



The Honorable Sam Liccardo, Mayor of San José,
and Members of the San José Council,
200 E Santa Clara St.
San José, CA 95113
via email, sent November 28, 2022

Subject: opposing the “Alternative Recommendation”, part of “Amendment to the City Council Policy 5-1 Transportation Analysis for Affordable Housing Projects” (Agenda Item 8.5)

Dear Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers,

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 amending City Council Policy 5-1 (Agenda Item 8.5) 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 the “Alternative Recommendation” 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 said in our Nov. 15th [letter to the Planning Commission](http://calsj.org/D6/D6NLG%20letter%20on%20PlanningCmsn%205.1%20&%20Pleasant%20Hill%20golf%20course.pdf)¹, we understand that 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. We also note that there have been a number of attempted workarounds, including the failed Measure B in 2018 and an unsuccessful push for a statewide law, and we feel that this is just another attempt to shortcut the appropriate planning process. The Council’s Transportation and Environment (T&E) Committee directed Staff to propose language for a remedy, and they complied, but then states that they **do not support the Alternative Recommendation**. To quote from the Staff Report:

¹ <http://calsj.org/D6/D6NLG%20letter%20on%20PlanningCmsn%205.1%20&%20Pleasant%20Hill%20golf%20course.pdf>



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 accept the recommendations of both Staff and the Planning Commission and to reject the Alternative Recommendation.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Dr. Lawrence Ames'.

Dr. Lawrence Ames, Chair, D6NLG