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Sent: Friday, October 27, 2023 3:51 PM
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Subject: Land Use Comments

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers:

The majority of San Mateans have consistently supported the construction of more housing, particularly affordable housing, continued job growth and economic development. But they don't believe it is necessary, nor are they willing, to sacrifice their homes, neighborhoods, quality of life, or character of their historic downtown in the process. And they don't have to. The current General Plan 2030 allows increased development potential in transit-oriented areas and meets state housing requirements. General Plan 2030 is a good plan that recognizes the importance of community and the unique land use assets that make San Mateo such a desirable community to live and work in. And most importantly, General Plan 2030 includes the Measure Y land uses that were approved by a majority of voters in 2020 and is the best measure of what level of increased development the community prefers.

WHY did the City Council choose the highest level of height and density in every identified study area, ignoring the more balanced, sustainable smart growth Measure Y model? Voters of San Mateo have made it clear what kind of community they want to live in and what shape its future should take. Over and over again, San Mateo voters have determined that they do not want 8-12 story high-rise buildings with densities of 100-200 units per acre throughout downtown and along El Camino Real.

Just whose interests is this general plan update intended to serve? Despite numerous outreach meetings, staff and the Council know how few unique individuals actually participated. The outsized influence of special interest organizations and paid operatives living in other cities appear to be the primary voices shaping the General Plan. The beneficiaries of the urban-scale redevelopment envisioned in the Draft General Plan 2040 are not those of us who live here, but those who stand to financially profit the most - big tech, big real estate, and big construction.

WHY is the 2040 General Plan based on excessive state housing requirements that are already out of date and will be significantly reduced before the current General Plan 2030 expires. The State Department of Finance has released new population projections showing CA growth is flat through 2060. Even so, General Plan 2030 meets the current excessive housing requirements.

Perhaps of equal concern is the lack of information about how much the extreme levels of development proposed in General Plan 2040 will cost and how it will be funded. New development does NOT pay its own way. The General Plan proposes maximum development and population growth without identifying where potable water will come from or how and when adequate transit will be provided. Nor does it identify where new parks, open space and other critical services can be provided in our already built out city. And nowhere is affordable housing specifically identified.

WHY has no fiscal analysis been done of the costs of providing the new services and infrastructure necessary to accommodate the extreme levels of new development proposed.

The state legislature is trying to urbanize non-urban communities to the detriment of everyone and the resulting costs for local cities are totally out of control. Developers profit while residents have to get ready for new taxes, fees and bond measures.

There is no need to approve the 2040 General Plan update at this time since the current General Plan 2030 is alive and well serving the community. A few developers may want more but it is not legally necessary to update now. And General Plan 2040 needs a lot more fine-tuning to become acceptable to the community at large. A win-win solution exists and San Mateo residents would be receptive to moderate land use changes but not the extreme high height and density increases proposed in every study areas.

WHY is the General Plan 2040 being rushed for a 2024 ballot when the existing General Plan 2030 is in conformance with the recently adopted Measure Y managed growth initiative and meets all state RHNA housing requirements for another 7 years? Many already approved projects have asked for extensions and have not been built. There is **NO RUSH**.

My specific comments follow:

- Propose a 2-phase GP that recognizes that voter approved Measure Y expires in 2030. Beyond 2030 there is no way to rely on current assumptions of future RHNA requirements given the rise in remote work and over-building of office space. After Measure Y expires in 2030, the City can revisit and amend the land use regulations given the then current economic and environmental realities.

After 2030 -

- Maintain Measure Y's heights given the fact that the State takeover of land use control automatically gives developers significant height and density bonuses.

- Provide Mix and Match balance in each study area, not broad brush maximum heights & densities. To exceed Measure Y limits, identify specific sites within each study area and note why necessary and what the benefits would be. Recognize that there are a few large lot sites that can accommodate a range of heights but that downtown is not one of them.

- Identify and protect key community serving land uses by not upzoning sites that residents rely on, such as grocery stores, car repair, small businesses and service providers. Most existing small businesses along El Camino Real and surrounding Downtown will be displaced by allowing maximum development because the cost of new construction significantly raises rents.