

Plan Bay Area 2050

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I strongly oppose adoption of the 2050 plan.

If the goal is more affordable housing, reduced congestion, balanced household income distribution and a better California then there should be evidence that the plan might actually work.

If the denser housing proposed worked to accomplish those goals then Manhattan and Hong Kong would be very affordable. There doesn't appear to be a means to keep "affordable" housing affordable in the coming decades; housing that was affordable in Palo Alto two or three decades ago is less affordable today. The plan appears to be ideal for the real estate funds currently being raised to buy single family and other housing for rentals....effectively pricing out individual families. It would benefit people selling their properties and moving out of California rather than remaining residents. Why would we do that?

There does not appear to be any means to enforce that a new resident of Menlo Park actually works in Menlo Park. Absent enforcement congestion will inevitably rise due to more commute traffic. In an increasingly pandemic prone world mass transit is unlikely to solve that issue. People will choose to live where amenities are better and commute to work elsewhere. The state is imposing additional units on local areas without providing those areas with funds to pay for needed additions to schools, libraries, parks, water supplies, roads, waste removal etc.. At a bare minimum if people in other areas are requesting (demanding) that certain areas add more units then they should be willing to pay for the needed infrastructure.

Balanced household income distribution is a worthy goal (although I am not sure where that has been achieved), but if that is the goal then Atherton, Marin and Beverly Hills would need far more units than Menlo Park or Palo Alto. The Plan seems very arbitrary on that point, almost as if it was ignored.

Perhaps most importantly, the Plan was drafted before the pandemic and new work from home and other changes. Now isn't the time to do an unreversible, state wide change to life in California.

Better alternatives exist:

Let local entities which embrace elements of the Plan try various approaches and actually see what works and what doesn't.

Encourage employers to locate facilities in alternate areas to provide a better work-life balance which might solve many of the issues the Plan hopes to address (but fails to demonstrate).

Require companies to provide affordable rental housing for some of their workers where the affordability can be enforced long term.

Rather than provide for an ever increasing California population use some resources to promote a stable population which would help solve not only the housing issue (a stable population doesn't require ever increasing housing), but also water, energy, congestion, waste disposal etc.

We can do much better.

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