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June 14, 2016

Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager
Town of Los Gatos
110 E. Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95030

RE: June 15, 2016 Joint Study Session on North 40 Specific Plan

Dear Town Manager Prevetti,

Silicon Valley at Home (SV@Home) is a new nonprofit organization that is driving the creation of affordable housing for a more vibrant and equitable Silicon Valley. SV@Home is the voice of affordable housing in Silicon Valley, representing a broad range of interests, from leading employers who are driving the Bay Area economy to labor and service organizations, to nonprofit and for-profit developers who provide housing and services to those most in need.

On behalf of our members and our coalition partners, I am writing in support of the comprehensive planning process that has taken place around the “North 40” in the Town of Los Gatos. The Town’s recent approval of both the North 40 Specific Plan and Housing Element came after decades of planning, and most recently, five years of process including over 50 opportunities for public input.

In light of the joint study session the Town is holding on June 15 to discuss the North 40 Specific Plan, we urge the Town to recognize the importance of the Specific Plan, acknowledging the extensive public process that has already occurred surrounding this site and considering the implications to the Housing Element if the allowable density were to be reduced.

Extensive & Inclusive Public Process

We commend the Town for the inclusive and extensive public process that has occurred not only surrounding the passage of the Specific Plan and Housing Element, but since the inception of the Commercial Specific Plan nearly three decades ago. With over 100 community meetings held since 2009, we believe that community engagement has been remarkably transparent and fruitful throughout the planning process. Careful review and thoughtful feedback from countless residents, business owners, town officials, and other important stakeholders have certainly shaped the content of the final Specific Plan and

Housing Element. This wide-reaching and inclusive engagement exemplifies the ideal participatory processes that we hope to achieve in community planning. While some community members may now call for new scrutiny and deliberation over the Specific Plan and Housing Plan, we attest that a full and proper public process has already occurred and that the Town should adhere to these documents as they stand.

Housing Element

The Los Gatos 2015-2023 Housing Element, adopted by the Town and certified by the State in May 2015, relies heavily on the zoning assumptions made in the North 40 Specific Plan. Mandated by state law, Housing Elements play an essential role in establishing sites for critically needed housing throughout California. Of the 619 housing units that the State requires the Town to plan for over the next eight years, 270 of these units are allocated to the North 40 site. These 270 units are included in the Specific Plan, allowable through zoning at a density of 20 units per acre. If the Town were to reduce the project density, the Housing Element would no longer be in compliance with State standards and the Town would have to find alternate locations for the required 270 units.

We believe that the North 40 development project responds appropriately and responsibly to the needs of Los Gatos. The proposed mixed-use community, with walkable retail, public open space and a range of housing opportunities, will be a diverse and sustainable neighborhood that fulfills unmet housing needs in the Town. The project meets the requirements of the Housing Element and corresponds with the intentions of the Specific Plan, while importantly providing a wide range of vital housing units for the Town and greater Silicon Valley region.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Pilar Lorenzana-Campo, Policy Director, SV@Home
Matt Vander Sluis, Program Director, Greenbelt Alliance

cc: Michael Lane, Policy Director, Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California
Rob Schultz, Town Attorney
Marni Moseley, Senior Planner