

From: I watanuki [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2024 4:12 PM
To: City Council (San Mateo) <CityCouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>
Cc: [REDACTED] Patrice Olds <polds@cityofsanmateo.org>
Subject: Comments for 3-18-24 - 2040 General Plan EIR

March 18, 2024

Mayor Diaz Nash and Members of the City Council,

On December 26, the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House Historic District (YYH Historic District) at 1007 East 5th Avenue was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (National Register Reference No. 100009653). It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criteria A and B in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Asian (Japanese) and Social History: Women's History for its association with Yoshiko Yamanouchi, a member of the pioneer Issei generation who was a leader the San Mateo Japanese American Community. Additionally, it meets the Asian Americans and Pacific Islander in California, 1850 -1970 National Register Multiple Property Submission Registration Requirements for Property Types Associated with Prominent Persons in Asian American History and for Property Types associated with Community Servicing Organizations. There are 9 contributing resources on the property. These include the House, Entrance Gateway and Fence, a Storage and Pump House, the Patio and Swimming Pool, the West Side Garden, a Japanese Style Hill-And-Pond Garden, the Katsura Building, the Katsura Walkway, and the Katsura Garden. Each contribute to the historical significance and integrity of the property.

The City of San Mateo states on their website: The determination of eligibility or listing for the National Register or California Register results in legal protections for the property or district. For example, environmental review may be required under CEQA if a project may cause a substantial adverse change to historic resources through demolition or alteration.

- A. The EIR fails to identify, analyze, and mitigate the significant impacts to the YYH Historic District from the General Plan's increased traffic noise, vibration, and particulate emissions.
- B. These traffic impacts have and will significantly affect the physical structures and gardens of the historic district, as demonstrated in the attachments.
- C. The City did not consider or analyze the feasible traffic impact mitigation of designating R2 Housing instead of the more impactful Service Commercial / Light Manufacturing.
- D. The City should consider the following mitigation measures to reduce the effects to the YYH Historic District:
 - a. Construct the sound wall with thick plantings along S Humboldt where the turn lane has been extended by the City. Do not remove 117 ft of RPPP parking on S. Humboldt Street. Install the traffic circles / speed humps on 5th and 9th Avenue (S Delaware to S Amphlett), and S Humboldt now to reduce the current and future cut-through traffic surrounding the historic resource. 5 ton load limit signs to limit the size of trucks making deliveries to S Amphlett and cutting through the neighborhood.
 - b. Reroute construction traffic west of railroad to use El Camino Real, and Interstate 92 to 101 to reduce the increased dust, air particulates, noise, vibrations to Equity Priority Neighborhoods and the YYH Historic District.

- c. Designating R2 or other non-truck land-uses should be considered along S Amphlett to reduce the impacts of diesel particulates, truck noise, tree damages to the YYH Historic District.

1. The Historic Preservation Ordinance indicates a resolution is needed for the City to recognize the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House as a historic resource and for it to be subject to the Historic Preservation Ordinance in San Mateo.

2. The 2040 Draft EIR fails to identify, analyze, and mitigate the direct and indirect impacts of General Plan cumulative traffic and air pollution on the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House. The EIR fails to analyze the cumulative truck impacts from the Service Commercial / Light Manufacturing businesses on S Amphlett using S Humboldt to 5th Avenue. The General Plan implementation will significantly damage the physical structures of the District and significantly affect the feeling of calmness and serenity at the property. There is the Katsura Building, Katsura Garden on S Humboldt, the West Side Garden at the corner of Humboldt and 5th Avenue, and the Hill and Pond Japanese Style Garden on 5th Avenue. In the front Muromachi Garden there are boulders that have come loose and have fallen into pond from the vibrations of the large trucks using 5th Avenue to S Amphlett and back to 101 North. We have had to had them re-cemented around the pond. The 7,000 gallon pond is very fragile and was built 66 years ago and we do not want cracks to develop in the pond and leak.

As such, you cannot approve the EIR as written and need to study these impacts, that have been unaddressed.

Exhibit #1 shows the damages from truck vibrations and soot particulates on the interior Katsura fences with the current truck impacts along S Amphlett. Exhibit #2 shows the truck damages to all the Chinese Tallow street trees along S. Humboldt. These current and future significant truck impacts were not identified, analyzed in the EIR. The construction truck traffic along 3rd and 4th Avenues also brings more cumulative impacts of air pollution. This combination along with Service Commercial and Light Manufacturing trucks traffic was not fully analyzed. Alternate construction routes using 9th Avenue to El Camino Real have been raised at Planning Commission meetings for Downtown Projects multiple times but never explored by the Public Works Department. The same construction routes are used through 3rd and 4th Avenues which bring further cumulatively significant truck pollution impacts to the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House and residential homes along 3rd and 4th Avenues. The truck route for construction trucks should be on State Highways like El Camino Real and Interstate 92 to Highway 101.

3. We have offered suggestions for designating R2 Housing instead of the more impactful Service Commercial / Light Manufacturing, and adaptive re-use of buildings for office start-ups or non-profits to reduce truck impacts. While housing has been discouraged because of the pollution impacts along S Amphlett, more Housing is being proposed at 1650 - 1730 S Amphlett along 101. Concar Passages and the Fish Market projects are also being built next to Interstate 92. Arbor Rose was built with the existing 9 ft sound wall with specialized windows and air filtration systems.

4. The EIR fails to address the cumulate impacts of all the different projects that have been approved in the Downtown to date.

The Yoshiko Yamanouchi House needs mitigation from the current and future traffic impacts with an extension of the current wall along S Humboldt. The current wall is only 71 ft and the turn lane of cars queuing up is 228 ft during peak pm hours. There are pictures of the back-up of traffic on 5th Avenue and S Humboldt from 4th Ave to 7th Avenue. See Exhibits # 3, 4, 5, 6. As such, there is sufficient evidence in the record that demonstrate these impacts, which have not been addressed, making the DEIR insufficient.

The addition of traffic calming along 5th Avenue (S Delaware to S Amphlett), S. Humboldt (4th Avenue to 9th Avenue) and 9th Avenue (S Delaware to S Amphlett) can reduce the cut-through traffic impacts and diesel soot, truck vibrations, and noise. We need 5 ton load limit signs on S. Humboldt and 5th Avenue and specific corners to limit the size of the trucks to S. Amphlett. The reliance on VMT in the general plan is flawed and does not measure the PM traffic impacts accurately. Laurie - can you point to evidence showing this.

5. The 2040 General Plan has reclassified 5th Avenue (which was a Local street) and 9th Avenue (which was a Collector) to Minor Arterials. This new reclassification to Minor Arterial will bring 3,000- 14,000 ADT through 3 streets which are 5th Avenue, S Humboldt and 9th Avenue; these streets surround the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House. This reclassification to Minor Arterials in the 2040 EIR will bring more traffic impacts to the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House. The new Minor Arterial and Major Collector classifications are not recognized in the current Neighborhood Traffic Management Plan (NTMP) for traffic calming devices to reduce cut-through traffic. The 2040 General Plan's recommendation to upgrade 5th and 9th Avenue is flawed since more traffic will be pushed through if a street has been reclassified to a Major Collector or Minor Arterial. There is insufficient evidence supporting the reclassification by the City.

STREET RECLASSIFICATION IS A LONG PROCESS

The Minor Arterials, Major Collectors, and Emergency Routes need to be added to the current NTMP. A faster methodology needs to be developed to reduce cut-through traffic and that plan is not identified or analyzed in the current 2040 General Plan.

Public Works has to submit new speeds and new ADT numbers to Caltrans to justify reclassification from Minor Arterials to Collectors. By waiting until the end of 2024 to submit new traffic and speeds, we may lose our ability to reclassify our streets to Collectors. Caltrans also has to recognize San Mateo's new Complete Streets Plan. The Central Neighborhood has requested the street reclassifications be returned back to non-arterials to reduce the future traffic impacts and to include traffic calming on the Major Collectors, Minor Arterials and Emergency Routes into the NTMP. There was a lack of analysis in the General Plan to explain the street reclassification process and how the YYH Historic District would be protected from the future traffic impacts. This reclassification of 5th and 9th Avenues and S Humboldt to Minor Arterials will generate more traffic in the future and that remediation is not currently available in the NTMP. Therefore, the Council does not have the proper evidence or information needed to make the decision to approve the DEIR.

THE LONG HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS IN THE EQUITY-PRIORITY CENTRAL NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE 2040 EIR ADDS MORE CUMULATIVE IMPACTS.

On August 2, 1991, a suit was filed challenging the decision to certify the Final EIR to and approve the improvements to the Third Avenue /101 Interchange and the Replacement of the Humboldt Bridge. The case was settled and in 1995, and the City built a sound wall around the property at 1007 East 5th Avenue along 4th Avenue (a lane was added) and a short section along S Humboldt for the turn lane to 101 South,

On May 26, 2009, a second suit was filed against the proposed reclassification of 5th Avenue to Collector between S Humboldt and S Amphlett and a proposed truck route on S Humboldt from 4th to 5th Avenues, and on 5th Avenue between S Humboldt and S Amphlett. We were concerned about more large truck impacts going to S Amphlett and the difficulty of access from 101.

That lawsuit was settled and 5th Avenue has remained a local street and was not reclassified to Collector. After many Public Work hearings, the City Council decided there would be no truck routes on 5th Avenue, S Humboldt, or 9th Avenue.

The City has recently removed more parking against the east side of the YYH Historic District for the 228 ft Humboldt Street Bike Lane from 4th to 5th Avenues and increased the right turn lane along S Humboldt to about 109 ft. A total of 10 more parking spaces were removed on both sides of the street for the new Humboldt Street Bike Lanes. Today, the vehicles start queuing on Humboldt from the corner of 4th Avenue to 5th Avenue next to the Historic Site during PM peak hours, and the new bike lane can not be used during the PM peak hours. The bicyclists continue to ride on the sidewalk on the west side of the site. The traffic queues up next to the Historic Resource site about 228 ft during the PM peak hour (Exhibit 3). The traffic also queues up on 5th Avenue from S Humboldt to past S Grant Street (Exhibit 6). The traffic on S Humboldt further extends 3 blocks from 4th Avenue to 7th Avenue during PM peak hour (Exhibit 5). These photographs show the back-up of traffic on 2 streets with the current traffic in the evenings. This is LOS F as stated in the Kiku Crossing traffic study. The traffic also backs up on S Humboldt from 3rd Avenue for 4 blocks going north. The 2040 Final EIR does not identify or analyze the traffic impacts to the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House and the future impacts of the reclassification to Minor Arterials surrounding the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House. The significant impacts include noise effects on the quiet serenity and calmness associated with the Japanese style landscape and architecture. The EIR cannot be approved without considering these impacts.

A March 4, 2024 letter from Denise Bradley primary author for Yoshiko Yamanouchi House nomination, stated the lack of impact analysis on direct and indirect impacts on the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House for the General Plan 2040 & Climate Plan Update. The letter mentioned the impacts from the proposed increase in development in the surrounding area on the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House, the impacts from proposed increase in traffic, the closer proximity of traffic along S Humboldt street, and related truck vibrations and disposition of particulates.

A March 4, 2024 letter from the San Mateo Heritage Alliance, stated the EIR did not analyze direct and indirect effects on the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House, along with inadequate analysis of increased traffic and deposition of particulates.

Summary: The 2040 Final EIR does not analyze the current traffic and truck impacts to the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House, and the future impacts of the reclassification to Minor Arterials surrounding the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House. The City should not reclassify 5th Avenue and 9th Avenue to Minor Arterials in the 2040 General Plan. The traffic circles / speed humps should be quickly installed on 5th and 9th Avenues similar to the speed humps on Eldorado and Fremont, since 5th Avenue is a Bike Boulevard. The sound wall with plantings needs to be extended on S Humboldt Street at the Yoshiko Yamanouchi site for remediation. Other non-truck land-uses should be considered along S Amphlett, and alternate construction routes using state highways need to be used to reduce air pollution impacts.

Laurie Watanuki

Tamerasuchi, Yoshiko, House

San Mateo, California
County and State

Name of Property

San Mateo County Assessor's Map

Assessor's parcels outlined in red, map annotated by Denise Bradley



San Mateo County Assessor's Map



