



SAN MATEO, SANTA CLARA & SAN BENITO COUNTIES

November 19, 2021

City of South San Francisco
400 Grand Ave
South San Francisco, CA 94080

Mayor and City Council of South San Francisco

Via: council@ssf.net

Planning Commission Chair, Michele Evans

Via: planning@ssf.net

Cc: rosa.acosta@ssf.net

*(Please forward the attached Sierra Club letter to the Community Development Director
and Housing Element Project Manager)*

Subject: General Plan Revisions - Housing Element

The Sustainable Land Use Committee (SLU) of the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter advocates on land use issues in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties.

Currently, all cities in California are required to update their current Housing Element to meet the new 2023 - 2031 RHNA requirements. This is an impactful process, and we offer the following comments and observations for your consideration.

1. Cities are contributing to an imbalance between jobs and housing that is unsustainable.

We recognize the new RHNA goals are much higher than the previous RHNA goals and most cities are struggling to see how to meet these higher goals; however, as this process is unfolding, many cities are also simultaneously approving large office and R&D developments within their jurisdiction which will bring thousands of new jobs into the community without considering the impact of those jobs on the new RHNA goals and the city's existing jobs/housing balance.

2. Jobs/Housing Fit: Cities are not providing for a sustainable "jobs/housing fit" within their city.

An unsustainable jobs/housing fit means that the majority of homes within the city are not affordable to the majority of employees who work in the city, and conversely, the jobs in the city do not pay enough to cover the cost of housing in the city. This causes difficulty in hiring and retaining employees, higher worker costs, more traffic congestion, more air pollution, less time with family, and less time participating in community recreational activities and events.

3. Many cities are not coordinating plans for new commercial development with their Housing Element.

Cities are not coordinating the expected number of new jobs with the expected number of new housing units that will be needed to house those new employees and the impact those new jobs will have on city-wide housing prices, housing availability, and income inequality.

4. RHNA numbers are not reflecting the anticipated housing need in relation to the real numbers of jobs that each city is approving.

Despite large increases in the RHNA goals, the disconnect is so vast that, even if the city were to fully meet it's 2023-31 RHNA goals, it could still be far short of a sustainable jobs/housing balance.

5. Probability of development: "p(dev)"

While "Probability of Development" for each lot is a required part of a Housing Element, many cities are not considering and documenting the probability ["p(dev)"] that those lots can in-fact be developed.

6. Commercial development proposals should be required to specify anticipated number of jobs created.

If commercial developers do not include an estimate of number of jobs expected in their proposed development, the city staff should

- a) Use a rule of thumb¹ to estimate the number of jobs and the potential impact on the city's overall jobs / housing ratio.
- b) Add this to a running total of the cumulative number of jobs and housing in the city, using a consistently updated excel sheet or equivalent data record in order to track the balance.
- c) Evaluate what impact those jobs will have on the projections in the Housing Element.

7. Sea level rise and wildfires should be a consideration in the Housing Element.

Sea Level Rise and wildfires have increasingly serious financial consequences for taxpayers. The new Housing Element should either not allow or discourage permanent housing in areas highly vulnerable to flooding, potential inundation from ground water rise, and wildfires.

Below we note some ways to maintain a jobs / housing balance.

- a) Require developers of large commercial projects to actually provide the number of housing units needed either on-site or off-site to balance the jobs generated by their development.
- b) This can be in partnership with a for-profit or non-profit housing developer or be built by the commercial developer itself.
- c) Increase current commercial impact fees as they are not sufficient to meet this need.
- d) Require the needed housing to be built simultaneous with building the commercial development.
- e) Change some commercial zoning to residential zoning or mixed-use/housing.

Summary

- **The 2023-31 RHNA goals do not reflect the real anticipated housing needs in many cities based on the real numbers of commercial development and jobs that each city has in its pipeline and is expected to approve during the new RHNA time frame.**
- **The goal of the Housing Element needs to be aligned with the actual number of jobs in the development pipeline, not just the RHNA numbers.**
- **The Housing Element should, in addition, include a “jobs/housing fit” goal, not just numerical jobs:housing balance.**
- **If cities approve zoning changes that are not likely to produce any real new development, those revisions should not count toward the new RHNA goals.**

We recognize that this Housing Element is particularly challenging and are very appreciative of the effort that the city is putting into it. Therefore, we offer this only in the hope that this information may serve to be useful in your process.

Respectfully Yours,

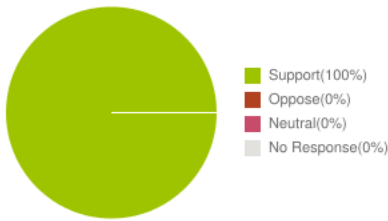


Gita Dev, FAIA, Co-Chair
Sustainable Land Use Committee
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

Cc: Chair and Members of the South San Francisco Planning Commission
Mayor and Members of the South San Francisco City Council
James Eggers, Executive Director, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter
Gladwyn d'Souza, Conservation Chair, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

¹ **Rule of Thumb:** Per our research, a good rule of thumb is a new office building will generate about one job per every 150 square feet of floor space and a new R&D or Biotech campus will generate about one job per 300 to 400 square feet of floor space. These jobs will in turn require a jobs/housing ratio of 1.5 jobs per housing unit or less to maintain a sustainable jobs / housing balance. Note: Calculating the jobs/housing ratio based only on office and R&D square footage covers the housing needed for those new jobs, but does not factor in the multiplier effect where each new office and R&D worker, creates more jobs for the lower income service workers who support that new employee (e.g., grocery clerk, Amazon driver, restaurant worker, etc.). A method of calculating this multiplier effect should also be built into the Housing Element as each office project approved simultaneously creates demand for additional low income and affordable level housing.

Overall Sentiment



Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 1:13pm 11-23-21

I write today to support the preferred alternative in Item 6 (and 6a, b, c) in tonight's special council agenda.

It's the duty of today's leaders to consider what they will leave in place for the people that will be there tomorrow, not just for those in the community now. A forward-thinking reimagining of an under-utilized part of the city adjacent to what was, is, and can be a vibrant downtown, as well as a transit hub that will handle as many as 16 trains an hour in 2040, is indeed what the South San Franciscans of tomorrow will need.

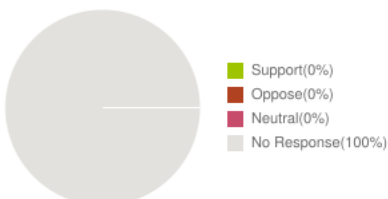
We are in a tremendous housing crisis, and I often feel the need to remind some people in the community that "overcrowding" is not measured by the number of homes in an area, but by more people having to crowd into fewer homes. Rezoning this land to relieve pressure — especially near our City's job center — is appropriate because helping people find homes, or at least ensuring homes are available for newcomers so those already here are less likely to be displaced, is the right thing to do.

In addition, the single-most meaningful challenge for our younger generations will be climate change. Building high-density infill housing near transit stations is an impactful way to meet our state's ambitious climate goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent of their 1990 levels. The days of the super-commute have to end. And, please, if you want people to actually take mass transit, eliminate parking minimums for such projects.

John Baker
South San Francisco Resident

Agenda Item: eComments for 7. 21-863 Report regarding consideration of an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of South San Francisco and the South San Francisco Unified School District concerning the use and duties of School Liaison Officers (SLOs) (Amy Ferguson, Management Fellow)

Overall Sentiment



Guest User

Location:

Submitted At: 2:01pm 11-23-21

I stand with John Baker on the MOU

It would be incredibly irresponsible of South SF's City Council to automatically renew the MOU. It must be evaluated annually.

Many of us remember Derrick Gaines and do not completely trust that the SSFPD has the best interests of all children in mind at all times, even today.

I am writing in hopes of convincing you to reevaluate this plan.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Mathiasen