

Laurie and Randy Hietter

February 17, 2022

Mr. Zachary Dahl
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SUBJECT: Comments on Land Use Alternatives

Thank you for the opportunity to review the *Land Use and Circulation Alternatives Evaluation for the City of San Mateo* General Plan. It is a well written document with excellent graphics. Please accept my comments below. I was only able to make a brief review.

Growth

The rationale for such large growth numbers is not clear. Simply referencing the State or Association of Bay Area Governments does not explain why San Mateo is considering such massive growth. Please explain the growth estimates and their rationale, and provide the numbers. I apologize if I missed that information.

The “low” population and housing growth level of 30% under Alternative A, combined with the increase due to SB 9 and 10 would likely meet the state requirements (although the text is not clear since the state numbers are not provided. Please do not consider 40% and 50% growth when it is far more than the average of 14% growth in the 20-year periods since 1980. This is too much growth for the City and Bay Area to absorb.

Empty housing is not good for the City or the neighborhoods. Many properties in San Mateo were bought on speculation. Did the City consider speculation vacancies? The City should consider a property tax surcharge on properties that are vacant for more than 3 months and establish fines for lack of maintenance.

Developers will build to the least risk and highest margin, which leads to displacement of neighborhoods of color and poor neighborhoods. Intense growth will benefit the developers and construction trades, but not necessarily the underserved.

San Mateo was settled by people who wanted to escape San Francisco for areas with more space. The mayor seemed to state last night at the Baywood Neighborhood Association meeting that single-family housing neighborhoods are “old-fashioned.” The recent pandemic showed us

that people wanted to escape small apartments in the cities to areas with private outdoor space. It seems that concept is not “old fashioned.”

Vision and Values

The vision and values are inconsistent. The vision statement includes respecting the quality of the neighborhoods but the values statements do not clearly reflect that value. The considered level of growth will have a significant adverse impact on the quality of the neighborhoods and our quality of life in San Mateo.

Historic Resources

The historic resources section does not acknowledge or name the historic districts in San Mateo, other than a reference to downtown and Glazenwood and “scattered historic buildings.” Historic districts likely include, at a minimum:

- Baywood
- San Mateo Park
- Glazenwood
- Hayward Park
- North Central

Other districts may exist. The historic survey was conducted in 1989 and referenced large, National Register-eligible districts. The Land Use report is deficient by not acknowledging the districts referenced in the 1989 *Downtown Historic Survey Final Report*. It is past time to conduct the historic survey of San Mateo. There can be no accurate or adequate analysis of effects to historic resources if the districts are not recognized and the survey is not conducted.

The statement below may be true but is unsubstantiated because there has been no systematic study of San Mateo.

“Study Area 4 includes the Downtown Historic District and the highest concentration of individual historic buildings in San Mateo.”

The historic survey must be conducted to understand the impacts of the alternatives.

Schools

Table 16 shows 2021-2022 Enrollment and Capacity for Schools in San Mateo. The reference school year may not be representative of enrollment without the pandemic. Please provide other reference years and show the trends (increasing or decreasing enrollment).

How are ADUs under SB 9 and 10 expected to affect school enrollments?

Water

“Cal Water’s current Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) reflects the State’s recent amendment to the Water Quality Control Plan for the BayDelta (Bay-Delta Plan), which decreased the percent of projected future flows that will be available for consumption by urban communities. Given these limitations, the current UWMP projects to have sufficient supplies to meet future demand within the service area that includes San Mateo for normal water supply years, but not for multiple dry year scenarios.”

The UWMP was completed in 2019, and we are now in a series of multiple dry years.

As stated, Cal Water will not be able to supply adequate water. Additional conservation to support excessive growth will cause enormous damage to our vegetation, wildlife habitat, and not allow for daily showers and normal cleaning; this is a significant quality of life issue for existing residents. San Mateo residents have already greatly modified our landscapes and behaviors to reduce water consumption. The projected growth in San Mateo, the Bay Area, and the State simply cannot be accommodated by the current water resources.

Environmental Concerns

The City is focusing on removing regulatory barriers to building housing at the expense of hard-won environmental regulations. The lack of these regulations made cities unlivable. Now the City seems to be minimizing regulations and environmental review at the expense of the environment. There will be unmitigated effects related to:

- Traffic,
- Noise,
- Loss of vegetation and wildlife habitat,
- Lack of sunlight due to shading,
- Loss of recreational space and high pressure on existing facilities,
- Overcrowded schools,
- Water,
- Waste water treatment
- Reduced police and fire protection.

Additional Comments

- Such intense growth (even with Alternative A: Lowest Growth) will substantially reduce quality of life for current residents.
- Address the reason people are not selling their homes—taxes and no capital gains rate in California and the fact that federal capital gains exclusions established in 1997 have not been indexed to inflation.
- Provide totals in tables of new units, population, etc.

- Include baseline numbers (or percentages, as the case may suggest) so the public can clearly understand what the increased population, housing and growth numbers mean.

Please do not consider growth beyond the minimum to avoid the overcrowding, environmental, effects, and degradation of our quality of life in the San Mateo we all love. Please recognize the direction the community voiced when they voted to limit density through Measure Y.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laurie and Randy Hietter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laurie and Randy Hietter