single-family home. I urge you to look into the missing middle housing types. Duplexes and two flats don't ruin a neighborhood. In fact, there are already some lovely areas within the city that have them. Updating the General Plan is such a long and involved process that we should take the time to consider opportunities for improvement in as much of the City as possible, or at least an even distribution of study areas throughout the City.

Finally, a few Commissioners mentioned that the General Plan addresses more than housing, but all we have heard in the process so far is the housing need and where housing can be built. If the General Plan will address other uses, shouldn't the study areas be based on what elements will be studied in each area? Certain areas may be more appropriate for transit-oriented development, but other areas might be studied for conservation or bike safety and walkability. Given the climate crisis as well as the housing crisis we cannot expect to go with business as usual. We have to develop more walkable neighborhoods and reduce the dependency on our cars.

At a minimum, a new map must consider opportunities for housing in a more balanced way and should provide additional detail about why the study areas were chosen. The current map is missing so much information that it simply cannot be approved in good faith. Please do not approve the proposed map.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,  
Nancy Schneider