

City Council Committee Members  
Community and Economic Development Committee  
City of San José  
200 East Santa Clara St.  
San José, CA 95113

Re: Proposed Changes to City of San José Housing Siting Policy

Dear members of the City Council's Community and Economic Development Committee:

We write to ask you to recommend to the full City Council that it adopt the Housing Department staff's proposed revisions to the Affordable Housing Siting Policy, as written in the Housing Department staff memorandum, dated November 18, 2022.

This cover letter was prepared by the Housing Justice Workgroup of the nonprofit Race Equity Action Leadership (REAL) Coalition. We are submitting our original letter dated October 3, 2022, with this cover letter because we continue to maintain our position, thoroughly documented in that letter, that affordable housing should be equitably located and funded in San José. We are also attaching the housing siting vision statement adopted by the broader REAL Coalition.

Since our October letter was submitted, Housing Department staff (Staff) has updated the Affordable Housing Siting Policy (Siting Policy); we acknowledge and support Staff's updated proposed policy. We commend Staff for being responsive to our comments and other comments from the community about previous versions of this policy. These changes recognize that the need for affordable housing is great throughout the City, especially in communities experiencing displacement pressures.

We also specifically support the following recommended changes to the siting policy:

- A. Eliminating earlier language that stereotyped lower-income neighborhoods and communities of color.

- B. Focusing on both funding and incentivizing development in historically segregated areas that have excluded affordable housing development, now called Affordable Housing Expansion Areas, rather than closing off other areas that also need additional affordable housing.
- C. Committing to identifying funding and other resources that would be directed into neighborhoods that have been historically redlined and disinvested, now called Continued Investment Areas.

We appreciate the Staff for its commitment to the ethnically, racially, socioeconomically, and otherwise diverse communities that call this City home. We ask you, as our leaders, to support these policy recommendations because they center belonging and justice.

Regards, the following members of the REAL Housing Justice Workgroup

Jaime Alvarado  
Alum Rock Urban Village Advocates (ARUVA)

Matt King  
Sacred Heart Community Service

Kenneth Rosales  
Regina Williams  
SV@Home

Claire Kennedy  
Kyra Kazantzis  
Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits (SVCN)

Gabriel Hernandez  
Sí Se Puede Collective

Kylie Clark  
Josh Selo  
West Valley Community Services

cc: City Council, Mayor, Staff

October 3, 2022

City of San José  
Housing Department  
200 East Santa Clara Street  
San José, CA 95113  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear Rachel and Jacky:

Re: Draft City of San Jose Housing Siting Policy

This letter was prepared by the Housing Justice Workgroup of the nonprofit Race Equity Action Leadership (REAL) Coalition. We write to provide comments on the City of San José's (the City) Draft Affordable Housing Siting Policy (Siting Policy).

The REAL community of nonprofit leaders and allies has been meeting since June 2020 to use our positional power to advocate for a more racially-just and equitable society; to establish a peer network of leaders committed to fighting white supremacy and systemic racism in ourselves and our institutions; and to hold each other accountable to the promises we made in the Nonprofit Racial Equity Pledge. The REAL coalition is broadly representative of the nonprofit community including human and community services, behavioral health and health, arts and culture, domestic violence, older adults, food distribution, education, environmental, farming, legal, disability rights, LGBTQ rights, ethnic, immigrant rights, housing and homelessness, criminal justice reform, urban planning, and intermediary organizations, and others. Over 125 organizations have participated in the REAL Coalition.

The REAL Coalition stands with the comments provided by the Alum Rock Urban Village Advocates (ARUVA) during the previous City Council discussion on the Siting Policy. The REAL Coalition has also consulted with the Sí Se Puede Collective in formulating our position.

## **REAL Coalition's Position and Recommendations on the City of San José's Current Rendition of the Affordable Housing Siting Policy**

The City's Siting Policy should truly commit to Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing by actively reversing the legacy of the racially-biased policies of redlining, segregation, and discrimination that have shaped San José and have negatively impacted the well-being of its residents of color. Starting last year, the City's discussion about locating affordable housing was dominated by maps that divided the City into under-resourced or high opportunity, impoverished or wealthy, and crime-ridden or safe areas. The City needs to stop classifying our neighborhoods into simplistic and harmful categories based on data that is undergirded by the criminalization of poverty; similarly, the City should stop reinforcing the inherently discriminatory idea that neighborhoods are "burdened" by the presence of lower-income individuals and families. We believe that the City must focus both on expanding access to areas with resources and investing resources in communities that have been harmed by past and present disinvestments from local, state, and federal governments, as well as the private sector.

Therefore, we reject the current Siting Policy as currently proposed. We disagree with the City Council's direction to use crime and lower-income levels as measures in the Siting Policy that would exclude affordable housing development in historically-disenfranchised communities of color. We further request that the City cease the exclusionary use of "categories" and instead call for a Siting Policy that recognizes the need for affordable housing in both historically-exclusive neighborhoods and historically-disinvested communities. In short, we want diverse choices so everyone can access affordable housing throughout the City. Disinvesting in affordable housing in historically-disadvantaged neighborhoods causes displacement and destabilizes families, neighborhoods, and the City as a whole. It also moves residents of those neighborhoods away from resources they may very well value and have built over several generations, such as employment, public transportation, religious and spiritual institutions and sites, cultural institutions, affordable retailers, their extended family networks, and caregivers for community members with disabilities. The City's focus on relocating people with lower incomes (forced or otherwise) must end.

Yes, the City should remove barriers to building affordable housing in neighborhoods that have been exclusive, and provide incentives for developers to build in areas that have not been accessible to lower-income families and people

in other marginalized groups. But the City should not at the same time give up on historically-disadvantaged neighborhoods by encoding the idea that no one would want to or should live there. In order to create just and equitable communities, the City of San José should be working towards neighborhood parity, where historically-redlined communities—and all communities—have upward mobility, educational attainment, physical and mental health, and other positive outcomes, especially for children.

Thank you for considering the comments submitted by the following 38 nonprofit and ally members of the REAL coalition.

Sincerely,

Walter Wilson  
African American Cultural Center

Frederick Ferrer  
Child Advocates of Silicon Valley

Maritza Maldonado  
Amigos de Guadalupe Center  
for Justice and Empowerment

Pete Settelmayer  
Downtown College Prep

MyLinh Pham  
Asian American Center of Santa Clara  
County

Shawn Gerth  
Educare Silicon Valley

Richard Konda  
Asian Law Alliance

Beth Leary  
Family Supportive Housing, Inc.

Sparky Harlan  
Bill Wilson Center

Jason Su  
Guadalupe River Park Conservancy

Jahmal Williams  
Black Leadership Kitchen Cabinet

Andrea Urton  
HomeFirst

Gregory Kepferle  
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara  
County

Susan Frazer  
Jewish Family Services of Silicon  
Valley

Quency Phillips  
Lighthouse Silicon Valley

Gisela Bushey  
Loaves & Fishes Family Kitchen

Anjee Helstrup-Alvarez  
MACLA/Movimiento de Arte y  
Cultura Latino Americana

David Mineta  
Momentum for Health

Reza Odabae  
Pars Equality Center

Heather Cleary  
Peninsula Family Service

Nathan Svoboda  
Project MORE

Dontae Lartigue  
Razing the Bar

Kathy Cordova  
Recovery Café San Jose

Poncho Guevara  
Sacred Heart Community Service

Carlos Rosario  
Santa Clara County Black Lawyers  
Association

Jessica Paz-Cedillos & Vanessa Shieh  
School of Arts and Culture at MHP

Gabriel Hernandez  
Sí Se Puede Collective

Shiloh Ballard  
Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition

Mary Gloner  
Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits

Kyra Kazantzis  
Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits

Elizabeth Gonzalez  
Silicon Valley De-Bug

Bob Nuñez  
SJSV NAACP

Saul Ramos & Victor Vasquez  
SOMOS Mayfair

Regina Celestin Williams  
SV@Home

Yvonne Maxwell  
Ujima Adult and Family Services

Kevin Zwick & Kevin Jenkins  
United Way Bay Area

Josh Selo  
West Valley Community Services

A background graphic showing several hands of different colors (yellow, orange, brown) reaching up to hold a globe. The hands are positioned around the top and right sides of the page, with the globe in the center. The overall color palette is warm and earthy.

# VISION STATEMENT

The REAL Coalition's Housing Justice Workgroup envisions an Affordable Housing Siting Policy that creates a San José in which every neighborhood is accessible to people of all income levels and every neighborhood is a desirable place to live.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### **ACHIEVE NEIGHBORHOOD PARITY**

Improve opportunities for upward mobility, educational attainment, physical and mental health, and other positive outcomes, especially for children in historically-redlined communities and all communities.

### **INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE**

Abandon the exclusionary use of “categories” and instead call for a Siting Policy that recognizes the need for affordable housing in both historically-exclusive neighborhoods and historically-disinvested and redlined communities.

### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING THROUGHOUT SAN JOSE**

Provide diverse housing choices so everyone can access affordable housing throughout San José.

### **JUST AND EQUITABLE INVESTMENTS AND INCENTIVES**

Build affordable housing in historically-exclusive communities by removing barriers and maximizing incentives, while investing affordable housing resources in communities that have been harmed by past and present disinvestments from local, state, and federal governments, as well as the private sector.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Hold historically-exclusive communities accountable to welcoming affordable housing in their neighborhoods.

### **LOCAL PREFERENCE SISTER POLICY**

Provide San José residents a greater opportunity to stay and invest in the neighborhoods they grew up in by adopting a City-wide Local Preference Policy; this sister policy would support the success of the Siting Policy.