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Subject: Oct 30, 2023 Special Council Meeting Written Comments Agenda Items 1 and 2

Honorable Mayor and Council Members,

I am Dave Cohen representing Ethics San Mateo, a California nonprofit public benefit corporation. We do not take positions of supporting or opposing specific issues, we are focused on ethical conduct by our city's leadership.

We are concerned about the Voter Opinion Survey on Draft General Plan 2040 Heights and Land Use Designation and the Draft General Plan for several reasons.

- 1) The General Plan was produced using a population forecast that has been revised by the authoritative State Agency, the Calf Department of Finance. The revised forecast actually shows declines in San Mateo County population from now to 2060, with every year's forecast population lower than 2023. A copy of the forecast, which is publicly available online, is attached.
- 2) We question the validity of the on-line Voter Opinion Survey on the Draft General Plan 2040 Heights and Land Use Designation. ESM has requested information regarding the development of the questions, including asking for the Statement of Work that True North was under contract to perform, who wrote or influenced the development of the questions, and how they were reviewed. We did not receive a response and have escalated our request. The requests are attached.

We believe some of the questions were not subject to critical review for adherence to best practice design of survey questions to avoid inaccurate or skewed results. The development of survey questions is a science and should be insulated from bias on the part of the authors or those contracting for the survey.

- 3) ESM believes that the development of the Draft General Plan has been subject to the publicly announced demands contained in the agendas of activist groups. We have observed members of activist groups, including probable lobbyists, attempting to marginalize and minimize the voices of San Mateo residents who oppose parts of their agendas.

ESM has received a copy of an email for YIMBY Action intended for city commissioners and elected officials, inviting them to participate in the organization's Local Government Alliance. Their stated goal is to implant activists into city leadership. They have succeeded in doing so. We believe San Mateo's Planning Commission is an example. A copy of the email is attached. The influence of activists on the Draft General Plan must be considered – their loud demands are drowning out what residents are stating.

We therefore ask the council to:

- a. Have the Draft General Plan re-evaluated using the updated population forecasts.
- b. Cause the suspension of any use of the survey results until it can be independently determined the methodology meets best practices.
- c. Determine the effect of conflicts of interest by activists, or those aligned with the activist groups' agendas, within our city government on the Draft General Plan development.

We believe that if the city had adequate, clearly defined, and enforceable standards of ethical conduct these kinds of issues would simply not rise to this high level of concern.

Regards,

Dave Cohen, President/CEO

Ethics San Mateo, A California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation

DEDICATED TO TRUTH, TRANSPARENCY AND ETHICAL CONDUCT IN CITY GOVERNMENT

