

MEMORANDUM

DATE July 30, 2021
TO City Council
FROM Joanna Jansen and Carey Stone, PlaceWorks
SUBJECT Summary the Planning Commission Input on the Draft Alternatives

This memorandum summarizes the input received during the Planning Commission meeting on July 27, 2021. At this meeting, the Planning Commission were asked to focus on two questions:

- Is this the right range of alternative scenarios?
- Are there ideas missing that you would like to see evaluated?

The July 27, 2021 Planning Commission meeting was one step in a series of community events to confirm we are considering a sufficient range of alternatives before the General Plan team conducts an in-depth evaluation to compare the pros, cons, and outcomes of each alternative on housing, character, traffic, public services, health and equity, environmental sustainability, City's fiscal health, conformance with applicable state laws, and other topics.

This synopsis focuses on comments from the Planning Commissioners and public that responded to the above questions and suggested new ideas not captured in any of the draft alternatives. It does not summarize general expressions of support for or dislike of a given alternative, since the goal of collecting feedback from this meeting was to refine the range of alternatives for evaluation rather than to choose among them.

The July 27, 2021 Planning Commission meeting materials and meeting recordings can be found at:

<https://strivesanmateo.org/city-council-planning-commission-meetings/>

Or at this dedicated link:

<https://sanmateo.primegov.com/Portal/Meeting?compiledMeetingDocumentFileId=14691>

General Comments on the Land Use Alternatives

The majority of the Planning Commission's discussion focused on overall comments on the Alternatives rather than specific comments on individual Study Areas.

New ideas suggested for all study areas:

- Add more High Density Residential in Alternative C for all study areas to ensure there is sufficient housing to meet the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) numbers through 2040.

- Interest in a mid-range growth alternative, similar to B, that concentrates growth along corridors, but also recognizing that increasing the alternatives from three to four may make the process more complicated.
- Include an alternative that maximizes density through increasing the Residential High and Mixed Use High designations in transit-oriented development areas near the Caltrain stations.
- Revise Alternative A for all study areas to result in lower, more moderate numbers for housing, population, and jobs.
- Ensure that privately-owned public open spaces would be truly open to the public.

Comments on housing:

- Affordable housing should be built throughout San Mateo, in all neighborhoods, including single-family neighborhoods. Create subsidized inclusive housing to ensure low-income individuals and families have a place to live in San Mateo.
- Maintain single-family residential zones as-is. People in San Mateo tend to want to live in single-family homes. They may not want to live in high-density housing. Single-family neighborhoods represent places of respite and are an appropriate part of having a variety of housing types in the city. Single-family zoning is not a roadblock to affordable housing.
- New construction is expensive, and residential units in these new buildings will not be affordable.
- If San Mateo's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) in future Housing Element cycles is similar to the most recent 6th cycle RHNA, the City could need to plan for tens of thousands of new units by the 8th cycle.
- Millennials and younger people will seek out a transit-oriented, walkable lifestyle.
- Include below market rate units within mixed use designations.
- A variety of housing types are needed in all neighborhoods to address the housing shortage.

Comments on the environment:

- Climate change is a major issue that should be considered. The City of San Mateo is at great risk of flooding and sea level rise during the life of this General Plan, and the people in San Mateo who are least resourced could lose their homes forever.
- Review the study areas and understand what the social, environmental and natural risks are.

Other comments:

- Given retail trends, there may not be future demand to support extensive mixed-use development because people buy online instead of locally.
- Improve outreach to underrepresented groups, especially renters.
- Local services such as supermarkets, pharmacies, and hardware stores should be within a 20-minute walking distance of most homes to create a livable city.
- Consider the probability of redevelopment of these sites and ensure we are taking a data-driven approach when considering which sites will be redeveloped.
- Tie housing to commercial development to make sure they are built at the same time.
- Ensure the infrastructure needs for each alternative is considered.

- Consider how decisions by other neighboring cities might affect development in San Mateo, especially in planning for evacuation routes and public safety.
- Decisions about the preferred scenario should consider social and environmental justice issues.
- Opposition to growth is due to residents feeling that the city is already too full, especially with regard to traffic.
- Define the term “character” in the evaluation and ensure the word “character” is not code for policies that are exclusive and prejudiced against specific groups of people.
- Consider the impacts of shadows on homes and green spaces.

Draft Circulation Alternatives

New ideas suggested for the Draft Circulation Alternatives:

- Add circulation improvements on the northeast side of study area 6 and 7.
- Incorporate traffic calming measures near all freeway on- and off-ramps.
- Add more pedestrian only streets downtown.
- Consider the accessible parking spaces in alternative C within downtown.

Circulation General Comments

- Rather than spending money on an autonomous vehicle shuttle, use those funds to improve bus infrastructure along El Camino Real.
- Bus speeds on El Camino Real are too slow, they should be improved.
- Consider how the circulation improvements will align with planned improvements in adjacent cities.
- Reduce vehicle use by considering Plan Bay Area 2040 vehicle reduction strategies, such as congestion pricing, car trip caps, and changing or eliminating parking requirements.
- Transportation demand strategies should be applied throughout San Mateo, not only around Caltrain stations.
- Provide transit passes to encourage transit use.
- Confirm that ADA parking would be accessible under Alternative C.

Study Areas 1 and 2

The Planning Commission did not suggest changes to Study Area 1 or Study Area 2.

Study Area 3

New ideas suggested for Study Area 3:

- Add a park near the City’s Corporation Yard on Pacific Boulevard.
- Should the two single-family islands along Palm, on each side of HWY 92 be excluded from this study area?

Study Area 4

New ideas suggested for Study Area 4:

- Include an alternative that designates properties within 1,000 feet of the Caltrain station as Mixed Use High to concentrate growth around the B Street corridor.
- Take the Residential Low Density designation on the west side of Delaware Street, north of 5th Avenue and south of 4th Avenue, and incorporate it into the other two alternatives.
- Expand the study area south on South Amphlett between 5th Avenue and 9th Avenue. Designate this area as Residential Low Density.

Other comments on Study Area 4:

- Historic buildings should be exempt.
- Provide public Wi-Fi downtown.

Study Area 5

New ideas suggested for Study Area 5:

- Add open space.

Study Area 6

New ideas suggested for Study Area 6:

- Add open space.

Study Areas 7 and 8

The Planning Commission did not suggest changes to Study Area 7 or Study Area 8.

Study Area 9

New ideas suggested for Study Area 9:

- Add open space.

Study Area 10

New ideas suggested for Study Area 10:

- Add more housing.
- Add open space areas.