

January 27, 2020

Dear Fellow General Plan Task Force Members and Staff,

San José was founded in 1777. For next 170-180 years, the city grew slowly, primarily around downtown. The downtown core is surrounded by neighborhoods, some of which are historic or contain historic buildings. I would also say it is characterized by small lot sizes, and some of the most affordable single-family and multi-family units in the City.

As you probably know, in the 1950's San José exploded into West SJ, Almaden Valley, Santa Teresa, etc. Vast neighborhoods, one after another, with malls, strip centers and parking lots dominating the area.

Right now, residents have to drive too far to get to their jobs or to the commerce centers where they shop. Not everyone wants to live in and work downtown. The outlying neighborhoods of single-family homes developed in the 50's, 60's and 70's are not going to go away. The desirable schools, tree lined streets and access to nearby open space will continue to be attractive to families. Even with improved transit, I believe it unrealistic for a large portion of those residents to leave their cars behind.

Therefore, fundamentally, we have to figure out how to increase the job base near where people already live, and decrease vehicle miles traveled, both to jobs and services. Thank goodness Coyote Valley has been set aside. It was the right thing to do for so many reasons. However, that area for job growth has to be replaced, and in a way that does not require residents to continue to commute hours per day.

The areas around San Jose that most contributed to suburban sprawl during those boom years have generally large lot sizes, fewer historic cultural resources to protect, huge underutilized parking lots, and proximity to shopping areas like Oakridge, Eastridge, and Blossom Hill/Santa Teresa corridor. Even with ongoing challenges of the retail environment, malls and strip centers will continue to be primary destinations for many years to come.

And speaking to inclusion, equity and displacement referenced in other letters to this Task Force, some of our most disadvantaged and vulnerable downtown neighborhoods do not wield the political power that the more affluent suburbs do. The talk about residential allocations, density and corporate campuses always seems to lead downtown, but rarely to the outlying areas that are at the root of our jobs/housing imbalance to begin with. That is not right.

I support urban villages, intensified housing and job creation along light rail, existing and future Caltrain stops as well as expanding the walk and bike sheds around those urban villages. There could potentially be a new Capitol Urban Village pending discussion by stakeholders. May I suggest that an additional Urban Village be considered in the vicinity of the Blossom Hill Caltrain station? Maximizing the benefits of electrified Caltrain would be an excellent idea.

The Blossom Hill Caltrain station vicinity already has many different types of uses, and could handle additional jobs capacity. Although somewhat to the west of the station, the Cottle Road Light Rail and perhaps even the Santa Teresa Light Rail station are positioned to complement higher and better utilization in our suburban environment.

San Jose should take a broader and more equitable view, and not automatically shift jobs and housing capacity into the dense and historic downtown neighborhoods.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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