



**Coalition Support for Expanding Community-Serving Uses Across
All School & Faith Properties**

Dear Chair Rosario and Planning Commissioners,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our strong support for expanding the allowable, permitted uses on school and faith institution properties, designated Public/Quasi-Public (PQP), as part of the General Plan Four-Year Review.

We would oppose an approach that would limit the expansion of allowable community-serving uses to some sites but not others, as we believe this could unintentionally interfere with the difficult decisions school districts and faith congregations must make in close partnership with their communities. It would also create equity impacts, as options available to one school district, community, or faith congregation may not be available to another. Finally, an uneven approach is likely to accelerate the loss of PQP sites to non-community uses. School districts and faith communities that lack the resources to navigate a lengthy and uncertain approval process may be forced to sell their land outright rather than retain ownership and redevelop it in ways that both strengthen their long-term financial sustainability and continue serving the community.

San José is experiencing profound demographic, economic, and housing changes that are reshaping our communities. Public school enrollment has declined significantly over the past decade, forcing difficult conversations about school consolidation and campus closures. At the same time, many faith communities are adapting to changing congregational needs while continuing to provide essential services, gathering spaces, and support for their neighborhoods.

These institutions have long served as anchors of community life. The General Plan should provide them with the flexibility to continue fulfilling that role as community needs evolve.

Expanding the allowable uses on school and faith properties would not require redevelopment of any site. Rather, it would give schools, congregations, and community partners the ability to pursue locally appropriate solutions that strengthen their institutions and better serve their neighborhoods. Depending on local needs, these solutions could include educator and workforce housing, affordable family or senior housing, childcare centers, community health services, nonprofit offices, neighborhood-serving retail, recreational facilities, cultural spaces, or other community-serving uses.

Providing this flexibility is particularly important as San José works to address its housing shortage. The city's housing crisis affects every sector of our community. Families with children increasingly struggle to remain in San José, contributing to declining school enrollment. Teachers, nonprofit employees, healthcare workers, and service workers face long commutes



because they cannot afford to live near the communities they serve. Older adults often lack housing options that allow them to age within their neighborhoods.

We see this reflected in the more than a third of San José households (more than 112,000 families and individuals) experiencing housing cost burden, paying more than 30% or even more than half their income for housing each month.¹ Meanwhile, our rents and home prices continue to rise while vacancy falls²- and when fewer homes are available, San Jose's lowest income residents are more likely to be pushed into homelessness. The single greatest systemic cause of homelessness- and the largest gap in the system- is the lack of affordable housing.³

At the same time, innovative partnerships between faith communities or school districts and local nonprofit organizations, can deliver much-needed and complementary community-serving uses. In May 2026, the Alum Rock Union School District entered an exclusive negotiating agreement with SOMOS Mayfair and the School of Arts and Culture (representing the Si Se Puede Collective) for the potential rebuilding of the former Mexican American Community Services Agency (MACSA) youth center. The community envisions recreating a community center and gym, which would provide youth programs, academic support, cultural programming, mental health services, workforce development, family services, childcare, sports programs and a community gathering space.⁴ However, few of these uses are permitted under the current PQP designation.

School and faith institution lands can provide significant opportunities to address these interconnected challenges while preserving community ownership and stewardship of land. Rather than forcing institutions to choose between maintaining underutilized property or selling it outright, the General Plan can create pathways for thoughtful redevelopment through long-term partnerships that allows these organizations to remain community anchors while addressing today's needs.

Importantly, expanding allowable uses is not simply about housing. It is about creating resilient community campuses that can evolve over time. Across the Bay Area, school districts and faith institutions have successfully partnered to develop affordable housing, educator housing, childcare facilities, senior services, health clinics, and other community-serving uses while continuing their core educational and religious missions. These projects demonstrate that greater flexibility can strengthen the role these institutions play in neighborhood life.

This recommendation also advances one of the central objectives of the General Plan Four-Year Review: identifying opportunities to expand residential capacity. School and faith

¹ City of San José Informational Memo (March 11, 2026). Data Analysis and Alternative Financing for Affordable Housing Production.

² City of San José. San José Housing Market Update, First Quarter 2026.

³ City of San José. (March 1, 2023). City of San José HOME Investment Partnerships American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) Allocation Plan

⁴ Lorraine Gabbert for San Jose Spotlight. (May 29, 2026). Burned East San Jose youth center could be rebuilt



properties are distributed throughout San José, including neighborhoods where opportunities for additional housing are otherwise limited. Allowing a broader range of residential and mixed-use development on these sites can meaningfully increase housing capacity while ensuring that new development remains rooted in community-serving institutions.

Most importantly, this approach preserves local choice. Expanding allowable uses does not predetermine what will happen on any individual property. Decisions about whether and how to redevelop will continue to be made by school districts, congregations, nonprofit partners, and local communities through established public processes. The General Plan should provide these institutions with options, not constraints, as they plan for their futures.

We respectfully urge the Task Force to recommend a citywide expansion of allowable uses on PQP-designated school and faith institution properties. Doing so will strengthen schools, support faith communities, expand housing opportunities, preserve valuable community assets, and help ensure that these institutions can continue serving San José residents for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The undersigned organizations

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