

April 13, 2020

City Council
City of San José
200 E. Santa Clara Street
San Jose CA 95113

In re: Item 10.1(a) Support for Zoning Ordinance Amendment File No. PP20-003

Dear Mayor Liccardo, Vice Mayor Jones, and Councilmembers:

We write to urge you to approve the Planning Commission recommendation and adopt zoning ordinance amendment File No. PP20-003 to make provisions for use of Portable Dwelling Units (PDUs) - also known as “tiny homes on wheels” - as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

In response to the housing affordability and availability crisis, the California State Legislature and local jurisdictions - thanks to your leadership and initiative, including the City of San José - have recently adopted measures to facilitate and expedite the design, permitting and construction of ADUs and tiny homes including Bridge Housing Communities.

In fact, SPUR’s August 2017 report, “Room for More: SPUR’s Housing Agenda for San José,” included a key strategy and call for the City to enable greater production of housing that is affordable by design and allow the construction of in-law units and other smaller living spaces. Since that time, significant progress has certainly been made toward this end and the City has become a model for other jurisdictions in this regard.

Now, building on this effort, the San José Conversation Corps + Charter School (SJCC+CS) is bringing forward another innovative program and solution to our housing crisis, to wit, portable dwelling units that can be quickly and relatively inexpensively constructed in a backyard. SJCC+CS estimates the construction time to be five (5) days and the cost to be approximately fifty-thousand dollars (\$50,000).

As a key benefit, the SJCC+CS Housing Solutions Enterprise also allows students to obtain a high school diploma, develop job skills, and acquire employment in the construction industry.

The SJCC+CS PDU is a 153 square foot fully independent living unit - much like an ADU - with a kitchen, bathroom, flexible living space for double occupancy, and an amenities package which includes appliances (mini-fridge, stove top, HVAC, microwave/hood) as well as a keypad, Ring entry system, and Amazon's Echo Show.

SJCC+CS will train students to build the units, lease backyards to place the units, and rent the units at below market rents to its students, while the host family will receive monthly rental income. However, to allow this program to go forward, the existing zoning ordinance must be amended.

Portable dwelling units in general and the SJCC+CS program in particular are worthy of support and represent exactly the kind of affordable housing solutions with substantial co-benefits that our community desperately needs at this time. For these reasons, we urge adoption of the proposed zoning ordinance amendment.

Sincerely,

Michael Lane, San José Policy Director
SPUR