

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, April 3, 2023 11:47 AM
To: City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>; Patrice Olds <polds@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: Agenda Item 16

Dear Mayor and City Council,

Agenda items are often evaluated one at a time and in a vacuum (by themselves without regard on other items and/or prior decisions). I strongly believe that issues are dynamic and impact one another. Likewise solutions that seem reasonable or work can be used for other challenging issues.

At the last City Council meeting (March 20th) this once again seemed present. We heard from the consultant regarding a potential storm water funding measure. A range of amounts were suggested. The consultant seemed to wisely advise we should focus outreach on a specific amount versus providing a range of amounts voters are willing to pay. At the end of the meeting it was suggested to bring back heights and densities by using a survey with a range of outcomes.

Regarding base heights and densities, I clearly understood from the March 6th meeting there was consensus to remove High II as an option. I am not in favor of High II. Primarily because after 85 feet of height there are additional fire and life safety requirements that are triggered. Assuming each floor is 10 feet I do not see the difference between 85 and 120 feet as feasible to be built from a cost standpoint and would have difficulty being underwritten or need to use private sources of funding resulting in increase the cost. We say we want our workers to make more, how is this possible if more money is going to those who finance the project versus those who build them?

Further it encourages existing landowners to exact a price as if the land were built at 120 feet. This would encourage speculation and a stubbornness that would be counterproductive to the housing needs of our City and the region (we may inadvertently create an imbalance of funding for projects in neighboring cities). My preference would be to have a standard that would result in a scenario where a project is more likely than not to be built. Government at all levels generally provides a framework, it would be more beneficial to provide examples of project that look good and can be built, while also allowing those who choose to invest in San Mateo a reasonable profit. Too much open-endedness creates uncertainty, and last time I checked the appetite for uncertainty was extremely low. A higher density will cause developers to sit on the sidelines and wait until certainty exists. If this happens we will likely fall short of our RHNA allocation.

About the survey, we should only poll what we plan to place in the EIR (we should use the same advice the storm fee consultant advised) and refrain from presenting a menu of options. The survey should also focus on likely voters. I think it would be counter productive and divisive to place a range of options before the public, because one option may poll a certain way and be voted on differently in an election. Like it or not this was a citizen ballot measure, so if we would like changes, you will need to listen versus trying to find an outcome that is like a popularity contest.

Thank you,

Thomas Morgan