1. **Recommendation**

In order to decrease the amount of recyclable debris that goes into landfills, the City of San Jose should ban all contractors from demolishing entire buildings and should instead require deconstruction to be done at a slow and strategic pace. Any recyclable debris should be sent to refurbishing/recycling centers in order to improve our environmental sustainability. This will be enforced by the Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement department of the City of San Jose, which can then determine whether or not a specific board is needed in order to regulate this deconstruction process.

1. **Background**

This idea came from Palo Alto as they had a lot of wood waste and construction waste, 90% of which went to landfills. In order to combat this, Palo Alto created the mandate to have demolition contractors demolish buildings slowly and strategically to salvage as much material as possible in order to preserve the environment. Strategic deconstruction would help youth by giving them a better environment to live in.

1. **Research**

The City of Palo Alto implemented the policy because they observed that 44%,³ roughly 19,000 tons (Norcal 5) , of their landfilled materials were from demolition alone.³ In San Jose, more than 30% of landfill waste is construction and demolition debris.¹ Although 75% of that waste is diverted and recovered by the City’s Construction & Demolition Diversion, we can still go further as a City by requiring deconstruction instead of demolition. With a similar law in Portland, Oregon, 95% of demolition debris is believed to be salvageable through deconstruction.⁵ The process of deconstruction itself consists of carefully deconstructing the building components of the structure, then separating the material from there into the categories of reuse, or recycle.³

Implementing deconstruction also affects the issue of public health. Decreased amounts in landfills will ultimately lead to a lesser effect on climate change, as the decomposition in landfills often contributes to smog and the release of methane gas. Additionally, landfills worsen conditions such as asthma.²

Economically, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2007, deconstructing instead of demolition increased “employment and economic activities in recycling industries”. Furthermore, “The EPA’s 2016 Recycling Economic Information (REI) Report showed that the recycling of Construction and Deconstruction (C&D) materials created 230,000 jobs in 2007”, showing the economic benefits to such a policy.⁴

1. **Advantages**

Environmentally, the advantages are a decrease in methane gases, a decrease in smog, and a decrease in construction and demolition debris in our landfills. Furthermore, deconstruction allows for greater amounts of recyclable and reusable material to be salvaged instead of otherwise going to landfills. In terms of public health, we may improve the quality of life for our constituents through air quality, and through a better environment. Economically, we as a City can see job growth in the C&D field in terms of recycling and deconstructing.

1. **Solvency**

By following through with this policy, the City of San Jose is setting a precedent that will drastically reduce the amount of waste that will go into landfills, thus taking further environmental action in order to improve our environment.

1. **Potential Setbacks**

Deconstruction is a more time consuming process as it “would take about 10 to 15 days to complete”. Additionally, it would be more costly to companies as it would require “ a crew of four to eight people, with the cost ranging from $22 to $34 per square foot.”⁵ This policy would ultimately look unappealing to contractors that consider offering their services to constituents and corporations in the City of San Jose.

In Palo Alto, “City staff estimates that the deconstruction-collection program will cost the city $243,000 in one-time expenses and $567,000 in annual ongoing expenses. In addition, the city plans to spend about $118,000 for consulting services related to outreach and education [regarding deconstruction].”⁵ The City of San Jose would have to make more room for this policy in its budget. However, both Palo Alto and Portland, Oregon have adopted this deconstruction ordinance or a variant because the environmental benefits would outweigh the costs.⁵

1. **Closing Statement**

The San Jose Youth Commission strongly supports this policy in order to reduce the amount of deconstruction debris through strategic deconstruction.

1. **Collaborated With**

District 3 Youth Advisory Council, San Jose Youth Commission

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