



**SAN JOSE DOWNTOWN
ASSOCIATION**

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April 23, 2019

The Honorable Mayor Sam Liccardo
City of San José
200 East Santa Clara St.
San José, CA 95113

RE: Improving Public Outreach on Development

Dear Honorable Mayor Liccardo and City Council,

The San Jose Downtown Association shares the City of San Jose's desire to improve its public outreach for new developments. We agree with the majority of recommendations outlined in the City Auditor's report entitled "Development Noticing: Ensuring Outreach Policies Meet Community Expectations" and highlight the following improvement areas as SJDA priorities:

- Information about developments and their community meetings should be easy to locate on the City's website, particularly on SJpermits.org
- Project information should be "in plain language" and easy to understand
- A wide radius of stakeholders should receive notice of community meetings well in advance of the meetings
- In almost every case, efforts to transmit information electronically, such as via email, will be more effective than sending out postcards
- Public meetings should utilize real-time technology with live broadcasting, as well as an ability for stakeholders to engage in meetings remotely

Finally, SJDA feels that this assessment of the City's public outreach needs to be done speedily so that community feedback can be taken into account during this time of unprecedented development activity. We look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

Michelle Azevedo
Director of Policy and Operations



Shasta/Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association

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April 23, 2019

Mayor Liccardo and Members of City Council
City of San Jose
200 East Santa Clara St
San Jose, CA 95113
[Sent via email]

Re: April 23, 2019 Council Agenda Item 3.3: Audit of Development Noticing

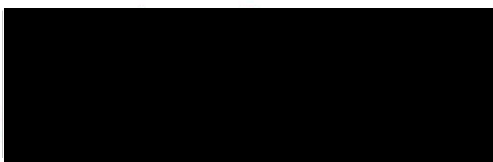
Dear Honorable Mayor Liccardo and Honored Members of City Council,

On behalf of the Shasta / Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association (S/HPNA), I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Audit of Development Noticing. S/HPNA represents 4,500 households immediately West of Diridon Station, in the Garden Alameda, Shasta / Hanchett Park, and St. Leo's neighborhoods. For thirty-five years, we have sought to work with the City of San Jose, developers, and our neighbors to create a vibrant neighborhood. In that time, developers have met directly with us, often well *before* the City's mandated community outreach. Sometimes over the course of several months, these discussions include the program, massing, and siting of a project. The importance of this proactive engagement with vested interests cannot be overstated; it has been a goal of S/HPNA's for years, as expressed in numerous letters to City Council and the Planning Commission. Going above and beyond the City's cursory community engagement process can only improve a development proposal, and we would love to see this level of conversation become the norm, rather than the exception.

We therefore wholeheartedly support the findings of the Auditor's Office, and request that the City Council prioritize the implementation of expanded public engagement and input. Early, robust engagement with community organizations should be a prerequisite, not an afterthought. Addressing language diversity within the City must be a part of each proposal, in both written and spoken forms. San Jose claims to value its residents and neighborhoods, yet the input currently mandated is, at best, incremental. Too often, public sentiment is that development and construction take place *despite* the wants and needs of the community, when the opposite should be the case. Well-planned development, with tangible assets to existing and new residents, is the best possible outcome. A timely, comprehensive response to the Auditor's findings is therefore essential.

We take pride in our neighborhood; S/HPNA Board members and volunteers have been diligent advocates for decades. We ask you to match this dedication, as the City Council has before it an opportunity to actively encourage community engagement in the development process.

Respectfully submitted,



Edward Saum

Vice President & Director for Planning & Land Use
Shasta / Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association



Mayor Liccardo and City Councilmembers:

I would strongly encourage City Council to prioritize a more rapid and proactive approach to achieving meaningful Community Engagement at this crucial time. Now more than ever, the City of San José should be demonstrating its strength in **INNOVATION**. Silicon Valley is known for its innovation in digital technology and its disruptive business models. We should be doing the same in this critical realm of planning for world class development projects as we strive to create a model city of the future. This includes negotiations for appropriate community benefits on large projects.

As one of the most diverse cities in America, we could put San José on the map by establishing a process ensuring that all appropriate input is considered in order to optimize our long-term decision-making.

The **FORMALITY** of the Community Engagement process is critical.

- Clear articulation of the **PURPOSE** for, and the ultimate **USE** of, community input.
- Provide information and guidelines for **PREPARATION** in advance, so participants are best able to contribute to focused, efficient, and effective input gathering.
- Effective use of various **INPUT GATHERING** methods depending on the audience. How will they be scheduled, communicated, organized, facilitated, and recorded?
- It is also critical to **SYNTHESIZE** the information into a clear, complete, and balanced representation of the various Points of View with supporting facts or opinions.
- Transparently share what the **DECISION-MAKING** process will be, with clarity on how **DISCUSSIONS** and **DEBATE** will be facilitated and who will participate.
- Provisions for a **FEEDBACK** mechanism for participants and plans to maintain **ONGOING** engagement with the community groups involved for future dialogue as appropriate.

I believe that there are cost-effective opportunities for **INNOVATION** in the input-gathering process itself.

- Leverage proven **community organizing** approaches
- Provide appropriate **incentives** and/or compensation for significant contributions
- Explore and/or experiment with **leveraging technology** to create a more continuous method of providing feedback by individuals in certain circumstances
- Evaluate the possibility of maintaining a **Knowledge Base** of (anonymous) data and information that could be utilized on an ongoing basis, including analysis for patterns or trends in conditions and/or opinions.

We have the skills and talent across our community to drive this process to success. We cannot wait years to begin the process. With the huge number of vacancies within City Hall right now, it would seem obvious that we can realign our priorities, and a small number of resources, to accelerate this very critical activity.

Sincerely,

Bill Souders

Downtown Resident