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*Executive Director***Via email****November 5, 2024**Leza Mikhail, Deputy Director
Michael Meehan, Principal Planner
County of Santa Clara Department of Planning & Development
Department of Planning**RE: Santa Clara County Current Draft Housing Element Update**

Dear Leza Mikhail and Michael Meehan,

As an organization dedicated to ensuring every resident of Santa Clara County has access to a safe, stable home they can afford, SV@Home has been actively involved in the Housing Element Update process in jurisdictions throughout Santa Clara County including the County of Santa Clara. We have been engaged with the County's process since it began by attending community meetings, study sessions, stakeholder focus groups, and sharing our perspective through both written and direct exchanges with Planning Department staff. **We support the current draft of the County's Housing Element Update to be submitted to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) in the coming days, and we recommend its certification.**

County planning staff has done an enormous amount of work to plan for a RHNA allocation of 3,125 units. SV@Home has questioned the allocation as disproportionately large, reflecting a failure of the allocation methodology. County staff has worked hard to balance available land and realistic development potential (as required by state law), while attempting to sustain the county's commitment to maintaining appropriate open space on unincorporated county lands. This has been a challenging process that has understandably diverted staff resources from important planning work across the county. We believe that certification of the current draft HEU will allow staff to begin the significant backlog of planning and implementation work.

We continue to have significant concerns about the County's plans for coordinating annexation of unincorporated county land in the San Jose Urban Service Area (USA) - particularly the Pleasant Hills Golf Course, which at 2,850 units makes up nearly 45% of the capacity of the sites inventory. We appreciate that edits have been made to Program 4.03 clarifying the annexation process, as required by HCD's last comment letter. However, conflicts remain regarding which jurisdiction has development and land use authority at different points in the process. These are challenges that will require close attention in implementation as development proposals are submitted to the City of San Jose.

We are concerned about how these challenges are relected in the development process for the Pleasant Hills Golf Course. **The 114-acre former golf course is a critical site for**

significant residential development with integrated affordable housing, necessary to address the pressing needs of San Jose’s Eastside and the region. This site is on unincorporated land within the PSA of the City of San Jose, and development of this site will require a number of layers of discretionary General Plan updates and waivers of San Jose development regulations. At the direction of the City Council, city staff have conducted an extensive community engagement and visioning process. The resulting statement of principles will be one reference point in the city’s development application review process along with:

- layers of discretionary actions,
- council direction that the redevelopment includes a substantial number of new homes,
- the integration of affordable homes on site beyond the 15% required by the city’s Inclusionary Housing Ordinance, and
- a fiscal analysis to assess the costs to the city of different development scenarios.

The developer has since submitted development applications to both the county and the city.

Our concerns are as follows:

The County updated its general plan for this site with land-use densities below those necessary to facilitate a substantive discretionary review and approval process by the City of San Jose.

The County chose to adopt a ministerial approval process for the site, which significantly undermines both the community planning process and the layers of discretionary authority held by the city. This action creates significant uncertainty about discretionary tools the county has to “strongly encourage the developer to design the project to conform with city standards and requirements while still meeting all applicable County standards, to the maximum extent feasible.”

The impact of the County’s actions is already evident. Application materials were submitted to both the county and the city, before publication of the current draft Housing Element Update, proposing the development of 1,716 units. This proposal is significantly below the potential of the location, and the 2,850 homes projected as feasible in the current draft of the Housing Element.

We would propose that in implementing the priorities of the 6th Cycle Housing Element the county consider the following actions to address these concerns:

Update the general plan designation to raise the minimum densities to 30+ du/a, to conform with Mullin density requirements for low-income sites and ensure that the development opportunities for the site are not undermined.

Remove the ministerial approval provision for this site, and others in the PSAs of incorporated jurisdictions, in cases where this approval is not required by housing element law, and to the extent possible under the State’s Housing Accountability Act.

Commit to full coordination with the City of San Jose, and notify any applicants that they should expect to conform to the discretionary authority of the city to facilitate annexation.

We appreciate the work the County has done in preparing the current draft of the 6th Cycle Housing Element Update, and we support certification of this draft by HCD. It is time to move to

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implementation. There is much to be done to ensure that the County of Santa Clara plays its part in addressing the need for affordable housing in Santa Clara County.

Sincerely,



Regina Celestin Williams

Executive Director

Silicon Valley @ Home is a nonprofit advocacy organization that supports housing and affordable housing development throughout Santa Clara County. SV@Home works with a broad coalition of strategic partners to address the urgent housing needs of the diverse residents across all our communities. We advocate for solutions including increasing production of homes at all income levels, especially affordable housing; preserving existing affordable housing; and protecting our community's most vulnerable residents from displacement.

