

April 17, 2019

City of San Jose  
Mayor and City Council  
200 E. Santa Clara  
San Jose, CA

Dear Mayor and City Council,

The recent Planning Commission appointment has raised many concerns amongst those of us striving for diversity, inclusion, equity and liberation, what we call DIEL. As leaders in the nonprofit community, we have come together to write this letter in the hopes that it can help guide the City to ensure that the systems of white supremacy and patriarchy are dismantled.

For context, we are a group of nonprofit CEOs who came together to figure out how to better center equity in ourselves, our nonprofits, the nonprofit sector, and the broader world. Under the auspices of the American Leadership Forum, we meet monthly to discuss equity issues that come up in our organizations, how to fix them, and how to take what we learn out into the sector.

It is important to note that the City is doing great work to address some of our most challenging issues. Staff and leadership are committed to making San Jose a wonderful place for all who live here through gang prevention programs, affordable housing solutions, the recent decision on an equity fund as well as its participation in GARE, Government Alliance and Race and Equity. The City has much to be proud of. And like all of us, the City has a lot of work to do when it comes to redressing the harms that continue to be perpetrated on low-income residents and communities of color.

That said, our group was appalled at the decision to create a majority white commission that is also majority D6 residents. The decision demonstrated several unpleasant realities. At best, it showed an ignorance on the part of 6 councilmembers of the importance of race and equity, especially at this point in time. At worst it showed how those in power continue to hoard power to the detriment of communities most harmed by a system that advantages those who are white, male and wealthy. Tuesday showed that the System is alive and well. It showed how the System is manifested in a progressive environment by well-intentioned people.

But this letter is not intended to argue and prove that the decision was horrible. It was. This letter is intended to invite the Council to view us as a resource on how to build a more equitable City.

We were born into a system that advantages white people and the wealthy. While none of us created that system, many of us benefit from it. To ignore that fact, to be willfully ignorant of it, and make the kinds of decisions that continue to deny certain segments of the community access to power is to be complicit. The good news is, we get to fix it and we can!

There are many ways that the City could avoid what happened with the Planning Commission vote, like commission reform and creating a leadership pipeline in certain areas of the City and we are pleased to

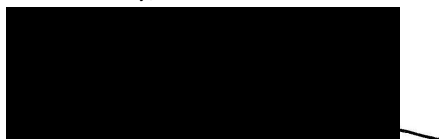
see a Council memo on the topic. Instead of commenting on specific proposals, we want to encourage you all to reach out to us for ideas, to listen to what we've learned. We are positive it will help.

That said, there is one concrete recommendation that we want to leave you with, a very high level recommendation intended to be an important starting point. That recommendation is to decide as a City to center equity in city policy-making and day-to-day business.

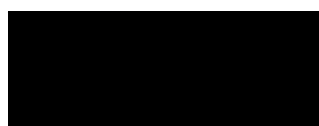
To center equity, we want to leave each of you with a personal invitation. We invite you to commit to be in conversation with one of us on a regular basis about these issues, to commit to reading, learning, discussing and engaging in the deep self-education needed to avoid complicity. We believe that once you all have gone through the kind of year's long learning that we've experienced, your hearts and minds will be changed and the business of the City, to build community for all, not just some, will be easier to achieve. It will still be work but it must start with all of you, us, being better.

Thank you for your dedication to this great City and for the time and emotional energy you spend as a city leader. We welcome the opportunity to help.

Sincerely,



Camille Llanes-Fontanilla  
SOMOS Mayfair



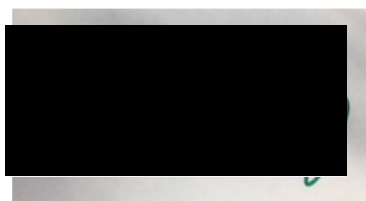
Cayce Hill  
Veggielution



Poncho Guevara  
Sacred Heart Community Services



Leslye Corsiglia  
SV@Home



Tanis Crosby  
YWCA Silicon Valley



Tamara Alvarado  
Formerly School of Arts and Culture



Kevin Zwick  
Housing Trust Silicon Valley



Shiloh Ballard  
Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition



April 22, 2019

To Hon. Mayor Sam Liccardo  
Hon. Vice Mayor Charles Jones, D1  
Hon. Councilmember Sergio Jimenez, D2  
Hon. Councilmember Raul Peralez, D3  
Hon. Councilmember Lan Diep, D4  
Hon. Councilmember Magdalena Carresco, D5  
Hon. Councilmember Devora Davis, D6  
Hon. Councilmember Maya Esparza, D7  
Hon. Councilmember Sylvia Arenas, D8  
Hon. Councilmember Pam Foley, D9  
Hon. Councilmember Johnny Khamis, D10

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of San Jose and Santa Clara, I am writing to express our disappointment with the recent Council decision to select a former city council member to be a member of the San Jose Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission is one of the City's most important committees upon which community members provide important guidance and input into land use decisions - decisions which can have a profound, long-term impact upon the City's future growth.

We are disappointed in the selection for several reasons:

- 1) The selection adds yet a fifth person, on a seven-member commission, who resides in District 6 — essentially providing excessive political weight from one geographical area of the city.
- 2) The Planning Commission provides its members with an excellent opportunity to become immersed in and engaged in some of the complexities of City land use policies — often a “training ground” for future City political leadership. Installing a former City Council member who's had eight years of participating in those decisions, robs the City of opportunity to develop future leaders and to provide such civic participation to other residents;
- 3) It deprives the Planning Commission of having among its membership, a broad representation of individuals from throughout the City.

- 4) It fails to provide members of the east side of San Jose, where some of our most vulnerable, lower income residents live, to have a voice on the City's land use decision-making. This action disenfranchises many members of our community.

We urge the City Council to re-consider its decision and/or work diligently in future to identify ways and opportunities to ensure that there is broader involvement and engagement for members of our entire city.

Mary Collins,



President, League of Women Voters of San Jose and Santa Clara



# LATINA COALITION

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**Latina Coalition of  
Silicon Valley**  
1346 The Alameda,  
Ste 7-293  
San Jose, CA

[www.LatinaCoalition.org](http://www.LatinaCoalition.org)

Wednesday, April 24, 2019

RE: Support for City of San Jose Planning Commission

Municipal Code and Charter Amendments

Dear Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers Jones, Carrasco, Esparza, Peralez, Foley, Jimenez, Diep, Davis, Arenas, and Khamis:

We write today on behalf of our over 120+ members in strong support of your efforts to reform the City of San Jose's Planning Commission. Specifically, we support the reform efforts that encourage a robust recruitment plan, expand the commission's composition to 11 members, and align the appointment selection to no more than one commissioner per council district. **We believe these reform efforts will help achieve and uphold diversity, equity, inclusion, and ensure residents from each council district are equally represented** in discussions brought before the commission that impact a community's growth and character well into the future. **Also, we support partnering with trusted community organizations such as our own Latina Coalition of Silicon Valley to assist or take on any part of these efforts.**

Latina Coalition of Silicon Valley is a nonprofit organization that **develops and strengthens the power of Latinas to advance our collective success through sisterhood, leadership, and civic engagement.** We have approximately 120+ active members and hundreds of other friends and partners who contribute and help us achieve our mission. Our members are diverse in ethnicity, age, education, and professional background. **One of our goals is to educate and mobilize our community to advocate and actively engage on issues impacting Latinas.**

We believe these reform efforts matter for a few reasons. **The priorities, needs, concerns, and cultural competencies of residents vary from one council district to another.** A commissioner appointed from a council district they reside in will have a better understanding and knowledge of the context and neighborhood dynamic of their community as opposed to a commissioner that resides outside of it having little to no personal ties to neighborhood residents, businesses and leaders.

In addition, we are enthused by the request to create a recruitment plan that will educate and encourage residents interested to serve on the commission. Individuals appointed to commissions, and in particular the Planning Commission, often possess the social and political networks to seek appointment. To create a robust outreach and recruitment plan will ensure residents without these networks to have an equal opportunity to apply and be selected to serve.

We appreciate your leadership and willingness to bring forward solutions to address inequity and diversity of Boards and Commissions for the City.

Sincerely,

Latina Coalition Board of Directors