

December 16, 2014

Honorable Mayor Jose Esteves and Milpitas City Council
455 East Calaveras Boulevard
Milpitas, CA 95035

Re: Amendment to Integral District 1, Lots 2, 3 and 4 (Item 2 on Dec. 16, 2014 Council agenda).

Dear Mayor Estevez:

SPUR is a member-supported, non-profit organization that promotes good planning and good government in the San Francisco Bay Area with offices in San Francisco, San Jose and soon, Oakland. Over the last 18 months we undertook a major research project focused on transportation, which resulted in the SPUR report *Freedom to Move, how the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority can create better transportation choices in the South Bay*. Through this and other major policy reports, SPUR has begun working with South Bay cities to ensure that planning around the BART Silicon Valley extension project results in great places with quality transportation options.

We are writing in support of staff and the planning commission's recommendation to implement the Transit Area Specific Plan and deny the proposed amendment to Integral District 1, Lots 2, 3 and 4, which reverses the planning intensity and revises the urban design of development in the Milpitas BART station area. SPUR is concerned that the amendment would degrade the neighborhood in substantive and irreversible ways. It would also adversely impact the South Bay transportation network and future BART Silicon Valley station areas.

The Milpitas Transit Area Specific Plan (TASP) recognizes that neighborhoods around high-capacity transit, such as BART, are our region's most valuable growth opportunities. We laud the TASP for recognizing the importance of population and job density, mixed land uses, walkability and attractive architecture. SPUR concurs with the staff and planning commission that the process, goals and strategies of the TASP are worth pursuing, even if it requires waiting for the real estate market to evolve.

SPUR has three chief concerns with this proposed amendment.

1. **Degraded transportation and walkability for residents and workers.** The TASP strategically calls for high-density and mixed land uses, with retail facing the street and integrated into the neighborhood to encourage walking, biking and transit usage. In contrast, low-density, car-oriented housing and retail are difficult to access with walking, biking or transit. The proposed amendment would increase the isolation of

residents and workers and increase auto-dependency. Retail will be less sustainable when there are fewer residents who can walk.

2. **Risk to BART service and future BART funding.** A decrease in population and job density would reduce the number of riders using the Milpitas BART station. Low BART ridership increases the need for BART operating subsidies and/or service reductions. Fewer riders at Milpitas would reduce the demand and hence availability of local light rail and bus transit; and jeopardizes scarce regional, state and federal funding for Phase II of BART Silicon Valley. We must increasingly demonstrate the ability to capture scarce station area infill opportunities to compete for these funds.
3. **Inability to achieve the TASP vision.** The TASP identifies multi-modal capital improvements, paid for by development fees, which will support the plan's goals. Areas built out at low-density will remain low-density in perpetuity and also dampen the ability build adjacent high-density projects. A cumulative decrease in development intensity will decrease this funding for capital projects, causing a vicious cycle that degrades the ability to grow a multi-modal urban neighborhood.

We ask you to consider the long term impacts of land use decisions made today around the multi-billion dollar BART Silicon Valley rail investment and deny the proposed amendment. Thank you for your consideration. Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Ratna Amin
SPUR Transportation Policy Director

Cc:

Thomas C. Williams, Milpitas City Manager
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