

December 18, 2019

Dear Envision 2040 Taskforce Members,

On behalf of SPUR, we are writing in response to Staff's memo for the December 18th General Plan Taskforce meeting. We are encouraged to see the progress and direction the City of San Jose is moving in and offer the following recommendations for your consideration and discussion.

Missing Middle Housing / Plex Housing: SPUR is very supportive of the concept of allowing 2-4 units on parcels designated Residential Neighborhood in certain areas. In our latest white paper, *It Takes a Village*, Strategy 2 is "Don't hold single-family zoning sacred, especially in areas near transit."

It has been a long-held principle of city planners across the country to preserve single-family neighborhoods and allow apartments and condominiums in other locations when growth is needed. Today there is broader awareness of how governments at all levels have instituted and repeatedly doubled down on policies of racial segregation, not least through single-family zoning. This is changing both locally and elsewhere. Senator Scott Wiener's SB 50 bill, in combination with Senator Mike McGuire's amendments, has ignited a conversation in California. Minneapolis was recently the first major city to abolish single-family zoning, allowing at least duplexes and triplexes to be built on any site that allows residential use. Oregon followed, and Seattle, Vancouver and others are looking at making similar changes. In California, this year's AB 68 will create a path toward greater density in single-family neighborhoods by allowing multiple accessory dwelling units on single-family and multifamily sites. In the Bay Area, where the housing shortage is acute, this rethinking seems particularly appropriate. According to Urban Footprint's analysis for The New York Times, 94% of San Jose's land that allows residential uses is currently zoned for detached single-family homes only.

We believe that San Jose can be a leader on this issue in California, as it has been on other planning issues, such as adopting an infill-focused general plan. While the longer-term goal might be to eliminate single-family zoning across the city, areas near transit and areas in and around San Jose's urban villages would be appropriate locations to pilot this transition.

Our Recommendation 15 in *It Takes a Village* is to: *Create an overlay zone in and around urban villages and other growth areas within a 10-minute walk of transit. Areas currently zoned single-family (residential neighborhoods) in transit-rich areas should allow for "missing middle" housing (duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes).* We look forward to seeing staff's recommendations on Missing Middle / "Plex" Housing next month.

Residential Uses in Neighborhood Business Districts: SPUR supports allowing housing in some of San Jose's neighborhood business districts, specifically in/on Willow Street, North 13th Street, Willow Glen, Story Road, and Japantown. Allowing more residents to live in these neighborhood areas will not only allow for new opportunities for people to live in San Jose, but will also help the viability of neighborhood retail and support activity in these historically pedestrian-oriented



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neighborhoods that have potential for more. In our housing strategy for San Jose, *Room for More*, we recommend (#12) that the city "require sufficient residential densities in transit-oriented locations to help support ground-floor retail."

We would support requirements for active use at the ground floor broadly and for active commercial uses at key building frontages in order to ensure we making good places for people walking on the street. Our Recommendation 11 in *Room for More* is to "Require good design and active uses on the ground floor."

In the future, we would recommend considering expanding the boundaries of where multifamily would be allowed in the North 13th Street and Willow Glen neighborhood business districts. We would suggest that over time, adding the remainder of the block between North 13th and North 12th, between North 13th and North 14th, and the strip between Lincoln Avenue and Blewett could help ease transitions between single-family and new multifamily in the neighborhood business districts. Having a street width between new development and existing single-family would help mitigate concerns about shadows and privacy. It would also have the benefit of reducing the negative impact that major setback or stepped building height requirements have on the potential square footage (and resulting financial feasibility) of urban village projects. In *It Takes a Village*, Recommendation 16 is to "include entire city blocks in urban village plan areas, allowing for better transitions between single-family neighborhoods and denser mixed-use corridors."

Thank you for the opportunity to share SPUR's thinking on these housing items. If you have any questions on this or SPUR's take on other General Plan 4-year Review policies, please do not hesitate to reach out to either of us (mhuttenhoff@spur.org and kwang@spur.org).

Sincerely,

Michelle Huttenhoff
San Jose Policy Director

Kristy Wang Community
Planning Policy Director