



Honorable Sam Liccardo, Mayor of San José
Members of the City Council
200 E Santa Clara St.
San José, CA 95113
via email, sent Dec. 7, 2021

Subject: City Council Dec. 7th Agenda, Item 10.2, “Residential Uses in Neighborhood Business Districts”

Dear Mayor Liccardo and Council Members,

The District 6 Neighborhood Leaders Group (D6NLG), an association established over a decade ago, is comprised of officers, boardmembers and involved community representatives from the various neighborhood associations across District 6 in San José. We have been involved for years in advocating for developing San José into a safe, attractive, and inviting city. At our December 6th meeting, by consensus, we decided to write you regarding “Residential Uses in Neighborhood Business Districts” and the impacts to Lincoln Avenue and the Willow Glen Business District.

We appreciate the need for more housing, and are supportive of the (continued) residential use in the Willow Glen Business District.

We are concerned, however, that the current proposal lacks sufficient “objective zoning code” language that will help the District preserve its unique character. Ever since 1984, the District has been guided by a City-adopted set of guidelines¹ that cover details such as “building massing”, “façade articulation”, and the like so that new structures would “fit in.” The intent is to keep Willow Glen an attractive, vibrant, walkable, successful commercial district. This includes a number of critical points, such as avoiding “dead-zones” of non-activated frontages and “cold-spots” that are forever shaded by overshadowing structures.

As we understand matters, new State laws will soon render “subjective” guidelines like our 1984 set meaningless, and only City-adopted “objective” requirements in place by year’s end can be enforced. Therefore, we request that you create a “Willow Glen Neighborhood Business District Overlay” to include points such as:

- Requiring step-back and daylight planes for buildings over three stories, so that sunlight can create a warm, friendly pedestrian environment: please, no cold “concrete canyons”; and
- Implement Staff recommendation for commercial/retail ground floor frontage: keep the street active and inviting, and do not permit sections of blank walls or ground-level residential units that would break the flow of the shopping pedestrians.

We urge that you create a community-based task force to help develop the objective design standard language. (I served on the task force that developed the original 1984 Guidelines, and would be willing to help again if needed.)

¹ http://www.wgbackfence.net/Linc_1984/LincolnAveStudy_1984.pdf



At today's Council meeting, we urge you to approve the **concept** of mixed use designation for the Willow Glen Business District, but to **delay** the final approval of the General Plan change until the establishment of **objective zoning code** language for the Willow Glen Business District.

The Willow Glen Business District is a unique gem in the city.
Housing is important, and it can be accommodated in the Willow Glen Business District,
but please do not do so at the expense of this vibrant and successful district:
Do not "kill the goose that lays the golden egg."

Thank you,

~Larry Ames
Lawrence L Ames, Chair, D6NLG

cc: Toni Taber, City Clerk