



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Mayor Amourance Lee, City Councilman Adam Loraine, City Manager Drew Corbett, Hillsdale-Beresford Neighborhood Association, San Mateo Daily Journal

**From:** Waypoint Church's Board of Elders

**Date:** May 30, 2023

**Subject:** Waypoint's Parking Lot and the Housing Element of SM's General Plan

### Executive Summary:

Waypoint Church has not previously and does not currently have any plans to build housing on its parking lot. Further, Waypoint Church is not advocating for any position with respect to zoning of our parking lot in the housing element of the General Plan. We are leaving that for the city to determine, with input from the community.

### Detailed Statement:

Waypoint Church (historically known as First Presbyterian Church) previously posted a statement on Nextdoor regarding the topic of the housing element of the General Plan and affordable housing on its parking lot on 25th Ave. Based on subsequent discussions with members of the community, we believe some additional information may be helpful for those seeking to understand this matter.

Waypoint considers our property to be a blessing. Over the years, we have been intentional about sharing that blessing with the community in various ways, such as hosting a farmers' market, providing a space for Second Harvest Food Bank to distribute food, allowing other church organizations that don't own property to meet in our space, and opening our doors to community organizations like 12-step programs (i.e. AA and Al Anon), the scouts, and county parenting classes. We believe that being good stewards necessitates being generous with the resources God has entrusted us with.

Five years ago a member of our congregation was approached about exploring the possibility of using the church parking lot to build affordable housing for seniors and for young adults aging out of the foster care system. This idea was then brought to Waypoint's elder board (the official decision making body in a Presbyterian church) to determine if this idea was worth pursuing further. A small ad hoc group was formed to learn about what such a project might entail. This group met fewer than a half dozen times. They talked with a non-profit entity that supports affordable housing projects; they looked at similar projects (including the Rotary Club's Senior Housing Apartments on Hacienda Street); and they had a single meeting with a representative of the City of San Mateo's planning department, through which the group came to understand that the General Plan process, then underway, could identify the parking lot as a *potential* site for low-income housing development. The thought at the time was that if Waypoint's parking lot was added to the General Plan, it would give the church the flexibility to consider a project like

this at some point in the future, and that was the end of the team's inquiry. Covid delayed the city's General Plan process, and there were no further discussions within Waypoint in the meantime.

Fast forward to today: That ad hoc team has not met in several years. Waypoint's elder board had not discussed affordable housing for several years – until this issue was raised in the community in early April (2023). There have not been any broad discussions with church members. No plans have been developed; no architectural drawings done; and no financing agreements seriously discussed. Waypoint's elder board has not been presented with a proposal and has never voted on a proposal to build on this property.

We believe that the flier that began being circulated around April 1, 2023, alerting our community to a "proposal" for developing this property contained some ambiguous and inaccurate information that led to misconceptions. The flier stated that there is a "proposal" for a building of up to 70 feet at the "Farmers' Market parking lot" which would not include parking, *and* the flier included a stock image of a tall building that exceeded in height what the City would ever allow. Nevertheless, it seems many people interpreted the flier to mean that the particular image printed on the flier was an *actual* "proposal" for the Waypoint parking lot. The discussion around this topic appears to merge the *city's* proposal for changing zoning in areas near public transportation (the General Plan) with a hypothetical proposal of a building on the Waypoint Church parking lot. However, these two items are not connected. The city *is* proposing that zoning be changed, but Waypoint is not actively pursuing a change in the use of our property. **Moreover, we want to clearly state that Waypoint is not advocating for any position with respect to zoning for this location in the housing element of the General Plan.** We will leave that for the city to determine, with input from the community.

We are heartbroken by the level of distress and mistrust we have encountered from some neighbors about this issue. We respect that the topic of housing is difficult and that there are no outcomes that will satisfy everyone. Many of our members are long-time residents of San Mateo, including the neighborhood around the church campus, and it is almost certain that within the Waypoint family there are a variety of views and opinions on this emotional and complex topic, just as there are in the community at large.

Before any decision would be made by Waypoint's elder board to pursue using our parking lot for anything other than its current purpose, we would have extensive conversations within our congregation *and* with the community. If at any point in the future there is a proposal to build housing on any part of our property, we would engage in that process in a transparent, responsible, conscientious, and compassionate way. The City of San Mateo's normal processes of review and community input would also, of course, apply.

We hope that by providing more context regarding our consideration of a project like this, and asserting definitively that we have no internal plans, proposals, or decisions for such a project, minds will be put at ease.

Waypoint's board of elders is the decision-making body of the church, and any decisions regarding use of the church's property require approval by that board. Only the board or someone explicitly authorized by that board can speak on behalf of Waypoint, and to date no individual, past or present, has been appointed to speak publicly on behalf of the Waypoint's board on this topic.

- Waypoint Church, board of elders