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1. Comprehensive Zoning Code Update (Future Adoption)
   Online updates can be accessed here:
   https://strivesanmateo.org/zoning-code-update/

2. Ordinance 2025-05
   Online/searchable version of the Zoning Code can be accessed here:
   https://law.cityofsanmateo.org/us/ca/cities/san-mateo/code/27

3. Council Agenda Report (September 8, 2026) - Ordinance Introduction

4. Council Agenda Report (September 22, 2026) and Attachments - Ordinance Adoption

Ord. No. 2025-05. Zoning Code Amendments and Below Market Rate Program Update — Ordinance Adoption

WHEREAS, the State Housing Element Law (Government Code Section 65580 et seq.) requires that the City Council adopt a Housing Element for the 2023-2031 period to accommodate the City of San Mateo ("City") regional housing need allocation (RHNA) of 7,015 housing units; and

WHEREAS, on May 20, 2024, the City Council adopted a resolution to adopt the revised Housing Element of the General Plan for the period of 2023-2031 (Housing Element); and

WHEREAS, under Housing Element Goal 1 – Production and the Policies H1.3, H1.6, and H1.9, the City commits to reviewing and amending the City's Zoning Code to update the City's Inclusionary Housing requirements to allow for alternative compliance options to increase affordable housing production, update standards to support housing production, and create minimum residential densities for mixed-use projects; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the San Mateo General Plan 2040 analyzed new residential development of up to 19,764 new housing units and growth around the City through 2040; and

WHEREAS, on March 18, 2024, at a duly noticed public hearing, the City Council certified the EIR for the San Mateo General Plan 2040, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, together with related State implementation guidelines promulgated thereunder (CEQA); and

WHEREAS, on May 13, 2025, the Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing, received all written and oral public comments, and recommended that the City Council approve the proposed ordinance to amend several Chapters of Title 27, Zoning, of the San Mateo Municipal Code to Implement the 2023-2031 San Mateo Housing Element (Sixth Housing Cycle); and

WHEREAS, on July 28th, 2025, at a duly noticed public hearing, the City Council adopted an ordinance to adopt the amendments to several Chapters of Title 27, Zoning, of the San Mateo Municipal Code to Implement the 2023-2031 San Mateo Housing Element (Sixth Housing Cycle).

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAN MATEO ORDAINS AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1.

Legislative Findings. At a duly noticed public hearing on July 28th, 2025, the City Council of the City of San Mateo reviewed and considered the accompanying staff report and attachments thereto, the exemption from environmental review, together with comments received during the public review process, and hereby finds and determines that the proposed ordinance is consistent with the adopted General Plan in that it supports the development of housing and achieves the General Plan's stated goals and policies.

Section 2.

Section 27.02.230 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is added to Chapter 27.02 as follows:

> ## 27.02.230 RESIDENTIAL MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.
>
> (a) Within a 1/2 mile radius of a Caltrain Station as shown on the General Plan Land Use Map, a mixed-use development project with a residential component that includes five or more residential units shall comply with the following minimum residential densities if the development project is within one of the following General Plan Land Use Designations. If the project area is within more than one General Plan Land Use Designations, the lowest density requirement applies.
>
> (1) Mixed-Use Low and Mixed-Use Medium I – 30 dwelling units per acre
>
> (2) Mixed-Use Medium II and Mixed-Use High – 50 dwelling units per acre
>
> (b) A mixed-use development project with a residential component that includes five or more residential units outside of a TOD area are required to comply with minimum residential densities when the development project is within one of the following General Plan Land Use Designations. If the project area is within more than one General Plan Land Use Designations, the lowest density requirement applies.
>
> (1) Mixed-Use Low – 10 dwelling units per acre
>
> (2) Mixed-Use Medium I – 15 dwelling units per acre
>
> (3) Mixed-Use Medium II – 30 dwelling units per acre

(4) Mixed-Use High – 50 dwelling units per acre

(c) The City Council may consider a request to reduce the required minimum residential density in a mixed-use development project with a residential component for a project that provides a greater percentage of affordable housing units than required by Section 27.16.050 Affordable Housing or by providing public community benefits.

Section 3.

Section 27.04.130 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.04.130 SITE PLAN AND ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW (SPAR).

(a) The following projects, as well as other projects that may be designated in this code, require a site plan and architectural review and no such project shall commence until the approval body has approved a planning application for site plan and architectural review: any building, new parking lot, fence over seven (7) feet in height, or an extension, alteration, or addition of or to an existing building or parking lot; historic buildings within the Downtown Specific Plan area as specified in Chapter 27.66. Single family and accessory buildings that conform to the standards contained in Chapter 27.18, or minor facade modifications as defined in Section 27.04.313, and which conform with Section 27.08.031, are exempt from this requirement, unless they are specifically designated by this section as requiring review. In making its review, the Zoning Administrator, Development Review Board, and Planning Commission shall be guided by the standards adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council. The application shall be approved if the Zoning Administrator or Commission finds all of the following to exist:

(1) The structures, site plan, and landscaping are in scale and harmonious with the character of the neighborhood;

(2) The development will not be detrimental to the harmonious and orderly growth of the City;

(3) The development will not impair the desirability of investment or occupation in the vicinity, and otherwise is in the best interests of the public health, safety, or welfare;

(4) The development meets all applicable standards as adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council, conforms with the General Plan, and will correct any violations of the

zoning ordinance, building code, or other municipal codes that exist on the site;

(5) The development will not adversely affect matters regarding police protection, crime prevention, and security.

(b) All buildings, structures, landscaping, and other establishments shall be constructed in accordance with the approved drawings.

(c) The City Council shall review and make the final determination on all buildings that exceed the height limit in the General Plan.

Section 4.

Subsection (d) of Section 27.06.050 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

(d) Site Plan and Architectural Review for buildings that exceed the height limit in the General Plan;

Section 5.

Section 27.08.035 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.08.035 COMPLETION OF PLANNING APPLICATION.

(a) A planning application is determined to be complete when all documents, reports, data, maps, fees, and other information prescribed in Section 27.08.010 are submitted and are determined to be adequate to allow the approval body to determine if the required findings can be made.

(b) For any application determined to be incomplete, an applicant may appeal the incompleteness determination to the Planning Commission within 14 days of the date of the incomplete letter. Any appeal shall be submitted in writing, and be accompanied by payment of the filing fee. Pursuant to California Government Code Section 65943, the Planning Commission shall make a final written determination on the appeal not later than 60 calendar days after receipt of the applicant's written appeal. The appeal process shall toll any timing requirements to resubmit incomplete application materials.

(c) The Zoning Administrator may close out an application, if information is requested in writing by the Zoning Administrator, and the information has not been submitted to the Zoning Administrator or the action has not occurred within 120 days. Applications which are closed out are considered to be withdrawn and any unspent fees from the application will be refunded. An applicant for a housing development project, as defined in California Government Code Section 65905.5(b)(3) shall follow timelines and provisions outlined in California Government Code Section 65941.1 to maintain preliminary application eligibility.

(d) The Zoning Administrator's action may be appealed to the Planning Commission within ten (10) days of the Zoning Administrator's action closing out an application, or of determining that a new planning application is required.

Section 6.

Section 27.08.085 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.08.085 PLANNING APPROVAL EXPIRATION.

Final approval of a planning application shall expire two years from the date of approval, with the following exceptions:

(a) A completed building permit application is filed before the expiration date and a building permit is issued prior to or within six months after the two year expiration date.

(b) The property within two years has been used in conformance with the final order.

(c) Approvals granted to the City of San Mateo shall be in force and effect for such time period as funds are budgeted in whole or in part for the project by the City or Agency.

(d) Projects for which an extension has been obtained in accordance with Section 27.08.087 below.

Section 7.

Section 27.08.087 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.08.087 PLANNING APPROVAL EXTENSION.

The following extensions to planning approvals are available:

(a) Extensions required by state or federal law. Where state or federal law requires that extension of a planning approval be considered, the Zoning Administrator shall approve an extension if they find that the project complies with all applicable zoning, planning, and general plan regulations and conditions.

(b) City extensions. The Zoning Administrator may approve up to two extensions of a planning approval, each for up to two years, subject to the following provisions:

(1) Application required. To apply for a planning approval extension, an applicant must submit the application prior to the expiration date of the planning approval, pay the application fee and provide the reason(s) for the extension request.

(2) Findings required. To approve a time extension, the Zoning Administrator must find all of the following:

(A) The approved project is still consistent with the City's General Plan; and

(B) The approved project is still consistent with the City's Zoning Ordinance; and

(C) The extension will not result in any new environmental impacts or an increase in severity of previously identified environmental impacts.

(c) Notice of Zoning Administrator Decision on Extension. Notice will be provided to the neighborhood by the same process followed for the original project approval. Notice will also be provided to the Planning Commission and City Council within ten days of the Zoning Administrator's decision.

(d) Appeals. The decision of the Zoning Administrator is appealable to the Planning Commission within ten days of the Zoning Administrator's decision by filing a written appeal with the Planning Division and payment of applicable fees. When an appeal is filed, the expiration date of a planning approval is tolled until a final action is taken. The provisions of Municipal Code Chapter 26.48 govern for all projects with associated subdivision maps.

Section 8.

Section 27.16.050 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

> **27.16.050 AFFORDABLE HOUSING.**
>
> To implement the affordable housing goals and policies in the General Plan, the City Council adopted the Below Market Rate (BMR) Program. Specific requirements for the development of affordable units under the BMR Program, including the alternative compliance option of providing offsite affordable units and other proposed alternatives, are regulated by resolution adopted by the City Council.

Section 9.

Environmental Determination In accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15183, the zoning amendment to streamline the processing of development applications, and establish minimum densities for mixed-use housing development projects is exempt from further environmental review because the Project is consistent with the anticipated land uses under the land use designations adopted as part of General Plan 2040 for which an EIR was certified by the City Council on March 18, 2024. Also, there are no specific proposed changes to maximum residential development densities and is consistent with the development density established by the General Plan. The Project is also consistent with the implementation policies of the adopted and certified Housing Element and pursuant to certain mandates in state law. There are no project specific effects that are peculiar to the project or the sites; there are no project specific impacts that the General Plan Update EIR failed to analyze as significant effects; there are no potentially significant off-site and cumulative impacts that the general plan EIR failed to evaluate; and there is no substantial new information which results in more severe impacts than anticipated by the general plan EIR.

Section 10. Severability.

In the event any section, clause or provision of this ordinance shall be determined invalid or unconstitutional, such section, clause or provision shall be deemed severable and all other sections or portions hereof shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 11. Publication.

This Ordinance shall be published in summary in a newspaper of general circulation, posted in the City Clerk's Office, and posted on the City's website, all in accord with Section 2.15 of the City Charter.

Section 12. Legislative History and Effective Date.

This Ordinance was introduced on June 16, 2025, and adopted on July 28, 2025, and shall be effective 30 days after its adoption.

The foregoing Ordinance was adopted by the City Council of the City of San Mateo, State of California by the following vote:

AYES	Council Members Newsom, Loraine, Fernandez, Cwirko-Godycki and Diaz Nash
NOES	None
ABSENT	None

ATTEST:

CITY OF SAN MATEO

City Hall
330 W. 20th Avenue
San Mateo CA 94403
www.cityofsanmateo.org

Agenda Report

Agenda Number: 5 | Section Name: CONSENT CALENDAR | Account Number: 26-4662 | File ID: 26-11619

TO: City Council

FROM: Alex Khojikian, City Manager

PREPARED BY: City Clerk's Office

MEETING DATE: September 08, 2026

SUBJECT:
Municipal Code Amendments — Ordinance Adoption

RECOMMENDATION:
Adopt an Ordinance to amend San Mateo Municipal Code Titles 17, 23, and 26 to address General Plan Policies and development review procedures, adopt California Department of Transportation Standards by reference, authorize the Director of Public Works to administratively update minor revisions to the Public Works Engineering Standards, and repeal Section 23.16.020.

BACKGROUND:
On August 17, 2026, the City Council introduced an Ordinance to amend San Mateo Municipal Code Titles 17, 23, and 26 to address General Plan Policies and development review procedures, adopt California Department of Transportation Standards by reference, authorize the Director of Public Works to administratively update minor revisions to the Public Works Engineering Standards, and repeal Section 23.16.020.

If adopted, the Ordinance will become effective 30 days after adoption.

BUDGET IMPACT:
Adoption of these amendments will not have an impact on the City's budget.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:
This Ordinance adoption 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).)

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT
This staff report supports the Infrastructure initiative.

NOTICE PROVIDED
In accordance with California Government Code section 6066, a public notice was published in a newspaper of general circulation on July 7 and July 14.

ATTACHMENTS
Att 1 – Proposed Ordinance

STAFF CONTACT
Chantal Eaton, Deputy City Clerk
ceaton@cityofsanmateo.org
(650) 522-7044

CITY OF SAN MATEO

City Hall
330 W. 20th Avenue
San Mateo CA 94403
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Agenda Report

Agenda Number: 15 | Section Name: CONSENT CALENDAR | Account Number: 10-3134 | File ID: 26-12684

TO: City Council

FROM: Alex Khojikian, City Manager

PREPARED BY: City Clerk's Office

MEETING DATE: September 22, 2026

SUBJECT:
High-Density Mixed-Use and Multi-Family Districts, and Zoning Code Updates — Ordinance Adoption

RECOMMENDATION:
Adopt an Ordinance to make various amendments to Title 27 "Zoning" of the San Mateo Municipal Code to establish four new high density zoning districts consistent with General Plan 2040 and make minor revisions to various sections to update outdated language and correct inconsistencies.

BACKGROUND:
On September 8, 2026, the City Council introduced an ordinance amending Title 27, "Zoning," of the San Mateo Municipal Code. The amendments establish four new high-density zoning districts consistent with General Plan 2040 and make minor revisions to update outdated language and correct inconsistencies. The Council also directed staff to remove floor area ratio (FAR) requirements from the R6 and R7 residential districts and to limit the application of FAR standards to only nonresidential portions of buildings in the MU3 District (Medium Density Mixed-Use) and the MU4 District (High Density Mixed-Use). These changes are reflected in the attached ordinance in both the clean version (Attachment 1) and the tracked changes version (Attachment 2).

If adopted, the Ordinance will become effective 30 days after adoption.

BUDGET IMPACT:
There is no budget impact for this Ordinance Adoption.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:
The proposed Ordinance is statutorily exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 21080.17 of the Public Resources Code and Section 15183 of the CEQA Guidelines. CEQA Guidelines Section 15183 provides a statutory exemption for projects that are consistent with a previously adopted General Plan, Community Plan, or Zoning ordinance for which an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was certified. The General Plan 2040 and Climate Plan Update Final EIR, finalized in January 2024, evaluated development impacts associated with approximately 19,764 residential units and 3,186,000 square feet of nonresidential floor area. The proposed Zoning Code amendments are intended to facilitate development capacity consistent with the General Plan and would support the development of additional residential units and nonresidential floor area within the growth assumptions already analyzed in the EIR.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT
This staff report supports the Land Use and Housing initiatives.

NOTICE PROVIDED
All meeting noticing requirements were met.

ATTACHMENTS
Att 1 – Proposed Ordinance
Att 2 – Proposed Ordinance with Tracked Changes
Att 3 – Public Comment

STAFF CONTACT
Chantal Eaton, Deputy City Clerk
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(650) 522-7044

CITY OF SAN MATEO
DRAFT ORDINANCE

AMENDING THE ZONING CODE (TITLE 27) TO CREATE FOUR NEW ZONING DISTRICTS (R6 HIGH DENSITY MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, R7 HIGH DENSITY MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, MU3 MEDIUM DENSITY MIXED-USE, AND MU4 HIGH DENSITY MIXED-USE), UPDATE TEXT IN VARIOUS SECTIONS, AND DETERMINE THAT THE AMENDMENTS ARE EXEMPT FROM FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW UNDER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT PURSUANT TO SECTION 21080.17 OF THE PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE AND SECTION 15183 OF THE CEQA GUIDELINES

WHEREAS, on March 18, 2024, at a duly noticed public hearing, the City Council adopted Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040 (General Plan) with Resolution No. 25 (2024), as a comprehensive update to General Plan 2030; and

WHEREAS, on March 18, 2024, at a duly noticed public hearing, the City Council certified the City of San Mateo's General Plan's EIR and adopted the Significant Impacts and Mitigations Measures Findings and Alternatives Findings, and Statement of Overriding Considerations with Resolution No. 26 (2024); and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the San Mateo General Plan 2040 analyzed new residential development of up to 21,410 new housing units and growth around the City through 2040; and

WHEREAS, the City of San Mateo is authorized under the State of California to regulate land use for the public health, safety, and general welfare; and

WHEREAS, the existing zoning districts do not fully correspond to or adequately implement certain land use designations established in the General Plan, particularly with respect to higher-intensity mixed-use and higher-density residential development; and

WHEREAS, the proposed zoning districts (R6 High Density Multiple Family Residential, R7 High Density Multiple Family Residential, MU3 Medium Density Mixed-Use, and MU4 High Density Mixed-Use) are intended to implement General Plan land use designations by allowing a compatible mix of higher density residential, commercial, office, and civic uses at appropriate intensities, while promoting walkability, efficient land use, and access to services; and

WHEREAS, this Ordinance also includes various Zoning Code cleanup amendments, including revisions to intended to clarify language, correct inconsistencies, remove obsolete provisions, and improve overall usability and internal consistency of the Zoning Code; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Zoning Code cleanup items are minor in nature, do not alter the overall intent of the Zoning Code, and are necessary to ensure clear and effective administration of the regulations; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Ordinance is statutorily exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 21080.17 of the Public Resources Code and Section 15183 of the CEQA Guidelines because the proposed updates are consistent with the development assumptions established within General Plan.

WHEREAS, on June 23, 2026, the Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing, received all written and oral public comments, and recommended that the City Council approve the proposed Ordinance to amend Title 27.

WHEREAS, on _____, 2026, at a duly noticed public hearing, the City Council adopted an Ordinance to adopt the amendments to several Chapters of Title 27, Zoning, of the San Mateo Municipal Code to implement the General Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAN MATEO ORDAINS AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Legislative Findings. At a duly noticed public hearing on _____, 2026, the City Council of the City of San Mateo reviewed and considered the accompanying staff report and attachments thereto, the exemption from environmental review, together with comments received during the public review process, and hereby finds and determines that the proposed Ordinance is consistent with the adopted General Plan in that it supports the development of housing and achieves the General Plan's stated goals and policies.

Section 2. Section 27.04.130 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.04.130 Community Care Facility

A "community care facility" means any place or building that is maintained and operated to provide 24-hour non-medical residential care, or day care services for children, adults, or both, limited to the following:

(a) Residential Care Facility. A residential care facility means a family home, group home, residential care facility for the elderly, foster home, intermediate care facility or similar facility, for 24-hour non-medical care of persons in need of personal services, supervision, or assistance essential for sustaining the activities of daily living or for the protection of the individual;

(b) Day Care Center. A day care facility means any facility which provides non-medical care to persons (adults and/or children) in need of personal services, supervision, or assistance essential for sustaining the activities of daily living or for the protection of the individual on less than a 24-hour basis;

(c) Family Day Care Home. A family day care home means a facility which provides care, protection, and supervision of no more than 14 children in the caregiver's own home, for periods of less than 24 hours per day, while the parents or guardians are away.

Section 3. Section 27.04.200 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.04.200 Floor Area

(a) Definitions.

(1) Floor Area. Floor area means the sum of the gross horizontal areas of all principal and accessory buildings and above grade covered parking on a zoning plot.

(2) Floor Area Ratio (FAR). Floor area ratio means the gross floor area of the buildings on a zoning plot divided by the net lot area.

(b) Measurement, other than single-family dwellings in R1 zoning districts.

(1) Floor area is measured from the exterior façade of the building's wall planes, from the centerline of party walls, or from a line three feet from the edge of an eave, whichever produces the largest floor area. Stories exceeding fifteen (15) feet in height shall be counted as additional floor area, with the exception of ground floor commercial uses. Floor area also includes all accessory structures on the site and basements that meet the definition in subsection (c)(6).

(2) Exclusions. The following are not counted as floor area:

(A) Covered or open courts, and atriums, on the ground floor, provided that the area is not used as dwelling, office, retailing, or required access;

(B) In multiple-level buildings, covered courts, if the retailing uses are open to the public. Multiple-level stairwells and elevators shall be counted only as ground floor area;

(C) Covered walkways and balconies;

(D) First floors, mechanical areas, penthouse, and top floors are counted only once as floor area, regardless of height;

(E) Bicycle parking facilities;

(F) Floor area designated for day care centers accessory to and intended to serve a multi-family, commercial, office or manufacturing use. Such floor area may be located within the primary structure or may be in a freestanding structure accessory to the primary structure;

(G) Covered parking for office use shall not be counted as floor area in areas delineated for exclusion within an adopted plan, such as the Mariner's Island Specific Plan or the Bay Meadows Specific Plan.

(c) Measurement, for single-family dwellings in R1 zoning districts, shall include the following:

(1) A covered structure or portion of a building where it has a horizontal or sloped covering which consists of 50% or more solid material.

(2) All area enclosed within the walls of the principal structure (as measured from the outside perimeter of walls), and the area (or footprint) of any attached carports, covered balconies or porches (as measured from the outside perimeter of its support structures).

(A) Exception: To encourage street frontage activity, the first 100 square feet of a covered front porch shall not be included as floor area.

(3) The area of all detached accessory structures, regardless of the number of open sides, including:

(A) Detached garages and carports;

(B) Storage sheds and other similar structures; and

(C) Covered patios or similar structures.

(4) Any interior space where the vertical distance between the upper surface of the floor and the floor above is fifteen (15) feet or more shall be counted as twice the floor area. If there is no floor above the space, then the distance shall be measured to the underside of the roof structure.

(5) Attic space is considered floor area when area "A" is at least 50% of areas "A" and "B" combined in the following plan-view diagram:

Area "B" (ceiling height between 5′ and 7′ 6″)	Area "A" (ceiling height 7′ 6″ or greater)	Area "B" (ceiling height between 5′ and 7′ 6″)

(6) A basement is considered floor area when:

(A) It is habitable space as defined in the current California Building Code, and

(B) More than one-half the area of the outermost basement walls is above finished or pre-existing grade (whichever is lower), and the surface of the finished floor level above is either:

(i) More than four (4) above finished or pre-existing grade (whichever is lower) for more than 50% of the total perimeter, and

(ii) More than twelve (12) feet above finished or pre-existing grade (whichever is lower) at any point.

(d) Off-Street Parking and Loading. Floor area for determining off-street parking and loading requirements as contained in Chapter 27.64, shall be based on physical floor space and shall not include the following:

(1) Storage areas except for areas located within selling or working space such as counters, racks, and closets;

(2) Utility areas including, but not limited to, elevator shafts, telephone switching rooms, stairwells, rest rooms, and heating and cooling rooms;

(3) Accessory facilities to be used only by employees of the principal uses;

(4) Off-street parking and loading facilities, including aisles, ramps, and maneuvering space;

(5) Basement, attic, or mezzanine floor area other than area devoted to retailing activities, to the production of processing of goods, or to business or professional offices;

(6) Floor area designated for day care centers accessory to and intended to serve a multi-family, commercial, office or manufacturing use. Such floor area may be located within the primary structure or may be in a freestanding structure accessory to the primary structure;

(7) Floor Area Computed for Building Volume. Additional parking shall be required in the event of change of excluded floor areas into uses generating parking.

(e) Interpretation. All interpretations of floor area shall be subject to the review and approval of the Zoning Administrator.

(f) No change in the definition or calculation of floor area, except to the extent that the City Council expressly states that the change allows greater floor area, shall be construed to authorize an expansion of the allowable floor area of a building or structure, whether pursuant to Chapter 27.72 or otherwise.

Section 4. Section 27.08.030 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.08.030 Site Plan and Architectural Review (SPAR)

(a) The following projects, as well as other projects that may be designated in this code, require a site plan and architectural review and no such project shall commence until the approval body has approved a planning application for site plan and architectural review: any building, new parking lot, fence over seven (7) feet in height, or an extension, alteration, or addition of or to an existing building or parking lot; historic buildings within the Downtown Specific Plan area as specified in Chapter 27.66. Single family and accessory buildings that conform to the standards contained in Chapter 27.18, or minor facade modifications as defined in Section 27.04.313, and which conform with Section 27.08.031, are exempt from this requirement, unless they are specifically designated by this section as requiring review. In making its review, the Zoning Administrator, Development Review Board, and Planning Commission shall be guided by the standards adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council. The application shall be approved if the Zoning Administrator or Commission finds all of the following to exist:

(1) The structures, site plan, and landscaping are in scale and harmonious with the character of the neighborhood;

(2) The development will not be detrimental to the harmonious and orderly growth of the City;

(3) The development will not impair the desirability of investment or occupation in the vicinity, and otherwise is in the best interests of the public health, safety, or welfare;

(4) The development meets all applicable standards as adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council, conforms with the General Plan, and will correct any violations of the zoning Ordinance, building code, or other municipal codes that exist on the site;

(5) The development will not adversely affect matters regarding police protection, crime prevention, and security.

(b) All buildings, structures, landscaping, and other establishments shall be constructed in accordance with the approved drawings.

Section 5. Section 27.30.010 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.30.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted provided that the use limitations contained in Section 27.30.025, "Permitted and special uses—Twenty-Fifth Avenue Improvement Area," shall apply to properties in the Twenty-Fifth Avenue Improvement Area and the use limitations contained in Section 27.30.027, "Permitted and special uses—Hillsdale Station Area Plan Active Zone," shall apply to properties in the Hillsdale Station Area Plan Active Zone:

(a) Animal grooming, provided no overnight boarding occurs on the site;

(b) Bakeries;

(c) Barber shops and hair salons;

(d) Delicatessens;

(e) Dry cleaners, with customer service areas;

(f) Financial institutions, provided the ground floor area devoted to this use does not exceed 2,500 square feet per establishment;

(g) Health studios and spas;

(h) Laundromats;

(i) Libraries;

(j) Low Barrier Navigation Center above the ground floor in compliance with Government Code Sections 65660-65668 shall be considered a use by-right. "Use by right" shall have the same meaning as defined in subdivision (i) of Section 65583.2. Supportive housing shall also comply with Section 27.94.020 By-Right Residential Use Requirements and subject only to those objective development standards and policies that apply to other multifamily development within the same zone.

(k) Newspaper publishing;

(l) Offices, provided the ground floor area devoted to this use does not exceed 2,500 square feet per establishment;

(m) Photo processing;

(n) Picture framing;

(o) Real estate establishments;

(p) Residential units above the ground floor that comply with the objective development standards for the R3 District in Chapter 27.22 and affordable housing requirements as adopted by City Council resolution, unless otherwise specified in Chapter 27.29;

(q) Restaurants and accessory outdoor dining areas, without drive-through facilities;

(r) Retail uses, such as, but not limited to, the following uses, subject to a maximum of 15,000 square feet of floor area per establishment except for supermarkets and drug stores:

(1) Antique shops,

(2) Apparel sales, tailoring and repair stores,

(3) Drug stores,

(4) Hardware and garden supply stores,

(5) Household furnishings,

(6) Pet shops,

(7) Supermarkets and grocery stores;

(s) Reverse vending machines, subject to regulations established in Chapter 27.69;

(t) Schools and day care facilities;

(u) Travel agencies;

(v) Temporary buildings for construction purposes for a period not to exceed the duration of such construction;

(w) Accessory uses to principle uses permitted; and

(x) Other compatible uses as determined by the zoning administrator.

Section 6. Section 27.32.010 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.32.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Permitted uses in the C1 district;

(b) Art galleries;

(c) Automotive accessory stores, excluding on-site service and repair of vehicles;

(d) Boarding, lodging, or rooming houses;

(e) Catering services;

(f) Hotels and motels, including restaurant and meeting rooms;

(g) Laundries;

(h) Medical and dental clinics, including laboratories;

(i) Offices;

(j) Parking facilities;

(k) Printing, lithographing, or publishing establishments for newspaper, business cards, and other similar uses;

(l) Radio and television broadcasting stations;

(m) Reproduction services;

(n) Residential units above the ground floor that comply with the objective development standards within the R4 district in Chapter 27.24 and affordable housing requirements as adopted by City Council resolution, except as otherwise specified in Chapter 27.29;

(o) Retail uses, including incidental rental and repair;

(p) Emergency Shelters;

(q) Accessory uses to principle uses permitted; and

(r) Other compatible uses as determined by the zoning administrator.

Section 7. Section 27.34.010 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.34.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Permitted uses in the C1 and C2 districts;

(b) Residential units above the ground floor that comply with the objective development standards for the R4 District in Chapter 27.24 and affordable housing requirements as adopted by City Council resolution, except as otherwise specified in Chapter 27.29;

(c) Ambulance service;

(d) Automobile, boat, and truck sales and rental, including service and repair as accessory to the primary sales use, sales may occur on open lot;

(e) Automobile service, parts, and repairs, classified as minor motor vehicle repair in Section 27.04.325;

(f) Car wash and detailing facilities, may not occur on open lot;

(g) Laboratories, research, experimental, and testing, provided no production or manufacturing of products occurs on the premises;

(h) Accessory uses to principle uses permitted; and

(i) Other compatible uses as determined by the Zoning Administrator.

Section 8. Section 27.36.010 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.36.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Permitted uses in the C1, C2, and C3 districts, except that residential uses, low barrier navigation centers, office uses on the properties along Palm Avenue between Twentieth and Twenty-fifth Avenues, and emergency shelters are prohibited;

(b) Air conditioning and heating sales and service;

(c) Animal hospitals, which may include outdoor kennels;

(d) Automotive parts, service, and repair classified as major motor vehicle repair in Section 27.04.320;

(e) Construction materials sales and lumberyards;

(f) Dry cleaning establishments, without customer service areas;

(g) Linen, towel, diaper and other similar supply services;

(h) Machinery sales, rental, and service, when conducted within an enclosed building;

(i) Parcel delivery and receiving stations;

(j) Processing and assembly of goods determined by the Zoning Administrator to be compatible with adjacent uses, provided that space in a building does not exceed six thousand square feet of total floor area and basement space, not including stairwells or elevator shafts; and provided that such processing or assembly can be conducted without noise, vibration, order, dust or any other condition which might be disturbing to occupants of adjacent buildings. When manufacturing operations of the same or similar products demand space exceeding six thousand square feet, they shall be located in the M1 district.

(k) Sheet metal shops;

(l) Storage and warehousing;

(m) Tool, die and pattern making;

(n) Welding and iron work;

(o) Wholesale establishments;

(p) Accessory to principal uses permitted;

(q) Other compatible uses as determined by the Zoning Administrator.

Section 9. Section 27.38.020 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.38.020 Permitted Uses

Unless otherwise provided in this title, uses of building or land in this district and buildings hereafter erected, structurally altered or enlarged shall be limited to the following uses:

(a) Any use permitted in the C2 District, except an animal hospital and emergency shelters; provided that the use limitations contained in Section 27.38.110, Required Retail Frontage, shall apply to properties located within the required retail frontage area, as shown in the Downtown Plan.

(b) Residential units, when located above the ground floor and as part of a mixed-use development, subject to CBD residential development standards and affordable housing requirements as adopted by City Council resolution;

(c) Name plates and signs, as classified and regulated in Title 25.

(d) Accessory uses which are necessary to the above-mentioned buildings and uses; including a maximum of 15% of floor area for ancillary office uses related to retail establishments located in the ground floor area of the district, and which are not visible from the street nor located within the retail storefront area.

(e) Any other use deemed similar in nature and operation that is determined by the Zoning Administrator to be compatible with existing and permitted uses allowable under the CBD Central Business District zoning and is deemed desirable in serving the downtown core area and the community at large.

Section 10. Subsection (a)(1) of Section 27.38.110 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.38.110 Required Retail Frontage

(a) Permitted Uses. The following uses are permitted on the ground floor subject to the requirements in Section 27.38.040, Conditions of Use, and the standards listed in subsection (c) below:

(1) Retail Sales. Uses principally engaged in retail sale or rental of consumer or household goods, including ancillary repair services.

Section 11. Section 27.44.020 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.44.020 Permitted Uses

The following uses shall be permitted:

(a) Administrative, executive, and professional offices, provided that the professional offices are limited to those professions listed in Section 5.24.160, and including similar professional occupations, and provided that no office of a veterinarian shall include an animal hospital or kennel.

(b) Accessory uses; including, but not limited to:

(1) Sale of personal goods and services, when provided in the principal building, including, but not limited to, the following:

(A) Flower, food, and news vending;

(B) Printing and photocopying;

(C) Travel agencies;

(D) Ticket outlets;

(2) Other services which are customary appurtenant uses.

(c) Health and recreation facilities.

(d) Public utility and service uses.

(e) Financial and business offices and related facilities.

(f) Research laboratories (experimental and testing), provided no production or manufacturing occurs, and provided that all activities conform with the performance standards established for the M1 district.

(g) Residential units that comply with the objective development standards for the R3 District in Chapter 27.22 and affordable housing requirements as adopted by City Council resolution, unless otherwise specified in Chapter 27.29.

(h) Restaurants without drive-through facilities.

(i) Schools and day care facilities.

(j) Temporary buildings for construction purposes for a period not to exceed the duration of such construction.

(k) Warehousing, storage, and distribution facilities as accessory uses but not exceeding 10,000 square feet per establishment or not more than 60% of gross floor area per establishment.

(l) Other compatible uses as determined by the Zoning Administrator.

Section 12. Section 27.48.030 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.48.030 Special Uses

Special Uses in the E1 district may also be allowed, subject to approval of a special use permit.

Section 13. Chapter 27.50 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is added to Title 27 as follows:

Chapter 27.50
R6 District - High Density Multiple Family Residential

27.50.005 Purpose

The R6 High Density Multiple Family District correlates with the Residential Medium II Land Use Designation and will provide for higher-density, multi-family residential development, including condominiums and apartments, in locations near mixed-use, office, and commercial areas.

27.50.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Home daycare centers;

(b) Multiple family dwellings;

(c) Supportive housing in compliance with Government Code Sections 65650 - 65656, shall be considered a use by-right. "Use by right" shall have the same meaning as defined in Government Code Section 65583.2(i). Supportive housing shall also comply with Section 27.94.020 By-Right Residential Use Requirements and subject only to those objective development standards and policies that apply to other multifamily development within the same zone.

(d) Licensed residential care facilities including group homes with six (6) or fewer residents, in addition to the caregiver's family, subject to the objective development standards that apply to other residential uses of the same type in the same zone. Certain licensed group homes shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9, as amended from time to time; and

(e) Residential care homes of any size regardless of State licensing; and

(f) Temporary buildings for construction purposes for a period not to exceed the duration of such construction.

27.50.020 Special Uses

Unless otherwise provided, the following uses may be permitted subject to the approval of a special use permit by the Planning Commission:

(a) Boarding and lodging houses;

(b) Nursing, hospice, and/or convalescent facility;

(c) Residential care facility (excluding group homes) with seven (7) or more residents in addition to the caregiver. Certain licensed care facilities shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9;

(d) Fraternity and sorority houses.

27.50.030 Off-Street Parking

Off-street parking facilities shall be provided as required in the off-street parking code (Chapter 27.64).

27.50.040 Density

The maximum density shall be 99 dwelling units per acre.

27.50.050 Building Height

Building height limit for this district shall be a maximum of six stories and seventy-five (75) feet.

27.50.060 Minimum Yards

A rear yard setback of five (5) feet must be provided.

27.50.070 Buffers

Buffers shall be provided as follows:

(a) If a side property line is adjacent to a R1 or R2 district, a buffer of ten (10) feet must be provided.

(b) If a rear property line is adjacent to R1 or R2 district, a buffer of fifteen (15) feet shall be provided.

27.50.080 Open Space

Residential development shall provide open space as follows:

(a) Private usable open space only: A minimum of 50 square feet of private usable open space per unit; or

(b) Common usable open space only: A minimum of 75 square feet of common usable open space per unit; or

(c) Combination of private and common open space:

(1) Private usable open space, at a minimum of 30 square feet per unit, and

(2) Common usable open space equal to at least 150% of the difference between the private usable open space requirement and the proposed amount of private usable open space.

(3) For example, a development proposing 30 square feet of private usable open space per unit would also have to provide 30 square feet of common usable open space per unit. [Formula Example: (50 square feet – 30 square feet) * 150% = 30 common usable square feet.]

Section 14. Chapter 27.51 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is added to Title 27 as follows:

Chapter 27.51
R7 District - High Density Multiple Family Residential

27.51.005 Purpose

The R7 Multiple Family Dwellings District correlates with the Residential High Land Use Designation and is intended to provide for high-density multi-family residential development, including condominiums and apartments. The R7 District is intended for development in Downtown San Mateo, in proximity to Caltrain stations, and along major transit corridors such as El Camino Real.

27.51.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Home daycare centers;

(b) Multiple-family dwellings;

(c) Supportive housing in compliance with Government Code Sections 65650 - 65656, shall be considered a use by-right. "Use by right" shall have the same meaning as defined in Government Code Section 65583.2(i). Supportive housing shall also comply with Section 27.94.020 By-Right Residential Use Requirements and subject only to those objective development standards and policies that apply to other multifamily development within the same zone.

(d) Licensed residential care facilities including group homes with six (6) or fewer residents, in addition to the caregiver's family, subject to the objective development standards that apply to other residential uses of the same type in the same zone. Certain licensed group homes shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9, as amended from time to time; and

(e) Temporary buildings for construction purposes for a period not to exceed the duration of such construction.

27.51.020 Special Uses

Unless otherwise provided the following uses may be permitted subject to the approval of a special use permit by the Planning Commission:

(a) Boarding and lodging houses;

(b) Nursing, hospice, and/or convalescent facility;

(c) Residential care facility (excluding group homes) with seven (7) or more residents in addition to the caregiver. Certain licensed care facilities shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9;

(d) Fraternity and sorority houses.

27.51.030 Off-Street Parking

Off-street parking facilities shall be provided as required in the off-street parking code (Chapter 27.64).

27.51.040 Density

The maximum density shall be 130 dwelling units per acre.

27.51.050 Building Height

Building height limit for this district shall be a maximum of eight stories and one hundred (100) feet.

27.51.060 Minimum Yards

A rear setback of five (5) feet must be provided.

27.51.070 Buffers

Buffers shall be provided as follows:

(a) Side. If a side property line is adjacent to a R1 or R2 district, a buffer of ten (10) feet must be provided.

(b) Rear. If a rear property line is adjacent to R1 or R2 district, a buffer of fifteen (15) feet shall be provided.

27.51.080 Open Space

Residential development shall provide open space as follows:

(a) Private usable open space only: A minimum of 50 square feet of private usable open space per unit; or

(b) Common usable open space only: A minimum of 75 square feet of common usable open space per unit; or

(c) Combination of private and common open space:

(1) A combination of private usable open space, at a minimum of 30 square feet per unit, and

(2) Common usable open space equal to at least 150% of the difference between the private usable open space requirement and the proposed amount of private usable open space.

(3) For example, a development proposing 30 square feet of private usable open space per unit would also have to provide 30 square feet of common usable open space per unit. [Formula Example: (50 square feet – 30 square feet) * 150% = 30 square feet of common usable open space.]

Section 15. Chapter 27.52 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is added to Title 27 as follows:

Chapter 27.52
MU3 District – Medium Density Mixed-Use

27.52.005 Purpose

The MU3 Medium Density Mixed-Use District is intended to allow medium-density, mixed-use buildings that provide a mix of commercial, office, and/or residential uses within the same site or building as well as individual commercial, office, or residential uses. The MU3 District is intended to allow a mix of uses near other mixed-use, commercial, or residential areas, and within Downtown San Mateo.

27.52.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Accessory uses to principal uses permitted;

(b) Animal grooming, provided no overnight boarding occurs on the site;

(c) Art galleries;

(d) Automotive accessory stores, excluding on-site service and repair of vehicles;

(e) Boarding, lodging, or rooming houses;

(f) Emergency Shelters;

(g) Financial institutions;

(h) Health studios and spas;

(i) Hotels and motels, including restaurants and meeting rooms;

(j) Libraries;

(k) Low Barrier Navigation Center above the ground floor in compliance with Government Code Sections 65660-65668 shall be considered a use by-right. "Use by- right" shall have the same meaning as defined in subdivision (i) of Section 65583.2. Supportive housing shall comply with Section 27.94.020 By-Right Residential Use Requirements and subject only to those objective development standards and policies that apply to other multifamily development within the same zone.

(l) Medical and dental clinics, including laboratories;

(m) Offices;

(n) Personal Services;

(o) Real estate establishments;

(p) Multi-family residential units;

(q) Supportive housing in compliance with Government Code Sections 65650 - 65656, shall be considered a use by-right use. "Use by right" shall have the same meaning as defined in Government Code Section 65583.2(i). Supportive housing shall also comply with Section 27.94.020 By-Right Residential Use Requirements and subject only to those objective development standards and policies that apply to other multifamily development within the same zone.

(r) Licensed residential care facilities including group homes with six (6) or fewer residents, in addition to the caregiver's family, subject to the objective development standards that apply to other residential uses of the same type in the same zone. Certain licensed group homes shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9, as amended from time to time;

(s) Restaurants, catering services, and accessory outdoor dining areas, without drive-through facilities;

(t) Retail uses, including ancillary rental and repair;

(u) Schools and day care facilities;

(v) Temporary buildings for construction purposes for a period not to exceed the duration of such construction; and

(w) Other compatible uses as determined by the Zoning Administrator.

27.52.020 Special Uses

The following uses may also be permitted subject to approval of a special use permit, provided that the use limitations contained in Section 27.30.025, "Permitted and special uses—Twenty-Fifth Avenue Improvement Area," shall apply to properties in the Twenty-Fifth Avenue improvement Area and the use limitations contained in Section 27.30.027, "Permitted and special uses—Hillsdale Station Area Plan Active Zone," shall apply to properties in the Hillsdale Station Area Plan Active Zone:

(a) Alternative financial services, subject to the restrictions set forth in Section 27.30.020;

(b) Automobile gasoline service station;

(c) Automotive sales;

(d) Clubs, lodges, and fraternal organizations;

(e) Parking facilities, as a principal use;

(f) Residential care facility (excluding group homes) with seven (7) or more residents in addition to the caregiver. Certain licensed care facilities shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9;

(g) Religious institutions; and

(h) Other compatible uses as determined by the Zoning Administrator subject to the granting of a special use permit.

27.52.030 Conditions Of Use

All uses, except residences, shall be subject to the following conditions:

(a) Manufacturing, processing, or treatment of products which is clearly ancillary and essential to the retail business may be conducted on the same premises;

(b) Uses shall not generate odor, dust, smoke, noise, vibration, toxic waste or other emissions which constitute nuisances;

(c) Exterior signs shall pertain only to a use conducted within the building;

(d) Uses shall be conducted wholly within an enclosed building, except as authorized by special use permit, or as previously authorized, or if the use is legally nonconforming.

27.52.040 Off-Street Parking And Loading

Off-street parking facilities shall be provided as required in the off-street parking code (Chapter 27.64).

27.52.050 Maximum Floor Area Ratio

The maximum floor area ratio of buildings and structures on a zoning plot shall be 4.0. Floor area ratio shall only apply to nonresidential portions of a building.

27.52.060 Density

The minimum density for projects with five or more residential units shall be consistent with section 27.02.230. The maximum density for residential developments shall be 99 dwelling units per acre.

27.52.070 Building Height

Building height shall not exceed the following:

(a) A maximum of four stories and fifty (50) feet for a nonresidential building;

(b) A maximum of six stories and seventy-five (75) feet for a residential building or mixed-use building with residential uses.

27.52.080 Minimum Yards

A rear yard of not less than five (5) feet shall be provided.

27.52.090 Buffers

Buffers shall be provided as follows:

(a) Side. If a side property line is adjacent to a R1 or R2 district, a buffer of ten (10) feet must be provided.

(b) Rear. If a rear property line is adjacent to R1 or R2 district, a buffer of fifteen (15) feet shall be provided.

27.52.100 Open Space

Residential development shall provide open space as follows:

(a) Private usable open space only: A minimum of 50 square feet of private usable open space per unit; or

(b) Common usable open space only: A minimum of 75 square feet of common usable open space per unit; or

(c) Combination of private and common open space:

(1) A combination of private usable open space, at a minimum of 30 square feet per unit, and

(2) Common usable open space equal to at least 150% of the difference between the private usable open space requirement and the proposed amount of private usable open space.

(3) For example, a development proposing 30 square feet of private usable open space per unit would also have to provide 30 square feet of common usable open space per unit. [Formula Example: (50 square feet – 30 square feet) * 150% = 30 common usable square feet.]

27.52.110 Setback And Build-To-Line Standards For El Camino Real

The regulations governing setback and build-to-line standards for El Camino Real in the C1 district shall apply.

Section 16. Chapter 27.53 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is added to Title 27 as follows:

Chapter 27.53
MU4 District – High Density Mixed-Use

27.53.005 Purpose

The MU4 High Density Mixed-Use District is intended to allow high-density mixed-use buildings that provide a mix of commercial, office, and/or residential uses within the same site or building as well as individual commercial, office, or residential uses. The MU4 District is intended to allow a mix of uses near major streets, train stations, and shopping centers, and within Downtown San Mateo.

27.53.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Permitted uses in the MU3 District.

27.53.020 Special Uses

The following uses may also be permitted subject to approval of a special use permit, provided that the use limitations contained in Section 27.30.025, "Permitted and special uses—Twenty-Fifth Avenue Improvement Area," shall apply to properties in the Twenty-Fifth Avenue improvement Area and the use limitations contained in Section 27.30.027, "Permitted and special uses—Hillsdale Station Area Plan Active Zone," shall apply to properties in the Hillsdale Station Area Plan Active Zone:

(a) Alternative financial services, subject to the restrictions set forth in Section 27.30.020;

(b) Automobile gasoline service station;

(c) Automotive sales;

(d) Clubs, lodges, and fraternal organizations;

(e) Parking facilities, as a principle use;

(f) Residential care facility (excluding group homes) with seven (7) or more residents in addition to the caregiver. Certain licensed care facilities shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9;

(g) Religious institutions; and

(h) Other compatible uses as determined by the Zoning Administrator subject to the granting of a special use permit.

27.53.030 Conditions of use

All uses, except residences, shall be subject to the following conditions:

(a) Manufacturing, processing, or treatment of products which is clearly ancillary and essential to the retail business may be conducted on the same premises;

(b) Uses shall not generate odor, dust, smoke, noise, vibration, toxic waste or other emissions which constitute nuisances;

(c) Exterior signs shall pertain only to a use conducted within the building;

(d) Uses shall be conducted wholly within an enclosed building, except as authorized by special use permit, or as previously authorized, or if the use is legally nonconforming.

27.53.040 Off-Street Parking and Loading

Off-street parking facilities shall be provided as required in the off-street parking code (Chapter 27.64).

27.53.050 Maximum Floor Area Ratio

The maximum floor area ratio of buildings and structures on a zoning plot shall be 4.5. Floor area ratio shall only apply to nonresidential portions of a building.

27.53.060 Density

The minimum density for projects with five or more residential units shall be consistent with section 27.02.230. The maximum density for residential developments shall be 130 dwelling units per acre.

27.53.070 Building Height

Building height shall not exceed the following:

(a) A maximum of five stories and sixty five (65) feet for a nonresidential building;

(b) A maximum of eight stories and one hundred (100) feet for a residential building or a mixed-use building with residential uses.

27.53.080 Minimum Yards

A rear yard of not less than five (5) feet shall be provided.

27.53.090 Buffers

Buffers shall be provided when adjacent to an R1 or R2 district as follows:

(a) Side. If a side property line is adjacent to a R1 or R2 district, a buffer of ten (10) feet must be provided.

(b) Rear. If a rear property line is adjacent to R1 or R2 district, a buffer of fifteen (15) feet shall be provided.

27.53.100 Open Space

Residential development shall provide open space as follows:

(a) Private usable open space only: A minimum of 50 square feet of private usable open space per unit; or

(b) Common usable open space only: A minimum of 75 square feet of common usable open space per unit; or

(c) Combination of private and common open space:

(1) A combination of private usable open space, at a minimum of 30 square feet per unit, and

(2) Common usable open space equal to at least 150% of the difference between the private usable open space requirement and the proposed amount of private usable open space.

(3) For example, a development proposing 30 square feet of private usable open space per unit would also have to provide 30 square feet of common usable open space per unit. [Formula Example: (50 square feet – 30 square feet) * 150% = 30 common usable square feet.]

27.53.110 Setback And Build-To-Line Standards For El Camino Real

The regulations governing setback and build-to-line standards for El Camino Real in the C1 district shall apply.

Section 17. Section 27.71.020 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.71.020 Scope

This chapter shall apply as a minimum for all projects requiring approval of a planning application pursuant to Section 27.08.010, except for single-family dwelling design review and 100% affordable housing development applications. Landscaping not subject to this chapter shall be governed by the provisions of Chapter 13.40. The Zoning Administrator may determine that minor additions or changes to existing property are not reasonably related to the purpose of this chapter and may be exempt from the requirements of this chapter.

Section 18. Environmental Determination. In accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, section 21080.17 of the Public Resources Code and Section 15183 of the CEQA Guidelines, this action is statutorily exempt.

Section 19. Severability. In the event any section, clause or provision of this Ordinance shall be determined invalid or unconstitutional, such section, clause or provision shall be deemed severable and all other sections or portions hereof shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 20. Publication. This Ordinance shall be published in summary in a newspaper of general circulation, posted in the City Clerk's Office, and posted on the City's website, all in accord with Section 2.15 of the City Charter.

Section 21. Legislative History and Effective Date. This Ordinance was introduced on Clerk to complete., and adopted on Clerk to complete., and shall be effective 30 days after its adoption.

CITY OF SAN MATEO
DRAFT ORDINANCE

AMENDING THE ZONING CODE (TITLE 27) TO CREATE FOUR NEW ZONING DISTRICTS (R6 HIGH DENSITY MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, R7 HIGH DENSITY MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, MU3 MEDIUM DENSITY MIXED-USE, AND MU4 HIGH DENSITY MIXED-USE), UPDATE TEXT IN VARIOUS SECTIONS, AND DETERMINE THAT THE AMENDMENTS ARE EXEMPT FROM FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW UNDER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT PURSUANT TO SECTION 21080.17 OF THE PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE AND SECTION 15183 OF THE CEQA GUIDELINES

WHEREAS, on March 18, 2024, at a duly noticed public hearing, the City Council adopted Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040 (General Plan) with Resolution No. 25 (2024), as a comprehensive update to General Plan 2030; and

WHEREAS, on March 18, 2024, at a duly noticed public hearing, the City Council certified the City of San Mateo's General Plan's EIR and adopted the Significant Impacts and Mitigations Measures Findings and Alternatives Findings, and Statement of Overriding Considerations with Resolution No. 26 (2024); and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the San Mateo General Plan 2040 analyzed new residential development of up to 21,410 new housing units and growth around the City through 2040; and

WHEREAS, the City of San Mateo is authorized under the State of California to regulate land use for the public health, safety, and general welfare; and

WHEREAS, the existing zoning districts do not fully correspond to or adequately implement certain land use designations established in the General Plan, particularly with respect to higher-intensity mixed-use and higher-density residential development; and

WHEREAS, the proposed zoning districts (R6 High Density Multiple Family Residential, R7 High Density Multiple Family Residential, MU3 Medium Density Mixed-Use, and MU4 High Density Mixed-Use) are intended to implement General Plan land use designations by allowing a compatible mix of higher density residential, commercial, office, and civic uses at appropriate intensities, while promoting walkability, efficient land use, and access to services; and

WHEREAS, this Ordinance also includes various Zoning Code cleanup amendments, including revisions to intended to clarify language, correct inconsistencies, remove obsolete provisions, and improve overall usability and internal consistency of the Zoning Code; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Zoning Code cleanup items are minor in nature, do not alter the overall intent of the Zoning Code, and are necessary to ensure clear and effective administration of the regulations; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Ordinance is statutorily exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 21080.17 of the Public Resources Code and Section 15183 of the CEQA Guidelines because the proposed updates are consistent with the development assumptions established within General Plan.

WHEREAS, on June 23, 2026, the Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing, received all written and oral public comments, and recommended that the City Council approve the proposed Ordinance to amend Title 27.

WHEREAS, on _____, 2026, at a duly noticed public hearing, the City Council adopted an Ordinance to adopt the amendments to several Chapters of Title 27, Zoning, of the San Mateo Municipal Code to implement the General Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAN MATEO ORDAINS AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Legislative Findings. At a duly noticed public hearing on _____, 2026, the City Council of the City of San Mateo reviewed and considered the accompanying staff report and attachments thereto, the exemption from environmental review, together with comments received during the public review process, and hereby finds and determines that the proposed Ordinance is consistent with the adopted General Plan in that it supports the development of housing and achieves the General Plan's stated goals and policies.

Section 2. Section 27.04.130 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.04.130 Community Care Facility

A "community care facility" means any place or building that is maintained and operated to provide 24-hour non-medical residential care, or day care services for children, adults, or both, limited to the following:

(a) Residential Care Facility. A residential care facility means a family home, group home, residential care facility for the elderly, foster home, intermediate care facility or similar facility, for 24-hour non-medical care of persons in need of personal services, supervision, or assistance essential for sustaining the activities of daily living or for the protection of the individual;

(b) Day Care Center. A day care facility means any facility which provides non-medical care to persons (adults and/or children) in need of personal services, supervision, or assistance essential for sustaining the activities of daily living or for the protection of the individual on less than a 24-hour basis;

(c) Family Day Care Home. A family day care home means a facility which provides care, protection, and supervision of no more than 14 children in the caregiver's own home, for periods of less than 24 hours per day, while the parents or guardians are away.

Section 3. Section 27.04.200 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.04.200 Floor Area

(a) Definitions.

(1) Floor Area. Floor area means the sum of the gross horizontal areas of all principal and accessory buildings and above grade covered parking on a zoning plot.

(2) Floor Area Ratio (FAR). Floor area ratio means the gross floor area of the buildings on a zoning plot divided by the net lot area.

(b) Measurement, other than single-family dwellings in R1 zoning districts.

(1) Floor area is measured from the exterior façade of the building's wall planes, from the centerline of party walls, or from a line three feet from the edge of an eave, whichever produces the largest floor area. Stories exceeding fifteen (15) feet in height shall be counted as additional floor area, with the exception of ground floor commercial uses. Floor area also includes all accessory structures on the site and basements that meet the definition in subsection (c)(6).

(2) Exclusions. The following are not counted as floor area:

(A) Covered or open courts, and atriums, on the ground floor, provided that the area is not used as dwelling, office, retailing, or required access;

(B) In multiple-level buildings, covered courts, if the retailing uses are open to the public. Multiple-level stairwells and elevators shall be counted only as ground floor area;

(C) Covered walkways and balconies;

(D) First floors, mechanical areas, penthouse, and top floors are counted only once as floor area, regardless of height;

(E) Bicycle parking facilities;

(F) Floor area designated for day care centers accessory to and intended to serve a multi-family, commercial, office or manufacturing use. Such floor area may be located within the primary structure or may be in a freestanding structure accessory to the primary structure;

(G) Covered parking for office use shall not be counted as floor area in areas delineated for exclusion within an adopted plan, such as the Mariner's Island Specific Plan or the Bay Meadows Specific Plan.

(c) Measurement, for single-family dwellings in R1 zoning districts, shall include the following:

(1) A covered structure or portion of a building where it has a horizontal or sloped covering which consists of 50% or more solid material.

(2) All area enclosed within the walls of the principal structure (as measured from the outside perimeter of walls), and the area (or footprint) of any attached carports, covered balconies or porches (as measured from the outside perimeter of its support structures).

(A) Exception: To encourage street frontage activity, the first 100 square feet of a covered front porch shall not be included as floor area.

(3) The area of all detached accessory structures, regardless of the number of open sides, including:

(A) Detached garages and carports;

(B) Storage sheds and other similar structures; and

(C) Covered patios or similar structures.

(4) Any interior space where the vertical distance between the upper surface of the floor and the floor above is fifteen (15) feet or more shall be counted as twice the floor area. If there is no floor above the space, then the distance shall be measured to the underside of the roof structure.

(5) Attic space is considered floor area when area "A" is at least 50% of areas "A" and "B" combined in the following plan-view diagram:

Area "B" (ceiling height between 5′ and 7′ 6″)	Area "A" (ceiling height 7′ 6″ or greater)	Area "B" (ceiling height between 5′ and 7′ 6″)

(6) A basement is considered floor area when:

(A) It is habitable space as defined in the current California Building Code, and

(B) More than one-half the area of the outermost basement walls is above finished or pre-existing grade (whichever is lower), and the surface of the finished floor level above is either:

(i) More than four (4) above finished or pre-existing grade (whichever is lower) for more than 50% of the total perimeter, and

(ii) More than twelve (12) feet above finished or pre-existing grade (whichever is lower) at any point.

(d) Off-Street Parking and Loading. Floor area for determining off-street parking and loading requirements as contained in Chapter 27.64, shall be based on physical floor space and shall not include the following:

(1) Storage areas except for areas located within selling or working space such as counters, racks, and closets;

(2) Utility areas including, but not limited to, elevator shafts, telephone switching rooms, stairwells, rest rooms, and heating and cooling rooms;

(3) Accessory facilities to be used only by employees of the principal uses;

(4) Off-street parking and loading facilities, including aisles, ramps, and maneuvering space;

(5) Basement, attic, or mezzanine floor area other than area devoted to retailing activities, to the production of processing of goods, or to business or professional offices;

(6) Floor area designated for day care centers accessory to and intended to serve a multi-family, commercial, office or manufacturing use. Such floor area may be located within the primary structure or may be in a freestanding structure accessory to the primary structure;

(7) Floor Area Computed for Building Volume. Additional parking shall be required in the event of change of excluded floor areas into uses generating parking.

(e) Interpretation. All interpretations of floor area shall be subject to the review and approval of the Zoning Administrator.

(f) No change in the definition or calculation of floor area, except to the extent that the City Council expressly states that the change allows greater floor area, shall be construed to authorize an expansion of the allowable floor area of a building or structure, whether pursuant to Chapter 27.72 or otherwise.

Section 4. Section 27.08.030 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.08.030 Site Plan and Architectural Review (SPAR)

(a) The following projects, as well as other projects that may be designated in this code, require a site plan and architectural review and no such project shall commence until the approval body has approved a planning application for site plan and architectural review: any building, new parking lot, fence over seven (7) feet in height, or an extension, alteration, or addition of or to an existing building or parking lot; historic buildings within the Downtown Specific Plan area as specified in Chapter 27.66. Single family and accessory buildings that conform to the standards contained in Chapter 27.18, or minor facade modifications as defined in Section 27.04.313, and which conform with Section 27.08.031, are exempt from this requirement, unless they are specifically designated by this section as requiring review. In making its review, the Zoning Administrator, Development Review Board, and Planning Commission shall be guided by the standards adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council. The application shall be approved if the Zoning Administrator or Commission finds all of the following to exist:

(1) The structures, site plan, and landscaping are in scale and harmonious with the character of the neighborhood;

(2) The development will not be detrimental to the harmonious and orderly growth of the City;

(3) The development will not impair the desirability of investment or occupation in the vicinity, and otherwise is in the best interests of the public health, safety, or welfare;

(4) The development meets all applicable standards as adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council, conforms with the General Plan, and will correct any violations of the zoning Ordinance, building code, or other municipal codes that exist on the site;

(5) The development will not adversely affect matters regarding police protection, crime prevention, and security.

(b) All buildings, structures, landscaping, and other establishments shall be constructed in accordance with the approved drawings.

Section 5. Section 27.30.010 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.30.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted provided that the use limitations contained in Section 27.30.025, "Permitted and special uses—Twenty-Fifth Avenue Improvement Area," shall apply to properties in the Twenty-Fifth Avenue Improvement Area and the use limitations contained in Section 27.30.027, "Permitted and special uses—Hillsdale Station Area Plan Active Zone," shall apply to properties in the Hillsdale Station Area Plan Active Zone:

(a) Animal grooming, provided no overnight boarding occurs on the site;

(b) Bakeries;

(c) Barber shops and hair salons;

(d) Delicatessens;

(e) Dry cleaners, with customer service areas;

(f) Financial institutions, provided the ground floor area devoted to this use does not exceed 2,500 square feet per establishment;

(g) Health studios and spas;

(h) Laundromats;

(i) Libraries;

(j) Low Barrier Navigation Center above the ground floor in compliance with Government Code Sections 65660-65668 shall be considered a use by-right. "Use by right" shall have the same meaning as defined in subdivision (i) of Section 65583.2. Supportive housing shall also comply with Section 27.94.020 By-Right Residential Use Requirements and subject only to those objective development standards and policies that apply to other multifamily development within the same zone.

(k) Newspaper publishing;

(l) Offices, provided the ground floor area devoted to this use does not exceed 2,500 square feet per establishment;

(m) Photo processing;

(n) Picture framing;

(o) Real estate establishments;

(p) Residential units above the ground floor that comply with the objective development standards for the R3 District in Chapter 27.22 and affordable housing requirements as adopted by City Council resolution, unless otherwise specified in Chapter 27.29;

(q) Restaurants and accessory outdoor dining areas, without drive-through facilities;

(r) Retail uses, such as, but not limited to, the following uses, subject to a maximum of 15,000 square feet of floor area per establishment except for supermarkets and drug stores:

(1) Antique shops,

(2) Apparel sales, tailoring and repair stores,

(3) Drug stores,

(4) Hardware and garden supply stores,

(5) Household furnishings,

(6) Pet shops,

(7) Supermarkets and grocery stores;

(s) Reverse vending machines, subject to regulations established in Chapter 27.69;

(t) Schools and day care facilities;

(u) Travel agencies;

(v) Temporary buildings for construction purposes for a period not to exceed the duration of such construction;

(w) Accessory uses to principle uses permitted; and

(x) Other compatible uses as determined by the zoning administrator.

Section 6. Section 27.32.010 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.32.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Permitted uses in the C1 district;

(b) Art galleries;

(c) Automotive accessory stores, excluding on-site service and repair of vehicles;

(d) Boarding, lodging, or rooming houses;

(e) Catering services;

(f) Hotels and motels, including restaurant and meeting rooms;

(g) Laundries;

(h) Medical and dental clinics, including laboratories;

(i) Offices;

(j) Parking facilities;

(k) Printing, lithographing, or publishing establishments for newspaper, business cards, and other similar uses;

(l) Radio and television broadcasting stations;

(m) Reproduction services;

(n) Residential units above the ground floor that comply with the objective development standards within the R4 district in Chapter 27.24 and affordable housing requirements as adopted by City Council resolution, except as otherwise specified in Chapter 27.29;

(o) Retail uses, including incidental rental and repair;

(p) Emergency Shelters;

(q) Accessory uses to principle uses permitted; and

(r) Other compatible uses as determined by the zoning administrator.

Section 7. Section 27.34.010 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.34.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Permitted uses in the C1 and C2 districts;

(b) Residential units above the ground floor that comply with the objective development standards for the R4 District in Chapter 27.24 and affordable housing requirements as adopted by City Council resolution, except as otherwise specified in Chapter 27.29;

(c) Ambulance service;

(d) Automobile, boat, and truck sales and rental, including service and repair as accessory to the primary sales use, sales may occur on open lot;

(e) Automobile service, parts, and repairs, classified as minor motor vehicle repair in Section 27.04.325;

(f) Car wash and detailing facilities, may not occur on open lot;

(g) Laboratories, research, experimental, and testing, provided no production or manufacturing of products occurs on the premises;

(h) Accessory uses to principle uses permitted; and

(i) Other compatible uses as determined by the Zoning Administrator.

Section 8. Section 27.36.010 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.36.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Permitted uses in the C1, C2, and C3 districts, except that residential uses, low barrier navigation centers, office uses on the properties along Palm Avenue between Twentieth and Twenty-fifth Avenues, and emergency shelters are prohibited;

(b) Air conditioning and heating sales and service;

(c) Animal hospitals, which may include outdoor kennels;

(d) Automotive parts, service, and repair classified as major motor vehicle repair in Section 27.04.320;

(e) Construction materials sales and lumberyards;

(f) Dry cleaning establishments, without customer service areas;

(g) Linen, towel, diaper and other similar supply services;

(h) Machinery sales, rental, and service, when conducted within an enclosed building;

(i) Parcel delivery and receiving stations;

(j) Processing and assembly of goods determined by the Zoning Administrator to be compatible with adjacent uses, provided that space in a building does not exceed six thousand square feet of total floor area and basement space, not including stairwells or elevator shafts; and provided that such processing or assembly can be conducted without noise, vibration, order, dust or any other condition which might be disturbing to occupants of adjacent buildings. When manufacturing operations of the same or similar products demand space exceeding six thousand square feet, they shall be located in the M1 district.

(k) Sheet metal shops;

(l) Storage and warehousing;

(m) Tool, die and pattern making;

(n) Welding and iron work;

(o) Wholesale establishments;

(p) Accessory to principal uses permitted;

(q) Other compatible uses as determined by the Zoning Administrator.

Section 9. Section 27.38.020 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.38.020 Permitted Uses

Unless otherwise provided in this title, uses of building or land in this district and buildings hereafter erected, structurally altered or enlarged shall be limited to the following uses:

(a) Any use permitted in the C2 District, except an animal hospital and emergency shelters; provided that the use limitations contained in Section 27.38.110, Required Retail Frontage, shall apply to properties located within the required retail frontage area, as shown in the Downtown Plan.

(b) Residential units, when located above the ground floor and as part of a mixed-use development, subject to CBD residential development standards and affordable housing requirements as adopted by City Council resolution;

(c) Name plates and signs, as classified and regulated in Title 25.

(d) Accessory uses which are necessary to the above-mentioned buildings and uses; including a maximum of 15% of floor area for ancillary office uses related to retail establishments located in the ground floor area of the district, and which are not visible from the street nor located within the retail storefront area.

(e) Any other use deemed similar in nature and operation that is determined by the Zoning Administrator to be compatible with existing and permitted uses allowable under the CBD Central Business District zoning and is deemed desirable in serving the downtown core area and the community at large.

Section 10. Subsection (a)(1) of Section 27.38.110 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.38.110 Required Retail Frontage

(a) Permitted Uses. The following uses are permitted on the ground floor subject to the requirements in Section 27.38.040, Conditions of Use, and the standards listed in subsection (c) below:

(1) Retail Sales. Uses principally engaged in retail sale or rental of consumer or household goods, including ancillary repair services.

Section 11. Section 27.44.020 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.44.020 Permitted Uses

The following uses shall be permitted:

(a) Administrative, executive, and professional offices, provided that the professional offices are limited to those professions listed in Section 5.24.160, and including similar professional occupations, and provided that no office of a veterinarian shall include an animal hospital or kennel.

(b) Accessory uses; including, but not limited to:

(1) Sale of personal goods and services, when provided in the principal building, including, but not limited to, the following:

(A) Flower, food, and news vending;

(B) Printing and photocopying;

(C) Travel agencies;

(D) Ticket outlets;

(2) Other services which are customary appurtenant uses.

(c) Health and recreation facilities.

(d) Public utility and service uses.

(e) Financial and business offices and related facilities.

(f) Research laboratories (experimental and testing), provided no production or manufacturing occurs, and provided that all activities conform with the performance standards established for the M1 district.

(g) Residential units that comply with the objective development standards for the R3 District in Chapter 27.22 and affordable housing requirements as adopted by City Council resolution, unless otherwise specified in Chapter 27.29.

(h) Restaurants without drive-through facilities.

(i) Schools and day care facilities.

(j) Temporary buildings for construction purposes for a period not to exceed the duration of such construction.

(k) Warehousing, storage, and distribution facilities as accessory uses but not exceeding 10,000 square feet per establishment or not more than 60% of gross floor area per establishment.

(l) Other compatible uses as determined by the Zoning Administrator.

Section 12. Section 27.48.030 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.48.030 Special Uses

Special Uses in the E1 district may also be allowed, subject to approval of a special use permit.

Section 13. Chapter 27.50 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is added to Title 27 as follows:

Chapter 27.50
R6 District - High Density Multiple Family Residential

27.50.005 Purpose

The R6 High Density Multiple Family District correlates with the Residential Medium II Land Use Designation and will provide for higher-density, multi-family residential development, including condominiums and apartments, in locations near mixed-use, office, and commercial areas.

27.50.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Home daycare centers;

(b) Multiple family dwellings;

(c) Supportive housing in compliance with Government Code Sections 65650 - 65656, shall be considered a use by-right. "Use by right" shall have the same meaning as defined in Government Code Section 65583.2(i). Supportive housing shall also comply with Section 27.94.020 By-Right Residential Use Requirements and subject only to those objective development standards and policies that apply to other multifamily development within the same zone.

(d) Licensed residential care facilities including group homes with six (6) or fewer residents, in addition to the caregiver's family, subject to the objective development standards that apply to other residential uses of the same type in the same zone. Certain licensed group homes shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9, as amended from time to time; and

(e) Residential care homes of any size regardless of State licensing; and

(f) Temporary buildings for construction purposes for a period not to exceed the duration of such construction.

27.50.020 Special Uses

Unless otherwise provided, the following uses may be permitted subject to the approval of a special use permit by the Planning Commission:

(a) Boarding and lodging houses;

(b) Nursing, hospice, and/or convalescent facility;

(c) Residential care facility (excluding group homes) with seven (7) or more residents in addition to the caregiver. Certain licensed care facilities shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9;

(d) Fraternity and sorority houses.

27.50.030 Off-Street Parking

Off-street parking facilities shall be provided as required in the off-street parking code (Chapter 27.64).

27.50.040 Density

The maximum density shall be 99 dwelling units per acre.

~~27.50.050 Floor Area Ratio~~

~~The maximum floor area ratio of buildings and structures on a zoning plot shall be 3.5.~~

27.50.0560 Building Height

Building height limit for this district shall be a maximum of six stories and seventy-five (75) feet.

27.50.0670 Minimum Yards

A rear yard setback of five (5) feet must be provided.

27.50.0780 Buffers

Buffers shall be provided as follows:

(a) If a side property line is adjacent to a R1 or R2 district, a buffer of ten (10) feet must be provided.

(b) If a rear property line is adjacent to R1 or R2 district, a buffer of fifteen (15) feet shall be provided.

27.50.0890 Open Space

Residential development shall provide open space as follows:

(a) Private usable open space only: A minimum of 50 square feet of private usable open space per unit; or

(b) Common usable open space only: A minimum of 75 square feet of common usable open space per unit; or

(c) Combination of private and common open space:

(1) Private usable open space, at a minimum of 30 square feet per unit, and

(2) Common usable open space equal to at least 150% of the difference between the private usable open space requirement and the proposed amount of private usable open space.

(3) For example, a development proposing 30 square feet of private usable open space per unit would also have to provide 30 square feet of common usable open space per unit. [Formula Example: (50 square feet – 30 square feet) * 150% = 30 common usable square feet.]

Section 14. Chapter 27.51 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is added to Title 27 as follows:

Chapter 27.51
R7 District - High Density Multiple Family Residential

27.51.005 Purpose

The R7 Multiple Family Dwellings District correlates with the Residential High Land Use Designation and is intended to provide for high-density multi-family residential development, including condominiums and apartments. The R7 District is intended for development in Downtown San Mateo, in proximity to Caltrain stations, and along major transit corridors such as El Camino Real.

27.51.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Home daycare centers;

(b) Multiple-family dwellings;

(c) Supportive housing in compliance with Government Code Sections 65650 - 65656, shall be considered a use by-right. "Use by right" shall have the same meaning as defined in Government Code Section 65583.2(i). Supportive housing shall also comply with Section 27.94.020 By-Right Residential Use Requirements and subject only to those objective development standards and policies that apply to other multifamily development within the same zone.

(d) Licensed residential care facilities including group homes with six (6) or fewer residents, in addition to the caregiver's family, subject to the objective development standards that apply to other residential uses of the same type in the same zone. Certain licensed group homes shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9, as amended from time to time; and

(e) Temporary buildings for construction purposes for a period not to exceed the duration of such construction.

27.51.020 Special Uses

Unless otherwise provided the following uses may be permitted subject to the approval of a special use permit by the Planning Commission:

(a) Boarding and lodging houses;

(b) Nursing, hospice, and/or convalescent facility;

(c) Residential care facility (excluding group homes) with seven (7) or more residents in addition to the caregiver. Certain licensed care facilities shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9;

(d) Fraternity and sorority houses.

27.51.030 Off-Street Parking

Off-street parking facilities shall be provided as required in the off-street parking code (Chapter 27.64).

27.51.040 Density

The maximum density shall be 130 dwelling units per acre.

~~27.51.050 Floor Area Ratio~~

~~The maximum floor area ratio of buildings and structures on a zoning plot shall be 4.0.~~

27.51.0560 Building Height

Building height limit for this district shall be a maximum of eight stories and one hundred (100) feet.

27.51.0670 Minimum Yards

A rear setback of five (5) feet must be provided.

27.51.0780 Buffers

Buffers shall be provided as follows:

(a) Side. If a side property line is adjacent to a R1 or R2 district, a buffer of ten (10) feet must be provided.

(b) Rear. If a rear property line is adjacent to R1 or R2 district, a buffer of fifteen (15) feet shall be provided.

27.51.0890 Open Space

Residential development shall provide open space as follows:

(a) Private usable open space only: A minimum of 50 square feet of private usable open space per unit; or

(b) Common usable open space only: A minimum of 75 square feet of common usable open space per unit; or

(c) Combination of private and common open space:

(1) A combination of private usable open space, at a minimum of 30 square feet per unit, and

(2) Common usable open space equal to at least 150% of the difference between the private usable open space requirement and the proposed amount of private usable open space.

(3) For example, a development proposing 30 square feet of private usable open space per unit would also have to provide 30 square feet of common usable open space per unit. [Formula Example: (50 square feet – 30 square feet) * 150% = 30 square feet of common usable open space.]

Section 15. Chapter 27.52 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is added to Title 27 as follows:

Chapter 27.52
MU3 District – Medium Density Mixed-Use

27.52.005 Purpose

The MU3 Medium Density Mixed-Use District is intended to allow medium-density, mixed-use buildings that provide a mix of commercial, office, and/or residential uses within the same site or building as well as individual commercial, office, or residential uses. The MU3 District is intended to allow a mix of uses near other mixed-use, commercial, or residential areas, and within Downtown San Mateo.

27.52.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Accessory uses to principal uses permitted;

(b) Animal grooming, provided no overnight boarding occurs on the site;

(c) Art galleries;

(d) Automotive accessory stores, excluding on-site service and repair of vehicles;

(e) Boarding, lodging, or rooming houses;

(f) Emergency Shelters;

(g) Financial institutions;

(h) Health studios and spas;

(i) Hotels and motels, including restaurants and meeting rooms;

(j) Libraries;

(k) Low Barrier Navigation Center above the ground floor in compliance with Government Code Sections 65660-65668 shall be considered a use by-right. "Use by- right" shall have the same meaning as defined in subdivision (i) of Section 65583.2. Supportive housing shall comply with Section 27.94.020 By-Right Residential

Use Requirements and subject only to those objective development standards and policies that apply to other multifamily development within the same zone.

(l) Medical and dental clinics, including laboratories;

(m) Offices;

(n) Personal Services;

(o) Real estate establishments;

(p) Multi-family residential units;

(q) Supportive housing in compliance with Government Code Sections 65650 - 65656, shall be considered a use by-right use. "Use by right" shall have the same meaning as defined in Government Code Section 65583.2(i). Supportive housing shall also comply with Section 27.94.020 By-Right Residential Use Requirements and subject only to those objective development standards and policies that apply to other multifamily development within the same zone.

(r) Licensed residential care facilities including group homes with six (6) or fewer residents, in addition to the caregiver's family, subject to the objective development standards that apply to other residential uses of the same type in the same zone. Certain licensed group homes shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9, as amended from time to time;

(s) Restaurants, catering services, and accessory outdoor dining areas, without drive-through facilities;

(t) Retail uses, including ancillary rental and repair;

(u) Schools and day care facilities;

(v) Temporary buildings for construction purposes for a period not to exceed the duration of such construction; and

(w) Other compatible uses as determined by the Zoning Administrator.

27.52.020 Special Uses

The following uses may also be permitted subject to approval of a special use permit, provided that the use limitations contained in Section 27.30.025, "Permitted and special uses—Twenty-Fifth Avenue Improvement Area," shall apply to properties in the Twenty-Fifth Avenue improvement Area and the use limitations contained in Section 27.30.027, "Permitted and special uses—Hillsdale Station Area Plan Active Zone," shall apply to properties in the Hillsdale Station Area Plan Active Zone:

(a) Alternative financial services, subject to the restrictions set forth in Section 27.30.020;

(b) Automobile gasoline service station;

(c) Automotive sales;

(d) Clubs, lodges, and fraternal organizations;

(e) Parking facilities, as a principal use;

(f) Residential care facility (excluding group homes) with seven (7) or more residents in addition to the caregiver. Certain licensed care facilities shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9;

(g) Religious institutions; and

(h) Other compatible uses as determined by the Zoning Administrator subject to the granting of a special use permit.

27.52.030 Conditions Of Use

All uses, except residences, shall be subject to the following conditions:

(a) Manufacturing, processing, or treatment of products which is clearly ancillary and essential to the retail business may be conducted on the same premises;

(b) Uses shall not generate odor, dust, smoke, noise, vibration, toxic waste or other emissions which constitute nuisances;

(c) Exterior signs shall pertain only to a use conducted within the building;

(d) Uses shall be conducted wholly within an enclosed building, except as authorized by special use permit, or as previously authorized, or if the use is legally nonconforming.

27.52.040 Off-Street Parking And Loading

Off-street parking facilities shall be provided as required in the off-street parking code (Chapter 27.64).

27.52.050 Maximum Floor Area Ratio

The maximum floor area ratio of buildings and structures on a zoning plot shall be 4.0. ~~[Alternative - add the following text: "~~Floor area ratio shall only apply to nonresidential portions of a building.~~"]~~

27.52.060 Density

The minimum density for projects with five or more residential units shall be consistent with section 27.02.230. The maximum density for residential developments shall be 99 dwelling units per acre.

27.52.070 Building Height

Building height shall not exceed the following:

(a) A maximum of four stories and fifty (50) feet for a nonresidential building;

(b) A maximum of six stories and seventy-five (75) feet for a residential building or mixed-use building with residential uses.

27.52.080 Minimum Yards

A rear yard of not less than five (5) feet shall be provided.

27.52.090 Buffers

Buffers shall be provided as follows:

(a) Side. If a side property line is adjacent to a R1 or R2 district, a buffer of ten (10) feet must be provided.

(b) Rear. If a rear property line is adjacent to R1 or R2 district, a buffer of fifteen (15) feet shall be provided.

27.52.100 Open Space

Residential development shall provide open space as follows:

(a) Private usable open space only: A minimum of 50 square feet of private usable open space per unit; or

(b) Common usable open space only: A minimum of 75 square feet of common usable open space per unit; or

(c) Combination of private and common open space:

(1) A combination of private usable open space, at a minimum of 30 square feet per unit, and

(2) Common usable open space equal to at least 150% of the difference between the private usable open space requirement and the proposed amount of private usable open space.

(3) For example, a development proposing 30 square feet of private usable open space per unit would also have to provide 30 square feet of common usable open space per unit. [Formula Example: (50 square feet – 30 square feet) * 150% = 30 common usable square feet.]

27.52.110 Setback And Build-To-Line Standards For El Camino Real

The regulations governing setback and build-to-line standards for El Camino Real in the C1 district shall apply.

Section 16. Chapter 27.53 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is added to Title 27 as follows:

Chapter 27.53
MU4 District – High Density Mixed-Use

27.53.005 Purpose

The MU4 High Density Mixed-Use District is intended to allow high-density mixed-use buildings that provide a mix of commercial, office, and/or residential uses within the same site or building as well as individual commercial, office, or residential uses. The MU4 District is intended to allow a mix of uses near major streets, train stations, and shopping centers, and within Downtown San Mateo.

27.53.010 Permitted Uses

The following uses are permitted:

(a) Permitted uses in the MU3 District.

27.53.020 Special Uses

The following uses may also be permitted subject to approval of a special use permit, provided that the use limitations contained in Section 27.30.025, "Permitted and special uses—Twenty-Fifth Avenue Improvement Area," shall apply to properties in the Twenty-Fifth Avenue improvement Area and the use limitations contained in Section 27.30.027, "Permitted and special uses—Hillsdale Station Area Plan Active Zone," shall apply to properties in the Hillsdale Station Area Plan Active Zone:

(a) Alternative financial services, subject to the restrictions set forth in Section 27.30.020;

(b) Automobile gasoline service station;

(c) Automotive sales;

(d) Clubs, lodges, and fraternal organizations;

(e) Parking facilities, as a principle use;

(f) Residential care facility (excluding group homes) with seven (7) or more residents in addition to the caregiver. Certain licensed care facilities shall be subject to separation requirements pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 1267.9;

(g) Religious institutions; and

(h) Other compatible uses as determined by the Zoning Administrator subject to the granting of a special use permit.

27.53.030 Conditions of use

All uses, except residences, shall be subject to the following conditions:

(a) Manufacturing, processing, or treatment of products which is clearly ancillary and essential to the retail business may be conducted on the same premises;

(b) Uses shall not generate odor, dust, smoke, noise, vibration, toxic waste or other emissions which constitute nuisances;

(c) Exterior signs shall pertain only to a use conducted within the building;

(d) Uses shall be conducted wholly within an enclosed building, except as authorized by special use permit, or as previously authorized, or if the use is legally nonconforming.

27.53.040 Off-Street Parking and Loading

Off-street parking facilities shall be provided as required in the off-street parking code (Chapter 27.64).

27.53.050 Maximum Floor Area Ratio

The maximum floor area ratio of buildings and structures on a zoning plot shall be 4.5. ~~[Alternative - add the following text: "~~Floor area ratio shall only apply to nonresidential portions of a building.~~"]~~

27.53.060 Density

The minimum density for projects with five or more residential units shall be consistent with section 27.02.230. The maximum density for residential developments shall be 130 dwelling units per acre.

27.53.070 Building Height

Building height shall not exceed the following:

(a) A maximum of five stories and sixty five (65) feet for a nonresidential building;

(b) A maximum of eight stories and one hundred (100) feet for a residential building or a mixed-use building with residential uses.

27.53.080 Minimum Yards

A rear yard of not less than five (5) feet shall be provided.

27.53.090 Buffers

Buffers shall be provided when adjacent to an R1 or R2 district as follows:

(a) Side. If a side property line is adjacent to a R1 or R2 district, a buffer of ten (10) feet must be provided.

(b) Rear. If a rear property line is adjacent to R1 or R2 district, a buffer of fifteen (15) feet shall be provided.

27.53.100 Open Space

Residential development shall provide open space as follows:

(a) Private usable open space only: A minimum of 50 square feet of private usable open space per unit; or

(b) Common usable open space only: A minimum of 75 square feet of common usable open space per unit; or

(c) Combination of private and common open space:

(1) A combination of private usable open space, at a minimum of 30 square feet per unit, and

(2) Common usable open space equal to at least 150% of the difference between the private usable open space requirement and the proposed amount of private usable open space.

(3) For example, a development proposing 30 square feet of private usable open space per unit would also have to provide 30 square feet of common usable open space per unit. [Formula Example: (50 square feet – 30 square feet) * 150% = 30 common usable square feet.]

27.53.110 Setback And Build-To-Line Standards For El Camino Real

The regulations governing setback and build-to-line standards for El Camino Real in the C1 district shall apply.

Section 17. Section 27.71.020 of the San Mateo Municipal Code is amended as follows:

27.71.020 Scope

This chapter shall apply as a minimum for all projects requiring approval of a planning application pursuant to Section 27.08.010, except for single-family dwelling design review and 100% affordable housing development applications. Landscaping not subject to this chapter shall be governed by the provisions of Chapter 13.40. The Zoning Administrator may determine that minor additions or changes to existing property are not reasonably related to the purpose of this chapter and may be exempt from the requirements of this chapter.

Section 18. Environmental Determination. In accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, section 21080.17 of the Public Resources Code and Section 15183 of the CEQA Guidelines, this action is statutorily exempt.

Section 19. Severability. In the event any section, clause or provision of this Ordinance shall be determined invalid or unconstitutional, such section, clause or provision shall be deemed severable and all other sections or portions hereof shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 20. Publication. This Ordinance shall be published in summary in a newspaper of general circulation, posted in the City Clerk's Office, and posted on the City's website, all in accord with Section 2.15 of the City Charter.

Section 21. Legislative History and Effective Date. This Ordinance was introduced on Clerk to complete., and adopted on Clerk to complete., and shall be effective 30 days after its adoption.

[redacted]

From: Martin McTaggart
Sent: Monday, September 14, 2026 1:03 PM
To: Chantal Eaton
Subject: FW: Four Ways the Zoning Ordinance Fails San Mateos Historic Districts, Resources, and Landmarks. (File ID 26-11552)

Hi Chantal,

Kindly append this as public comment to the ordinance adoption item on 9/22.

Thank you,
Martin

From: Doug D'Anna <[redacted]>
Sent: Monday, September 14, 2026 12:51 PM
To: Clerk <clerk@cityofsanmateo.org>; City Council (San Mateo) <citycouncil@cityofsanmateo.org>; Zachary Dahl <zdahl@cityofsanmateo.org>
Cc: [redacted]; Laurie Hietter [redacted]>; Ashley Zerpa <[redacted]>; Ruthmary Cradler [redacted]>
Subject: Four Ways the Zoning Ordinance Fails San Mateos Historic Districts, Resources, and Landmarks. (File ID 26-11552)



September 2026

Mayor and Members of the City Council
City of San Mateo
330 W. 20th Avenue, San Mateo, CA 94403

Re: File ID 26-11552 — Agenda Item 18 — High-Density Mixed-Use and Multi-Family Zoning Districts

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

I am submitting this letter to document four distinct ways the proposed ordinance fails to extend historic-adjacency protection to San Mateo's historic districts and resources — each traced to the City's own adopted standards and certified environmental record.

Executive Summary

The City's proposed zoning ordinance (File ID 26-11552) creates four new high-density districts — R6, R7, MU3, MU4 — but does not extend historic-adjacency protection to them.

The standard isn't new. Every parcel adjacent to an R1 or R2 zone already gets a mandatory buffer. No parallel buffer specificially exists for adjacency to a historic district. landmark or resource.

The ordinance exempts itself from CEQA, up front, by claiming consistency with the General Plan[1] — yet the General Plan itself calls for exactly the standard this ordinance omits (Action CD 5.12[2]).

The City's own certified Final EIR named that same action, by name, as the fix for a formal Heritage Alliance objection[3] — and never delivered it.

Without this amendment, any protection San Mateo's historic districts have is an accident of unrelated zoning, not a recognition of their historic status — protection this same ordinance could erase the moment a parcel inside or directly adjacent to them is upzoned.

The ask: pause adoption; insert one subsection into four existing sections extending the R1/R2 buffer to historic districts and resources.

Failure 1 — The Missing Buffer

R7 alone permits 8 stories / 100 feet, with just a 5-foot rear setback[4].

Chapter 27.66 already requires review — a planning application or Certificate of Appropriateness — whenever a historic building is altered[5]. It has never governed what's built beside a historic resource.

The new ordinance's buffer trigger: 10-ft side / 15-ft rear buffer, only if adjacent to an R1 or R2 zone[6]. No equivalent trigger exists for historic adjacency, anywhere in Chapters 27.50–27.53.

> *"If a side property line is adjacent to a R1 or R2 district, a buffer of ten (10) feet must be provided..."*— *Municipal Code § 27.50.080, identical across all four new districts*

Same ordinance, same city — a buffer is required next to an R1 or R2 zone; none is required next to a historic district or resource.

Where a historic district's underlying zoning happens to be R1, as it does for at least part of the Glazenwood Historic District and the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House Historic District, a parcel there may receive today's buffer — but only as an accident of that unrelated zoning, not because the ordinance recognizes historic status.

The Downtown Historic District, which is not zoned R1, receives no buffer of any kind. And even where the buffer applies today, nothing in the ordinance ties it to historic status — it would disappear the moment that parcel were rezoned under one of the very districts this ordinance creates.

The gap has only widened since. The City's own 2023 *Multi-Family and Residential Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards* — still in effect today, and entirely independent of this ordinance — go further still. Section 4.4.1, Neighborhood Transitions, requires mandatory stepbacks for any qualifying project within 10 to 20 feet of an abutting R1 zoning district: a five-foot third-story stepback for low-rise buildings, ten- to twenty-foot stepbacks above the second story for mid-rise and high-rise buildings, plus mandatory evergreen screening along the property line[7]. Every one of these triggers is keyed to R1 zoning. None of them is keyed to a historic district, landmark, contributor, or historic resource — those words do not appear anywhere in the standard.

CEQA requires evaluating a project's impact on a historic resource's surroundings, not just the resource itself[8]. This standard and the buffer above are now two separate City rules, both keyed to R1 adjacency, both silent on historic adjacency. And as Failure 3 shows, the City drew this same line thirty years earlier, in 1993 — recognizing that adjacency to a historic resource creates a design impact worth regulating, and then never carrying that recognition forward.

Failure 2 — The CEQA Self-Exemption

CEQA recognizes harm to a historic resource's surroundings, not just the resource itself, as potentially significant[8].

Section 18 declares the ordinance "statutorily exempt" from further CEQA review, on the basis of General Plan consistency[9]. No historic-adjacency study accompanies it.

The consistency claim doesn't hold: the General Plan's Action CD 5.12 calls for exactly the standard the ordinance skips[10].

This isn't inference — it's the City's own record. Heritage Alliance formally objected (Sept. 2023) that the Draft EIR's historic-resources analysis was inadequate[11].

> *"Action CD 5.12 Historic Resources Design Standards. Create objective design standards for alterations to historic resources and contributors to a designated historic district, and new development adjacent to historic resources within historic districts."* — *Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040, p. 116, Chapter 5: Community Design and Historic Resources Element (adopted May 31, 2024)*

Every new project already needs Site Plan and Architectural Review, which requires it be "in scale and harmonious with the character of the neighborhood"[12]. That finding is discretionary, citywide, and predates this ordinance — it never mentions historic resources by name. A subjective aesthetic finding is not the objective design standard this action requires.

Why This Gap Exists

Two City systems — historic review and zoning — were never measured against each other. Historic review governs the building. Zoning governs what's built beside it. Neither covers the seam between them.

Any parcel near a historic district can be reclassified into a new high-density district with zero historic-adjacency review.

Failure 3 — The Zoning Code Ignores Its Own Historic-Preservation Framework

The Zoning Code cites the General Plan for CEQA consistency — but nothing historic in any of these four documents is cross-referenced in it:

1. Historic Context Statement (2026) — Defines what's historic and why.[13]

2. Preservation Ordinance (Ch. 27.66) — Sets the legal test: any alteration to a Landmark or Contributor must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, incorporated by reference — including Standard 9, which requires new construction to be compatible in scale and massing.[14]

3. Downtown Retail Core & Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines (1993) — Translates the test into a design standard — but scoped by section number to the old chapters, not the new districts.[15]

4. General Plan (Action CD 5.12, 2024) — Calls for design standards for development adjacent to historic resources — already adopted, never implemented.

5. Zoning Code (Ch. 27.50–53) — The only one that grants permission to build — and the only one none of the other four are cross-referenced in.

Two of these are binding law the ordinance is supposed to be consistent with — the Preservation Ordinance and Action CD 5.12. Neither is cited. The other two are the City's own guidance, one of them three decades old, both admitting the same problem this ordinance ignores.

The City has used item 3 before — and never carried it into the new districts. The 1993 *Downtown Retail Core & Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines* devote an entire section (Guidelines CC–FF) to non-historic buildings within the Downtown Historic District, stating they apply "to ensure that new development is compatible with existing historic buildings."[15]

The guidelines direct new construction to align cornices with neighboring historic buildings (CC), incorporate common facade components (DD), echo the architectural rhythm of nearby historic structures (EE), and match materials common to historic buildings (FF). That the City felt compelled to write these guidelines in 1993 is itself an admission that adjacency to a historic resource creates a design impact worth regulating — the exact impact this ordinance now ignores for the four new districts.

But those guidelines only reach buildings sited within the mapped Downtown Historic District boundary — they say nothing about a parcel just outside that boundary, looking in. And even within the boundary, they are discretionary: the City's own guidelines state that "the approving body may approve projects not in compliance with the guidelines" when it determines other solutions may be preferable[15] — not an objective, code-enforceable standard like the one the City already requires for R1 adjacency today.

The City may argue that zoning code doesn't typically cite outside guidance. But this ordinance already does exactly that when it chooses to — deferring to "the Downtown Plan" for retail frontage requirements[16], and to "an adopted plan, such as the Mariner's Island Specific Plan or the Bay Meadows Specific Plan" for other exclusions[17]. The zoning code is comfortable citing outside plans. It has simply never chosen to for anything historic — which is exactly what makes Section 18's claim of General Plan consistency, addressed in Failure 2, difficult to sustain.

Thirty years after 1993, the City wrote a second design standard for R1 adjacency — see Failure 1. It still didn't carry the lesson forward. Two chances, three decades apart, both taken for an ordinary neighbor and both missed for a historic one.

In the Ordinance's Own Words: The Zoning Code Totally Ignores Historic Preservation

This is not paraphrase. The following is the primary text of the proposed ordinance itself (Attachment 1).

> *"...the proposed Ordinance is consistent with the adopted General Plan in that it supports the development of housing and achieves the General Plan's stated goals and policies."— Section 1, Legislative Findings. No policy is named. Action CD 5.12 is never cited — anywhere in this ordinance.*

"Historic" appears exactly **once** across all 21 sections of this ordinance — an existing cross-reference to Chapter 27.66, confined to the Downtown Specific Plan area (Section 4). Nothing new. Nothing about the four new districts.

> *"If a side property line is adjacent to a R1 or R2 district, a buffer of ten (10) feet must be provided."— §§ 27.50.080(a), 27.51.080(a), 27.52.090(a), 27.53.090(a) — identical, word for word, in all four new chapters*

Historic district. Landmark. Contributor. Resource. ***None of these words appear.***

Failure 4 — The General Plan Called for This Design Standard in 2024

But you won't find it in the new zoning update.

2024 — The General Plan called for these design standards (Action CD 5.12). Never created.

2024 — The City's own certified EIR response promised it, by name, to answer a formal objection. Never delivered.

2026 — Still missing in this zoning ordinance, same as it was in 2024.

The Fix & The Ask

The fix has two parts — one already promised, one an interim step:

Step One (the real fix): Direct staff to implement Action CD 5.12 — the historic design review standard the City already adopted in the General Plan, and already named in its own certified Final EIR as the mitigation for this exact concern.

Step Two (interim stopgap): Add one sentence to four existing sections, extending the R1/R2 buffer to historic districts and resources, tonight, while Step One is built out.

> *"(c) If a side or rear property line is adjacent to a Historic District, Landmark, Contributor, or Historic Resource… the buffer required by subsections (a) and (b) for adjacency to an R1 or R2 district shall apply in the same manner."— Proposed new subsection (c) — the interim step, one sentence, inserted into four existing sections*

Without this amendment, any protection San Mateo's historic districts have is an accident of unrelated zoning, not a recognition of their historic status — protection this same ordinance could erase the moment a parcel inside or directly adjacent to them is upzoned.

This letter asks Council to:

1. Direct staff to implement the historic design review standard called for in Action CD 5.12, and extend the existing R1/R2 adjacency buffer to historic districts and resources, per Steps One and Two above; and
2. Direct staff to map which parcels near San Mateo's historic districts could be rezoned under the new districts, before final adoption.

Respectfully submitted,

Doug D'Anna

Laurie Hietter, San Mateo Heritage Alliance

Ashley Zerpa

Ruthmary Cradler

John Cradler

Laura Watanuki

Notes

1. Proposed Ordinance Amending Title 27 (File ID 26-11552), Section 18, citing Public Resources Code § 21080.17 and CEQA Guidelines § 15183.
2. Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040, Action CD 5.12, p. 116 (adopted March 18, 2024).
3. Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040 Final EIR, Response to Comments, Response ORG1-7, p. 5-14 (January 18, 2024).
4. San Mateo Municipal Code § 27.51.060; § 27.51.070.
5. San Mateo Municipal Code §§ 27.66.090(a)-(b), Review Required, and 27.66.100, Certificate of Appropriateness, Historic Preservation (adopted May 18, 2026).

6. San Mateo Municipal Code §§ 27.50.080(a)-(b), 27.51.080(a)-(b), 27.52.090(a)-(b), 27.53.090(a)-(b).
7. City of San Mateo, Multi-Family and Residential Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards, § 4.4.1, Neighborhood Transitions, pp. 33–34 (adopted December 4, 2023, effective January 3, 2024).
8. Public Resources Code § 21084.1; CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5(b).
9. Proposed Ordinance Amending Title 27 (File ID 26-11552), Section 18.
10. Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040, Action CD 5.12, p. 116 (adopted March 18, 2024).
11. San Mateo Heritage Alliance, comment letter on the Draft EIR, September 25, 2023 (Comment ORG1-3).
12. San Mateo Municipal Code § 27.08.030, Site Plan and Architectural Review, as amended by Section 4 of the proposed ordinance (File ID 26-11552).
13. City of San Mateo, Notice of Exemption, City of San Mateo Citywide Historic Context Statement, San Mateo County Document No. 129498 (filed May 6, 2026), citing Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040 Policy CD 5.1 and Action CD 5.9.
14. U.S. National Park Service, The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, Standard 9, incorporated by reference in San Mateo Municipal Code § 27.66.100(b)(1) (adopted May 18, 2026).
15. City of San Mateo, Downtown Retail Core & Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines (1993).
16. San Mateo Municipal Code § 27.38.020(a), Permitted Uses, as amended by Section 9 of the proposed ordinance (File ID 26-11552).
17. San Mateo Municipal Code § 27.04.200(b)(2)(G), Floor Area, as amended by Section 3 of the proposed ordinance (File ID 26-11552).

[redacted]

From: Doug D'Anna <[redacted]>
Sent: Thursday, September 17, 2026 2:40 PM
To: City Council (San Mateo); Clerk
Subject: Re: File ID 26-11552 — Zoning Code Amendments Creating R6, R7, MU3, and MU4 Districts September 22, 2026 City Council Meeting
Attachments: Four_Reasons .pptx

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Categories: Public Comment Added to SharePoint

Dear City Clerk and Members of the Council,

I am submitting the attached PowerPoint for a group presentation, *"Four Reasons This Ordinance Fails Historic San Mateo,"* for the record in connection with the above-referenced item on your September 22, 2026 agenda. I respectfully request that it be entered into the public record and distributed to Council members in advance of the meeting.

The PowerPoint sets out four specific, document-based concerns with the proposed ordinance as it relates to San Mateo's historic districts and resources:

- The ordinance's buffer requirements apply to R1 and R2 neighbors but not to historic districts or individually designated historic resources.
- No design-compatibility review applies to new construction next to a historic building or contributor outside the Downtown Retail Core.
- The ordinance does not reference any of the City's own governing historic-preservation documents.
- The ordinance's CEQA exemption relies in part on a Public Resources Code section that, by its own text, applies only to accessory dwelling unit ordinances.

The PowerPoint also notes that the City's own staff report for this item describes several of the ordinance's standards as "interim," pending the Comprehensive Zoning Code Update — while historic-district compatibility is not addressed anywhere in that report.

I ask that Council direct staff to implement Action CD 5.12 of the General Plan — the design standard the City has already adopted — and to reference historic districts, landmarks, and resources directly in this ordinance's language before final adoption.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Doug D'Anna

FILE ID 26-11552 · SEPTEMBER 2026

Four Reasons This Ordinance Fails Historic San Mateo

The new high-density zoning code doesn't just overlook our historic districts — it doesn't know they exist.

Doug D'Anna · San Mateo, CA — Glazenwood Historic District

REASON 1

1 No Buffer

R1 and R2 neighborhoods get a mandatory buffer next to new high-density construction. San Mateo's three historic districts — Downtown, Glazenwood, and Yoshiko Yamanouchi House — and its individually designated historic resources get nothing.

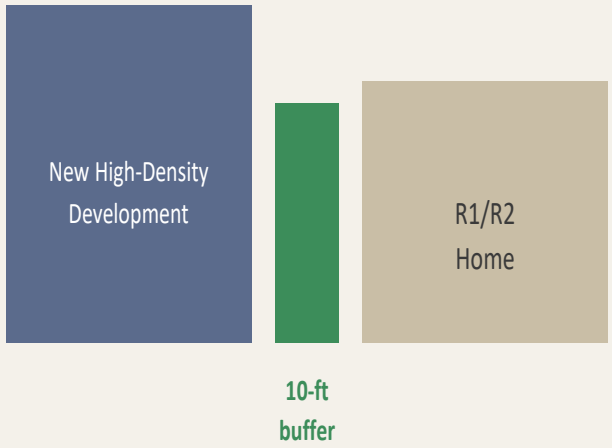
Any protection Glazenwood receives is just an accident of also being zoned R1 — not because it's historic.

Municipal Code §§ 27.50.080(a)-(b), 27.51.080(a)-(b), 27.52.090(a)-(b), 27.53.090(a)-(b)

Same Rule, Drawn to Scale

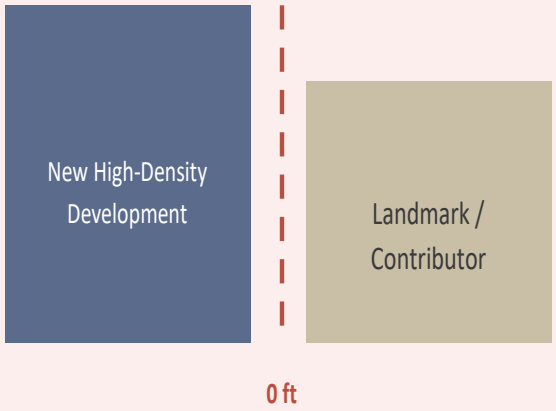
Same ordinance, same city — buffer required next to R1/R2, none required next to a historic district or resource, across all four new districts (R6, R7, MU3, MU4).

ADJACENT TO R1 / R2 ZONE



Mandatory buffer applies.

ADJACENT TO HISTORIC DISTRICT



No buffer required.

Illustrative, not to scale · Municipal Code §§ 27.50.080(a), 27.51.080(a), 27.52.090(a), 27.53.090(a) — identical across all four new districts

REASON 2

2 No Design Review

Even where a buffer exists by accident, nothing requires new construction next to a historic building or contributor outside the **Downtown Retail Core** to look compatible — no review of height, scale, or materials. The General Plan calls for exactly this kind of standard, city-wide.

A buffer is just distance. It doesn't stop a glass tower from standing right next to a historic structure.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, Standard 9 · 1993 Downtown Design Guidelines · General Plan Action CD 5.12

REASON 3

3 No Reference

The zoning code mentions historic buildings once — never for what's built beside them:

- The Historic Preservation Ordinance
- The 1993 Design Guidelines
- The 2026 Historic Context Statement
- The General Plan's own Action CD 5.12

Four documents that define what's historic and why. The zoning code acts like none of them exist.

Action CD 5.12, Historic Resources Design Standards:

> *"Create objective design standards for alterations to historic resources and contributors to a designated historic district, and new development adjacent to historic resources within historic districts. Use the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as the basis for these objective design standards to ensure projects have a contextual relationship with land uses and patterns; spatial organization; visual relationships; cultural and historic values; and the height, massing, design, and materials of historic resources."*

— Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040, Action CD 5.12

REASON 4

4 No Environmental Review

Bypasses CEQA review using the wrong exemption

The ordinance cites Public Resources Code § 21080.17 — without explanation — to bypass further CEQA review. That section, by its own text, only exempts ordinances implementing state ADU law. This ordinance creates four new high-density zoning districts. It implements nothing about ADUs.

It also claims consistency with the General Plan — a separate exemption, cited alongside the first.

But the General Plan calls for design standards covering height, massing, and materials for new construction next to historic resources — exactly the protection this ordinance skips.

You can't bypass CEQA with a citation that doesn't apply, then claim consistency with a plan you're not following.

Ordinance Section 18 · Public Resources Code § 21080.17 · CEQA Guidelines § 15183 · General Plan Action CD 5.12

THE PROMISE

The General Plan Already Called For This

Action CD 5.12, adopted in 2024, directs the City to:

> *"Create objective design standards for alterations to historic resources and contributors to a designated historic district, and new development adjacent to historic resources within historic districts. Use the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as the basis for these objective design standards to ensure projects have a contextual relationship with land uses and patterns; spatial organization; visual relationships; cultural and historic values; and the height, massing, design, and materials of historic resources."*
>
> — Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040, Action CD 5.12

The zoning code ignores it.

THE URGENCY

Interim, But Not Harmless

The City's own staff report calls this ordinance's standards "interim" — height limits and FAR are explicitly flagged for revision once the Comprehensive Zoning Code Update (CZCU) is adopted. Staff's own estimate: **mid-2027.**

Historic districts were never flagged the same way. The word "historic" does not appear once in the entire 8-page staff report.

Any project approved before the CZCU arrives gets built. "Interim" doesn't undo a building.

Agenda Report, File ID 26-11552 · Staff estimate: CZCU completion mid-2027

THE ASK

This Is a City That Takes Its History Seriously...

That is why it placed preservation in these four documents:

- The Historic Preservation Ordinance
- The 1993 Design Guidelines
- The 2026 Historic Context Statement
- The General Plan — Action CD 5.12, adopted 2024

The zoning code ignores all four.

THE ASK:

1. **Direct staff to implement Action CD 5.12 — the design standard the City already adopted.**
2. **Reference historic districts, landmarks, and resources directly in this zoning ordinance's language before final adoption.**

City of San Mateo
City Council Meeting

POST PACKET

PUBLIC COMMENT

[redacted]

From: Max Mautner <[redacted]>
Sent: Saturday, September 19, 2026 8:00 AM
To: City Council (San Mateo); Clerk
Subject: Item 17 — Alternative 4 locks in the street we already have

Mayor Loraine and Councilmembers,

In January, Veronica Vasquez was killed in the crosswalk at El Camino Real and 17th Avenue. The city's response, separating the turn phase from the walk phase, was the right fix and it moved quickly. It also cost zero parking spaces. That is the pattern: every safety improvement San Mateo has delivered on this corridor has been one that took nothing from the curb. A signal phase change is not the ceiling of what this street needs. It is what is left available once parking is off the table, and it took a death to get it.

Alternative 4 makes that constraint permanent. This corridor recorded 144 injury collisions from 2019 to 2023, eleven of them fatal or severe. The evaluation matrix in front of you rates staff's preferred alternative "Low" on Caltrans policy and "Low" for walking, biking, transit, and the environment. It is also the only alternative scored by city staff rather than by the consultant who scored the other three:

Evaluation Topic	Existing	Alt 1: Transit	Alt 2: Pedestrian	Alt 3: Bicycle	Alt 4: Spot*
Alignment with Caltrans Policy	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Low
Alignment with Local Policy	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Effect on People Walking	Low	Medium	High	High	Low
Effect on People Biking	Low	Medium	Low	High	Low
Effect on People Riding Transit	Low	High	Medium	Low	Low
Effect on People Driving and Parking	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Medium
Effect on the Environment	Low	High	Medium	High	Low
Addressing Community Input	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium

Table 1. Alternatives Evaluation Summary (Source: Central El Camino Multimodal Plan – Alternatives Evaluation Memo, Fehr & Peers, October 23, 2025)

**City of San Mateo-exclusive alternative. Individual topics were evaluated by City staff, with community input gathered through business outreach.*

The same report projects 9,000 jobs and 10,000 residents within a half mile of this street over the next 10 to 15 years. Alternative 4 hands those 10,000 new residents the El Camino Real that exists today, for decades.

The parking capacity question has already been answered, by the city's own $70,000 analysis: roughly 300 vehicles parked on El Camino at a given time, enough surrounding supply to absorb them within one to two blocks, and no corridor-wide capacity constraint. Whatever the case against reallocation is, it is not capacity.

My request: direct staff that San Mateo enters the PID with on-street parking available for reallocation where safety or transit performance requires it, and that Alternative 4 does not carry this council's support.

Explicit direction matters here, because in its absence the record reads as instruction to preserve every space regardless of whether it is occupied, what it costs the people crossing the street, and what it costs those riding the bus, my family included.

Max Mautner
Co-lead, Move San Mateo. Writing for myself.

[redacted]

From: Lisa Taner <[redacted]>
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2026 8:29 AM
To: City Council (San Mateo)
Cc: Martin McTaggart
Subject: No Upside for FAR Removal

Dear City Councilmembers,

There is no upside to removing FAR unless you are a developer. Have we not given them enough locally and via state mandates?

It's like somebody taking our city and putting it down a disposal - now we just hit the ON switch?

The impacts listed below demolish everything that makes a city enjoyable and livable. Not to mention the mountains of challenges that the fallout would bring, including impacts to utilities, storm water runoff, schools, just to name a few.

"A suburban city keeps Floor Area Ratios (FAR) to preserve its low-density character, manage local infrastructure, and protect home values. Removing FAR entirely removes a vital tool for controlling building volume, which can dramatically change a suburb.

Local governments resist removing FAR in suburban areas for several key reasons: 🏠

Preserving Neighborhood CharacterPrevents "McMansions": Without FAR limits, developers can buy modest suburban homes, tear them down, and build massive, boxy houses that max out the lot's boundaries and tower over neighbors.

Maintains Open Space: Suburbs are characterized by yards, trees, and sunlight. FAR controls the overall bulk of a building, ensuring homes don't block sunlight, destroy privacy, or eliminate green spaces. 🚙

Managing Infrastructure Limits Prevents Traffic Overload: Suburban roads, intersections, and street parking are designed for a specific, low-density capacity. Removing FAR can lead to multi-unit buildings or massive commercial spaces that cause gridlock.

Protects Utilities: Suburban sewer systems, water lines, and electrical grids have finite capacities. A sudden spike in building sizes and occupancy can overwhelm these systems, leading to costly public infrastructure upgrades.

Controls Stormwater Runoff: Larger building footprints mean fewer lawns to absorb rainwater. This increases concrete runoff, which can overwhelm suburban storm drains and cause local flooding. 📉

Safeguarding Property Values and Quality of LifeProtects Residential Stability: Dramatic, unpredictable changes to a neighborhood’s scale can hurt the resale value of existing homes, as buyers look to suburbs specifically for a spacious, uniform environment.

Maintains School Capacities: Unchecked density spikes can rapidly increase the local child population, overcrowding suburban schools that cannot easily expand their facilities."

Eliminating the FAR max, even on an interim basis, could affect all those projects already in the development pipeline. What is your hope for San Mateo's future?

Sincerely,

Lisa Taner

[redacted]

From: Rick Bonilla <[redacted]>
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2026 2:32 PM
Cc: City Council (San Mateo); Rob Newsom; Danielle Cwirko-Godycki; Lisa Diaz Nash; Nicole Fernandez; Adam Loraine; Zachary Dahl; Alex Khojikian
Subject: Re: Public comment on Agenda Item 15: Support for Zoning Amendments

Good afternoon,

As the Chair of the Board of Directors at the Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County, I would like for you to know I totally support this message. Please consider these words the same as coming directly from me.

Rick Bonilla

On Tue, Sep 22, 2026 at 2:24 PM Jeremy Levine <[redacted]> wrote:

> Good afternoon San Mateo City Council Members (and Zach and Alex!),
>
> On behalf of HLC, please vote to approve the proposed zoning code amendments contained in Agenda Item 15. These amendments faithfully implement the voters' intent in the passage of Measure T, creating new zoning districts that will facilitate more homes and quality walkable neighborhoods.
>
> Most significantly, the new districts streamline the zoning process by removing duplicative standards like Floor Area Ratio. As I wrote in a letter on July 20, " Floor Area Ratios are a duplicative zoning regulation that arbitrarily restricts building size. San Mateo already has height limits and setbacks that constrain the building envelope. Floor Area Ratio simply adds another layer of complexity with no additional benefit for the beauty or massing of buildings."
>
> To elaborate: rules like Floor Area Ratios make the zoning code less transparent and accessible to average citizens. They add layers of complexity that mean only sophisticated developers and planners, not average citizens, understand the nature of their own rules. Standards proposed by other public commenters, such as buffers around historic resources, have the same effect, turning consistent and predictable rules into patchwork standards navigable only by a select few with arcane, esoteric knowledge of the codes.
>
> The goal of the city's extensive zoning updates--and the voter-approved Measure T--is to simplify the city's code, to make San Mateo's rules accessible to the general public, to promote more homes. The new districts take a first step in that direction, laying the groundwork for more thorough updates of other preexisting districts in the coming year. Please approve them as written.
>
> Thank you for your consideration,
> Jeremy
> --
> **Jeremy Levine (he • him)**
> Policy Manager
> Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County
> [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: Doug D'Anna <[redacted]>
Sent: Monday, September 21, 2026 12:03 PM
To: Martin McTaggart
Subject: Public Comment * Updated Powerpoint 9/20/2026 -Zoning for Sept 22 Council meeting.
Attachments: ae1af20b-Four_Reasons_UPDATED_17.pptx

Martin,

Here is my public comment to go along with my added powerpoint for Tuesday's council meeting.

Please confirm you have received this.

Thanks,

DD

Public Comment — File ID 26-11552

Doug D'Anna · San Mateo, CA — Glazenwood Historic District · September 22, 2026 City Council Meeting

Mayor and Council. In the next few minutes, I'll point out four reasons why the new zoning code fails San Mateo's historic districts, landmarks, and buildings — allowing new construction up to 75 to 100 feet tall right next to them. Two things I'm asking you to do: implement General Plan Action CD 5.12, adopted in 2024, and reference historic districts directly in this ordinance's language before final adoption. Here's why.

SLIDE 2 — NO BUFFER

Failure one: no buffer. A buffer is required open space between a new tall building and the homes next door. Glazenwood only gets one by accident — we happen to be zoned for single-family homes. Downtown and the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House district don't even get the accident.

SLIDE 3 — THE DIAGRAM

Here's what that looks like, drawn to scale. Ten feet next to a regular home. Zero next to either of the two historic districts.

SLIDE 4 — NO DESIGN REVIEW

Failure two: no design review. The General Plan calls for objective design standards — height, massing, materials — near historic resources, city-wide. This ordinance only recognizes that inside the Downtown Retail Core. And

even that isn't this ordinance's doing — it's an older guideline this ordinance never touches. Glazenwood and the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House district get nothing at all — and the one review that might have caught that gap, CEQA, gets bypassed too. A buffer is distance, not compatibility.

SLIDE 5 — NO REFERENCE

Failure three: no reference. Four documents on this slide define what's historic in San Mateo. This ordinance forgets this city's great history.

SLIDE 6 — NO DISTRICT-SPECIFIC REVIEW

Failure four: no district-specific review. The ordinance cites two CEQA exemptions. The first is written for accessory dwelling units — it doesn't apply here. The second claims consistency with the City's certified 2024 General Plan environmental impact report. But nothing in the record shows that review specifically addressed effects on Glazenwood, Downtown, or the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House district.

SLIDE 7 — THE PROMISE

This slide is the fix. Action CD 5.12 — this Council already adopted it in 2024. It calls for exactly the design standards this ordinance skips.

SLIDE 8 — THE URGENCY

And this is why it can't wait. Staff calls these standards interim — but any project approved before the update arrives still gets built. "Interim" doesn't undo a building.

SLIDE 9 — THE ASK

Two asks. Direct staff to implement Action CD 5.12. And reference historic districts, landmarks, and resources directly in this ordinance's language, before final adoption.

This is a city that takes its history seriously enough to put it in four documents. Don't let the zoning code be the one place that forgets. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
Doug D'Anna

[redacted]

From: Doug D'Anna <[redacted]>
Sent: Monday, September 14, 2026 12:51 PM
To: Clerk; City Council (San Mateo); Zachary Dahl
Cc: [redacted]; Laurie Hietter; Ashley Zerpa; Ruthmary Cradler
Subject: Four Ways the Zoning Ordinance Fails San Mateos Historic Districts, Resources, and Landmarks. (File ID 26-11552)



September 2026

Mayor and Members of the City Council
City of San Mateo
330 W. 20th Avenue, San Mateo, CA 94403

Re: File ID 26-11552 — Agenda Item 18 — High-Density Mixed-Use and Multi-Family Zoning Districts

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

I am submitting this letter to document four distinct ways the proposed ordinance fails to extend historic-adjacency protection to San Mateo's historic districts and resources — each traced to the City's own adopted standards and certified environmental record.

Executive Summary

The City's proposed zoning ordinance (File ID 26-11552) creates four new high-density districts — R6, R7, MU3, MU4 — but does not extend historic-adjacency protection to them.

The standard isn't new. Every parcel adjacent to an R1 or R2 zone already gets a mandatory buffer. No parallel buffer specificially exists for adjacency to a historic district. landmark or resource.

The ordinance exempts itself from CEQA, up front, by claiming consistency with the General Plan[1] — yet the General Plan itself calls for exactly the standard this ordinance omits (Action CD 5.12[2]).

The City's own certified Final EIR named that same action, by name, as the fix for a formal Heritage Alliance objection[3] — and never delivered it.

Without this amendment, any protection San Mateo's historic districts have is an accident of unrelated zoning, not a recognition of their historic status — protection this same ordinance could erase the moment a parcel inside or directly adjacent to them is upzoned.

The ask: pause adoption; insert one subsection into four existing sections extending the R1/R2 buffer to historic districts and resources.

Failure 1 — The Missing Buffer

R7 alone permits 8 stories / 100 feet, with just a 5-foot rear setback[4].

Chapter 27.66 already requires review — a planning application or Certificate of Appropriateness — whenever a historic building is altered[5]. It has never governed what's built beside a historic resource.

The new ordinance's buffer trigger: 10-ft side / 15-ft rear buffer, only if adjacent to an R1 or R2 zone[6]. No equivalent trigger exists for historic adjacency, anywhere in Chapters 27.50–27.53.

> *"If a side property line is adjacent to a R1 or R2 district, a buffer of ten (10) feet must be provided…"* — *Municipal Code § 27.50.080, identical across all four new districts*

Same ordinance, same city — a buffer is required next to an R1 or R2 zone; none is required next to a historic district or resource.

Where a historic district's underlying zoning happens to be R1, as it does for at least part of the Glazenwood Historic District and the Yoshiko Yamanouchi House Historic District, a parcel there may receive today's buffer — but only as an accident of that unrelated zoning, not because the ordinance recognizes historic status.

The Downtown Historic District, which is not zoned R1, receives no buffer of any kind. And even where the buffer applies today, nothing in the ordinance ties it to historic status — it would disappear the moment that parcel were rezoned under one of the very districts this ordinance creates.

The gap has only widened since. The City's own 2023 *Multi-Family and Residential Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards* — still in effect today, and entirely independent of this ordinance — go further still. Section 4.4.1, Neighborhood Transitions, requires mandatory stepbacks for any qualifying project within 10 to 20 feet of an abutting R1 zoning district: a five-foot third-story stepback for low-rise buildings, ten- to twenty-foot stepbacks above the second story for mid-rise and high-rise buildings, plus mandatory evergreen screening along the property line[7]. Every one of these triggers is keyed to R1 zoning. None of them is keyed to a historic district, landmark, contributor, or historic resource — those words do not appear anywhere in the standard.

CEQA requires evaluating a project's impact on a historic resource's surroundings, not just the resource itself[8]. This standard and the buffer above are now two separate City rules, both keyed to R1 adjacency, both silent on historic adjacency. And as Failure 3 shows, the City drew this same line thirty years earlier, in 1993 — recognizing that adjacency to a historic resource creates a design impact worth regulating, and then never carrying that recognition forward.

Failure 2 — The CEQA Self-Exemption

CEQA recognizes harm to a historic resource's surroundings, not just the resource itself, as potentially significant[8].

Section 18 declares the ordinance "statutorily exempt" from further CEQA review, on the basis of General Plan consistency[9]. No historic-adjacency study accompanies it.

The consistency claim doesn't hold: the General Plan's Action CD 5.12 calls for exactly the standard the ordinance skips[10].

This isn't inference — it's the City's own record. Heritage Alliance formally objected (Sept. 2023) that the Draft EIR's historic-resources analysis was inadequate[11].

> *"Action CD 5.12 Historic Resources Design Standards. Create objective design standards for alterations to historic resources and contributors to a designated historic district, and new development adjacent to historic resources within historic districts."— Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040, p. 116, Chapter 5: Community Design and Historic Resources Element (adopted May 31, 2024)*

Every new project already needs Site Plan and Architectural Review, which requires it be "in scale and harmonious with the character of the neighborhood"[12]. That finding is discretionary, citywide, and predates this ordinance — it never mentions historic resources by name. A subjective aesthetic finding is not the objective design standard this action requires.

Why This Gap Exists

Two City systems — historic review and zoning — were never measured against each other. Historic review governs the building. Zoning governs what's built beside it. Neither covers the seam between them.

Any parcel near a historic district can be reclassified into a new high-density district with zero historic-adjacency review.

Failure 3 — The Zoning Code Ignores Its Own Historic-Preservation Framework

The Zoning Code cites the General Plan for CEQA consistency — but nothing historic in any of these four documents is cross-referenced in it:

1. Historic Context Statement (2026) — Defines what's historic and why.[13]

2. Preservation Ordinance (Ch. 27.66) — Sets the legal test: any alteration to a Landmark or Contributor must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, incorporated by reference — including Standard 9, which requires new construction to be compatible in scale and massing.[14]

3. Downtown Retail Core & Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines (1993) — Translates the test into a design standard — but scoped by section number to the old chapters, not the new districts.[15]

4. General Plan (Action CD 5.12, 2024) — Calls for design standards for development adjacent to historic resources — already adopted, never implemented.

5. Zoning Code (Ch. 27.50–53) — The only one that grants permission to build — and the only one none of the other four are cross-referenced in.

Two of these are binding law the ordinance is supposed to be consistent with — the Preservation Ordinance and Action CD 5.12. Neither is cited. The other two are the City's own guidance, one of them three decades old, both admitting the same problem this ordinance ignores.

The City has used item 3 before — and never carried it into the new districts. The 1993 *Downtown Retail Core & Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines* devote an entire section (Guidelines CC–FF) to non-historic buildings within the Downtown Historic District, stating they apply "to ensure that new development is compatible with existing historic buildings."[15]

The guidelines direct new construction to align cornices with neighboring historic buildings (CC), incorporate common facade components (DD), echo the architectural rhythm of nearby historic structures (EE), and match materials common to historic buildings (FF). That the City felt compelled to write these guidelines in 1993 is itself an admission that adjacency to a historic resource creates a design impact worth regulating — the exact impact this ordinance now ignores for the four new districts.

But those guidelines only reach buildings sited within the mapped Downtown Historic District boundary — they say nothing about a parcel just outside that boundary, looking in. And even within the boundary, they are discretionary: the City's own guidelines state that "the approving body may approve projects not in compliance with the guidelines" when it determines other solutions may be preferable[15] — not an objective, code-enforceable standard like the one the City already requires for R1 adjacency today.

The City may argue that zoning code doesn't typically cite outside guidance. But this ordinance already does exactly that when it chooses to — deferring to "the Downtown Plan" for retail frontage requirements[16], and to "an adopted plan, such as the Mariner's Island Specific Plan or the Bay Meadows Specific Plan" for other exclusions[17]. The zoning code is comfortable citing outside plans. It has simply never chosen to for anything historic — which is exactly what makes Section 18's claim of General Plan consistency, addressed in Failure 2, difficult to sustain.

Thirty years after 1993, the City wrote a second design standard for R1 adjacency — see Failure 1. It still didn't carry the lesson forward. Two chances, three decades apart, both taken for an ordinary neighbor and both missed for a historic one.

In the Ordinance's Own Words: The Zoning Code Totally Ignores Historic Preservation

This is not paraphrase. The following is the primary text of the proposed ordinance itself (Attachment 1).

> *"...the proposed Ordinance is consistent with the adopted General Plan in that it supports the development of housing and achieves the General Plan's stated goals and policies."* — *Section 1, Legislative Findings. No policy is named. Action CD 5.12 is never cited — anywhere in this ordinance.*

"Historic" appears exactly **once** across all 21 sections of this ordinance — an existing cross-reference to Chapter 27.66, confined to the Downtown Specific Plan area (Section 4). Nothing new. Nothing about the four new districts.

> *"If a side property line is adjacent to a R1 or R2 district, a buffer of ten (10) feet must be provided."* — *§§ 27.50.080(a), 27.51.080(a), 27.52.090(a), 27.53.090(a) — identical, word for word, in all four new chapters*

Historic district. Landmark. Contributor. Resource. ***None of these words appear.***

Failure 4 — The General Plan Called for This Design Standard in 2024

But you won't find it in the new zoning update.

2024 — The General Plan called for these design standards (Action CD 5.12). Never created.

2024 — The City's own certified EIR response promised it, by name, to answer a formal objection. Never delivered.

2026 — Still missing in this zoning ordinance, same as it was in 2024.

The Fix & The Ask

The fix has two parts — one already promised, one an interim step:

Step One (the real fix): Direct staff to implement Action CD 5.12 — the historic design review standard the City already adopted in the General Plan, and already named in its own certified Final EIR as the mitigation for this exact concern.

Step Two (interim stopgap): Add one sentence to four existing sections, extending the R1/R2 buffer to historic districts and resources, tonight, while Step One is built out.

> *"(c) If a side or rear property line is adjacent to a Historic District, Landmark, Contributor, or Historic Resource... the buffer required by subsections (a) and (b) for adjacency to an R1 or R2 district shall apply in the same manner."* — *Proposed new subsection (c) — the interim step, one sentence, inserted into four existing sections*

Without this amendment, any protection San Mateo's historic districts have is an accident of unrelated zoning, not a recognition of their historic status — protection this same ordinance could erase the moment a parcel inside or directly adjacent to them is upzoned.

This letter asks Council to:

1. Direct staff to implement the historic design review standard called for in Action CD 5.12, and extend the existing R1/R2 adjacency buffer to historic districts and resources, per Steps One and Two above; and
2. Direct staff to map which parcels near San Mateo's historic districts could be rezoned under the new districts, before final adoption.

Respectfully submitted,

Doug D'Anna

Laurie Hietter, San Mateo Heritage Alliance

Ashley Zerpa

Ruthmary Cradler

John Cradler

Laura Watanuki

Notes

1. Proposed Ordinance Amending Title 27 (File ID 26-11552), Section 18, citing Public Resources Code § 21080.17 and CEQA Guidelines § 15183.
2. Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040, Action CD 5.12, p. 116 (adopted March 18, 2024).
3. Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040 Final EIR, Response to Comments, Response ORG1-7, p. 5-14 (January 18, 2024).
4. San Mateo Municipal Code § 27.51.060; § 27.51.070.
5. San Mateo Municipal Code §§ 27.66.090(a)-(b), Review Required, and 27.66.100, Certificate of Appropriateness, Historic Preservation (adopted May 18, 2026).
6. San Mateo Municipal Code §§ 27.50.080(a)-(b), 27.51.080(a)-(b), 27.52.090(a)-(b), 27.53.090(a)-(b).
7. City of San Mateo, Multi-Family and Residential Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards, § 4.4.1, Neighborhood Transitions, pp. 33–34 (adopted December 4, 2023, effective January 3, 2024).
8. Public Resources Code § 21084.1; CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5(b).
9. Proposed Ordinance Amending Title 27 (File ID 26-11552), Section 18.
10. Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040, Action CD 5.12, p. 116 (adopted March 18, 2024).
11. San Mateo Heritage Alliance, comment letter on the Draft EIR, September 25, 2023 (Comment ORG1-3).
12. San Mateo Municipal Code § 27.08.030, Site Plan and Architectural Review, as amended by Section 4 of the proposed ordinance (File ID 26-11552).
13. City of San Mateo, Notice of Exemption, City of San Mateo Citywide Historic Context Statement, San Mateo County Document No. 129498 (filed May 6, 2026), citing Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040 Policy CD 5.1 and Action CD 5.9.
14. U.S. National Park Service, The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, Standard 9, incorporated by reference in San Mateo Municipal Code § 27.66.100(b)(1) (adopted May 18, 2026).

15. City of San Mateo, Downtown Retail Core & Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines (1993).
16. San Mateo Municipal Code § 27.38.020(a), Permitted Uses, as amended by Section 9 of the proposed ordinance (File ID 26-11552).
17. San Mateo Municipal Code § 27.04.200(b)(2)(G), Floor Area, as amended by Section 3 of the proposed ordinance (File ID 26-11552).

[redacted]

From: Doug D'Anna <[redacted]>
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2026 2:16 PM
To: Clerk; City Council (San Mateo)
Subject: Response to Staff Comment-Response Email of September 22, 2026

Mayor and Council,

Earlier today, staff sent a response to those who submitted comments on this item.

It confirms that Floor Area Ratio and historic buffer requirements will be assessed by the Comprehensive Zoning Code Update team.

I want that commitment on the record.

And I want to respond to it directly.

That commitment exists because people raised it. The same should be true of the other three.

Three of the four failures in this ordinance got no response at all.

Not agreement. Not disagreement. Not a word.

- **No design review standard outside the Downtown Retail Core.**
- **No reference anywhere in this ordinance's language to historic districts, landmarks, or resources.**
- **No answer on a CEQA exemption citation written for accessory dwelling units, applied here to four new high-density zones.**

That's not an accident.

It's confirmed by the CZCU's own agenda.

The November 10 Planning Commission study session covers four things:

- Height
- FAR
- Open space
- Setbacks and buffers

Design review, historic reference, and CEQA methodology are not on that list.

If they're not on the list, they are not currently planned.

And "interim" is not a limit. It's a label.

Nothing in tonight's adoption requires a project to wait for the CZCU.

Any project that comes forward under this framework before the CZCU is finished gets these standards as written — including the removed FAR maximums for R6 and R7.

Calling a standard interim doesn't make an approved building temporary.

I'm asking the Council for a direct answer tonight, not a future promise.

Does the Comprehensive Zoning Code Update's scope include design review standards, historic reference, and the CEQA citation — yes or no?

Until that answer is on the record, delay adoption of this ordinance.

Bring it back to a future meeting, where all four issues can be addressed together — not one at a time.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Doug D'Anna

[redacted]

From: Laurie Hietter <[redacted]>
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2026 8:18 AM
To: Lisa Diaz Nash; Rob Newsom; Danielle Cwirko-Godycki; [redacted]; Adam Loraine; Martin McTaggart
Cc: Doug D'Anna
Subject: High-Density Mixed-Use and Multi-Family Districts, and Zoning Code Updates

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council:

The San Mateo Heritage Alliance respectfully requests that the proposed R6 and R7 zoning districts include an objective buffer requirement when new development is adjacent to a designated historic resource, historic district, landmark, or contributing property.

The proposed ordinance already recognizes the need for buffers where
R6 and R7 properties abut R1 or R2 zoning: 10 feet along a side property line and 15 feet along a rear property line. We ask the Council to provide comparable protection where these new high-density districts directly abut historic resources.

This is a straightforward, objective development standard. It would establish a predictable physical separation before a project is designed, rather than relying on discretionary review after a substantially larger development envelope has already been established.

We anticipate that staff may respond that existing SPAR or historic-review procedures are sufficient. We respectfully disagree that discretionary review is an adequate substitute for a clearly stated objective buffer.

The proposed ordinance itself requires SPAR findings that a project be “in scale and harmonious with the character of the neighborhood.”
Those are discretionary findings, not an objective setback or buffer standard. Moreover, the current SPAR provision specifically identifies historic buildings within the Downtown Specific Plan area; it does not establish a uniform objective buffer from historic resources throughout the City.

A buffer would not prohibit development. It would simply establish a modest, predictable separation between new high-intensity development and the historic resource it may directly adjoin.

We therefore ask the Council to add an objective historic-resource buffer to the R6 and R7 standards before adopting these districts, using the existing R1/R2 buffer structure as a starting point.

At minimum, if the Council does not believe such a buffer is appropriate, we ask staff to explain publicly:

Why the existing 10-foot side and 15-foot rear buffers are appropriate when R6/R7 development adjoins R1/R2 zoning, but no comparable buffer is proposed for historic resources;

What objective standard currently provides equivalent protection for historic resources outside the Downtown Specific Plan area; and

How the City intends to implement the General Plan's direction regarding objective standards for development adjacent to historic resources.

The objective standards required in the General Plan CD 5.12 would help to address this issue. Given that it is unlikely that funds will be allocated to implement the historic standards, staff could transform appropriate guidelines from the Downtown Retail Core & Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines.
We believe these questions should be resolved before the new high-density districts are adopted. The council has a busy agenda tonight. Please delay this decision.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

San Mateo Heritage Alliance
[redacted]
Protecting Our Past for a Better Future

[redacted]

From: Jeremy Levine <[redacted]>
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2026 2:24 PM
To: City Council (San Mateo); Rob Newsom; Danielle Cwirko-Godycki; Lisa Diaz Nash; Nicole Fernandez; Adam Loraine
Cc: Zachary Dahl; Alex Khojikian
Subject: Public comment on Agenda Item 15: Support for Zoning Amendments

Good afternoon San Mateo City Council Members (and Zach and Alex!),

On behalf of HLC, please vote to approve the proposed zoning code amendments contained in Agenda Item 15. These amendments faithfully implement the voters' intent in the passage of Measure T, creating new zoning districts that will facilitate more homes and quality walkable neighborhoods.

Most significantly, the new districts streamline the zoning process by removing duplicative standards like Floor Area Ratio. As I wrote in a letter on July 20, " Floor Area Ratios are a duplicative zoning regulation that arbitrarily restricts building size. San Mateo already has height limits and setbacks that constrain the building envelope. Floor Area Ratio simply adds another layer of complexity with no additional benefit for the beauty or massing of buildings."

To elaborate: rules like Floor Area Ratios make the zoning code less transparent and accessible to average citizens. They add layers of complexity that mean only sophisticated developers and planners, not average citizens, understand the nature of their own rules. Standards proposed by other public commenters, such as buffers around historic resources, have the same effect, turning consistent and predictable rules into patchwork standards navigable only by a select few with arcane, esoteric knowledge of the codes.

The goal of the city's extensive zoning updates--and the voter-approved Measure T--is to simplify the city's code, to make San Mateo's rules accessible to the general public, to promote more homes. The new districts take a first step in that direction, laying the groundwork for more thorough updates of other preexisting districts in the coming year. Please approve them as written.

Thank you for your consideration,
Jeremy

--
Jeremy Levine (he • him)
Policy Manager
Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2026 12:10 PM
To: City Council (San Mateo)
Cc: Clerk
Subject: Please Delay the Decision on the Zoning Code Updates - R6/R7 FAR

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

Please delay the decision to remove the FAR maximums from the R6 and R7 districts and leave the proposed limits in place while this issue receives further analysis.

This is a complicated zoning change, and I do not believe the public has been given enough information to understand what eliminating FAR could mean in practice. Before making this change, the Council and the public should understand the full range of consequences—not simply whether height, setbacks and density can also regulate building size.

Has the City evaluated all the effects of eliminating FAR? For example, how could it affect development potential, building bulk, land values, development economics, future redevelopment proposals, and the City's ability to regulate development over the long term? And the difference between what could be built on an R6 or R7 property with an FAR limit versus without one?

These changes can have significant and potentially unintended consequences. Once incorporated into the zoning code, they may also affect property values and development expectations in ways that are difficult to reverse.

There is no reason to rush this decision. The public needs to understand what is being changed, why it is being changed, and the potential consequences before the Council acts.

Please delay the FAR decision, retain the proposed 3.5 FAR for R6 and 4.0 FAR for R7 in the interim, and allow time for the City and the public to fully understand the implications.

Thank you,

Lisa Maley