



District 6 Neighborhood Leaders

P.O. Box 28708, San Jose CA 95159-8708

April 28, 2008

Board of Directors
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
3331 North First Street
San Jose, CA, 95134

Re: Opposition to the proposed sale of a VTA Parcel to Green Republic

Dear VTA Board members,

The D6NL is a long-standing group of neighborhood leaders – board members from over a dozen neighborhood associations, business district representatives, school board trustees, and other community activists – serving the area in Council District Six in San Jose. At our April 28th meeting, the D6NL voted to oppose the current proposal to sell the VTA property at San Carlos and Sunol to the Green Republic LLC Group.

While we agree that the site is suitable for high-density transit-oriented development and that it should be a source of revenue for the VTA, we do not believe that the current sales agreement is appropriate.

The site is covered by the Midtown Specific Plan (MSP), a plan that was created in a thorough process involving planners, developers, and the community. The MSP is adopted City Policy. The MSP designates various sub areas, including one called the “Vasona Mixed Use Subarea” which is comprised of the VTA site and an adjacent but smaller lot. The MSP calls for the Vasona Subarea to be a “Place-Making” Transit Node – a mixed-use development with a vibrant pedestrian plaza and open walkways that would be a “Destination,” something that would attract people from all along the Light-Rail corridors and from across the City.

The Midtown Specific Plan calls for a limited amount of residential, and a substantial amount of retail space, office, and industrial/commercial use. The commercial and retail will create the vitality of the site, and will also help the City of San Jose remain a financially viable community. However:

- The Green Republic proposal is primarily residential, proposing over 800 dwelling units, whereas the Midtown Plan specifies a maximum of 370 units for the entire Vasona Subarea. And the proposed VTA contract contains a provision that exacerbates the problem by granting a bonus for the increase in housing.
- The Green Republic proposal offers minimal retail space – only 16,000 sq. ft. Even though the proposed project represents over half the acreage of the Vasona Subarea, this is only a small fraction of the 100,000 sq. ft. of retail and commercial that is called out in the MSP for the Vasona Subarea. The modest amount of proposed retail space may be adequate to serve the

nearby residents, but it is insufficient for the creation of a “Destination” that would provide a “sense of place” and which would attract area-wide residents and workers on the Light Rail.

- And the Green Republic proposal calls for 120' towers, but the MSP specifically limits building heights to 90'.

We suspect that any of these variances from the Midtown Specific Plan – residential, retail, or height – would require a General Plan Amendment. This is a lengthy public process that would delay the project construction, which in turn would delay payment to the VTA for an extended period.

One more point: it is critical that the proposed Light Rail Station at Sunol/San Carlos be constructed before any housing is built on the site. If the housing goes in first, then residents will need cars to get around, and once they’ve bought the cars and figured out the commute routes, it will be challenging to convince them to take the Light Rail instead. However, if the station is there when they move in, they may opt to use the Light Rail for their everyday travel instead of buying an extra car and contributing to local traffic congestion.

The VTA parcel on San Carlos at Sunol has the potential to be a vibrant Transit-Oriented Destination with a pedestrian plaza surrounded by retail, commercial, and office space, with residential above and behind – the vision described in the Midtown Specific Plan. The current proposal from Green Republic does not come close to this potential. Thus, we in the D6NL group respectfully urge that the VTA Board reject this proposal and reopen the selection process to seek a better-suited project, either from Green Republic or from another developer.

We hope that the VTA site on San Carlos at Sunol will become a Place-Making Destination that will entice us and many others throughout the Valley to travel there on the Light Rail.

Looking forward to working with you towards a better solution,

Dr. Lawrence Lowell Ames, Chair
San Jose Council Dist. 6 Neighborhood Leaders Group
Planning and Land Use Committee

Helen Chapman, co-chair, D6NL Group
Approved at the April 28, 2008 meeting

cc: Mayor Chuck Reed, City of San Jose
Councilmember Pierluigi Oliverio, San Jose District 6
Supervisor Ken Yeager, Santa Clara County District 4
Mike VanEvery, Green Republic LLC.