

November 18, 2020

*Electronic mail to generalplanstaff@sanjoseca.gov; jared.hart@sanjoseca.gov;
jessica.zenk@sanjoseca.gov; district8@sanjoseca.gov; patrick.mcgarrrity@sanjoseca.gov*

Envision San Jose 2040

4-Year Review Task Force

November 19, 2020 Task Force Meeting

Re: Evergreen-East Hills Development Policy Item – Comment Letter

Honorable Task Force Members:

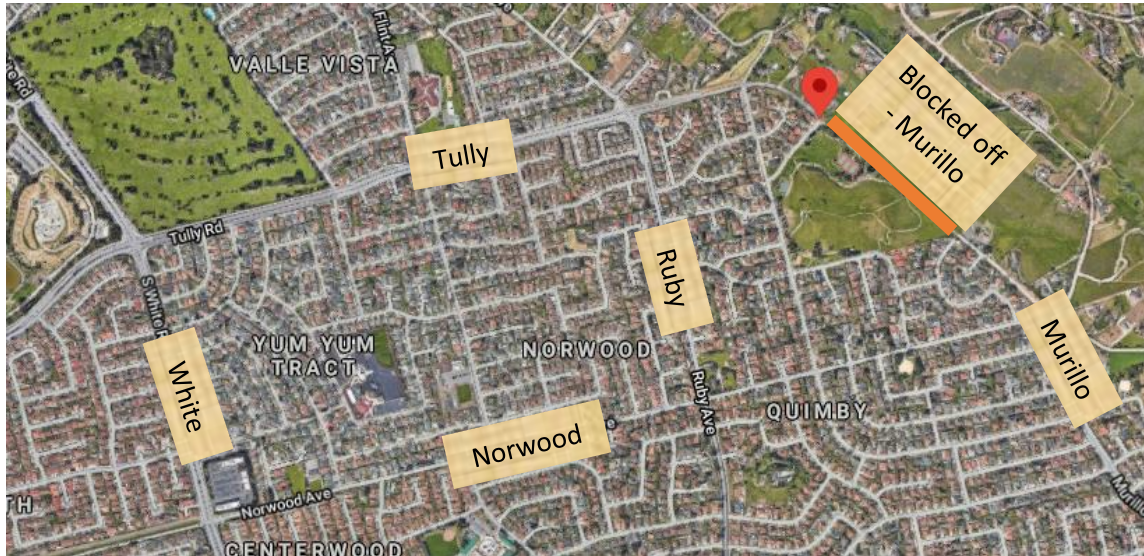
On Monday, November 16, 2020, I attended a presentation about the Evergreen-East Hills Development Policy. I thank Councilmember Arenas and City staff for making this presentation possible.

The materials presented at that meeting were considerable, and neighbors had many questions and comments. I, and other neighbors, are continuing to digest the full impacts of staff's recommendations, which are before you. In the interim, I wanted to share some of my concerns about staff's report and recommendations because they may inadvertently give the impression that closing the Evergreen-East Hills Development Policy (EEHDP) and completing outstanding transportation mitigation measures will resolve long-standing traffic issues that residents face, given staff's expectations for limited future development capacity. Respectfully, I and many of my neighbors do not believe this is the case.

Evergreen will substantially grow and add automobile impacts outside of its planned growth areas through Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and/or Public/Quasi-Public zoning change proposals unless the City clarifies its development standards in its heavily traffic-impacted suburban areas. My family's home, in Evergreen's suburban foothills, is next to a small site off at the intersection of Ruby and Norwood Avenues. For nearly two years, the developer actively pursued a 60,000 s.f. CUP project that included a 90+ underground parking garage. Neighbors and I are pleased and grateful to the developer for now pursuing a new project that will eliminate the underground parking structure. (Plans and details related to this PQP rezoning application are expected in the coming months.) Something in San Jose's planning documents and processes is amiss if, on the one hand, our suburban area is routinely referred to as low growth and traffic impacted but, for nearly two years, an applicant intently pursued a high density / intensity project with an underground parking structure in the suburbs that is well outside of designated growth areas. To do away with or substantially alter the EEHDP, **staff's recommendations must include General Plan goals and policies and zoning changes that clarify that, excepting 100% affordable housing, high density / intensity projects will not be supported in heavily traffic-impacted suburban areas with poor access to public transit that are outside of growth areas.**

Although my neighbors and I are grateful that staff is recommending investment in traffic improvement projects in high-priority areas, **feedback from neighbors that staff received on November 16 demonstrates our concerns that staff's recommendations must be supplemented to address considerable and long-standing roadway safety issues.** My family's home off of Ruby Avenue, located between Norwood Avenue and Tully Road, is substantially impacted by traffic. Automobile traffic that

should travel on Murillo Avenue or White Road is, instead, funneled to and travels along Ruby Avenue. Regarding Murillo Avenue, for some unexplained reason, it remains blocked off from fully connecting to Tully Avenue, despite having the ability to do so. For decades, a relatively small section of roadway east of Groesbeck Hill Park, that would otherwise connect Murillo Avenue, remains closed (see map below).



This one small section of roadway prevents Murillo from fully connecting to Tully Avenue, which means that other streets, and particularly Ruby Avenue, must absorb trips that would otherwise travel on this stretch of avenue. Past inquiries have not helped explain why Murillo Road remains closed to through traffic, despite this being a viable option for equitably distributing traffic impacts in Evergreen. **Staff has not included study for and opening of Murillo Avenue so that it takes on its fair share of throughway traffic impacts, and I urge the Task Force to recommend that staff include this in its recommendations.**

Ruby Avenue also experiences excessive impacts from traffic, particularly commercial traffic, from motorists who prefer to race through two stop signs along Ruby Avenue between Norwood Avenue and Tully Road instead of waiting through three traffic lights along a parallel section of White Road. Some of this traffic along Ruby Avenue is generated from an Urban Village to the south, which includes commercial traffic that prefers to speed on our two-lane Ruby Avenue instead of travel on White Road's six-lane road. Staff's proposed prioritization of traffic improvement project for Ruby Avenue, which is to add roundabouts at the Norwood Avenue and Tully Road intersections, is appreciated, but neighbors are concerned that these improvements will only decrease speeds at these intersections. As several neighbors shared with staff on November 16, we are concerned that travelers will pick up speed in between these roundabouts, making this stretch of Ruby Avenue even more dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly for those who cross Ruby Avenue at locations other than the controlled intersections at Norwood and Tully Road, which are at least .5 miles apart.

Traffic improvements should include more than roundabouts along Ruby Avenue at Tully Road and Norwood Avenue, since it is likely that traffic speeds and hazards will worsen in between the two

proposed roundabouts. On November 16, neighbors and I suggested compliments (and mitigation to combat unintended speeding created by) the roundabouts. These suggestions included adding stop signs and crosswalks along Ruby Avenue, particularly between Norwood and Tully Road, since it is impractical to expect that pedestrians and cyclists will only cross Ruby Avenue at the Norwood and Tully Road intersections. As mentioned above, traffic is funneled to Ruby Avenue because: 1) Murillo Avenue is incomplete and does not allow through traffic, and 2) White Road has three intersections that are controlled with lights, and motorists prefer to speed through Ruby Avenue's two intersections over the same stretch, which are controlled with stop signs. Unless more is done, solely installing roundabouts will not decrease traffic – it will only decrease traffic speeds at the intersections where they are installed. Speeding in between these roundabouts will get worse, causing additional road and safety hazards for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. As such, **I urge the Task Force to recommend that staff study and implement additional improvements, like opening Murillo Avenue to through traffic and adding stops signs and crosswalks, particularly on Ruby Avenue between Norwood Avenue and Tully Road, to complement and/or mitigate unintended speed / safety impacts caused by the recommended roundabouts.**

Thank you for taking time to consider these comments.

Sincerely,

Reuben Castillo