

July 29, 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 # 6 - Opportunity Housing

Dear Task Force Members,

On behalf of SPUR, I write in response to the staff memo for the July 30th General Plan 4-Year Review Task Force meeting that will focus on Opportunity Housing.

SPUR strongly endorses Opportunity Housing for our city and we applaud the Task Force and staff for bringing this item forward. In fact, our August 2017 report, “Room for More: SPUR’s Housing Agenda for San José,” called for similar measures. We encourage you to be bold.

There is a growing acknowledgment across our nation of how planning practices with racist intent have created the exclusionary and segregated neighborhoods and communities we have today. San José must become part of a growing cohort of cities and states that is taking steps to rectify these inequities by allowing a variety of housing types to emerge in neighborhoods that are currently restricted to single-family houses.

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, vehicle miles traveled, and environmental quality. It falls to us to correct this now.

A June 18, 2019 exposé by New York Times writer, Emily Badger, revealed that 94% of San José’s residential land is zoned for detached single-family homes. We currently have zoning that allows for high-rise towers in the downtown and affordable mid-rise apartment buildings in Urban Villages, but virtually no opportunities for “missing-middle” building types that can create greater housing affordability “by design” and without public subsidy.

We support much of the reasoning in the June 18 correspondence from Jessie O’Malley Solis with VTA and the July 27 correspondence from Leslye Corsiglia with SV@Home. As they both noted in their letters, Opportunity Housing is still low-density and need not be limited or even targeted solely to parcels within a half-mile of High Frequency Transit.

Homeowners across the city should equally have the property rights and flexibility to, at their discretion and without displacing tenants, modestly increase the density and number of dwelling units on their lot. This right ought not be limited to arbitrary geographic locations or parts of the

city. Please do not limit the opportunity for our property owners and residents to access Opportunity Housing. We are better than that.

Opportunity Housing should, at the discretion of the property owner, be allowed by-right across San José in order to effectively promote race equity, housing availability and affordability, and environmental sustainability. We can accommodate population growth within our existing development footprint with gentle density that still protects historic buildings and preserves existing neighborhood design standards and character.

Thank you for your kind and thoughtful consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Michael Lane, San José Director
SPUR