

November 18, 2019

Dear Envision 2040 Taskforce Members,

On behalf of SPUR, we are writing in response to Staff's memo regarding the proposed modifications to the Urban Village general plan policy. SPUR has been a continuous supporter of the San Jose's Urban Village plan as a way to create more mixed-use, higher density development throughout San Jose. The General Plan four-year review allows us the opportunity to take a step back and analyze the policies and goals the city laid out for itself in 2011. We need to acknowledge the trends and forces our city is facing and amend certain policies that conflict with current city priorities to increase both commercial and residential development.

This week, SPUR released a new white paper – *It Takes A Village: Strategies for successful implementation of San Jose's urban village vision* – that informs SPUR's thinking. The white paper can be accessed at www.spur.org/urbanvillages. We hope that you consider the following set of recommendations and comments when reviewing the proposed changes to the Urban Village plan.

SPUR supports the following Staff recommendations:

Urban Village Boundary Modifications: SPUR supports eliminating both the Evergreen and East Capitol/Foxdale Drive urban villages. We support the recommendation to shift the residential capacity from the Evergreen Village to Downtown and to shift the residential capacity in the East Capitol/Foxdale plan to the Little Portugal Village site. Both Little Portugal and Downtown are locations that will host the future extension of BART. The additional capacity is needed in these locations to support future ridership and to create dense, transit-oriented communities.

We further recommend that Staff look at other UV sites of similar (Neighborhood Village) scale and create a new plan type. We recommend reducing the overall number of urban villages that must undergo a full-scale community planning process, and create a new category of smaller-scale "microvillages" with a simpler and standardized set of requirements for development. (See SPUR's Recommendation 4 in *It Takes a Village*.)

Lastly, we support staff's recommendation to the modify the boundary line of the Race Street Light Rail Urban Village removing the Reed & Graham site and areas east of Lincoln Avenue from the Village thus preserving those areas for industrial use.

Plan Horizons: SPUR recommends that Staff completely eliminate plan horizons. We believe that San Jose's system of plan horizons is an unnecessarily complicated way to control residential growth. The concern that urban villages would grow too much too quickly has proven unfounded. Even without horizons, San Jose does not have the staff time or funding capacity to plan all the urban villages immediately, so there will be a natural phasing of the plans. Instead we recommend that Staff prioritize

urban village planning by transit access, market demand analysis, vehicle miles traveled and equity considerations. (See SPUR's Recommendation 1 in *It Takes a Village*.)

Short of taking this bigger step, we strongly support the proposal to shift these two completed urban village plans into Horizon 1. We would go one step further and propose that the city adopt a blanket policy to move future completed plans into Horizon 1.

Residential Pool Policy: SPUR supports Staff recommendation to remove Policy IP-2.11, the Residential Pool policy to reduce housing growth barriers. Given the significant housing crisis the region is facing, it no longer makes sense to limit residential growth in areas outside of a current planned horizon.

Urban Village Planning Implementation Policy: SPUR strongly supports amending policy IP-5.5 and reverting the language back to the original General Plan policy language from 2011. The current objectives laid out in this policy have created confusion and barriers to residential development. This change would allow for more flexibility for mixed-use development, while still accommodating the jobs and housing growth goals in Urban Villages.

Signature Project Policy: SPUR supports the idea of adding clarity and definition to the Signature Project designation in the general plan. (See SPUR's Recommendation 13 in *It Takes a Village*.) Transparency around the threshold requirements for Signature Projects will help create certainty and a clear path for developers and partner agencies as they conceive of new projects and try to bring them forward for approvals. We appreciate that Staff has looked to past Signature Projects to see what job density and open space requirements are reasonable to request; hopefully that research also included a review of Signature Project concepts that were discussed but were ultimately infeasible.

Thank you for the opportunity to share SPUR's thinking on urban villages. If you have any questions on this or SPUR's take on other General Plan 4-year Review policies, please do not hesitate to reach out to either of us (mhuttenhoff@spur.org and kwang@spur.org).

Sincerely

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