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July 14, 2020

Honorable Mayor Gillmor and Members of the City Council
City of Santa Clara
1500 Warburton Avenue
Santa Clara, CA

Dear Mayor Gillmor, Vice Mayor Hardy, and Councilmembers Davis, Chahal, Watanabe, and O'Neill:

RE: Agenda Item #3: Authorize the Negotiation and Execution of a Third Amendment to the Exclusive Negotiations Agreement with Republic Metropolitan LLC for the site located at 500 Benton Street

On behalf of SV@Home, we write today to oppose the extension of the Exclusive Negotiations Agreement (ENA) for the site located at 500 Benton Street in Santa Clara. The current proposal for the site does not rise to the opportunity for affordable housing at a critical transit hub and raises significant concerns about compliance with state law.

SV@Home wants to thank the Valley Transit Authority (VTA) for all of its work to ensure that their land at the Santa Clara Station is used for much needed affordable workforce housing. We appreciate VTA's leadership in leveraging publicly-owned land to build affordable, transit-oriented housing. The remainder of the proposal for the site, however, falls short of city, regional, and state goals.

We need to set high standards for city-owned land. It is a limited, valuable resource that should be deployed to meet Santa Clara's affordable housing needs. Additionally, the strengthening of the State Surplus Land Act through 2019's AB1482 is only one of the latest in a string of legislative and judicial decisions that directly link surplus public land and affordable housing development. SV@Home is concerned that state law regarding surplus land has not been adequately followed in this case. Indeed, the prioritization of student housing for this location does not take full advantage of the transit-rich opportunity presented by future increased Caltrain service and the Silicon Valley BART extension.

As a housing advocacy organization, SV@Home does not take opposing specific housing proposals lightly. Santa Clara should build off of the precedent set by VTA prioritizing affordable development on its land and ensure that the 500 Benton site both reflects local needs for affordable housing and conforms with state law on surplus land.

Sincerely,



David K Meyer
Director of Strategic Initiatives