
The following comments were collected as part of a community workshop on policies and programs for the City of San Mateo's Housing Element on November 2, 2021 via Zoom Webinar. 35 participants joined the event and results from each five breakout room discussions is presented below. Each breakout room conducted their discussions following a presentation of background information and an overview of existing programs and policies and potential new strategies. 23 of the participants completed a poll during the event, results can be found at the end this document.

Across all five groups, community members expressed a preference for strengthening housing production and affordable housing programs and policies. Specifically, San Mateo community members in all five discussion groups expressed interest in expanding the City's commercial linkage fee. Expanding the production of missing middle housing was proposed in four of the discussion groups. Supporting the creation of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), establishing an affordable housing overlay, and increasing support for housing for people with physical and intellectual disabilities were supported in three of the discussion groups.

Each discussion group considered the following questions: "What do you think about the existing programs? Are there revisions to them that you think would be helpful to explore? As the City moves forward with planning efforts, which options would best match San Mateo's needs and community character? What questions, concerns, and ideas do you have?"

Group One Discussion:

Summary: San Mateo community members in group one expressed interest in strengthening Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) and "missing middle housing" production as effective strategies to improve the supply and affordability of housing, while addressing historical discrimination by locating new lower-cost units in communities they have historically been excluded from. Specifically, community members would like the City: increase commercial linkage fees to pay for housing and TOD programs, relaxing height limits, especially for missing middle developments; and establish an ADU program for the City to incentivize nonprofits and smaller employers to develop ADUs. Community members also expressed interest in building more units to reduce the problem of overcrowding and traffic congestion and including small commercial pockets in residential neighborhoods.

- "I like the housing programs and I like what they're doing, but I want to know the potential negatives and concerns that come with increases in population relative to existing people within San Mateo area. How crowded does it make San Mateo? How many more people do they allow to live in the City? I have concerns about parking requirements for ADUs. There is existing crowding within neighborhoods but extra concern for parking requirements."

- “We need programs that increase people in proximity to where they work. The current commercial linkage fee is too low. When you create jobs, you create demand for housing. Many jobs, specifically office jobs, can be well paying, but that creates demand for lower income jobs as well (clerks, daycare, retail, etc). Funding should come from higher commercial linkage fees and office developments in order to offset impact from office projects and create a good jobs-housing balance.”
- “Other cities in area have similar struggles to San Mateo. As industries expand, office space demand increases. I think there will be a large move back towards office space as opposed to staying with remote work. If we don’t build more housing then traffic problems will only get worse. Even in offices with high paid workers, there are low paying jobs that are essential to servicing them. Commercial linkage fees are critical with the amount of people coming and going for work. More people living in the City will make it more livable. The population might rise, but people will contribute more in San Mateo rather than if they were on the road all the time. One existing program that we should put more thought into is ADUs. As people have problems about putting too many housing units in single family areas, this is a way to increase units in a way that is a compromise for people who don’t want higher density buildings in lower density areas. A local church has built an ADU with minimal impact to the surrounding area, we can use it as a case study for how it can be effective programs. Smaller employers and nonprofits could provide partnership possibilities for homeowners to relieve staffing or other issues related to housing. It may be a useful strategy to help need at the individual level rather than through larger projects. People’s 1-on-1 needs could be enhanced by use and City sponsorship of ADU program.”
- “Missing middle housing is especially important (duplexes, triplexes, etc). San Mateo, like most cities, has a long history of housing discrimination. The solution to that is not to let things sit as they are but to look at how to fill diversity across the City. Missing middle is good place to start, where you can infill to put lower income people in areas where they have otherwise been excluded while being best for the long term health of the City. Transportation is also key; the City needs to think about how to expand transportation options when there are areas outside of immediate routes like train stations. One example being an office development that had shuttle programs. These types of programs with high frequency, convenience, and reliability could help prevent people from using single occupancy vehicles and reduce cars. We should dovetail housing plans with transportation plans outside of El Camino Real and the train stations. More data is necessary – we need to take into account: diversity, renters vs owners, and where do we have housing that is underutilized. We need to encourage people to use properties that are not currently used. For neighborhoods to be walkable, there needs to be commercial or other areas than residential within walking distance. Opening up areas that are currently residential, but could have small commercial spaces in them, could make for increased walkability. When rethinking the Housing Element we could make the City have smaller pockets where

people could walk to rather than using vehicles. This will increase sustainability for the existing uses while reducing the need for cars.”

- “We should enact vacant property taxes like Oakland does. I support missing middle – there are small sites around the City that are not utilized in a variety of areas, especially along El Camino Real, that may be too small for larger projects but are perfect for smaller units in the missing middle scale – duplexes, etc. Utilizing those sites could add a good number of units in an easier way to facilitate affordable housing. There was a habitat for humanity project in a former firehouse where height bonuses where applicable. We should pursue allowing density bonuses plus height bonuses. Taking height limitations off would help make projects more economically feasible for developer incentives. Larger projects could continue under current programs – but missing middle and underutilized parcels could help fill gaps. Redevelopment agencies previously facilitated these types of projects perhaps would should start up something similar.”

Group Two Discussion:

Group two also identified increasing commercial linkage fees and strengthening missing middle production as strategies to address housing affordability. Community members in this group also called for: an affordable housing overlay with clear regulations for community benefits; a City density bonus in addition to the State's; a policy for nonprofit developers to have first dibs on the purchase of older apartment buildings to avoid displacement; and utilization of SB10 to create missing middle housing. There was also support for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) and marketing of apartments for people with physical disabilities.

- “I think its important that we maintain a wide variety of programs”
- “We see that there is a lack of “deeply” affordable housing for very impoverished people that needs to be addressed”
- “I think housing affordability is always going to be behind the 8 ball if developers/ landlords are always chasing profits”
- “It feels as though we’re never going to catch up to meet all the housing needs”
- “Its hard for young people to find housing once they graduate from college, so they end up having to move far away.”
- “There is lots of difficulty for disabled people to find the right housing. They need to live here to be close to their doctors”
- “Its very hard to find housing in San Mateo on limited income”
- “It feels like profit is the main driver that makes development in San Mateo”
- “The Commercial linkage fee should be higher”

- “All programs for new housing development should allow increased height and density. There is a project called 1458 San Bruno Ave providing 200 units/ acre with 50% affordable units. We need developments like that.”
- “We need to also look at increasing medical facilities, entertainment, and other things that keep up the quality of life in San Mateo”
- “We need an affordable housing overlay with clear regulations for community benefits as well as a City density bonus in addition to the State Density Bonus.”
- “We should pursue adding more Transit Oriented Development wherever possible”
- “I think transit needs to be expanded since it is only available for those who live next to it”
- “I think existing residents are excluded from transit. The new development/higher density surrounding transit makes it more difficult for people farther away to access. This leads to more congestion/traffic and less parking”
- “We should explore having shuttles that take residents of large developments to the train station. Then we could increase the area where increased density can be added while still connecting the development with transit.”
- “We need to establish competitive financing for City land acquisition when it is for affordable housing”
- “I believe basic services need to be met before we expand housing”
- “I think union workers should lower their fees when building affordable housing”
- “We need more affirmative marketing of apartments for the physically disabled”
- “We should explore more housing in missing middle options.”
- “We need more options for people to travel around the City in different forms of micromobility”
- “A new policy could be enacted where nonprofit developers can have first dibs to purchase when an older apartment building goes up for sale so that all the residents aren’t displaced”
- “I like the form of garden court apartments to allow higher density”
- “Missing middle would allow us to build smaller”
- “It seems that studio apartments are no different than dorms. Why don’t big companies provide these for their employees on their campuses so there is more room for families to settle in the City?”
- “I think company towns haven’t gone too well in the past. I wouldn’t want to have my employer as my landlord.”
- “We should use SB10 to create missing middle housing.”

Group Three Discussion:

Group three identified increasing commercial linkage and other fees to pay for affordable housing, as well as expanding missing middle housing, and establishing an affordable housing overlay. Transit Oriented

Development and locating housing and jobs near transit to reduce commutes and congestion was also emphasized. Some community members noted concerns over service and infrastructure to accommodate growth and concerns that the programs being discussed did not enhance the City.

- “We should explore increasing commercial linkage fees and similar developer in-lieu/impact fees that would directly support affordable housing. The current fees are too low.”
- “The City needs to develop in a sustainable manner by locating housing and jobs near transit.”
- “Housing development also needs to accommodate for families (with unit sizes of 2+ bedrooms)”
- “How will we accommodate all this future growth (e.g. services, infrastructure)?”
- “We must ensure that the inclusionary BMR percentage of housing does not make affordable housing projects infeasible”
- “We need to increase housing to reduce the job/housing imbalance and reduce commutes; especially for low-income community members”
- “The Bay Meadows planned unit development is a successful example of good Transit Oriented Development.”
- “We need to explore expanding middle housing (especially in townhomes)”
- “The City should approach a strategy of land acquisition for affordable housing development”
- “Zoning/Planning should include an affordable housing overlay”
- “We need more adaptive reuse policies for existing buildings (e.g. office to residential)”
- “We can ensure preservation or creative adaptative reuse of existing housing stock with affordability deed restrictions”
- The HIP housing home-sharing program would be a good method to get more use out of existing housing”
- “We need to spread fair housing throughout the City and encourage diversity”
- “In my view, none of these programs enhance the City”
- “The main issue of affordability is the imbalance of housing vs jobs (there is one unit for every 11 jobs created)”
- “I’m concerned that the existing housing stock benefits long-time residents, but we need to consider the needs of the future/younger generation”

Group Four Discussion:

Community members in group four would like the City to: set clearer standards to streamline the production of ADUs and missing middle housing options in the City; strengthen renter protections; increase below-market-rate housing requirements from 15% to at least 20%; and increase the supply of 3-bedroom below-

market-rate rental units. Group members also were concerned about the City overly relying on ADU production to meet housing projections and would like to retain developers building affordable units onsite rather than a move toward offsite fees. While some voiced support for expanding commercial linkage fees, others noted setting these fees too high may drive employers away.

- “I’m excited the City is intentional about building affordable housing, because the market by itself will keep driving the cost up. It’s important to have a diverse community that we live in. For environmental reasons, it is important to live near work. Not just tech workers in Silicon Valley; service sector, government employees, and teachers also need to be able to live nearby.”
- “One of my biggest concerns is that commercial linkage fees are not high enough, and the timing of commercial projects which can take a decade to plan and build. It doesn’t actually get occupied by employees and affects RHNA numbers. The impact of job building won’t be felt until well into RHNA cycle; which means we are not seeing real numbers. I’m worried about ADU production: how much is reasonable to expect from ADU production? There might be a surge in the beginning, but I’m unsure how sustainable that is over time.”
- “The ADU program is kind of in disarray. I’m an ADU provider and do a lot of advertising in SMDJ, but I don’t see demand for ADUs. If there are applications for ADUs, they tend to be for conversions of garages into ADUs. It seems there are a lot of discretionary items that still need clarification by City Council such as height requirements and other factors. Council needs to provide tools to the Planning Dept to educate public about ADUs and raise awareness. In San Mateo, they have point of sale matters or ordinance where if you do an addition or improvements of \$90k or more, you have to do a sewer lateral inspection... what that means is that they have all these requirements (impact fees, etc.) that make it harder for property owners to want to do ADUs. Also, below-market-rate housing requirements for new development (15%?) should be a lot higher for developers. It should be 20% or more – because 15% is not enough, and I believe City Council would agree. I think there’s an oligarchy that’s been established in the City for so long, which is a reflection of all the initiatives (with Measure H that turned into Measure Y, and so forth.) The Housing Element needs to address this.”
- “The existing programs are excellent as far as they go, but will continue to be insufficient for two reasons. (1) The graph shown in the original presentation which shows out of control job growth from 2010 to 2015. Until we can get a handle on job growth and tamp it down a little, we will continue to have this problem. (2) The market continues to push prices up, and affordability down. Until we get a handle on the job growth and turn things around, the great programs we have will be insufficient. In a sense, the private sector pushes the cost of housing onto the public.”
- “A more sustainable form of construction is to reuse an existing building. I like efforts where organizations and their partners purchase existing buildings, renovate, and provide to people who

need lower cost housing. I'm concerned about the revision to policy where developers can contribute to a fund instead of actually building housing."

- "I'm concerned with the idea of tamping down job growth.... The only reason that people have equity and extreme value in their homes is the phenomenal job situation. Once those jobs and the companies leave, they are gone forever."
- "Having continued job growth will continue to make housing unaffordable. We take the good with the bad, and there's nothing we can do about it."
- "SB9, dubbed the duplex initiative, is starting at 2022. I would like to see workshops that addresses SB9, which would open up housing."
- "Are there any renter protection measures that the City has in place, besides the County and the State, now that eviction protections (from COVID-19) have sunsetted? Is the City doing anything now to help renters who may no longer be able to pay their rent?"
- "We need to examine what size units developers are proposing; because we need variety. There is a need for 3-bedroom below-market-rate units in San Mateo, which is rare to see here. Developer incentives are not clearly defined. I'm constantly asking: what would be an appropriate public benefit? We need variety of units and at least some should be accessible to those with mobility challenges or mental disabilities. I live in North Central and see the effect of too many people living in one housing unit – parking and trash impacts."
- "We need to address Missing Middle, which might be a good solution for people trying to purchase a home. Not everyone needs a single-family residence, which was the gold standard a while ago, but folks now are open to more dense options that provide housing. The appetite in the City of San Mateo might be more amendable to the missing middle densities. We need all types of housing: which means densifying Transit Oriented Districts and certain parts of the City that make sense. There will be some neighbors who are against higher density, so maybe the missing middle and SB 9 is the appropriate baby step. My perspective is that of a former real estate developer. Developers are incentivized by fee reductions. We should consider perhaps if more affordable units are provided, then the more some impact fees can be reduced. The City can push on market rate developers, who are making so much money right now in this time. Do not be afraid; no reason to not push envelope on affordable units. We need renter protection: there is so much displacement at all levels of the income spectrum in San Mateo. How do we help people stay, especially people who have been born and raised here, but can no longer can? Oftentimes it is children of families who grew up here. How do we help with displacement?"
- "Getting foot into home buying is difficult; we need education on how for our community. There is RHNA pressure. If you build 3-bedroom unit, do you get credit for 3 units? Current housing production

does not support trades people who need space. We need to provide housing that supports these types of jobs. More and more people are going to work out of home.”

- “I’m interested in Missing Middle. We need more focus on quality, not just quantity. Need high quality design in order to put Missing Middle housing in single-family neighborhoods or any neighborhoods. We need high quality design that is contextual and matches the neighborhood.”
- “The Missing Middle is the element that is needed to blend everything that has been discussed: including keeping trades workers close to where people work, Transit Oriented Development, and first-time home buyers. Its important to include faith leaders in community, which can be accomplished by adding residential to churches. The same concept can work with schools. Many doors can be opened up with the Missing Middle concept, which can allow people to live near where they work.”

Group Five Discussion:

Community members in group five would like the City to: expand the first-time homebuyer program; invest more in upgrading existing buildings, increase density and mixed uses around transit hubs, increase the commercial linkage fee, strengthen tenant protections. There was also interest in expanding the 15% below-market-rate program and to target it toward deeper affordability levels. There was also a suggestion to develop a program to require rental site managers to take an online housing regulations class/test.

- “I’m proud of redevelopment commitment that exists in San Mateo. The inclusionary program is pretty good and the commercial linkage fee is a great start. The City is also very good about identifying publicly owned sites and prioritizing them for affordable housing development/redevelopment.”
- “I’m happy that the Kiku crossing affordable housing development has come to fruition. We are seeing multi generations living in small quarters originally designed for a small number of people. We would like for older first-time homeowner properties to be upgraded for today’s environments and add to more affordable housing on properties. Additionally, we need an expansion of the first-time homebuyer program. The Gateway housing development has a park behind us, and it is not built or utilized to its full potential and not usable by the neighborhood, unlike King’s park. This is an area the City can invest more money to rebuild and upgrade existing buildings and enhance existing facilities. I would prefer for more first-time homeowner properties rather than rentals. More common spaces in multi-unit developments is desired.”
- “I like mixed use zoning and building around transit hubs. Affordable housing is important: personally I am a household of 4 on the cusp of lower income. When we had to move out of the home we were renting, we took a look at affordable housing and we were still priced out. Affordable housing doesn’t feel affordable. This is why there are multiple generations in small units contributes to parking issues/impacts. We are always going to be renters and will eventually have to move out because

ownership will never be an option for us. Affordable housing is a major challenge for the City to address.”

- “It feels like 15% BMR rate is an arbitrary number that does not actually meet the needs of the people to retain our young families and seniors. We need to study what the actual percentage of affordable units we need and explore revisiting this percentage.”
- “I’d like to see more events on B Street. There was a past event where City Council came before COVID. Seeing the street activated and people participate was great. I would like more events like that... maybe a farmers’ market? We need different types of events that brings the community together. I would also like to see more European flat style houses instead of (or rather than just) townhomes.”
- “I’d want to increase the commercial linkage fee. We need better regulations for rental properties to include better restrictions on why and when people have to move out. With more renter protection/safety nets, we can reduce homelessness.”
- “I like the idea about looking out and building for special needs populations. We need to be very specific and deliberative about sites. How much does the City use overlay zones for family/special needs affordable housing/something with services? Is it appropriate to use housing overlay sites for El Camino Real? It would be great if properties along El Camino Real being redeveloped are required to have affordable housing and not market rate units (or a larger percentage of BMR units over the 15%) through an overlay. One thing that Sonoma County does is that they require a site manager for rentals take and pass an online test for verification and so that they are aware of housing rules/regulations. This has cut down their legal claims by 80%. Let’s all know the basic rules so we can be fairer to each other. Looking at these programs in addition to zoning/landuse will be helpful/effective for tenants.”
- “I’ve observed regarding the option for missing middle...From a practical standpoint that’s already what is occurring in North Central. There are quite a bit of duplexes and three unit townhomes being added to the area. One thing that I would note especially for our neighborhood is that I agree with ideal of getting more cars off of the road. However, I work at a part of the county where transit is not an option. Most of my neighbors are service workers with their livelihoods tied to their vehicles. We are in an in-between state where we still have to provide for parking while we are trying to transition away for that. It’s a hard place to be.”
- “Fair housing is really important for San Mateo to address. We tried to address tenant protection through the voting process which did not pass. Tenant protections and accessibility are essential issues. I would like for the City to reduce auto use through programs and incentives. During the pandemic I could cross El Camino Real against the light because there was so little traffic. That is all gone now. We need incentives to reduce auto use and get back closer to nature. I would also really want to know if the 15% BMR is going to get us where we need to be for people who are living in the City and would like to stay.”

Results of a poll conducted during the workshop:



