



**COMMUNITY  
CONVERSATIONS**  
HOUSING IN SAN MATEO

## Highlights from San Mateo's April 27, 2019 Community Conversation

On April 27, 2019 over 120 community members, council members and planning commissioners came together at San Mateo High School for a discussion about housing in San Mateo. This community conversation was the first of two gatherings jointly planned and sponsored by the City of San Mateo, Common Knowledge, and Home for All, a community collaborative addressing housing challenges in San Mateo County.

A key goal of these gatherings is to help create a shared understanding of how housing challenges affect the entire community. Feedback from these community conversations will also help inform the City's ongoing work on policies and programs to address housing affordability and availability in San Mateo. In her opening remarks, Mayor Diane Papan explained the reason for the meeting is to help community members connect with each other in a welcoming environment, and have an open dialogue about the future of San Mateo. Two short presentations set the framework for facilitated discussions at 15 tables, some of which were facilitated in both English and Spanish. Spanish speakers received a warm welcome from bilingual staff at the beginning and listened to the presentations through an interpreter. Councilmembers, Planning Commissioners, and City staff attended as listeners.



The meeting design was based on community engagement best practices, which Home for All is working to implement in San Mateo County. The City's meeting also builds on several years of previous community input including the 2015 Housing Task Force and recent workshops on the General Plan 2040 update. A second

community conversation on May 18 will build upon what community members shared both at the April 27 discussion and during listening sessions that occurred in the weeks leading up to the event.

Prior to the April 27 meeting, City staff conducted extensive community outreach interviewing over 100 people throughout San Mateo, including people from diverse backgrounds and those who have not participated in previous conversations hosted by the City.

Of the 109 discussion participants who attended on April 27, about 40 percent indicated they were new to City discussions and 40 percent had experience with housing-related policies and programs.

During the outreach process, City staff interviewed community members at community events, train stations, recreation centers, eateries, fitness centers and the Main Library. They also connected with business representatives and employees who both lived in and outside of San Mateo. Conversations also occurred with representatives from school districts and neighborhood associations. In these listening sessions, the most prevalent concerns were related to the increasing cost of living in San Mateo, people's inability to purchase homes, traffic impacts, seeing friends and families move away, and concern for being able to stay in the area over the long term.

This meeting summary includes input from the following sources:

- Perspectives and comments shared during the City's multi-week outreach effort
- Emails received prior to the meeting from people who could not attend
- Table discussion notes from the 15 table facilitators
- Individual input and feedback forms from 84 out of 109 discussion participants on April 27

## **Presentation & Discussion #1: Hopes & Concerns for Housing in San Mateo**

City Housing Specialist Scott Prowse provided an [opening presentation](#) about the regional housing shortage facing San Mateo and all cities in San Mateo County. Attendees also heard background information on local demographics, including who lives or works in San Mateo, as well as the current housing supply. Participants then contributed to a first round of table discussions featuring these questions:

1. How does the issue of housing affect you and the people you know in San Mateo?
2. As we think about San Mateo's future, what kind of community do you want to live in? Why is that important to you?

The table discussions and report outs from table facilitators indicated a wide range of challenges associated with how housing affordability and availability is impacting the quality of life in San Mateo. Many also appreciated the City's diversity, sense of community, thriving downtown, and proximity to services and recreation options. While



**Several of my family members  
have had to leave San Mateo  
because of the high cost of  
housing.**



highlighting a rich range of personal experiences, a common theme among report outs was a **shared hope for sustaining the quality of life in San Mateo as the city grows.**

The following are highlights of participants' comments and representative quotes:

### How housing is affecting San Mateo

- Housing costs that are deeply affecting **quality of life** and wages are not keeping pace with the cost of living, especially for service workers and those making minimum wage
- **More affordable housing options** are needed to accommodate **all stages of life and all income levels**
- The need for **infrastructure improvements** (transportation, water, sewer, maintenance of existing housing) to accommodate a **growing population**
  - More public **transportation** options, including more frequency and capacity of transit
  - Concern for **traffic and parking** impacts stemming from higher density
- Seeing friends and family move away
- "Lack of affordable housing is keeping our school district from attracting and retaining quality teachers, and this affects the quality and consistency of our students' education"

### Hopes and concerns for the future of San Mateo

- Sustaining and improving the existing **quality of life, safety, and sense of community**
- Prioritize **preventing displacement of those who presently live in San Mateo**
  - Provide incentives for workers in San Mateo to qualify for subsidized housing
- Maintaining the **rich diversity** of San Mateo
- Designing a **walkable community with plenty of transit options**
- Concern for the **people who are forced to move away**
  - Staff retention and high turnover for small businesses and schools
  - As children grow, they cannot afford to live here
- Enthusiasm for a community with a **mix of housing options** that support housing **for all stages of life**, especially children and seniors aging in place



A safe and calm community with sufficient opportunities, assistance, and education. ”

## **Presentation & Discussion #2: Options to Help the Community Thrive**

The second presentation by San Mateo's Housing Manager Sandra Council provided an overview of the values and guiding principles of the City's work. She explained how these Community Conversations build on what was heard from the community about housing during recent General Plan workshops. Providing a diversity of housing types to meet the needs of all community members, maintaining neighborhood character and quality, and ensuring all new housing is developed sustainably were identified as guiding principles for housing development in San Mateo. Ways to address housing availability in San Mateo were also presented and included building transit-oriented development, redeveloping public-owned properties, collecting funds for affordable housing, and other strategies.



During the second discussion, community participants were asked to consider these questions:

1. Which of these housing options seem promising based on our community's needs? Are any concerns coming up for you?
2. How can our community work together to address our housing needs?

The responses, summarized below, are helping to shape a second community conversation on May 18 that will offer the community an opportunity to further learn about and discuss potential housing options.

#### Housing options favored to help meet community needs

- **More affordable housing options** that accommodate all stages of life and all income levels
  - Increasing affordable housing requirements for developers (more than the current 10 percent) and increasing the availability of Below Market Rate units
- Interest in exploring and implementing mixed-use development, housing near transit, additional dwelling units (ADUs), and shared housing
- Providing opportunities to assist **existing San Mateo residents** to remain in our community
- Smart growth with **more public transit options and more open space** for the community to connect
- The need to assess **parking and traffic issues** associated with higher density and ADUs

#### Working together to address housing needs

- More resources and information on how to find affordable housing and the city's current housing efforts
- Hope for a **coordinated, regional and long-term approach** to close the jobs-housing imbalance while maintaining local control
- Including **large employers and businesses in finding solutions**
- Support for landlords to make improvements to maintain their properties without displacing renters
- Continued discussions and events about housing to engage residents in understanding and providing input on potential solutions and to further **broaden participation** in these discussions
- **Working together** as a community to seek solutions

Everyone in San Mateo is encouraged to attend and help spread the word about the next Community Conversation on Saturday, May 18, 2019. The May 18 meeting will be designed so that new participants can easily join the conversation, while also building on the first meeting and work that has been done in the past.

#### SAVE THE DATE

### Community Conversations: Housing in San Mateo

**Saturday, May 18 | Hillsdale High School | 3115 Del Monte St.**

**9:00 a.m. Breakfast | 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Community Conversation**

For more information, please contact the City's Housing Division at [housing@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:housing@cityofsanmateo.org). We welcome your ideas about how to get more people engaged in this conversation.

