

CORRESPONDENCE

Parks and Recreation Commission

Wednesday, November 18, 2020
6:00 P.M.

Zoom Webinar



District 1	Daphna Woolfe, Chair
District 2	Andre Morrow
District 3	Lawrence Ames
District 4	Kelly Snider
District 5	Vacant
District 6	Art Maurice
District 7	Giavanna Vega
District 8	Vacant
District 9	Rudy Flores
District 10	Vacant
Citywide	George Adas, Vice Chair

Councilmember Maya Esparza,
Council Liaison

Jon Cicirelli, Director, PRNS



Shasta/Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association

www.shpna.org

November 17, 2020

VIA EMAIL (Melrose.Hurley@sanjoseca.gov)

Daphna Woolfe, Chair
San Jose Parks and Recreation Commission
City of San Jose
200 East Santa Clara St
San Jose CA 95113

Re: Proposed Downtown West Open Space Plan

Dear Chair Woolfe and Parks Commissioners,

On behalf of the Board of Directors for the Shasta/Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association (S/HPNA) which represents 4,500 households immediately West of Diridon Station, in the Garden Alameda, Shasta/Hanchett Park, and St. Leo's neighborhoods. For more than thirty-five years, we have sought to work with the City of San Jose, developers, and our neighbors to create a vibrant neighborhood. We take pride in our community; S/HPNA Board members and volunteers have been diligent advocates for decades.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide written comment on the proposed Downtown West Open Space Plan to the Commission. We appreciate the extended outreach by City staff and Google to give our association and members the opportunity to learn about the development and to give feedback at various community meetings as the plan progresses. The role of the Commission as advisory to City Council is important and your lens on park issues and understanding of policy is critical.

S/HPNA is severely underserved in parks. As additional residents move into the area, the residents-to-parks ratio as outlined both in the General Plan and Parkland Dedication Ordinance will continue to worsen. While this widening disconnect is not unique to our neighborhood parks, it has been exacerbated by previous Council policies, including, but not limited to, the inclusion of school lands in parkland calculations and a long ago policy that excluded most of the Alameda Business District from park fees. We respectfully ask that for a project on this scale of development take a visionary and exemplary view of providing additional park space by looking

at but not limited to pedestrian overcrossings and off street trail connections. In addition we request exceptional quality amenities for the planned park spaces.

We are deeply concerned that the Downtown West project initially promoted its development and included in its communications at public meetings that they are providing 15 acres of parks and trails, when in reality only 4.80 acres will be city dedicated open space. We have reservations about the integrity of the Riparian setback General Plan policy after hearing about plans for activation of that space as part of Los Gatos Trail Creek Connection. We don't agree that Riparian setbacks should be counted towards park acreage goals. We also have concerns on how the privately-owned public spaces would be operated as outlined in the 10.20 acres of project sponsored-owned open space section. We would want to make sure that families from our boundaries and adjacent neighborhoods would not experience issues with accessing that space and that those spaces be clearly identified to the community and made to feel welcoming.

In addition we are very concerned about the phasing in of the parks, with the largest space "Northend Park" coming online last in the proposed development plans. That area is currently difficult to access by our residents because of the existing rail line and Caltrans Maintenance Station. The appearance that this park would be easily accessible is unclear unless a pedestrian bridge is built into the project that would provide residents a direct connection from Stockton Ave. It is also unclear whether this parkland could be taken if needed for the future High Speed Rail alignment. We respectfully ask that you engage and provide comments on this issue as clarity is needed; even Google has identified the Diridon Integrated Station Concept (DISC) Plan rail alignments as a potential risk for their development. Clarity on the timeline of this potential park project is needed as well.

We are also concerned to hear recent plans to look at reducing park fees in the Diridon Station Area as part of draft Diridon Affordable Housing Implementation Plan. We hope that the Downtown West Project will continue to fund parks at current levels or consider exceeding goals in order to provide the greatest benefit.

Finally we would like to state that the Downtown West development has agreed to additional community benefits. We applaud this statement but would like to remind the Commission and City Staff that fees such as Commercial Linkage Fees, Park Impact Fees mitigate the impact of new development. Mitigating negative impacts are not community benefits, so again we respectfully ask that no decrease in park fees are considered as the Diridon Station Area Plan builds out, of which the Downtown West development is a part of.

We welcome development that supports the neighborhoods with community services and quality amenities, while maintaining and encouraging walkability and vibrance and including green spaces in the area. We look forward to continued engagement with the Commission, City staff, and Google as the Downtown West plans progress.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Chapman, President
Shasta/Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association