

TRANSMITTED VIA EMAIL

July 26, 2020

2040 General Plan Four-Year Review Task Force
City of San Jose

Dear General Plan Four-Year Review Task Force Co-chairs, Task Force Members, and City Staff.

Re: Equity and Inclusion - Opportunity Housing

We write today as nonprofit community leaders who are working together to confront and address issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and liberation throughout Santa Clara County. Recent events have elevated the inequities and challenges faced by people of color throughout our country, with residents gathering in the streets to protest injustice and unfair treatment of people based on the color of their skin.

One of the most significant places where we can see these inequities today is through the way we zone our cities. Historically, along with other policies that sought to discriminate against low-income families and communities of color, single-family zoning was created with the explicit intent of segregating communities and controlling access to opportunity.

The policy has worked well. With over 94% of all residential land in San Jose zoned single-family (the highest in the country for a large city) the patterns of segregation are clear-- lower-income families and communities of color live disproportionately on the City's East side, and white, affluent families live disproportionately in the neighborhoods of Almaden, Silver Creek, and Willow Glen. Maintaining single-family zoning has had the result of constraining housing supply and the diversity of housing opportunities, and has resulted in overcrowding (Latinx households are three times more likely than their non-Hispanic white counterparts to live in overcrowded households), overpayment, and out of control home prices.

As the Task Force members consider the staff recommendations, we ask three things. First, please keep in mind the need to address current and historical systems of racial and economic exclusion. Second, consider taking action similar to the cities of Portland and Minneapolis where they moved to eliminate single-family residential zoning citywide as a step towards more equitable opportunity. And finally, support efforts to reduce displacement and ensure that any policy that is approved does not unknowingly result in added exclusion by narrowly defining where low-density multi-family is allowed.

This is not easy work, and we know that there will be virulent outcry from many who own their own homes and for whom single-family zoning is sacrosanct. We commend the City Council for its courage in raising the review of outdated zoning laws and asking the General Plan Task Force to consider changes. We further commend city staff for acknowledging that the history of single-family zoning in San Jose is intertwined with policies of deliberate racial and economic

exclusion. By making small changes to allow low-density multifamily housing in single-family neighborhoods we can begin to correct a legacy of exclusion while expanding economic opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration. The time to act is now!

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