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Dear Mayor Kasperzak, Vice Mayor Inks and the members of the Mountain View City Council,

After many years of hard work, Mountain View is poised to adopt a new General Plan. Greenbelt Alliance is thrilled to have been a part of this process. It has been a pleasure and valuable learning experience to work in a community with so many sharp, dedicated residents, staff members and officials. Already the draft General Plan has gained Mountain View local and national press coverage. We are confident that the document you are about to adopt is cutting edge. It will not only propel Mountain View in an exciting, environmentally sustainable direction, but will also serve as an example to the region and world.

Greenbelt Alliance strongly supports many of the policies in the proposed plan. We commend Council and all those who have been involved in this process for the great work reflected in the document. Still, we believe that some changes to the preferred draft of the General Plan could improve it further. As you prepare for your July 3rd and July 10th Council meetings we ask that you consider the following changes:

Strive for a better balance between jobs and homes

Mountain View has a current jobs to homes balance of 1.8 to 1. One of the main reasons that Greenbelt Alliance decided to get involved in the General Plan update some years ago was that we believed the policies in the new General Plan could help address the imbalance of jobs and homes in Mountain View. We are disappointed that under the new General Plan this jobs to homes imbalance will actually *increase* to 1.9 to 1.¹

Mountain View set an important precedent when it became one of the first cities in the nation to use an EIR to study how sometimes planning for *more* homes in the right places, rather than *fewer*, will result in a drop in vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions. Interestingly, this analysis looked only at the reduction in driving that results when you have greater numbers of people concentrated in village centers, NOT at the potential reduction in in-commuting that would result from a more balanced jobs:homes ratio. We're sure that a more in-depth analysis of the "Increased Housing Alternative" would show that planning for more homes would *also* cause a decrease in-commuting, therefore further reducing greenhouse gas emission generation.

To address the two topics presented above, Greenbelt Alliance asks that Council do the following:

- Take the ingenious "flexibility in exchange for community benefits" concept that Council came up with on April 21st for the El Camino Real Corridor and apply it to all of the nine focus areas. As recent events

¹ The draft General Plan is planning for over 8,000 new homes between now and 2030. While that is commendable, it is not enough to balance the amount of job growth planned for the same time period. For instance, the number of employees working in the North Bayshore neighborhood alone is expected to rise from 17,500 today to 29,500. The General Plan asserts that this imbalance is not a problem, as the supply of homes throughout the rest of the region compensates for Mountain View's local deficit. While Greenbelt Alliance recognizes that neighboring cities should and will be making efforts to increase the Silicon Valley's housing stock, we do not think that it is reasonable to assume that such a large share of the planned job growth in Mountain View will be housed by other cities.

in the San Antonio neighborhood show, this tool could prove extremely useful to the city in areas beyond El Camino Real.

- Include a reference to the findings of the General Plan draft EIR, which showed that the Increased Housing Alternative was in fact the “environmentally superior alternative” (page 620 of the EIR). As we understand it, the City intends the current General Plan to be a “living document”. Adding a statement about the findings of the EIR regarding the Increased Housing Alternative will remind future decision makers that housing can sometimes be used as a mitigation tool for environmental impacts.

Prioritizing affordability and diversity

We ask you to add an explicit statement to the General Plan that calls out Mountain View’s commitment to affordability and diversity. The earliest drafts of the General Plan included these two themes but along the way they seem to have been lost. Greenbelt Alliance recognizes that recent events have made the provision of affordable housing difficult, but planning remains a critical need so that when market and regulatory conditions change Mountain View is ready. The City’s most recent Housing Element is based on the 1992 General Plan and plans for an inadequate number of affordable units. To ensure that future Housing Elements and local opportunities (i.e. putting the findings of the recent Nexus Study to use) produce the most number of below market rate homes possible, we ask that Council call out **affordability** and **diversity** as priorities in the General Plan.

Think big and leave your options open

There has been much discussion recently about whether or not to allow residential development in North Bayshore. Greenbelt Alliance supports this concept, though we recognize the challenges this situation poses. In spite of - or because of that - we see this as a very exciting opportunity that deserves further consideration. Ultimately, we believe that the challenges posed by residential in North Bayshore (traffic/transportation, wildlife impacts, not having enough space to get the critical mass of residents needed to create a real neighborhood, sea level rise) can be tackled. Further, we believe that the situation before you is a very unique opportunity to find creative solutions to problems that the cities all over the Bay Area will be wrestling with in coming years. If done right, the transformation of North Bayshore from an office park of the past to a thriving, environmentally sustainable, mixed use community could set a new precedent for companies and cities everywhere, while simultaneously addressing local concerns and bringing increased value to the community. If any city is ready to take on this exciting challenge, it’s Mountain View.

At this stage, we ask that you leave the door open to further study of housing in North Bayshore. A more in-depth analysis of the questions at hand can take place through the Precise Plan update. If we close this door now, it will take a long time to rebuild the political will required to re-open it, given the lengthy process we have all just been through. We currently have a diverse and dedicated group of stakeholders that can explore and execute the best possible plan for this neighborhood. Let’s make the most of that.

Thank you

We’d like to reiterate what an honor it has been for our organization to be involved in this process. All those that helped create this document should feel proud about the work they’ve done. We are looking forward to seeing the wonderful things that come from the adoption of this plan.

Best regards,

Ellie Casson
Field Representative, Greenbelt Alliance