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**Cc:** Patrice Olds <[polds@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:polds@cityofsanmateo.org)>

**Subject:** Comments on. "General Plan and Housing elements - Next Steps"

Dear Council Members:

Having read the advance materials for the General Plan and Housing elements - Next Steps topic, it is clear that San Mateo can achieve its 2040 plan requirements with the study areas selected by the earlier plan process and within Measure Y rules. In fact, the analysis ignores that Measure Y allows for additional height construction provided there is adequate benefit to the City. Also, state laws increase height and density limits beyond Measure Y's restrictions based on the percent of units that are affordable. These conditions should be included in the analysis.

The materials then go on to downplay the demographic and social changes in the area and assume that things won't change due to COVID-19. While that debate may be interesting, as this claim is surprising given current events, it won't be needed as choosing Alternative A would allow for plan 2040 to proceed with a high likelihood of success - especially if the factors mentioned above are considered. California lost population recently and several tech companies have moved headquarters. Oracle, HP and Tesla are going elsewhere and many companies are seeking work from home programs for at least part time. There is much evidence to suggest there will be a decline in demand for offices, leaving more land for housing construction. Housing demand is also high for single family homes due to the lack of private open space in apartments. That may be more enduring as the issues with sheltering in place proved to be daunting if you only have 80 sq. ft. of private outdoor space. A backyard is currently a popular feature. Certainly these factors can impact demand for housing. Time will help clarify these trends.

Also, a significant number of California cities are protesting the HCD housing demand process, as the current method includes significant double counting. ( See Embarcadero Institute [double-counting-in-the-latest-housing-needs-assessment](#)) While the State may be able to sustain this protest, that is not certain. Assuming inflated housing numbers going forward, as is done in this analysis, and assuming continued demand for housing are risky choice. Instead, proceeding with Option A while these factors, which are mostly COVID based, resolve as the pandemic is controlled is the best course of action. This will hopefully enable a better prediction of future demand.

As a former executive who oversaw the completion of annual 5-10 year plans, along with annual action plans, I see no issue and much benefit in beginning the next general plan 4-5 years after the completion of plan 2040. It seems there is an attempt to make this sound more onerous than it is. Alternative A is the best choice.

Finally the recent HLC meeting makes this topic more provocative as the comments made by the Council Members in attendance clearly indicated an animosity to Measure Y. The tone of the meeting clearly showed an intent to open development to all areas of the City and to eliminate height limits. Measure Y passed and the City does not need to change height limits to meet the increased goals of its RHNA targets.

I encourage the Council to direct staff to pursue Alternative A.

Michael Nash