
From: Skip Hilton <skiphilton@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, July 11, 2016 5:44 PM
To: _Planning Commission
Cc: _CCIN
Subject: Support and Comment on the General Plan Update

Dear Members of the Planning Commission:

I would like to provide some input to your discussion of Draft EIR for the General Plan Update taking place tonight. In general, I support the General Plan. As I am out of town and unable to attend the town hall, I want to make sure you are hearing from residents that support the proposals for developing housing, shopping, and amenities in the Bayfront/M2 Area.

First off, I want to commend the City Council, Planning Commission, and other Menlo Park officials for working with Facebook on these issues. Rather than just fighting their desire to grow, they are tapping this hub of economic investment and activity to solve other problems and improve our city. This is a lot more than just mitigating traffic impacts. I believe these officials deserve commendation for doing the hard work and taking this collaborative approach. Keep it up.

I also commend Facebook for proposing to build housing that will accommodate their growing employee base, and reduce the commute burden and traffic impacts created by their organization as it continues to expand and grow. My hope is that this housing stock will also serve non-Facebook employees, and provide more affordable housing options to the limited inventory of expensive housing up and down the peninsula.

My concern is that some residents and housing proponents will advocate for higher requirements on Facebook and other developers in the M2 that are so stringent and high as to stifle all efforts to build and improve the area. We see the same problem with the Downtown Specific Plan - just zoning for a specific number of units for housing does not mean that those units will actually be built. The higher the burden we place on the investors and developers interested in improving the area through zoning, the less likely these projects will come to fruition. As I read it, the General Plan allows for 5500 new workers in the Bayfront/M2. We need to make sure that the housing being proposed is actually built so that these workers have the option of living nearby, so we start fixing our jobs/housing imbalance rather than making it worse.

Menlo Park also sorely lacks housing that is accessible to low and middle-income workers. We are unlikely to find the space to build significant numbers of affordable housing units in our downtown corridor, although this is an ideal location due to public transit access. The second biggest "hub" for public transit should be, and could be the Bayfront/M2. There is ample space to build high density, affordable housing throughout the General Plan area. The best tool for this is to require 15% of the units entitled by the General Plan be set aside as affordable housing, and I encourage the Commission to make this recommendation. This BRM rate is equal to Palo Alto's percentage and higher than San Mateo's. As I understand it, Redwood City does not require inclusionary zoning at all. At this BMR requirement level we could add nearly 700 units of affordable housing based on the 4500 total housing units proposed - affordable housing which we desperately need.

Finally, there are some concerns that Facebook in particular may not be able to develop all of the housing units with the current zoning. I believe they would like to build the housing. However, given the amount of housing we would like to see, it is foreseeable that a lack of FAR or height allowance could hinder this housing development, and require a need to ask for additional FAR and height exceptions on a project-by-project basis. In that case there

is a real possibility that the financial incentives encourage them to build just SOME of the housing that is entitled, but build ALL of the office space that is entitled - a result which does not solve the jobs/housing imbalance. I would like to see a mechanism for the city to push for this housing to be completed. One approach would be to unlock the entitled office space in tranches as housing is developed in kind.

Regards,

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