

**From:** Sean Lacson [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** Monday, April 3, 2023 2:00 PM  
**To:** City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>; Clerk <clerk@cityofsanmateo.org>;  
General Plan <generalplan@cityofsanmateo.org>  
**Subject:** 4/3 Meeting - Rejected Housing Element

Dear Mayor Lee, Deputy Mayor Diaz Nash, and Members of the San Mateo City Council,

I'm writing as a San Mateo Resident in District 2 and a member of the San Mateo Climate Action Team, to address the height and density limits under consideration at the Special Study Session on April 3rd. We wish to thank the council and staff for their recognition at the March 6th Special Study Session that we need to increase height and density limits over those allowed by Measure Y in our General Plan Update. We are asking that you consider the following:

- Greater densification in areas close to public transit will have the benefit of reducing CO2 emissions through reduced travel distances and less urban sprawl. Greater densities also allow for higher numbers of affordable units. This satisfies requirements for both social justice and regional economic needs.
- The City has recently received its second letter from HCD stating that the San Mateo Housing Element for this cycle is not in compliance. The review letter from HCD cites serious flaws in the Site Inventory with respect to a great many of the sites' suitability and capacity. This undercuts the claim that the city can move forward without serious consideration of either relaxing height limits imposed by Measure Y on an expedited basis to increase site capacity or else subject the R1 neighborhoods to potential upzoning. Please bear in mind that with the Builder's Remedy, which is currently in play, San Mateo effectively has no enforceable zoning for proposed projects offering at least 20% affordable units.
- Under the current circumstances we feel it is extremely misguided to eliminate staff's March 6 proposal for Residential High II land use designation. The city website states in a FAQ section on the General Plan that "at the very least, General Plan 2040 will need to ensure that enough land is zoned for housing for RHNA 2023-31". Not only should Residential High II designation be retained but, if anything, height and density provisions should be extended and strengthened.
- In the most recent opinion poll commissioned by the City, more than 60% of respondents last year indicated they favored higher densities and heights (*up to 12 stories*).
- No one has yet brought up what the consequences might be if a ballot measure to overturn Measure Y fails.

Based on the above considerations, we strongly urge the City Council to:

1. Retain the high density alternatives Residential High II and Mixed Use High II. Now is not the time to get rid of these options. We need the flexibility to use these designations.
2. Increase height limits for residential building to Residential High III for 12 stories in the downtown core of San Mateo and within a half mile of Cal-Train stations
3. Increase height limits for residential buildings to 8 stories along the El Camino corridor.
4. Openly discuss the consequences for failure by the city to pass a resolution overturning Measure Y, candidly assess what this could mean for future compliance with the HCD, and entertain possible contingency plans.

Thanks again for the opportunity to participate in this discussion.

Sincerely,

Sean Lacson