



CITY OF SAN MATEO

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Agenda Report

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TO: City Council
FROM: Drew Corbett, City Manager
PREPARED BY: Community Development Department
MEETING DATE: May 17, 2021
SUBJECT:
General Plan and Housing Element – Update

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive an informational update on the General Plan and Housing Element update efforts and provide direction on next steps for door-to-door outreach.

BACKGROUND:

The General Plan Update 2040 (GPU) was initiated in Fall 2018 and began with a series of visioning workshops and community meetings. In April 2019, the scope of work was modified to provide more opportunities for community outreach and include additional tools for engagement. From April 2019 through March 2020, significant progress was made on the GPU project. Then, in early March 2020, the San Mateo County Health Officer began issuing Shelter-in-Place (SIP) orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and City staff canceled all remaining in-person community outreach events scheduled in March and beyond.

On June 15, 2020, the City Council directed staff to pause outreach activities until after the November election due to two competing land use related ballot measures, the SIP, and a variety of external factors that could create public confusion or require duplication of work. On August 17, 2020, staff returned to Council with a revised project schedule, virtual outreach plan, scope of work, and related project revisions. At the same time, the City entered into an agreement with a consultant to commence work on the Housing Element of the General Plan and adjusted the General Plan scope to include the environmental review associated with that. While outreach activities were postponed, the GPU team reversed the order of tasks to prioritize non-outreach related tasks and made substantial progress on the internal review and evaluation of the Goals and Policies of the General Plan.

In late 2020, San Mateo voters passed Measure Y, which limits building height and density of new developments in the City through 2030. Additionally, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) released the draft Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) numbers, which indicate San Mateo will need to provide a clear path forward for the development of approximately 7,000 new housing units at prescribed affordability levels, plus a buffer in case some allocated sites are ultimately developed without housing or without the housing at the prescribed affordability level.

At the January 19, 2021 meeting, staff provided an update to the City Council and asked for guidance on next steps. The Council directed staff to resume General Plan community outreach activities and kick off the Housing Element Update effort. The remainder of this report provides an overview of the progress made on each of those components since the January 19, 2021 meeting and provides an overview of next steps in this process.

Outreach Activities

Over the last several months, consultants and staff have hosted multiple virtual events and informational presentations on

both the General Plan Update and the Housing Element. This has included both standalone events open to all members of the public, as well as presentations to existing groups or organizations at their regular meetings. Staff continues to field requests from community organizations to provide an overview of the General Plan Update process and will make every effort to accommodate as many as possible. **Table 1** below provides a summary of recent outreach activities, including the subject matter and audience for each:

Table 1: Summary of 2021 Outreach Events to Date		
Date	Organization/Audience	Subject
Friday, February 12, 2021	Rotary Sunshine	Introduction to General Plan
Thursday, March 18, 2021	San Mateo United Homeowners Association (SMUHA)	Introduction to General Plan
Wednesday, March 24, 2021	San Mateo Community	Introduction to General Plan
Thursday, March 25, 2021	Home Association of North Central San Mateo (HANCSM)	Introduction to General Plan
Saturday, March 27, 2021	San Mateo Community	Introduction to General Plan
Tuesday, March 30, 2021	Chamber of Commerce	Introduction to General Plan
Tuesday, March 30, 2021	San Mateo Community	Introduction to Housing Element (co-hosted with 21 Elements)
Saturday, April 3, 2021	San Mateo Community	Introduction to Housing Element (co-hosted with 21 Elements)
Wednesday, April 7, 2021	One San Mateo	Introduction to General Plan
Saturday, April 10, 2021	San Mateo Community	Introduction to General Plan (Spanish)
Tuesday, April 13, 2021	Downtown San Mateo Business Association (DSMA)	Introduction to General Plan
Thursday, April 15, 2021	San Mateo Community	Land Use Alternatives Workshop
Saturday, April 17, 2021	San Mateo Community	Land Use Alternatives Workshop
Tuesday, May 4, 2021	San Mateo Community	Introduction to Housing Element (co-hosted with 21 Elements)

To drive participation at these meetings and provide general information about the GPU, staff utilized social media, flyers, a number of email listservs, and enlisted the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center (PCRC) staff in an effort to engage San Mateo’s Spanish speaking community members. In addition, staff took the following additional steps to increase participation at the Introduction to Housing Element and Land Use Alternatives Workshops:

- Placed ads in both the print and online versions of the *San Mateo Daily Journal* with the meeting dates and times with a link to register
- Sent a mailer to more than 50,000 addresses in San Mateo with basic information about the General Plan and the specific details for the land use and housing element meetings
- Distributed flyers and event-specific information directly to members of the Spanish-speaking community

Aside from the April 10 Spanish language event that was unattended, the above events were generally well-attended, showing a continued interest in the General Plan. Several community members who have been active in the process since the beginning attended these workshops, but polling during the meetings also indicated many attendees were new to the General Plan process. Nearly half (49%) of respondents in the Introduction to the General Plan and Land Use Alternatives workshops indicated it was their first time joining a General Plan event. Staff is encouraged by this development but recognizes more work is needed to further broaden participation and representation of the San Mateo community.

Planning the Future of San Mateo and Synthesizing Feedback

San Mateo is a diverse community and that diversity is reflected in the opinions staff has heard about how San Mateo should change over the next 20 years. The community feedback received to date shows that community members care deeply about San Mateo, but often have differing ideas about how to best plan for the future. However, as we continue this multiyear community planning effort to update the General Plan, we are also reminded that community members share many common goals. Through multiple workshops and meetings, community input has helped to shape the shared

vision for the future reflected in the General Plan Vision Statement: “San Mateo is a vibrant, livable, and healthy community that respects the quality of its neighborhoods, fosters a flourishing economy, is committed to equity, and is a leader in environmental sustainability.” This Vision reflects the community’s identified Values of diversity, balance, inclusivity, prosperity and resiliency. The Vision and Values are what guide the General Plan and Housing Element update process - from outreach to synthesizing feedback to recommending next steps. In that regard, inclusivity and education remain a top priority for the City.

Public engagement activities, both online and in-person, will continue to occur as allowed in English and Spanish. PCRC staff will continue to assist the City in our efforts to refine messaging and bring new members of the community into the GPU conversation, to ensure as many voices as possible are heard. We have heard that the residents of San Mateo share many of the same goals for the City’s future, and staff and consultants will continue to work with residents to find the common ground while listening to all of our community’s diverse perspectives. As we continue with community engagement and education, it is important to focus on shared goals and work together to address shared challenges.

Housing Element Update

Staff has been working to develop a draft inventory of sites that could accommodate the preliminary Regional Housing Needs Allocation of approximately 7,100 units plus a buffer of at least 15-30%, as per the State’s guidance. In addition, staff has been analyzing whether the RHNA allocation plus the buffer could largely be accommodated within the General Plan Study Areas and within the confines of Measure Y.

At this time, staff has identified capacity for approximately 10,400 units within the existing Study Areas and within the parameters of Measure Y. This results in a buffer of about 47%, which may be further refined through the ongoing Housing Element process and is subject to approval by the State. It should be noted that there will continue to be development outside of the Study Areas, including development of Accessory Dwelling Units. An estimate of such development has not yet been made but will be included in the final sites inventory.

The next step in the process is to determine how the inventory can accommodate the RHNA allocation according to income. More than half of the City’s RHNA is allocated to lower-income units: 26% for very low-income, 15% for low income, and 17% moderate income. Because of new rules in the Housing Accountability Act’s “No Net Loss” provisions (SB 166 of 2017), the land inventory and site identification programs in the Housing Element must always include sufficient sites to accommodate the unmet RHNA, in terms of the number of housing units, as well as the level of affordability. When a site identified in the Element as available for the development of housing to accommodate the lower-income portion of the RHNA, but is actually developed at a higher income level, the locality must either (1) identify and rezone, if necessary, an adequate substitute site, or (2) demonstrate that the land inventory already contains an adequate substitute site. An adequate buffer will be critical to ensure that the City complies with these new provisions of State law.

Next Steps:

The General Plan and Housing Element teams are working on additional public engagement as follows:

- Tuesday, May 18, 2021 – Land Use Alternatives Workshop #4
- Targeted outreach to Latinx community and others
- General Plan Subcommittee meeting (estimated June 2021)
- Planning Commission meeting (estimated July 2021)
- City Council meeting (estimated July or August 2021)
- Statistically significant survey (projected late 2021/early 2022)

Staff is exploring a variety of additional outreach options such as creating short educational videos and using additional messaging platforms, and continues to welcome new ideas. Staff was asked by Council to incorporate door-to-door outreach and engagement, with Council and possibly volunteer assistance and staff support, at its goal-setting workshops earlier this year. Staff is seeking further Council direction in order to ensure we understand the goals of this type of engagement and how it may impact the overall GPU process and schedule so we can plan for how best to support this effort. Staff has identified three potential approaches to door-to-door outreach.

Potential Outreach Approaches

Informational: If the door-to-door outreach is intended to educate/inform the public in an effort to increase participation, there are a variety of ways in which this can be accomplished. For instance, informational flyers or door hangers could be used for this purpose. This type of outreach would supplement the mailer mentioned above that was distributed in March and would not entail personal interaction with the community. If a conversation is desired, staff could help develop a script for Councilmembers/volunteers to use to educate community members. However, Councilmembers/volunteers would need to take care to ensure consistent, neutral, informational, messaging and that they could respond to inquiries about the GPU and other topics that may come up. Staff support would be needed to develop distribution materials and prepare and provide ongoing support to Councilmembers/volunteers for any conversations that may take place.

Input Gathering: If the goal is to solicit input from the community at large, this would need to be carefully considered and planned, as the collection and evaluation of comments received needs to be consistent throughout the process to ensure all input is handled in the same manner. Another thing to consider is that conducting meaningful outreach is most effective when participants receive consistent messaging and controls are in place to ensure all are receiving the same information in a neutral manner. This may be difficult to control with the use of volunteers who may already have opinions on the GPU. Also, the messenger would need to be well versed enough on the GPU and City operations to field inquiries, some of which may be unexpected and/or off-topic. Outreach for input would necessitate a systematic approach as far as collecting and synthesizing the input received. This would be time and work intensive, would require PlaceWorks support, and may add to the overall cost and time of the GPU. If this is the direction to staff, we would need to return with details about potentially needed schedule and/or budget adjustments.

Targeted Outreach: If there is a desire to target segments of the community who have not presented a strong turnout in past GPU events, such as our Spanish speaking community members, a targeted outreach approach could be useful. Census data could be used to target specific areas for education and outreach. It has been posited to staff that perhaps reaching this segment of the community was accomplished, but that our messaging may not have been as effective as we had hoped at piquing interest and compelling participation. In that regard, it could be that providing more tailored information in a personal manner to a targeted audience would be effective at fostering greater participation. Staff could support this effort by identifying neighborhoods to target, developing distribution materials, preparing Councilmembers/volunteers for any conversations that may take place, and perhaps supplementing this outreach with staff supported pop-ups at key locations.

At this time, does Council wish to undertake:

1. City-wide informational canvassing effort;
2. City-wide canvassing for input; or,
3. A targeted approach in communities whose views we may be missing?

Following this meeting and Council direction on additional outreach, staff will work with the consultants to adjust the consultant contract and schedule as needed, and provide an update at a future City Council meeting.

BUDGET IMPACT:

There is no budgetary impact for receiving this informational update.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

The General Plan and Housing Element project update is not a project subject to CEQA, because it is an organizational or administrative activity that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5).)

NOTICE PROVIDED

All meeting noticing requirements were met.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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