

October 3, 2022

City of San José
Housing Department
200 East Santa Clara Street
San José, CA 95113
rachel.vanderveen@sanjoseca.gov
Jacky.Morales-Ferrand@sanjoseca.gov

Dear Rachel and Jacky:

Re: Draft City of San Jose Housing Siting Policy

This letter was prepared by the Housing Justice Workgroup of the nonprofit Race Equity Action Leadership (REAL) Coalition. We write to provide comments on the City of San José's (the City) Draft Affordable Housing Siting Policy (Siting Policy).

The REAL community of nonprofit leaders and allies has been meeting since June 2020 to use our positional power to advocate for a more racially-just and equitable society; to establish a peer network of leaders committed to fighting white supremacy and systemic racism in ourselves and our institutions; and to hold each other accountable to the promises we made in the Nonprofit Racial Equity Pledge. The REAL coalition is broadly representative of the nonprofit community including human and community services, behavioral health and health, arts and culture, domestic violence, older adults, food distribution, education, environmental, farming, legal, disability rights, LGBTQ rights, ethnic, immigrant rights, housing and homelessness, criminal justice reform, urban planning, and intermediary organizations, and others. Over 125 organizations have participated in the REAL Coalition.

The REAL Coalition stands with the comments provided by the Alum Rock Urban Village Advocates (ARUVA) during the previous City Council discussion on the Siting Policy. The REAL Coalition has also consulted with the Sí Se Puede Collective in formulating our position.

REAL Coalition's Position and Recommendations on the City of San José's Current Rendition of the Affordable Housing Siting Policy

The City's Siting Policy should truly commit to Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing by actively reversing the legacy of the racially-biased policies of redlining, segregation, and discrimination that have shaped San José and have negatively impacted the well-being of its residents of color. Starting last year, the City's discussion about locating affordable housing was dominated by maps that divided the City into under-resourced or high opportunity, impoverished or wealthy, and crime-ridden or safe areas. The City needs to stop classifying our neighborhoods into simplistic and harmful categories based on data that is undergirded by the criminalization of poverty; similarly, the City should stop reinforcing the inherently discriminatory idea that neighborhoods are "burdened" by the presence of lower-income individuals and families. We believe that the City must focus both on expanding access to areas with resources and investing resources in communities that have been harmed by past and present disinvestments from local, state, and federal governments, as well as the private sector.

Therefore, we reject the current Siting Policy as currently proposed. We disagree with the City Council's direction to use crime and lower-income levels as measures in the Siting Policy that would exclude affordable housing development in historically-disenfranchised communities of color. We further request that the City cease the exclusionary use of "categories" and instead call for a Siting Policy that recognizes the need for affordable housing in both historically-exclusive neighborhoods and historically-disinvested communities. In short, we want diverse choices so everyone can access affordable housing throughout the City. Disinvesting in affordable housing in historically-disadvantaged neighborhoods causes displacement and destabilizes families, neighborhoods, and the City as a whole. It also moves residents of those neighborhoods away from resources they may very well value and have built over several generations, such as employment, public transportation, religious and spiritual institutions and sites, cultural institutions, affordable retailers, their extended family networks, and caregivers for community members with disabilities. The City's focus on relocating people with lower incomes (forced or otherwise) must end.

Yes, the City should remove barriers to building affordable housing in neighborhoods that have been exclusive, and provide incentives for developers to build in areas that have not been accessible to lower-income families and people

in other marginalized groups. But the City should not at the same time give up on historically-disadvantaged neighborhoods by encoding the idea that no one would want to or should live there. In order to create just and equitable communities, the City of San José should be working towards neighborhood parity, where historically-redlined communities—and all communities—have upward mobility, educational attainment, physical and mental health, and other positive outcomes, especially for children.

Thank you for considering the comments submitted by the following 38 nonprofit and ally members of the REAL coalition.

Sincerely,

Walter Wilson
African American Cultural Center

Frederick Ferrer
Child Advocates of Silicon Valley

Maritza Maldonado
Amigos de Guadalupe Center
for Justice and Empowerment

Pete Settelmayer
Downtown College Prep

MyLinh Pham
Asian American Center of Santa Clara
County

Shawn Gerth
Educare Silicon Valley

Richard Konda
Asian Law Alliance

Beth Leary
Family Supportive Housing, Inc.

Sparky Harlan
Bill Wilson Center

Jason Su
Guadalupe River Park Conservancy

Jahmal Williams
Black Leadership Kitchen Cabinet

Andrea Urton
HomeFirst

Gregory Kepferle
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara
County

Susan Frazer
Jewish Family Services of Silicon
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Quency Phillips
Lighthouse Silicon Valley

Gisela Bushey
Loaves & Fishes Family Kitchen

Anjee Helstrup-Alvarez
MACLA/Movimiento de Arte y
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David Mineta
Momentum for Health

Reza Odabae
Pars Equality Center

Heather Cleary
Peninsula Family Service

Nathan Svoboda
Project MORE

Dontae Lartigue
Razing the Bar

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Poncho Guevara
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Mary Gloner
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