



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Esparza

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: 11/29/2021

Approved

Maya Esparza

Date: 11/29/2021

SUBJECT: GENERAL PLAN 4-YEAR REVIEW

RECOMMENDATION

1. Approve staff recommendations with the exception of changing the Story Road Employment Lands Growth Area into a Local Urban Village (named Story Road Urban Village).
2. Approve Councilmember Peralez' memorandum and include Story Road Employment Land Growth Area in staff's exploration as described in Councilmember Peralez' Recommendation #2.

BACKGROUND

The intersection of Story and King Roads has served as a jewel of the East Side of San José for generations of East Siders. This community has a long history as a political and cultural center of both local and national significance. It was here that a young Cesar Chavez first began community organizing, registering voters and organizing English language classes for residents. The community continued to play a major role throughout his organizing efforts, and grocery stores in the neighborhood would be the very first targeted by the NFWA in the nationally historic Delano Grape Strike in 1965.

In the 1970s and '80s, Story and King, along with Los Angeles' Whittier Boulevard, became the global center of the international Lowrider movement, particularly after the establishment of Lowrider magazine by SJSU students Larry Gonzalez, Sonny Madrid, and David Nunez. The intersection has remained a cultural hub for our Latino community in San José, with many beloved small businesses throughout the corridor. Heavy investment from the San José Redevelopment Agency in the early 2000s brought sorely needed improvements to a community that, until then, had never even had a bank.

This is a community that has been devastated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Story and King straddles the 95122 and 95116 ZIP codes, two of the ZIP codes that have suffered the worst of both the public health and economic impacts of the crisis in the entire county. The residents

here live in multigenerational homes in some of the city's most overcrowded census tracts. These are families who have been contributing to our community for generations, living alongside first generation immigrants who have come here to build a better life for themselves and their families.

The pandemic has also wrought economic devastation on the small business community at the heart of Story and King, with most of these businesses being minority-owned, mom-and-pop businesses that have had challenges even in the best of times, and have been struggling to survive these past two years.

The threat of displacement for both our residents and businesses is a very real one, and what we stand to lose is enormous. We stand to lose the heart of the East Side, we stand to lose families who have devoted their lives to building a flourishing community where no one else would. The Urban Village designation that we are asked to consider today threatens to further embed this displacement threat in our General Plan, and will inevitably lead to the gentrification of this historic community, and displace the hardworking families and small business owners who have made Story and King what it is today.

Staff has made clear their commitment to preserving small, minority-owned business communities and preventing displacement through their recommendation to not allow additional residential development in the Calle Willow Business District. I agree wholeheartedly with this approach, and ask that the same caution and consideration be given to the Story and King community. That is why I urge my Council colleagues to decline the recommendations by staff and the Task Force to adopt an Urban Village designation for Story and King. The future of Story and King belongs to those who created it, to those for whom this is home, and we as a City have an obligation to enable this community to determine its own future, as it always has, and, if we act prudently, always will.