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RE: Problems with linear high rise corridors especially the San Carlos Grand Boulevard

TO: Envision 2040 San Jose General Plan Task Force

Although I have expressed my concern in general about your concept of linear high rise corridors in past correspondence, I would like to state in detail why this is not a good urban planning idea for any city including San Jose. As an urban environmental planner with 35 years of professional practice with a Masters from UC Berkeley and a K-12 San Jose Unified School District graduate, following are my detail concerns and suggestions:

1. Good urban design is clustering high rises and not building lines of high rises;
2. Housing density does not correlate only with high rises; one can obtain density with four story buildings if they are designed well. Perhaps the question should be: do we have the right developers in place to do this?
3. Consider adjacent land use and proportions when building high rises. For example, it is important not to build a line or cluster of high rises adjacent to historical neighborhoods like the Rose Garden or Shasta Hanchett Neighborhood Association. These historical neighborhoods have historical trees and vegetation which would die if they are shaded by tall buildings. They also have historical mountain and sunset views and have been designed to take advantage of these views. Massive high rises will destroy the character of these important neighborhoods and reduce opportunities for tourism and quality of life.
4. Well designed cities design to take advantage of view corridors along major boulevards and historical buildings, parks, and neighborhoods. San Jose should consider adding this to their urban design criteria.
5. High rises on the south and west destroy the opportunity for adjacent homes to have solar panels and also create the need for heating thus creating increased energy costs.
6. Lines of high rises create wind tunnels especially with our afternoon strong winds from the San Francisco Bay. No one will want to walk or sit in these wind tunnels.

Thank you for addressing these issues in our important 2040 Master Plan.

Kathryn Mathewson  
Environmental Planner and Designer  
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