



SPUR

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November 9, 2021

Mayor Sam Liccardo and City Councilmembers
City of San José
200 E. Santa Clara St.
San José, CA 95113

Dear Mayor Liccardo and City Council Members:

On behalf of SPUR, we urge you to support the Planning Department's recommendations regarding Coyote Valley as outlined in their November 5th memo to the Council.¹ These staff recommendations echo those of the Envision San José 2040 General Plan Four Year Review Task Force, which were finalized by the Task Force at their meeting on October 29, 2020.²

You have an opportunity to help San José move from an outdated vision of sprawl development that would create an uninterrupted expanse of pavement, traffic, and buildings between San Jose and Morgan Hill to a vision that preserves the city's southern greenbelt and recommits to concentrating growth in the parts of the San José that are already urbanized. We urge you to reorient the City's vision so that it embraces building up, rather than out.

Many different strands of SPUR's research support the Task Force's recommendation that the General Plan should lead to a future for Coyote Valley as one of agriculture and open space rather than as a jobs center. In *Rethinking the Corporate Campus* (2017) and *The Urban Future of Work* (2012) we highlight the importance of locating jobs in accessible places that reduce drive-alone commuting, make more efficient use of land and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In our report *Locally Nourished* (2013) we highlighted the value that agriculture brings in diversifying the region's economic base and its value as a land-use that reinforces growth toward infill, rather than sprawl. For San José, the sum of these recommendations translates into concentrating job growth in already existing urbanized areas, not planning for greenfield development at the southern border of the city.

City planning staff summed up this new vision for Coyote Valley well in their recommendations to the task force:

Coyote Valley is a unique asset to San Jose and should be preserved as a resource for the community that furthers the City's goals of environmental sustainability, enhancing open

¹ Christopher Burton, *Memorandum to City Council*, November 5, 2021:

<https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9944017&GUID=F4739B33-6F7E-4D21-9FF1-C630A5852521>

² Envision San José 2040 4-Year Review, "Task Force Meeting No. 9 Synopsis," October 29, 2020. See Motion #1, pages 9-11: <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/66911/637408548044970000>

*space, supporting agriculture in the non-urban areas of the City, and protecting critical linkages for wildlife movement.*³

Unfortunately, on October 27, the Planning Commission voted 5-4 against the Task Force and Staff recommendations and encouraged the City Council to do likewise. Based on their questions and comments during the meeting, the majority of the Planning Commission seemed to either desire more information before endorsing the staff recommendations or felt that maintaining land values for existing property owners superseded the city's interest in achieving important environmental goals by protecting agricultural land, open space, and further encouraging the development of jobs and homes in the City's core rather than its periphery.

These arguments, as the four Commissioners who voted in support of the original recommendations noted, are not compelling. The City Council must stand by the work of the Task Force and Planning staff and support the original recommendations made after months of work and deliberation.

Furthermore, we commend both the staff and the Task Force members for going beyond just articulating a new vision and providing ten clear, actionable recommendations for the North, Mid, and Southern Coyote Valley areas.⁴ The coordination with the County's upcoming zoning updates is an especially welcome example of how to take strong action to protect a greenbelt that crosses two jurisdictions.

We urge you to embrace all of the staff and Task Force recommendations. They will go a long way in changing both the regulatory framework and the assumptions of the real estate market so that San José can truly refocus its plans for growth inward, rather than outward.

Sincerely,



Fred Buzo
San José Director



Eli Zigas
Food and Agriculture
Policy Director

³ *Memorandum to Envision San José 2040 Task Force*, October 22, regarding "October 29, 2020 Task Force Meeting," pg. 4: <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showdocument?id=65782>

⁴ *Ibid*, pages 17-18