

2025 STATE OF THE CITY Q&A
Part 1 - Unanswered at live event

We received several similar questions, and the following have been categorized into themes to avoid redundancy.

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

How can community members become more involved in building a diverse city?

Answer: *Take advantage of community engagement opportunities including participation in policy making discussions and workshops, City land use and transportation planning efforts, take part in citywide events, get involved in neighborhood activities and programs, and stay current on ways to become involved in upcoming City initiatives by following us on social media, signing up for our newsletters, attending public meetings, and considering volunteering or joining a board or commission.*

What is the status of the new volunteer program?

Answer: *The City has a long-standing volunteer program, with over 1,500 volunteers signing up each year for our various program areas! We have a place for almost anyone willing to lend a hand and welcome folks of all ages at our Senior Center or recreation facilities, on our Citywide Team Up to Clean Up team, at our three local libraries, or several of our other facilities or departments if picking a more focused area of interest is more appealing. Whether you want to volunteer yourself or seek volunteers for your official non-profit organization, you can find more information [here](#).*

Can you put a supermarket downtown?

Answer: *The city doesn't operate or open businesses itself. Rather, through its Economic Development function develops ways to attract and retain businesses desirable to the community and through its Community Development Department regulates land use and development projects to ensure space exists for a variety of goods and services to support the community. In addition to the existing local specialty markets in the Downtown area, the location of the former Draeger's market is required to provide a replacement supermarket when the building is reconstructed.*

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

What are your plans for downtown?

Answer: *The Downtown Area Plan update is planned to begin in 2026 and will provide an opportunity for the community to help shape how the Downtown will transform in alignment with the General Plan 2040. The Downtown Plan will cover land use, traffic circulation, building design, public realm improvements, and more, and will welcome community input throughout the process.*

With the proposed development projects planned throughout the city, how will you address concerns on traffic and infrastructure?

Answer: *The City has a strong traffic and transportation planning function and is constantly striving to improve roadway infrastructure to improve traffic flow and safety. In addition, new development*

projects make contributions towards infrastructure in a variety of ways including paying fees to the city and making improvements commensurate with their project.

What new development projects are anticipated for the city in the next coming years?

Answer: Which developments will take place and what rate is largely a function of macro level development economics and how that reacts to the land use environment within the City. The best way to follow current development proposal in the pipeline is to follow the City's [What's Happening in Development](#) webpage and sign up for our various [Newsletters](#). Three major projects we do expect to see in the coming years are the redevelopment of Hillsdale Mall, a mixed-use project with 869 new homes and 16,400 sq. ft. of commercial space (including a grocery store) at the Concar/Delaware Shopping Center, and the Bespoke project, which is a public-private partnership that will provide 71 affordable housing units, office space, and a new location for the non-profit Self Help for the Elderly in our Downtown.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Where are we in the process for repairs needed to protect San Mateo from flooding? Are the creek cleanouts and culvert rebuilding still on time and do we have funding? Will this keep Sunnybrae from flooding?

Answer: The City is updating its Storm Drain Master Plan to evaluate and identify major capital improvements aimed at expanding system capacity and reducing overall flooding in San Mateo. Major project components will be determined after staff complete the data acquisition and condition assessment phases. Minor storm drain repairs have already been completed at locations identified by staff to reduce localized flooding. With regard to storm drain maintenance, our field maintenance crews completed cleaning efforts for all of the City's storm drains this past winter season and vegetation removal within creeks will recommence once the City obtains regulatory permits.

Concerning flooding within the Sunnybrae area, we anticipate implementation of improvements identified in the Storm Drain Master Plan update will reduce overall flooding throughout San Mateo under normal conditions. This includes Sunnybrae. However, this does not guarantee that flooding will be entirely eliminated. Flooding may still occur if a storm exceeds the system's typical design capacity, which is generally based on a 10- to 25-year storm event.

What is the City's view on the new El Camino bike lane in the South Bay extending up through San Mateo?

Answer: When it comes to making multimodal improvements to El Camino, Caltrans defers to the adopted plans of each agency. In the City of San Mateo, our adopted plans, such as the Bike Master Plan, prioritize use of El Camino Real for pedestrian and transit travel. Other routes parallel to El Camino Real, like Delaware Street, are prioritized for bike travel. If bike lanes are proposed on El Camino, either lanes of travel or parking would be lost, which could have would be concerning to the community. City staff are in communications with Caltrans on this project to make sure that they align the future of El Camino Real with City-adopted plans.

When will San Mateo have a grade separation for CalTrain?

Answer: Staff are coordinating with our grant writing team to pursue federal or state grants for a grade separation feasibility study. We have gotten preliminary feedback that safety

concerns/collision data for the downtown at-grade crossings are generally not significant enough to be competitive relative to other at-grade crossings nationwide. In addition, as has been [reported](#) locally regarding Burlingame's effort to separate the Broadway crossing, costs for grade separations continue to escalate. Given the large number of at-grade crossings in the City of San Mateo, it is unclear where the overall funding would come from to implement separations, especially any required local contribution. Staff's immediate priority is to advance safety improvements at two railroad crossings (Villa Terrace and E. Bellevue Ave) to allow for establishment of a Train Horn Quiet Zone within the City of San Mateo. To advance this effort, we anticipate that additional outreach will take place between June and August 2025, with an update being brought to council following this outreach effort. More information about this project can be found on the following website: <https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/2279/Train-Horn-Quiet-Zone>.

What solutions can be implemented to address the parking challenges for Bay Meadows residents, including the lack of guest parking, high garage fees, and the impact of 2-hour parking enforcement on homeowners and their families?

Answer: The City is engaging with the community to explore potential solutions they can pursue to alleviate some of the issues they are experiencing in relation to the resumption of parking enforcement in Bay Meadows.

POLICE

We need better awareness and enforcement of drivers who either do NOT stop at stop signs or do NOT look BOTH WAYS to ensure there is no pedestrian crossing the street. What will you do about this?

Answer: We intend to continue and maintain targeted enforcement at intersections with known issues. Officers regularly monitor areas near schools, parks, and residential zones where pedestrian activity is highest. We also intend to continue and maintain public safety campaigns, in conjunction with the Office of Traffic Safety, focused on pedestrian awareness and driver responsibility, especially around high-traffic crosswalks. We will continue to regularly meet with traffic engineers from the Public Works Department to evaluate intersections and determine whether traffic calming enhancements are warranted.

PARKS AND RECREATION

What is happening with the Boys and Girls Club?

Answer: The building was sold by the Boys and Girls Club to a different owner and a permit was issued earlier this year for use of the facility as a youth basketball camp.

Is PAL still using the Shoreview Recreation Center for afterschool programming? How is it going?

Answer: There has been a pause in afterschool programming at Shoreview, but we hope to bring it back next academic year

We heard that a construction agreement has been signed for phase 1 of the Central Park Master Plan. When does construction start and finish?

Answer: The groundbreaking has occurred, and construction completion is expected in 18-24 months from April 2025.

Can we get more trees replanted in this City?

Answer: [Strive San Mateo General Plan 2040](#) contains policies requiring new tree plantings as a result of new development and urban tree planting as funding becomes available. This is in addition to replacement trees planted/added as a result of permitted tree removals on private property and landscape maintenance at City facilities.

Finance

Any initial thoughts on how to close the estimated \$6 million budget deficit?

Answer: The city is addressing the deficit through an 11-layer financial sustainability plan, focused on revenue management and operational efficiencies.

Speak to the unrestricted net position of San Mateo city finances.

Answer: The city has been monitoring its financial position and implementing measures to improve long-term fiscal health. Sales tax revenue and discretionary spending are areas of focus as economic conditions shift.

Can you provide insight into the growth of the city budget and the future of funding?

Answer: The city's budget deficit is a growing concern. Revenue growth has slowed due to economic factors and high interest rates, impacting sales tax revenue. The city is implementing an 11-layer financial sustainability plan to maintain financial responsibility and operational efficiencies.

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

What CA cities the size of San Mateo (or larger) does not elect a mayor?

Answer: Redwood City, South San Francisco, Daly City.

What steps must be taken to change San Mateo to a citywide elective mayor system rather than by rotation?

Answer: *This change would likely require a change to the City's Charter and voter approval.*

Part 2 - Answered at live event (with timestamps)

Downtown San Mateo Commerce, Cleanliness, and Development – Time Stamp 38:20 – 42:55

Clerk: We received several questions about our plans to improve the downtown atmosphere, address vacancies, offer incentives, enhance cleanliness, attract businesses and residents, bring back retail, and even the possibility of attracting a new supermarket.

Staff: These are all priorities as we work to revitalize our downtown area. We're making real changes to revitalize downtown. Improvements to the Pedestrian Mall are already underway, including new seating, ADA ramps, bike racks, planters, and upgraded barricades. To bring in more desirable tenants, we're leveraging zoning regulations and working directly with property owners. A city-wide economic development plan is in progress, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Merchants Association, with a strong focus on strengthening downtown's appeal.

We're also tackling key issues like storefront appearances, streamlining special event permits, and creating better synergy for downtown events. The Downtown Area Plan update will launch in 2026, and we're staying proactive by holding quarterly broker meetings to monitor and improve the retail and commercial landscape. Cleanliness remains a priority, and we've stepped up efforts through partnerships for power washing and organized team cleanups.

Traffic, Pedestrian, and Cyclist Safety – Time Stamp 42:55 – 47:45

Clerk: Many have asked how we're addressing these concerns, particularly how new developments will impact traffic, what's being done to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists, the status of the Humboldt Bikeway, and how we're managing congestion on Alameda.

Staff: We are committed to improving traffic, pedestrian, and cyclist safety as our city continues to grow. For any major development, we require a traffic impact analysis to assess how much additional traffic will be generated. If a project adds more trips than our infrastructure can handle, developers must contribute financially to necessary upgrades. We use comprehensive modeling to evaluate these impacts and ensure our roads, bike lanes, and pedestrian pathways keep pace with growth.

We're actively working to enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety through the implementation of the Pedestrian Master Plan and Bicycle Master Plan. Our Local Roadway Safety Plan takes a data-driven approach to identifying high-collision areas, and we are optimistic about securing a \$1 million grant to improve the top 10 intersections in the next fiscal year. While progress has been slower than we'd like due to resource constraints, we've successfully secured state and federal grants to fund critical transportation projects.

The Humboldt Bike Lanes were recently reviewed by the City Council, and we are engaging with the North Central community, Humboldt residents, and cyclists to explore potential changes, including the possibility of removing a portion of the bike lanes between Second Avenue and Poplar Avenue. If removed, parallel bike boulevards could replace the section to maintain connectivity and safety. No formal decision has been made yet, and we are continuing community engagement and evaluation. Additionally, we're working on improving lighting along the Humboldt corridor and other bike routes.

Alameda presents different traffic challenges along its length. A current project will install a new traffic signal at Hillsdale and Alameda de las Pulgas to improve safety near Abbott Middle School and Hillsdale High School while addressing congestion. Grant funding has also been secured for improvements on 31st Avenue, including the design of a new traffic signal at 31st and Alameda. We're taking a multimodal approach to ensure safe and efficient travel for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers alike.

Crime and Public Safety – Time Stamp 47:45 – 49:55

Clerk: How is the City of San Mateo addressing crime management and will the San Mateo Police Department expand in response to the city's sizing broadens.

Staff: We are actively addressing crime and public safety concerns, especially as development and new projects impact public services. To enhance our crime management efforts, we are leveraging technology to improve response times and overall safety.

One of our key initiatives is the Real-Time Information Center, which allows us to respond to calls more swiftly. Through partnerships with various agencies, we use drones and public area cameras to provide officers with critical information before they arrive at a crime scene. This proactive approach, along with our use of advanced technological tools, has contributed to a reduction in retail and organized retail theft in the city.

Housing and Development – Time Stamp 49:55 – 54:14

Clerk: When it comes to housing and development, there are several important questions being raised, including what new projects are anticipated, how we're ensuring local workforce and apprentices are prioritized, what we're doing to support affordable housing, and why we're considering more office space at Hillsdale Mall despite existing vacancies.

Staff: The Hillsdale Mall proposal is still under consideration, and no final decisions have been made yet. I want to emphasize that we are committed to a thorough community planning process for what could become one of the largest planning and development projects since Bay Meadows. Our goal is to ensure that this project aligns with community needs, helps maintain Hillsdale as a regional destination, and meets housing and general plan requirements.

Clerk: Is the City of San Mateo committed to the general plan and historic preservation goals?

Staff: Development applications are on the rise, and my team and I are working hard to manage these effectively, making sure we engage with the community and communicate clearly about each project. One example is the updated proposal for the Concar Passage site, which now includes a significant increase in affordable housing. We're also looking at a new for-sale housing project at the Bayshore Public Commons site.

I've noticed a growing trend of office spaces being redeveloped into mixed-use spaces, and I'm carefully evaluating the broader implications of this shift. In the coming years, we'll provide more information on the balance between housing and office/commercial development to ensure we're taking a measured approach.

Supporting the local economy is a key priority. We believe updated commercial and office spaces are essential for keeping our job market competitive and ensuring San Mateo remains economically strong.

Infrastructure, Environment, and Flood Protection – Time Stamp 54:15 – 58:10

Clerk: Can you provide an update on the repairs and projects to protect San Mateo from flooding. Additionally, what is your stance on the maintenance and dredging on the south end of Marina Lagoon, when will San Mateo have great separation from Caltrans and are we still on schedule for all the various parts of flood control system.

Staff: In response to the challenges we faced during the New Year's Eve 2022 storm, we have made significant improvements to our flood protection and infrastructure. Marina Lagoon, a major flood control facility, has received substantial investments in its pump station. To strengthen our storm, drain infrastructure, we've hired additional staff and deployed vacuum trucks to clean catch basins, which has already proven beneficial during heavy rains.

We are also working toward securing a citywide creek maintenance permit, though we must navigate regulatory approvals due to habitat concerns. Recognizing that our Storm Drain Master Plan hasn't been updated since 2004, we are in the process of revising it, with completion expected by the end of the year. Community engagement will play a key role in this update, and the final plan will outline a prioritized list of improvements to ensure our city remains resilient against future storms.

Community Services and Public Spaces – Time Stamp 58:10 – 59:25

Clerk: What is the status of changes to Central Park including the baseball field and could you tell us more about the Central Park Master Plan and when does construction start.

Staff: When it comes to the status of changes to Central Park, including the baseball field, I'm excited to share that the construction contract for the Central Park playground has recently been approved by the City Council. We're expecting groundbreaking renovations to the playground in April. This is part of the larger four-phase Central Park Master Plan.

Phase one focuses on the playground, but future phases will include upgrades and renovations to the baseball field, tennis courts, rotary picnic pavilion, recreation center, bathrooms, and parking garage. We're committed to making these improvements to enhance the overall experience for everyone who enjoys the park.

City Attorney & City Clerk 59:25 – 1:01:02

Clerk: What is the process to elect a citywide mayor, what does that process look like and how can community members become more involved in building a thriving and more diverse city?

Staff: To elect a citywide mayor, the city charter would need to be amended, as it currently establishes a rotating mayoral position among council members. Since the city has already transitioned to district-based elections over two cycles, switching to a citywide mayor would require reversing that process and redrawing district lines—a substantial undertaking. Community members can get involved by staying informed, participating in public meetings, engaging with local commissions, and advocating for inclusive policies that reflect the diversity and needs of the city.

City Budget and Financial Planning – Time Stamp 1:01:02 - 1:04:36

Clerk: What are your initial thoughts on how to close the budget deficit.

Staff: When it comes to addressing the budget deficit, my initial thoughts are focused on a careful, strategic approach. I recognize that revenue growth has slowed, largely due to economic factors and high interest rates. As consumer discretionary spending declines, we're seeing a direct impact on sales tax revenue, which has contributed to the deficit.

To tackle this, we're implementing an 11-layer financial sustainability plan. This plan is designed to maintain financial responsibility while improving operational efficiencies across the board. It's about finding the balance between managing costs and ensuring we continue providing essential services to the community. I'm committed to navigating this challenge with a focus on long-term stability and sustainable growth.