

November 18, 2020

Envision 2040 General Plan 4-Year Review Task Force
c/o City of San José
200 E. Santa Clara Street
San José CA 95113

In re: Meeting # 10 – Evergreen-East Hills Development Policy

Dear Task Force Members,

On behalf of SPUR, I write in support of the recommendations in the staff memo for the November 19th General Plan 4-Year Review Task Force meeting that will focus on moving from the Evergreen-East Hills Development Policy (EEHDP) to the City’s more recent VMT Policy to guide planning and policies for growth and development.

The COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying economic crisis have laid bare the inequities in our city and the vulnerability of our immigrant communities and our East San José residents in particular, so many of whom are essential workers at risk of contracting the virus and often live in overcrowded households. These conditions have led to East San José being the area in the county with the most cases per capita.

San José has a long history of low-density, sprawl development over an area of over 180 square miles. This inefficient and unsustainable land use development pattern has had terrible repercussions for housing equity and affordability, fiscal stability, traffic circulation, vehicle miles traveled and environmental quality. It falls to us to correct this now.

Move to VMT Policy to Screen Development

The staff memo helpfully recites the history and challenges this planning area and its neighborhoods have faced over decades. **We strongly support the proposed transition from the EEHDP to the VMT Policy for growth control and good planning that directs new development to the right places.**

As noted in the memo, under SB 743 (Steinberg) of 2013, the VMT metric must be used for transportation analysis for purposes of CEQA and we agree that the City’s VMT Policy supports the intent of the EEHDP to prevent further residential sprawl on the hillsides while directing new development to transit-rich areas in Urban Villages.

We agree that the City, in consultation with neighborhood residents, should continue to prioritize and program Transportation Impact Fee (TIF) revenues for transportation improvements and mitigation measures to decrease traffic congestion and increase pedestrian safety and convenience.

Reid-Hillview Airport and Environs

Residents living around the Reid-Hillview Airport have voiced concerns about airport impacts, including air pollution, noise, and safety and environmental hazards. In our view, a commitment to race equity and social and environmental justice means it is necessary and appropriate to commit the airport site to a large-scale community redevelopment initiative that will benefit directly the residents of East San José and be responsive to their needs and aspirations. The VMT heat map demonstrates conclusively that this low-VMT area is exactly the right place for this type of redevelopment to occur.

Big Idea – Green Connections

As part of the “Big Ideas” component of SPUR’s Regional Strategy, we have identified redevelopment of the Reid-Hillview Airport and public investments and improvements in the surrounding area as a major initiative to improve the quality of life, health outcomes and recreational opportunities for residents.

Reid-Hillview, Eastridge Center, Lake Cunningham, and the Pleasant Hills Golf Course site together represent an opportunity to dramatically transform East San José while meeting community needs, promoting equity and sustainability and generating economic development and workforce training opportunities. This will, of course, require close coordination between the City of San José and the County of Santa Clara.

We recommend creating green connections in the area by following the watershed and tying surrounding open spaces into a seamless network of public amenities. This effort should include restoration and enhancement of the ecology and hydrology of Lake Cunningham, Thompson Creek, Silver Creek and the golf course site, utilizing green infrastructure for flood management. The trails in the area should be complete and continuous to support healthy and safe active transportation opportunities.

We encourage you to be bold and adopt these new visions and planning approaches for the Evergreen-East Hills area that promise to deliver tremendous benefits to residents and connect us better to the beautiful natural environment.

Thank you for your kind consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Michael Lane, San José Director
SPUR