



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Mayor Liccardo  
Councilmember Perez

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** March 18, 2022

Approved

Date 3/18/22

**SUBJECT: ACTIONS RELATED TO THE NORTH FIRST STREET URBAN  
VILLAGE PLAN**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Approve the Staff and Planning Commission recommendations
2. Direct Planning staff to add brief contextual language to the Plan that acknowledges the County's Civic Center property (the old San José City Hall) and provides an overview of expected uses and densities, with an emphasis on ground-floor commercial and active uses along North First Street, and a sufficiently high density appropriate for the site's adjacency to a light rail station. The Plan should specifically also consider the City-owned sites in the Civic Center area, and the opportunities for redevelopment and densification.
3. Direct Planning staff to increase the height category on the 880/west side parcel to 135 feet, to reflect the opportunity for density without neighborhood impacts.
4. Direct OED Staff to add language that embraces an intent to transition the North First Street corridor to more neighborhood-serving businesses over time, to diversify the excessive concentration of bail bonds businesses in this area.

## **BACKGROUND**

The conclusion of an Urban Village Plan process is always a reason for celebration. At the most basic level, the plan will result in the re-alignment of the zoning code with the General Plan land use categories. And at a strategic level, the plan can help direct future Transit Oriented Development to the right sites, and do so in a way that respects the character and cultural assets found in this unique neighborhood. North First Street is a natural area for expansion of Downtown's growth and investment.

This plan also represents a leaner version of the Urban Village process, and rightly so. If the city is going to make progress in completing these plans, it needs to find a more streamlined process

and template. That being said, there are a few missing elements that are important to address as we seek to create a vibrant investment opportunity. The following specific changes will provide better direction to ensure maximum impact for this strategic area that serves as a critical link between Downtown and North San José along the light rail line.

Acknowledgement of County Civic Center Property (old City Hall):

Even though the County has expressed no interest in being included in the plan, there is value in the City providing a vision for the urban fabric, especially related to the desirability of active and commercially oriented ground floor uses along N. First Street, adjacent to the Civic Center Light Rail Station. The City also owns land in this area, and it should be incorporated meaningfully in this larger vision.

Heights Adjacent to 880:

The heights along the 880/west side parcel, bordered by 880/VTA/First Street, are surprisingly low, considering there are no adjacent residential neighbors that would be directly impacted. Although access to the site is currently challenging based on the proximity to the highway off-ramp, a change to a UPP zoning will provide more opportunities for density.

Bail Bond Uses and Plans

Our community will take notice that the plan is silent on the proliferation of bail bond uses along the North First corridor. The plan should discuss and encourage more neighborhood-serving businesses over time.