

From: Maxine Turner <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, October 2, 2023 2:59 PM
To: City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>
Cc: Alex Khojikian <akhojikian@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: General Plan Update - Community Design and Historic Preservation Elements

As a former Planning Commissioner knowledgeable about General Plans and someone who has actively participated in many of the General Plan update (GP) meetings, workshops and pop-up events, I am confused and concerned about the staff report and the unsubstantiated and seemingly biased language. Trust in government is fundamental to our democracy.

Words matter. The Draft GP has NOT “focused on crafting a shared community vision for what San Mateo can be in the year 2040,” particularly with regard to selecting the preferred land use and circulation scenarios. The highest development land use scenario was NOT the “culmination of community, General Plan Subcommittee, and Planning Commission feedback” but that of the previous, pro-development City Council direction. The community’s vision for land use was clear when Measure Y passed which continued General Plan 2030. Tweaks to Measure Y were expected during the GP update but totally ignoring it was not.

It must be pointed out that the number of people voting for Measure Y far surpassed the relatively few individuals participating in the GP update despite the expensive and extensive outreach so thoroughly enumerated in the staff report. Since the staff report relies so much on the “number” of outreach meetings, perhaps the Council should ask for an “outcome report” on how many unique individuals attended these meetings and whether their goals for inclusiveness and diversity were met.

The report continues its confusing, biased and unsubstantiated language in referencing “themes.” Key themes on p.2 are identified broadly as: **sustainability, environmental justice, and community engagement** and addressed throughout the GP update. Yet, on p.5 under Community Feedback it notes there are “emerging themes” in feedback on the Draft General Plan. What follows under the *Community Design and Historic Resources Element* is very un-themelike, specific language that has not been previously seen nor discussed in any of the public meetings:

- Outline a process to designate a historic district that requires 2/3 approval of the affected property owners.
- Do not designate new historic districts.

Who added this language and based on what? This language also conflicts with Attachment 3, Recommended Staff Revisions # 5 and 6; and Big Ideas in GP 2040, *Address Historic Preservation Holistically*. Residents have consistently supported recognizing and protecting the unique historic resources of San Mateo. Many focus group participants in this and prior General Plans noted that the authentic downtown and traditional neighborhoods were reasons they moved to San Mateo. Historic Preservation policies have been part of the past two General Plans and should not be diluted in this one. **Do not include this language in the Historic Resources Element.**

My Specific Recommendations to Attachment 3, Revisions to the Community Design and Historic Preservation Elements follow:

New Policy CD 5 - Add language: *Implement a comprehensive approach to historic preservation based on conformance with state and federal laws and CEQA, community input*

and best practices from State and federal agencies and to find the right balancing between preservation with other important priorities such as providing new homes and supporting local businesses, especially small businesses.

Policy CD 8.3 Maintain language about “**stepping back upper floors.**” This is especially important for taller buildings and consistent with many of the new higher height buildings built in neighboring Peninsula cities. It is also consistent with reducing wind and other impacts that conflict with having a pedestrian oriented downtown and community.

Other Recommendations:

1 - Prepare an “outcome report” on how many unique individuals attended all listed meetings and whether the Council's goals for inclusiveness and diversity were met.

2 - Do not remove word "eligible" from Policy CD 5.3 as recommended by Planning Commission since it is legally required by state and federal laws, including CEQA.

3 - Revise the public input schedule to give both the Council and residents adequate time to review and discuss the lengthy GP update. With the agenda packet going out late on a Thursday for input on a Monday, there is not enough time for residents to review. Especially when the staff report is so long and complex. There is no stated reason to rush for the November 2024 ballot; the existing GP is valid through 2030 and the Housing Element can be updated prior to then.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. We all share the goal of having a socially-responsible GP 2040 that the community can be proud of and trust.

Sincerely,
Maxine