



May 20, 2026

City of San Jose General Plan Task Force
200 East Santa Clara Street
San José, CA 95113

Subject: Agenda Item #4: Small Multifamily (Missing Middle) Housing: Background and Preliminary Recommendations

Dear Chair Rosario and Members of the General Plan Task Force,

Thank you for your leadership in considering a missing-middle housing framework as part of the General Plan Four-Year Review. We also extend our appreciation to the city staff who prepared the informative [memo](#) and presentation for your consideration. Advancing a missing-middle housing framework is an important and meaningful step toward addressing San José's worsening affordability crisis.

Our [previous letter](#) emphasized the urgency of allowing more flexible zoning, as an increasing number of residents and workers are priced out of San José due to restrictive zoning. We want to reiterate our strong encouragement for the city to adopt meaningful increases in allowable density citywide, including in high-opportunity neighborhoods. The [Housing Policy Simulator](#), recently published by the Turner Center for Housing Innovation, demonstrates the promise of policies that allow neighborhoods to accommodate at least six units. While staff's 32 dwelling units per acre aligns with Housing Element Strategy Policy P-35 and is a positive step, **we believe the scale and urgency of the housing crisis require San José to go further.** Housing affordability has become one of California's defining challenges, driving residents to leave the state to find more attainable housing elsewhere in the country. Increasing the allowable density would make it significantly easier to deliver these missing-middle housing types. We were encouraged to hear members of the General Plan Task Force repeatedly call for a minimum density of 40 dwelling units per acre to support project viability, and we urge the Task Force to be even bolder to meet the scale of the housing crisis.

We strongly agree with the staff that the market, rather than artificial mandates, should determine parking needs. **We caution the City against taking a step backward by imposing parking requirements on missing middle housing.** While Government Code section 65863.2 limits cities' ability to mandate parking in many contexts, we nonetheless strongly urge San José not to pursue these parking mandates beyond what state law already permits. Such [mandates would increase housing costs](#) and undermine project feasibility. We have repeatedly seen



required parking spaces remain underutilized, and we fundamentally believe San José should prioritize scarce land for housing people, not storing private automobiles. Requiring additional parking would not represent forward-looking climate or housing policy; rather, it would be a step backward towards outdated planning practices.

We applaud staff for allowing flexibility in height and more homes, but we encourage **caution in imposing strict rear-yard setbacks**, particularly where impacts may be limited or site-specific. We support the staff's recommendation to look to Berkeley as a model for more flexible setback standards. In addition, state law (Government Code 65913.11) requires cities to allow qualifying projects to achieve a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of at least 1.0 for projects with 3-7 units or 1.25 for 8-10 units. If San José chooses to regulate through FAR, it would be simpler and more effective just to **adopt standards that allow a FAR of 1.25**. Well-intentioned but overly restrictive exemptions and standards can result in a program that appears strong on paper but delivers minimal housing in practice.

San José has a chance to create homes, reduce displacement pressures, strengthen its economy, and expand access to high-opportunity neighborhoods through thoughtful growth. A robust, workable missing-middle framework with sufficient density can help close the gap between deeply subsidized affordable housing and a \$2 million home, while better aligning the housing supply with the city's income realities.

For more background, see [SPUR's article](#) on how missing middle housing can help address the affordability crisis in San José and across the Bay Area.

Thank you for your service to the community.

Sincerely,

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