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To: [GeneralPlanStaff](#); [Pham, Kieulan](#); [Brilliot, Michael](#); [Piozet, Jennifer](#); [Hart, Jared](#)
Cc: [Hughey, Rosalynn](#)
Subject: Catalyze SV Input on General Plan Task Force's Community Engagement Discussion
Date: Wednesday, January 29, 2020 8:54:05 PM

[External Email]

Kieulan, Michael, Jennifer, Jared, & select Housing Commission Task Force members,

Catalyze SV would like to revisit with you the Task Force's discussion of community engagement on Signature Projects in urban villages (to read this message easier, we've **bolded** below our key points).

For Catalyze SV, creating a great community engagement provision on Signature Projects means:

- a) reaching a diverse group of stakeholders;
- b) getting the best possible ideas possible from them about how the project can benefit the most people;
- c) ensuring those ideas are transparently & accessibly shared with anyone; and
- d) openly explaining whether or not and why the developer can implement them.

We absolutely agree with City of San Jose staff that a broader discussion about community engagement needs to occur outside the Task Force's focused scope, as part of City Council Policy 6-30. In fact, we've been sharing [our ideas from our Cultivating Community initiative](#) with staff about that very policy & welcome collaboration with them and Task Force members on it.

On a parallel track, the Task Force is considering additional provisions for Signature Projects to move through the City's process. If we're considering extra provisions (on subjects such as commercial space), don't we want more meaningful community engagement be one of them as well?

We shared with our members the new language on community engagement that staff released late last week. [It reads](#):

“Create a tailored community engagement strategy to optimize broad and diverse stakeholder engagement in the community where the project is located to better collect feedback of the design and quality of the project. The community engagement strategy must adhere to and include the policies outlined under General Plan Goal CE-1 Active Community Engagement.”

Our staff & members had the following feedback:

- Overall, the language in this proposal is better than the last one because it is more inclusive of different perspectives and talks about creating tailored community engagement efforts.

- That being said, the term “where the project is located” puts greater weight on someone who is near the project (which usually implies a resident). As mentioned in [our previous letter](#), we believe all stakeholders deserve an equal opportunity to participate. That is alluded to in staff’s new language above that reads, “optimize broad and diverse stakeholder engagement.” Yet if the general structure of the above proposal moved forward, **we recommend striking “... where the project is located ..” from your recommendation.**
- In addition to the language “... design and quality of the project”, can we add “potential benefits” to that clause? Development isn’t just about design, it’s also about the potential benefits it can bring to a community. Thus, the **revised phrase we recommend is, “...design, potential benefits, and quality of the project.”**
- The General Plan Goal CE-1 has many important, noble ideas on community engagement. But if this Signature Project provision primarily refers to Council Policy 6-30 and General Plan Goal CE-1, why have a community engagement provision at all? Either a “Signature Project” requires additional, measurable efforts by a developer to talk to the community, or it doesn’t. Let’s have a substantive policy that truly engages the community in development on these major, groundbreaking projects in urban villages!
- This latest draft removes the quantitative measurements from the last one. **No measurable requirements means a true community engagement process could be below the higher threshold staff and the Task Force may want on Signature Projects.** Can we revisit including substantive, objective ways of measuring community engagement?

Thank you to all the Task Force members who brought up community engagement concerns, questions, and ideas at the last Task Force meeting. We hope the spirit and substance of some of your ideas and Catalyze SV's can be incorporated into the Signature Project policy.

For a greater set of ideas from Catalyze SV members on community engagement, we recommend referring back to the ideas in our [letter from December 2019](#) or our [Cultivating Community initiative](#). We continue to welcome the opportunity to brainstorm with staff and the Task Force the best ways of engaging the community about development in San Jose.

We’ll see you tomorrow night! Thank you for considering our perspectives - Alex

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P.S. We appreciate City of San Jose staff for meeting with us on January 21, though we didn't have a full discussion about Signature Projects achieving the greatest possible community engagement. After the December Task Force meeting, Catalyze SV reached out to staff on December 20, January 7, and January 10 to discuss the Task Force's input last month and revisit the [ideas in our December 2019 letter](#).

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