



City of San José City Planning Commission  
200 E Santa Clara St., San José, CA 95113  
via email, sent Nov. 15, 2022

Subject: Agenda Item 5c and the “Alternative Recommendation”

Dear Commissioners,

We in the District 6 Neighborhood Leaders Group (D6NLG), a decades-old association of involved community representatives of the numerous District 6 neighborhoods and associations, are dedicated to preserving and enhancing the quality of life in a sustainable and equitable San José. We support the City in its efforts to promote more housing, especially affordable housing, on appropriate sites and with appropriate services and infrastructure (such as transportation and parks). We also support the City in its efforts to comply with the State mandate to reduce climate-changing greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging projects that minimize “vehicle miles traveled” (VMT). The intent of Agenda Item 5c is to balance the prioritization of new affordable housing with the prioritization of reducing VMT. We trust that you will make a well-considered decision.

We are writing you to express our concern about an “Alternative Recommendation” that has been tacked onto the measure, which proposes to change policy citywide for the benefit of a single project: the long-closed Pleasant Hill Golf Course in unincorporated eastern San José. While this parcel is not in District 6, we could suffer “collateral damage” from unintended consequences: the proposed citywide policy could green-light development of open-spaces from Alviso to Coyote Valley, to the detriment of both the environment and the City Services budget.

As we understand it, development of the Pleasant Hill parcel has been stymied for decades by constraints in the Evergreen Development Plan, by various housing development “entitlement swaps” with adjacent regions (Berryessa and Edenvale), and perhaps also by the parcel owner’s overly ambitious development proposals. There has been a push for various shortcuts and workarounds, including the failed Measure B in 2018<sup>1</sup> and a push (unsuccessfully) for a statewide law<sup>2</sup> carefully crafted so as to only apply to this individual parcel. And now this May, Councilmember Peralez on the Transportation and Environment (T&E) Committee asked Staff to “explore changes to Policy 5-1 that allow Council to make findings for a Statement of Overriding Considerations for infill market-rate housing projects in areas with immitigable VMT

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<sup>1</sup> “Measure B is Promulgated by Billionaire developers at the expense of San Jose’s taxpayers and environment.” <https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/05/03/editorial-protect-san-joses-land-vote-no-on-measure-b-and-yes-on-measure-c/>

<sup>2</sup> SB739 (Cortese), as amended 2022 Private golf courses: conversion to housing. <https://legiscan.com/CA/text/SB739/id/2595521>



outside of General Plan growth areas.” Staff complied by developing this “Alternative Recommendation”.

Staff states that they ***do not support the Alternative Recommendation.*** To quote from the Staff Report:

If the Council would like to consider allowing the Pleasant Hill Golf Course to redevelop into housing and/or other uses, staff recommends that the City lead a transparent community engagement process, similar to an Urban Village process, to determine how the development of the site could meet the needs of its future residents, the larger community, and the City. Such a process could determine the appropriate mix and type of uses, desired community amenities, needed multimodal transportation improvements, and how, overall, such a development could successfully be integrated into the Evergreen Area. The process should include consideration of how the project could fit with the anticipated redevelopment of other key development sites in the immediate area including Reed Hill View (sic) airport and surrounding properties. Review of the development under Policy 5-1 would be one small component of a much larger entitlement process, and the Policy as proposed by staff would not preclude a public planning process or the ultimate approval of a project. ***One developer’s interest in one potential redevelopment project should not drive the direction of Citywide policy.*** [emphasis added]

The D6NLG wholeheartedly agrees with this. We feel that it is inappropriate for the T&E Committee to write proscriptive development details for a large project outside of a transparent community process.

We acknowledge the urgency of the housing crisis. We all should also acknowledge that housing development is influenced by the availability of financing, and current feasibility/cost analyses show no development is feasible now except for subsidized affordable housing projects, and also that people with lower incomes are better served by housing with readily accessible transit. A well designed planning and approval process would balance acknowledged community impacts with measureable community benefits through the collection of mitigation fees that would help improve transit in the isolated parts of the City.

We urge you to support Staff in rejecting the Alternative Recommendation.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lawrence Ames', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Lawrence Ames, Chair, D6NLG