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May 13, 2021

To: Mayor Rodriguez and San Mateo City Council members

Via email: citycouncil@cityofsanmateo.org

Subject: 2040 General Plan Draft Alternatives

Dear Mayor Rodriguez and Members of the San Mateo City Council,

Thank you for providing the opportunity for the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter Sustainable Land Use Committee (SLU) to provide input on the 2040 General Plan (GP).

We have reviewed the Draft Alternatives information and have the following comments for your consideration.

1. The alternatives need significantly higher density in the area within ½ mile of transit

Sierra Club has long maintained that increasing density within a half mile walking distance of transit corridors can actively direct a more equitable future and continue climate leadership by reducing VMT while still providing for our growing housing needs and for addressing affordability.

We will be evaluating the Preferred Alternative, in part, by using our Guidelines for Downtown and Station Area Plans

(<https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce-authors/u4142/D-SAP%20Guidelines%20Rev%2010-14-19.pdf>).

One of the key considerations in our Guidelines is the allowed density and required affordability. The current GP has very low density (50 units per acre) and our Guidelines encourage significantly higher numbers (~100 units per acre) along transit corridors. We would also like to see affordable housing, for all income levels, built into the alternatives.

In reviewing the Draft Alternatives, in most of them, Alternative C appears to come closest to higher density. But in some of the Study Areas, Alternative B has the highest density. It would be best if, when developing the Preferred Alternative, that the highest density alternative (B or C) for each Study Area be used.

2. Within 1/2 mile from transit, Single Family Zoning areas should also be considered for higher allowable density overlay given the proximity to transit.

By adding growth along transit corridors, including within adjacent single-family neighborhoods, we can provide the ridership to make transit viable and create a virtuous cycle of improved function and cost effectiveness. Land within this corridor should be converted to higher end uses that increase community benefits like affordable housing, increased density, clean air from reduced auto use and pedestrian safety.

3. Consider the 15-minute neighborhood concept within a 20-year plan

Areas outside of a half mile from transit, currently underserved by transit, should be strategically considered for nodes that allow commercial and mixed use using conditional use as a tool. The 15-minute neighborhood planning precept would create density of services and homes together and, over the 20-year plan period, allow for future transit system services to grow and service such density so as to allow residents improved access to services and to decrease future GHG creation and environmental impacts.

4. Resilience and Sea Level Rise Adaptation should be included in the plan

The [San Francisco Bay Shoreline Adaptation Atlas](#)¹ has identified the city's bay edge as having the characteristics that could benefit from nature-based approaches to adaptation to rising sea levels and increased near side flooding. While the opportunities are limited, they should be considered as part of the SLR adaption plan.

The May 13 - 27 Sierra Club webinar series "[Sea Level Rise: Why we need Nature-Based Adaptation](#)" provides much-needed information on what, where and how to implement these as well as how they are funded. We recommend this as a resource.

5. The GP needs to look to significantly increasing parks and open space

Given the need for more housing and therefore a higher density of housing, it is imperative to simultaneously increase the parks and open space available to the public. Creative approaches should be considered to accomplish this.

Our Green Streets/Green Corridors suggestions should be considered to help with this goal.

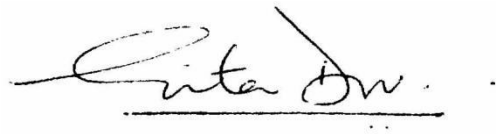
<https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce-authors/u4142/Green%20Streets%20Presentation%20-%201-20-21%20DC.pdf>

¹ [San Francisco Bay Shoreline Adaptation Atlas](#) See pages 171-172 for San Mateo

Also, in order that more open space and parks can be developed, it may be necessary that the allowable building heights and maximum density in San Mateo should be raised above the current 50-foot limit and 50 units per acre, where possible, and surface parking removed in favor of usable open space.

We ask that you consider this information as you consider the preferred alternative for the 2040 General Plan.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gita Dev", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Gita Dev, Co-chair

Sustainable Land Use Committee, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter (SCLP)

Cc Gladwyn d'Souza, Conservation Committee Co-chair, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter
James Eggers, Executive Director, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter