



September 29, 2019

Honorable Mayor Diane Papan and Members of the City Council
City of San Mateo
330 West 20th Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403

Dear Mayor Papan and Members of the City Council,

The North Central neighborhood is included in the City of San Mateo's fourth, fifth, and sixth study areas for the General Plan Update. As we embark on the next phase of the General Plan process, where we identify "what" to study, **HANCSM strongly opposes consideration of any upzoning within the city's residentially-zoned land - until the city creates a more equitable distribution of study areas.** Upzoning must be removed from consideration in North Central until analogous, residentially-zoned land within reasonable walking distance of our city's three Caltrain stations are also studied for upzoning.

The city and its Council has a moral and a legal obligation to affirmatively promote fair housing practices. It is unfair and unacceptable to concentrate growth - growth that our entire city must plan for - within the margins of one vulnerable neighborhood. What is fair and right will be for all of the city's transit-adjacent neighborhoods to be studied in equal measure.

On August 19, 2019 HANCSM presented a letter to the City Council opposing the study area map (Version 1) stating: *"North Central should not be exclusively singled out as the only residential neighborhood for study. We believe no neighborhood should be exempt from change and no neighborhood should be subjected to radical change."* Our letter was signed by 117 residents, including faith leaders, business owners, community organizations, and elected and appointed representatives who live in, work in, or volunteer for our community of North Central.

We arrived at the City Council meeting at 7:00 pm and waited until after 11:30 pm for this important agenda item to be called. Through this practice, many of our neighbors, including seniors and young families, were compelled to leave the meeting unheard. During the meeting, the City staff acknowledged their challenges in reaching vulnerable populations - especially those in North Central and Shoreview. Several councilmembers expressed serious concern about the outreach process, including Councilmember Freschet, who said she was torn about making any decision about the maps until the process was more representative. In spite of our efforts to bring North Central's perspective to the table, Councilmembers Freschet, Papan, and Rodriguez ultimately supported the study area map Version 1, where North Central is the *only residential neighborhood included in the General Plan's study*. This decision was profoundly devastating to our North Central community; we felt unrepresented, unheard, and ignored.



HANCSM believes that smart, inclusive, and sustainable planning can make a good city great. We champion the planning field's best practices of creating dense, walkable neighborhoods centered on regional transit - neighborhoods that demonstrably lead to reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved circulation for all modes of transportation. Good planning can make a world of difference in promoting a healthy economy where we can manage the cost of living by meeting the substantial need for more housing in productive places, especially subsidized affordable housing.

It has been three decades since San Mateo has done a comprehensive update to our General Plan. This is the first time in a generation to deeply question our city's present landscape, draw the blueprint for its future, and face our obligation to meet the needs of the next generation.

Last century, North Central faced systematic disinvestment through the practice of redlining. Many of our neighborhood's homes remain in terrible condition today because financing was explicitly restricted from neighborhoods like ours where people of color called home. Many of our neighbors alive today faced housing discrimination that prevented them from moving to other parts of the city. This legacy of institutional racism still lingers in the divergent outcomes of North Central from the rest of the city.

Our neighborhood has the oldest infrastructure in the City. Our sidewalks are unsafe. Our sewers often overflow onto the street. Our schools are ranked at the bottom for pedestrian safety. North Central has the most homes experiencing unhealthy and overcrowded conditions. Its neighborhood elementary school was almost shut down for underperformance. North Central remains the neighborhood with the highest concentration of rent-burdened residents, the greatest number of people of color, the most linguistically isolated residents, and the highest concentration of low income households. Going forward, we call on the Council and staff to study our unique history and demographics and develop evidence-based policy in North Central that will improve the health outcomes and advance health equity within our neighborhood. We support the incorporation of [San Mateo County's Strategies for Building Healthy, Equitable Communities](#) and framing the study of this neighborhood through that program. Attending to these myriad challenges will be vital to the neighborhood's future, but that work alone will not be enough for the city as a whole.

To be inclusive, equitable, and sustainable, we must actively work together to redress the past and plan for a healthy, inclusive community in North Central. The path that advances socioeconomic integration and stays true to our mission and values will be modeled on best practices in planning, not by ignoring our significant need for a balanced and sustainable future. **As we update our citywide General Plan, it should not be solely on North Central's shoulders to create a more just and sustainable future for our city. We rely on our leaders to do what is right for our entire community and take the - sometimes - hard stance in support of geographic equity.**

We applaud Councilmember Bonilla who supported the expanded study area map (Version 3) that would fully leverage our geographic opportunities to manage the change and growth that will inevitably take shape in San Mateo. We are encouraged by the words of Mayor Papan who was quoted in the San Mateo Daily Journal saying, "She did not look at including the future study area with the North



Central neighborhood as a step toward making one neighborhood absorb the burden of the city's high-density housing, and said if that were the case she wouldn't support including it."

On the other hand, Councilmember Rodriguez argued that North Central "asked" to be studied and other neighborhoods did not, and therefore the city's other neighborhoods should be "protected" from change. Our city as a whole faces many problems directly stemming from the planning and land use policies of last century. Our leaders need to do what is right for our entire city and not wait for neighborhoods to ask for it. **The fact is that North Central did not ask to be redlined any more than it asked to be studied. We welcome the chance to be studied only on the condition that all of the city's residential neighborhoods be treated fairly in the process.** Our desire to address our neighborhood's specific challenges through the General Plan Update process - challenges directly stemming from a century of malpractice - should not be supplanted with an unwarranted and unjust obligation to bear the brunt of our city's responsibilities for transforming itself into an inclusive and sustainable city.

Sincerely,

Adam Nugent, HANCSM President
Binh Thai, HANCSM Vice President
Joanne Bennett, HANCSM Treasurer
Carolina Nugent, HANCSM Secretary
Amourence Lee, HANCSM Communications & Love North Central Campaign Chair
Mike Caggiano, HANCSM Board Member
Noelia Corzo, HANCSM Board Member
Jonah Lee, HANCSM Board Member
Wesley Taoka, HANCSM Board Member
Ben Toy, HANCSM Board Member
Dianne Whitaker, HANCSM Board Member
Dorothy Chow, HANCSM Board Member
Bennito Angeles, HANCSM Board Member
Emmanuel Huff, HANCSM Board Member

One San Mateo
Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo
Rev. Marlyn Bussey, Pastor, St. James AME Zion Church
Claire Mack, Former Mayor of San Mateo
Cynthia Eagleton, Teacher at San Mateo Adult School
David Doneff, Teacher at San Mateo Adult School
Tim Doyle, Director at San Mateo Adult School



Leslie Talley, North Central Resident
Jon Steffensen, North Central Resident
Jane Williams, North Central Resident
Stephen Bell, North Central Resident
Joshua Hugg, North Central Resident
Anita Webb, North Central Resident
Helen Keacher, North Central Resident
Minnette Berger, North Central Resident
Trina Pierce, North Central Resident
Mary Webb, North Central Resident
Dianna Pettit, North Central Resident
Angel Enriquez, North Central Resident
Wally Jansen, North Central Resident
Shova Alemager, North Central Resident
Ken Fagan, North Central Resident
Kimberly Ezeama, North Central Resident
Stasia McGehee, North Central Resident
Rev. Jerold Nugent (retired), North Central Resident
Nancy Nugent, North Central Resident

Jenny Campbell, San Mateo Resident
Andreo Lesker, San Mateo Resident
Esmerelda Cabrea, San Mateo Resident