MEMORANDUM

DATES: February 17, 2022 and March 3, 2022

TO: General Plan Subcommittee

FROM: Zachary Dahl, Deputy Community Development Director
Joanna Jansen, Principal, PlaceWorks

SUBJECT: Land Use and Circulation Alternatives – Preferred Scenario Selection Process

RECOMMENDATION:
Receive an informational overview of the Land Use and Circulation Alternatives and the Evaluation Report, take public comments, ask clarifying questions and provide feedback on selection of the Preferred Land Use and Circulation Scenario.

Packet Materials

The meeting materials for Item 2 of the General Plan Subcommittee (GPS) meetings of Wednesday, February 17, 2021 and Thursday, March 3, 2022 include the following, which are attached to this memorandum:

- Attachment 1 – General Plan Vision Statement
- Attachment 2 – Alternatives Evaluation Report
- Attachment 3 – Land Use Alternatives Citywide
- Attachment 4 – Land Use Alternatives by Study Area
- Attachment 5 – Circulation Alternatives
- Attachment 6 – Community Engagement Overview and Summary of Public Comments

Background

The City's General Plan Update (GPU) kicked off in Fall 2018 and began with a series of visioning workshops and community meetings. From April 2019 through January 2022, the General Plan team held a series of meetings and events to establish the General Plan study areas, create the range of alternatives, confirm the draft alternatives, and receive feedback on the preferred land use and circulation scenario with the community. The General Plan team will continue to seek input on the preferred land use and circulation scenario through an online survey and other events through April 2022. More information about the outreach process, including meeting materials and recordings, is available at www.StriveSanMateo.org. The remainder of this report provides an overview of the alternatives process, summary of community outreach on the GPU and Housing Element, preview of the February 9, 2022 and March 3, 2022 GPS discussions, and identifies next steps.

Overview of Alternatives Process

The land use alternatives explore different possible growth scenarios for how to accommodate future housing, jobs, commercial and retail establishments, and parks and open space. The City is proactively planning to meet the requirements of State housing law, identify solutions to transportation and housing affordability issues, be prepared for the projected population and job growth in the region and locally, and other issues such as improving community health, equity, and access to services. This work is guided by the General Plan Vision and Values established at the outset of the project (Attachment 1).

The process to create the land use alternatives and to ultimately select a preferred land use scenario takes approximately two years and is shaped by community input at every significant step of the process. In general, each step of the alternatives process includes a similar series of meetings: first, community workshop(s) and outreach events, then General Plan Subcommittee meeting(s), followed by Planning Commission meeting(s), and culminating in City Council direction.

A summary of the steps to create the land use alternatives, and ultimately a preferred land use scenario, is outlined below. We are currently at Step 4.

1. **Choose study areas**. During the summer and fall of 2019, San Mateo community members were asked to provide input at workshops, meetings, and online to help identify areas of the City that have the most potential for change over the next 20 years (study areas). Examples of potential study areas include areas near transit; areas where current buildings are aging, vacant, or not maintained; or areas where people have expressed interest in considering redevelopment of the property through the General Plan Update process. Although most of the change is anticipated to occur within the study areas, the General Plan will include policies and actions that guide and support change throughout the entire city. For example, it will encourage citywide circulation and infrastructure improvements to enhance the multimodal network and maintain service standards.
2. **Create a range of alternatives for each study area**. In the winter of 2019, community members shared their ideas on the different types and range of development that should occur in each study area. Using public feedback gathered in-person and online, and General Plan Subcommittee, Planning Commission, and City Council input on the range of alternatives, the General Plan team (City staff and project consultants) prepared three draft land use and transportation alternatives. These draft alternatives consider different locations and intensities of development that could occur over the next 20 years for each identified study area. The three alternatives reflect recently built and approved projects and do not propose change to properties zoned R-1 (One-Family Residential), even if located within a study area.
3. **Evaluate and compare alternatives**. On August 16, 2021, the City Council provided direction on the three land use and circulation alternatives to evaluate. The General Plan team then began evaluating the alternatives to compare their differing outcomes against a set of metrics. The metrics include topics such as height and density, jobs-housing balance, historic resources, traffic and transit network, climate change (i.e. Sea level rise and wildfire risk), equity and public health, and fiscal sustainability.
4. **Selection of a preferred scenario for further study**. On January 14, 2022, the City published the Alternatives Evaluation Report on www.StriveSanMateo.org and began the community engagement process to choose a preferred scenario for circulation and each study area based on the relative benefits, trade-offs, potential impacts and desired mix of growth and development of each alternative. It is anticipated that the preferred land use scenario will be created by mixing and matching different combinations of housing and commercial development in each study area. We are currently in this step and are collecting community input to select the preferred scenario. (See "Preferred Scenario Community Input," below.) Following meetings before the General Plan Subcommittee and Planning Commission, the City Council will provide final direction on the preferred land use and circulation scenario on April 18, 2022.

5. **Refine the preferred scenario to become the updated General Plan Land Use map**. The GPU team will then update the land use maps for each study area and the citywide circulation map to reflect the preferred land use and circulation scenarios based on City Council's direction, and they will become the basis for the land use and circulation maps in the Draft General Plan. These final maps will be brought back to the City Council for confirmation before preparation of the environmental impact report (EIR) is initiated.

Overview of the Land Use Alternatives

The land use alternatives explore a range of residential growth within the 10 Study Areas based on both response to community input, and the need to accommodate the State Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of 7,015 housing units for the next eight-year housing cycle (2023-2031). The City of San Mateo must ensure that there is enough land zoned at appropriate densities to accommodate the current RHNA, plus a buffer, which is distributed among a range of income categories. A buffer is necessary to ensure that if the sites listed in the Housing Element are developed without housing, or are developed with less than the full amount of housing claimed in the Housing Element, there is remaining capacity to ensure an ongoing supply of sites for the full RHNA during the eight years of the Housing Element Cycle. In addition, since the General Plan is planning for the next 20 years, the preferred land use scenario should account for residential growth beyond the current RHNA to cover future housing cycles.

The three land use alternatives are explore growth of approximately 12,000, 16,000, and 21,000 new residential units. By comparison, San Mateo currently has just over 39,000 housing units. All land use alternatives keep job growth constant despite varying residential growth, with the assumption that the City would not implement policies to either significantly stimulate, nor significantly dampen, job growth. The alternatives evaluation includes an assessment of future jobs/housing balance given these assumptions. Table 1 provides a summary of the three land use alternatives.

Table 1 – Summary of Draft Land Use Alternatives

	Existing (2019)	Alternative A (Net New)	Alternative B (Net New)	Alternative C (Net New)
Homes	39,200	+11,810	+16,070	+21,080
Population	104,500	+29,500	+40,260	+53,500
Jobs	52,800	+15,430	+15,430	+14,990

Source: PlaceWorks, 2022

The land use alternatives, shown in Attachments 3 and 4, are generally described as follows:

- **Alternative A** generally has the least change in land use designations and densities, and the lowest residential growth. Alternative A is consistent with Measure Y.
- **Alternative B** has the second-highest residential growth and spreads growth and midrange heights more evenly across all 10 study areas. Outlying Study Areas like 6, 10, and 2 become small villages that incorporate office, residential, and mixed-use development. Alternative B

assumes some targeted exceptions to Measure Y on sites in the Mixed-Use High or Residential High categories.

- **Alternative C** has the highest residential growth and concentrates growth, change, tallest heights, and density near transit in Study Areas 3 and 4. Alternative C is not consistent with Measure Y.

Overview of the Circulation Alternatives

The circulation alternatives explore different ways people could travel throughout San Mateo, improving bicycle, pedestrian, vehicular and transit access to connect residents to regional transportation systems. All the alternatives assume pedestrian and bicycle improvements consistent with adopted City planning documents such as the Bicycle Master Plan and Pedestrian Master Plan. The circulation alternatives, shown in Attachment 5, are generally described as follows:

- **Alternative A**: **A Walkable City.** This alternative aims to create walkable communities throughout San Mateo by prioritizing pedestrian corridors, pedestrian improvements to challenging intersections, and implementing traffic calming and safety improvements near highway on-ramps, and would go beyond the pedestrian improvements contained in the Pedestrian Master Plan.
- **Alternative B: Prioritizing Regional Connections**. This alternative aims to increase and improve transit access to and from major connections in San Mateo by adding transit connections east/west from Study Areas 3, 6, and 10 to the Hillsdale Caltrain station, prioritizing dedicated High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) and bus lanes, and adding Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) improvements to El Camino Real.
- **Alternative C: Supporting, Walking, Regional Connections, and Emerging Mobility Solutions**. This alternative combines the local and regional transportation improvements of Alternatives A and B, while using inventive urban design, inspired by Barcelona's "superblocks" to create a pedestrian focused, car-light space in Downtown. In addition, this alternative would explore future transportation technologies, like on-demand rideshare services or an autonomous vehicle shuttle.

Relationship Between Measure Y and Draft Land Use Alternatives

Measure Y was passed by voters in November 2020. It extended the height and density limits under Measure P on new development and has a sunset date of 2030. This General Plan looks out beyond that sunset date to the year 2040. Therefore, some ideas in these alternatives explore land use designations that would allow buildings with six or more stories, particularly in Study Areas 3 and 4 near the Caltrain stations.

Alternatives Evaluation Report

The Alternatives Evaluation Report, which is included as Attachment 2, was prepared to help the community and decisionmakers understand the implications of three different approaches to land use and transportation planning for the next 20 years. The report considered a range of topics including:

- Urban Form
    - Height and Density
    - Ability to Meet Future RHNA
    - Jobs-Housing Balance
    - Historic Resources
- Traffic and Multimodal Network
- Community Services
- Utilities
- Environmental Sustainability
    - Sea Level Rise
    - Flooding
    - Wildfire Risk
- Equity and Public Health
- Fiscal Sustainability
- Market Feasibility
- Community Benefits

The Alternatives Evaluation Report is organized into five sections:

- Section 1: Overview of the alternatives process
- Section 2: Explanation of the land use and circulation alternatives
- Section 3: Summary of key evaluation findings
- Section 4: Additional context for the General Plan Update
- Section 5: Detailed evaluation analysis and findings

The Summary of Key Findings identified that for for six of the 28 evaluation topics, there would not be a meaningful difference among the three land use alternatives. Potential impacts to water supply, the wastewater system, stormwater system, sea level rise, flooding, and wildfire hazards and the ability to secure community benefits would be similar or the same under all alternatives. The major differences amongst the land use and circulation alternatives are described below.

Circulation Alternative A

- Results in the second highest amount of pedestrian improvements, after Alternative C, and would perform the same under all land use alternatives.
- Includes more bicycle improvements than Alternative B, and is equivalent to Alternative C.
- Performed the lowest in terms of transit because it does not include any east-west transit connections.
- Bicycle and transit improvements under this Alternative performed slightly higher when matched with Land Use Alternative C because these improvements would benefit more residents.

Circulation Alternative B

- Includes the fewest number of pedestrian improvements.

- All circulation alternatives include good bicycle network coverage, but because this Alternative does not include bicycle improvements along El Camino Real, it scored the lowest in this category.
- This Alternative, along with Alternative C, would have the highest transit benefit and both circulation alternatives would perform slightly better under Land Use Alternative C.
- Pedestrian and bicycle improvements included under this Alternative performed the same when considered in context of the three land use alternatives. However, the transit improvements performed slightly higher under Land Use Alternative C because it would benefit a higher number of residents.

Circulation Alternative C

- This Alternative would have the highest multimodal benefit because it anticipates the most pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements.
- The public realm improvements and Downtown superblock concept included in this Alternative would result in the most pedestrian benefits amongst the three circulation alternatives and would perform the same under all land use alternatives.

Land Use Alternative A

- This alternative would result in the least amount of residential growth and have lower densities and heights.
- Due to the lower densities, this alternative would likely not be able to meet future RHNA cycles beyond 2031 and would result in fewer residents within close proximity to transit and less publicly accessible open space.
- Since there are fewer residents near transit, the City's per capita VMT (including both residents and workers) would increase under this Alternative. However, total VMT would be lowest under Alternative A because it has the lowest total amount of new residents and workers.
- All alternatives have the potential to impact historic resources, but Alternative A would propose the fewest changes to the Downtown historic district.
- Although police, fire, schools, parks, and library services would be impacted under all alternatives, this Alternative would necessitate the least expansion of these services because it results in the lowest population growth.
- In terms of equity and environmental justice, this alternative would add fewer residents within proximity to diesel particulate matter exposure, but would also provide fewer affordable housing units.
- This Alternative would generate the most positive annual net fiscal impact for the City, producing 13 percent more net revenue ($980,000) than Alternative B and 56 percent more net revenue ($2.9 million) than Alternative C. Although Alternative A generates the lowest revenues, it also results in the lowest cost for additional public services.
- In terms of market feasibility, the land use types and densities would be feasible under this Alternative A.

Land Use Alternative B

- This Alternative would most likely be able to fulfill future State-mandated housing targets, but would have a smaller housing buffer as compared to Alternative C.
- This Alternative could result in the most changes to the Downtown historic district.
- The current market climate favors medium residential densities (4 to 7 stories and up to 99 units/acre) because construction costs and parking requirements can be optimized at this scale. Thus, since this Alternative includes the most medium density land use designations, it would have the highest market feasibility in today's market.

Land Use Alternative C

- This Alternative would generate the greatest residential growth and have the highest heights and densities.
- Since this Alternative has the greatest residential growth potential, it would most likely be able to fulfill future State-mandated housing targets including a sufficient housing site surplus as preferred by the State Housing and Community Development Department (HCD).
- Higher densities around the Caltrain stations and high frequency bus stops would likely increase transit ridership, resulting in the lowest per capita VMT of the three alternatives. However, total VMT is highest under this Alternative because it has the highest increase in both residents and workers.
- This Alternative could generate the most affordable housing, but could also expose the most new residents to diesel particulate matter from trucks, buses, and trains on major nearby arterial roads and highways, including Highway 101, Highway 92, and El Camino Real, as well as the Caltrain rail corridor (electrification of the rail corridor, once completed, will reduce diesel particulate exposure).
- This Alternative would have a positive net fiscal impact on the City, generating $5.2 million net annually in funding after accounting for City expenditures. All three land use alternatives would result in a net annual fiscal surplus, but this Alternative would produce the lowest net annual fiscal surplus since it has the highest cost for providing additional public services to accommodate the population growth.
- Achieving the highest densities under this Alternative could be challenging due to the high construction costs associated with this type of development, which are not supported under current market conditions. However, it is likely that market conditions and construction methods will change over the life of the General Plan, so this constraint may change over time.

Jobs-Housing Balance

Throughout the General Plan Update, the San Mateo community has been interested in how the land use changes and anticipated future growth would affect the city's jobs-housing balance. Jobs-housing balance is a measure of how well the local economy provides jobs for the local labor force and housing opportunities for that labor force. An adequate balance of housing and jobs can benefit the city's economy, environment, and resident quality of life. Although this topic is often described as "jobs-housing" balance, comparing the number of jobs to the number of residents is a more direct comparison of individuals, rather than comparing people to homes. The jobs-employed residents ratio is calculated by dividing the number of jobs in the community by the number of employed residents in the same

area. It must take into account the fact that many residents are children, seniors, students, or otherwise not part of the workforce. A high number of jobs relative to residents typically indicates that workers are commuting into the community. A low number of jobs and high number of residents typically indicates that workers are commuting out of the community for work. When the number of employed residents is significantly higher than the number of jobs in the city, it can lead to increased traffic congestion as workers commute either in or out, which in turn increases per capita VMT and creates increased air pollutant emissions, noise, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Theoretically, an ideal jobs-to-employed residents ratio for a city like San Mateo would be 1.0, which would indicate that there is a job in the community for every employed resident. It should be noted that the ratio of jobs to employed residents indicates a numerical match, not a qualitative match in job type vs. resident skills and abilities. Even with an ideal jobs-to-employed residents ratio of 1.0, many residents will continue to commute outside of San Mateo while workers that do not reside in San Mateo will continue to commute in. Although the City cannot control whether jobs within San Mateo are filled by residents, striving for a jobs-to-employed residents ratio of 1.0 increases the opportunity for employed residents to find a job in San Mateo.

Based on existing conditions plus net new employees and new population projected through 2040 under each alternative:

- Alternative A would result in a slightly higher jobs-employed residents balance when compared to the baseline year of 2018 (this is the most recent year for which reliable data is available; in 2020 and 2021 these numbers have been affected by the Covid pandemic). This implies that San Mateo would have slightly more jobs than employed residents under Alternative A.
- Alternatives B and C would result in a slightly lower jobs-employed residents balance when compared to the baseline year of 2018. However, Alternative B would still result in a jobs-employed residents ratio over 1.0. Alternative C would result in a jobs-employed residents ratio of 0.95.

All three alternatives are very close together when considering the total number of existing plus net new jobs and employed residents. However because this is a numerical ratio rather than an exact match of workers to jobs, workers will still commute to San Mateo and residents will commute to employment locations ouside of the City under any alternative even with an ideal jobs-to-employed residents ratio of 1.0.

Water Supply

This section presents additional detail about the water supply analysis of the land use alternatives evaluation. In all of the alternatives, based on the projections in Cal Water's Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP), Cal Water would not have sufficient supply to meet the projected demand. This is primarily because all alternatives contemplate population increases that exceed the 2040 population projection used for Cal Water's UWMP. Cal Water has indicated that they calibrate water supply closely to demand so as not to put ratepayers in the position of paying for supplies years or decades before they are actually needed. The next update of the UWMP, which will happen in 2025, will be created with reference to the projected development allowed under San Mateo's updated General Plan 2040. The preferred scenario and updated General Plan will be an important input for Cal Water into ongoing

future supply planning efforts along with other future conservation measures that could result in decreased water demand.

Environmental Sustainability

The Alternatives Evaluation Report also analyzed how hazards associated with climate change could affect the land use alternatives. In San Mateo, there are three primary climate-related hazards that could affect the physical environment: sea level rise (and associated groundwater rise) in the northern and eastern portions of the city, flooding along the eastern shoreline and along Marina Lagoon, and wildfire in the western and southern portions of the city. The eastern side of the city, including portions of Study Areas 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, and 10, could be subject to sea level rise impacts depending on the rate of sea level rise that occurs over this century. In addition, portions of these same study areas are within the FEMA 100-year flood zone and could be susceptible to flooding risks; however, the City of San Mateo is currently in construction on a project that will remove the remaining eastern portion of the City from the FEMA flood zone. Since sea level rise and flooding impacts would be localized to the first floor of a structure, all alternatives would be similarly affected by these impacts.

To proactively address the potential impacts of sea level rise, the City of San Mateo is working with regional, state, and federal partners. For example, the City participated in San Mateo County's 2018 *Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment Report;* collaborated with the City/County Association of Government's process to form the new Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency Agency/OneShoreline; created a new assessment district to fund necessary flood protection improvements; is in the process of completing the North Shoreview Levee and Pump Station Improvement project to provide flood protection to North Shoreview residents; and designed the upgrade and expansion of the wastewater treatment plant to provide protection from the 100-year base flood and 3.4 feet of sea level rise. The City is also engaged through the BayCAN collaborative, a Bay Area-wide collaborative network of local governments and organizations focused on responding effectively and equitably to the impacts of climate change.

Areas in San Mateo that are at risk of wildfire are located west of State Route 92. Study Area 6 is located within the Wildland Urban Interface, a zone that includes dense housing and vegetation that can burn in a wildfire. However, there are no study areas that are within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone as currently mapped by CAL Fire. Land Use Alternative C would add the most housing units and Land Use Alternative A would result in the fewest new housing units in Study Area 6.

Preferred Scenario Community Input

As discussed above, the General Plan team is asking the community and decisionmakers for input on the preferred circulation and land use scenarios. Beginning in March 2021, and ongoing through the April 2022 City Council meeting, the City's community engagement process is providing a range of forums, events and surveys, both in-person and virtual. These outreach efforts, for both the General Plan and Housing Element, have included the hosting of 15 virtual workshops and three online surveys as well as targeted outreach to the City's harder-to-reach demographics. Attachment 6 also includes a summary of the community input on the preferred scenarios. Workshop materials and meeting recordings can be found at: www.strivesanmateo.org/workshops-pop-up-events/.

The City is currently collecting input on the preferred scenario through an online survey which launched on Friday, January 21, 2022. The survey, which can be accessed on www.strivesanmateo.org, will close on Monday, March 7, 2022. As of February 10, 2022, the City has collected 63 responses to the survey. Survey settings limit participants to one response per user.

General Plan Subcommittee Objectives

At the February 17, 2022 and March 3, 2022 General Plan Subcommittee (GPS) meetings, the GPS is tasked with considering the results of the Alternatives Evaluation Report (Attachment 2) and the community input on the preferred circulation and land use scenario (Attachment 6), and using that information to provide input on the preferred land use and circulation scenario.

The goal of the Feburary 17, 2022 GPS meeting will be to educate and inform the GPS about the alternatives and the results of the alternatives evaluation so that the GPS has sufficient information to provide feedback on the preferred land use and circulation scenario at the Thursday, March 3, 2022 meeting.

At the February 17th meeting, the General Plan team will provide an overview presentation that will:

- Walk the GPS through the land use alternatives by study area and by circulation alternative.
- Summarize the results of the alternatives evaluation report.
- Provide an overview of community input received to-date on the preferred scenario.

The GPS will have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions, will receive public comment, and will have a discussion.

The goal of the March 3rd meeting will be to solicit GPS feedback on the preferred land use and circulation scenario. The GPS will review the land use alternatives by study area and is encouraged to consider the best mix of components for each area when providing input on a preferred land use scenario. The GPS will also review and consider the elements of each circulation alternative that they would like included in the preferred circulation scenario.

When preparing to provide feedback on the preferred circulation and land use scenarios and the compiled community input, each member of the GPS should consider:

- What ideas from any of the circulation alternatives, such as pedestrian and bike only streets, bike and pedestrian paths, transit connections, should be part of the adopted General Plan? Given the limited space in any given public street right-of-way, how should the General Plan prioritize these different improvements?
- What ideas from any of the land use alternatives, such as jobs and housing near transit, diversity of housing choices, or rehabilitating underutilized shopping centers, should be part of the adopted General Plan?
- Understanding the Preferred Land Use Scenario should plan for the next two and a half (2.5) housing cycles (RHNA) over the next 20 years, which could be 15,000 to 20,000 new units, how should those new housing units be accommodated?

Preferred Scenario – Next Steps

Following the March 3, 2022 GPS Meeting, the next steps to finalizing the preferred circulation and land use scenarios include:

- A public meeting before the Planning Commission on Tuesday, **March 22, 2022**, to review the input from the community and GPS, and provide a recommendation to the City Council.
- A public meeting before the City Council on Monday, **April 18, 2022**, to review the input from the community, Planning Commission, GPS and provide direction on the preferred scenario.
- Finalize the preferred circulation and land use scenario per Council direction.

After Council provides final direction on the preferred scenario, the General Plan team will finalize the preferred scenario to become the basis of the Draft Circulation Map and Draft Land Use Map. The potential environmental impacts from the draft maps along with the draft goals, policies and actions will be analyzed in the Draft General Plan EIR.

Questions or Additional Information

For questions or additional information about this packet, please contact Zachary Dahl at (650) 522-7207 or email generalplan@cityofsanmateo.org.