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October 21, 2025

San Mateo Planning Commission
Meeting No. 1785
Board of Supervisors
500 County Center,
Redwood City, CA 94063
planning_commission@smcgov.org

RE: Public Comment for Regular Agenda Item 3, Housing Element Rezoning Program

Dear Board of Supervisors,

My name is Mariel Smith and I am a resident of El Granada, San Mateo County (County), California and a Native Plant Ecologist for the State of California. I am writing to express my concerns over the potential impacts of the proposed County Housing Element Rezoning Program, and more specifically the impacts of rezoning the Urban Midcoast parcels identified in Attachments B and C in the planning document provided for Item 3.

These Urban Midcoast parcels are currently vacant and owned by the Cabrillo Unified School District, and are proposed to be zoned for a maximum density of 70 units. While I support the County's efforts to identify sites to meet the housing needs in compliance with State law, the Urban Midcoast parcels should be removed from consideration for rezoning and development for the following reasons.

The Urban Midcoast parcels are part of an area that can be considered an important wildlife corridor between the developed area of El Granada and Montara Mountain. This land provides important habitat for insect pollinators, birds, small mammals, and use by larger mammals and raptors. The importance of wildlife corridors fosters the biodiversity important for ecosystem resilience that occurs between the coastline the mountain and other urban areas nearby. Within a 1-mile radius, there are two California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) occurrences (i.e., populations) of federally threatened species. The monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus ssp. plexippus*) has an overwintering population that overlaps the Urban Midcoast parcels. While there are no recent surveys to suggest the species still occurs here, it is well documented that monarch butterflies will use the non-native Eucalyptus trees as habitat (which occurs on these parcels). The California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), which is also a California species of special concern (SSC), has a population that overlaps the Urban Midcoast parcels, and a few known satellite populations nearby. While the species is found in wetter parts, the intactness of this land provides a habitat buffer for the species and riparian area nearby.

This land also consists of two primary soil types (Tierra Loam and Denison coarse sandy loam). These soil types allow for slow percolation of water (which is important for soil-water retention) and provides an opportunity for restoring this land to native vegetation in the future, such as the historic native grasslands and coastal scrub community that likely occurred here more predominately. This land provides a climatic buffer for the community of El Granada, is a carbon sink where more carbon is stored belowground in the soil and vegetation than is released into the atmosphere, and is naturally cooler which is important in the face of climate change and for fostering a more fire-resilient community.

Lastly, the Urban Midcoast parcels are in an area appreciated by the residents of El Granada for its connectivity to neighboring streets and to the Rancho Corral del Tierra trail system of Montara mountain. Because of the connectivity to both recreation and wildlife, I would strongly urge the Planning Commission to consider exploring opportunities to suggest setting the land aside as a conservation easement to protect this habitat in perpetuity.

For these reasons, I recommend to the Planning Commission to consider removing the Urban Midcoast parcels from the County Housing Element Rezoning Program. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am available to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mariel Tereza Smith".

Mariel Tereza Smith
(775) 686-4739

From: [M.S](#)
To: [Planning Commission](#)
Subject: Comments Regarding El Granada Rezoning
Date: Tuesday, October 21, 2025 3:55:17 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of San Mateo County. Unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe, do not click links, open attachments or reply.

Good afternoon

I am a resident of El Granada and am emailing in regards to the proposed zoning change affecting our area.

We pride ourselves in El Granada for our respect for nature and the ecological concerns of the coast. This area is a sensitive and migratory habitat area. This appears to be yet another case of valuable wildlife habitat traded for profitable real estate development disguised as housing resolution. This land would be best served with a land trust that can manage and respect the land, and protect it from the likes of land developers.

Sadly, like many of the residents of El Granada, I found out about this the day before the hearing from a concerned neighbor. I wish I could express my disappointment that the county would appear to have deliberately subverted citizens of El Granada in by only using a section of the "San Mateo Times" as "public outreach" every member of the board should be ashamed of themselves to try to slip this through without residents having the opportunity to discuss and submit feedback adequately. I know hardly anyone who gets the San Mateo Times. We live in a digital age and emails and mailed flyers should have been the bare minimum of "public outreach". If anything, the hearing should be rescheduled so that community members can be more adequately prepared and informed.

I hope the county reconsiders the zoning change in El Granada. It affects a vast amount of our very small community and the ecological concerns should be prioritized over real estate development.

Thank you
A concerned resident