

**FW: agenda item 10.2 Almaden Office Project**

City Clerk &lt;city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov&gt;

Tue 9/14/2021 7:45 AM

To: Agendadesk &lt;Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov&gt;

-----Original Message-----

From: medicilorenzo [REDACTED]

Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2021 4:56 AM

To: City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>; The Office of Mayor Sam Liccardo <TheOfficeofMayorSamLiccardo@sanjoseca.gov>; District1 <district1@sanjoseca.gov>; District2 <District2@sanjoseca.gov>; District3 <district3@sanjoseca.gov>; District4 <District4@sanjoseca.gov>; District 10 <District10@sanjoseca.gov>; District5 <District5@sanjoseca.gov>; District 6 <district6@sanjoseca.gov>; District7 <District7@sanjoseca.gov>; District8 <district8@sanjoseca.gov>; District9 <district9@sanjoseca.gov>

Subject: Re: agenda item 10.2 Almaden Office Project

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sorry, the subject line of my original email mistakenly referred to agenda item 10.4. It should be agenda item 10.2

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To Mayor Licardo & Councilmembers,

The Almaden Office Project should be rejected unless it is redesigned to provide at least a 35-ft setback from the Guadalupe River's riparian corridor. This minimum standard of setback is already dramatically reduced from the city's Council Policy 6-34. According to proposed design, not only does the project fail to meet the significantly reduced level of setback, its underground levels encroach on the riparian corridor.

The proposed project design also violates San Jose General Plan policy ER-2.2 "Ensure that the 100-foot setback from riparian habitat is the standard to be achieved in all but a limited number of instances, only where no significant environmental impacts would occur." The SEIR determined that the project does have significant environmental impacts, therefore the project does not qualify for the stated exception to the 100-setback.

In the memorandum dated 9/10/2021, the Mayor and Councilmembers Peralez, Jimenez, Davis, Foley, advanced a specious argument that the project should be exempted from the policy 6-34 setback requirement because the existing use does not comply with the setback. This disingenuously ignores the fact that the environmental impact of a 16-story + 3 underground levels, 2.05 million sq ft structure is obviously much greater than that of a surface-level, open air parking lot.

The hope expressed by the Mayor and 4 Councilmembers, that the "office development would provide 'eyes' on the [Guadalupe] river' is vague and wishful thinking, not adequate rationale to approve a massive structure that was determined to have significant environmental impact.

San Jose Council Policy 6-34 became effective in Aug 2016, years before BXP Almaden Associates applied for its site development permit. Policy 6-34 should be enforced for the project. The disregard of the city's General Plan & Council policies by the planning commission and/or city leadership for this applicant is arbitrary, sets a bad precedent and erodes public trust.

Sincerely,  
Alice Nguyen, long-time San Jose resident

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Dear Mayor Liccardo and Council Members,

The proposed project is simply too close to the creek, leaving little if any space for the Guadalupe River Trail, a trail that should help the city meet its adopted goal of reduced “vehicle miles travelled” (VMT) by providing for off-road non-motorized transportation (i.e., walking and biking) to downtown.

Please reject the current proposal and stand up for our riparian setback policy, a policy that you adopted after years of study and review to protect our environment and enhance our city.

~Larry Ames

“Calling it ‘a death ray’ may be an exaggeration, but the concaved glass does seem to make the ... area significantly hotter.”

September 13, 2021

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers,

**I urge you to decline the Almaden Office Tower Project. If you dream of a River Walkway like San Antonio then you must act like the San Antonio Council and protect the river, the walk way experience, and the park.**

Today, I am writing you as an individual. To summarize my background: I serve as the leader of the San Jose Parks Advocates, but I have also worked on environmental issues for many years, starting with my service on an Environmental Protection Agency Advisory Board in the late 1970s. In 2020, the League of Conservation Voters awarded me a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Frequently, community members ask me in my role as the leader of San Parks Advocates, **"Why doesn't San Jose have something like the San Antonio River Walkway?"**

**It's simple. San Jose does not use San Antonio's most critical design element--access to sunlight for the river and river walk.**

**The Almaden Office Tower project is a perfect example why San Jose could never have a river walk like San Antonio. It is pedestrian unfriendly along the river with significant shading and massing that repels pedestrians.**

Although much of San Antonio's river walk is hardscape dating from a period when it was used as a canal, San Antonio doesn't use the excuse of hardscape to minimize the setback of the new built environment. Instead, San Antonio designs buildings with the pedestrian experience in mind. In San Antonio every portion of the River Walk has sunlight year-round. There are no dark canyons--except when walking under a bridge or freeway. San Antonio requires buildings to provide either a larger setback or a stair step design to maintain sunlight access--even along those segments with the greatest density and heights. San Antonio's current design standards require activation or elements that attract pedestrian interest, such as balconies or second-story open air restaurants or views into ground-floor activities. Design must allow direct sunlight to all vegetation.

**From San Antonio's River Walk design standards:**

- **Building massing shall be so designed as to provide direct sunlight to vegetation in the river channel.**
- Organize the mass of a building to **provide solar access** to the river:
  - a. One method of doing so **is to step the building down** toward the river when it is located in a position that would cast a shadow there.
  - b. Another method is to **set the building back** from the river a distance sufficient to avoid shading the water.

In contrast, the Almaden Office Tower project will shade the river most of the day. The SEIR response to comments acknowledges the trees and plants will be harmed by the limited sunlight. The tall massing is pedestrian unfriendly, attracting no one other than folks going to the offices.

**What about the Discovery Meadow side? Can't people use that?**

**Pedestrian don't like deep full shade.** They like filtered shade from trees or direct sunlight. This is the lesson from the tourist friendly San Antonio Riverwalk. The Almaden Office Towers project will significantly shade Discovery Meadow. The SEIR analyzed the shadow impact as part of the entire Guadalupe River Park from the airport to Virginia Street. This is why the report claimed there will be less

than 10% impact—it is less than 10% of three miles! But it is much more of the park. The SEIR report never revealed that the Discovery Meadow will be in shade every morning all year . It was only acknowledged in the initial reports and comments. During fall, winter, and spring the shade will extend after mid-day. The Children’s Museum’s play garden will be in shade all year.

**The towers will create a pedestrian unfriendly environment and change the way Discovery Meadow can be used.** Deeply shaded dark areas and damp turf don’t attract people. It’s pedestrian unfriendly. People who enjoy walking along the tree lined river will find less to observe as the natural trees and bushes fail.

**Another problem from shading—river bank failure**

When the natural trees and bushes fail, they don’t hold the riverbank as well. Valley Water has given presentations about micro climates and micro-bursts that result from climate change. The City can expect sudden rises in the river height. These surges contain so much energy they scour the river bank. Vegetation that has been weakened by deep shade will fail and the river bank will erode. Public agencies—Valley Water and the City of San Jose will bear the burden of costs associated with the shade created damage to the vegetation.

**Please reject the Almaden Office Towers project.**

**Ask for a design that would allow for a San Jose River Walk experience and that protects the river bank and Discovery Meadows as a premiere event location.**

Sincerely,

Jean Dresden

**FW: Protection of Guadalupe River**

City Clerk &lt;city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov&gt;

Tue 9/14/2021 7:41 AM

To: Agendadesk &lt;Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov&gt;

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**From:** Elaine Gould [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 13, 2021 4:30 PM  
**To:** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>; 6@sanjoseca.gov  
**Subject:** Protection of Guadalupe River

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Subject: City Council 9/14 Public Comment Agenda Item 10.2

Dear Mayor Liccardo and Council Members,

My name is Elaine Gould and I am a San Jose resident/community member. I write to ask that you not approve the Special Use Permit and Vesting Tentative Map for the Almaden Boulevard Office Project. The project as is does not uphold our city's riparian setback policy and will cause lasting harm to the riparian corridor. I ask that you stand up for our riparian setback policy and require the project developers to include a larger setback from the riparian edge. The project as is will cause immediate harm to the Guadalupe River, and end up harming the river for our community members in a few years time as well. Please think about our neighbors, our environment, and our future and vote no on this project.

Thank you

,  
Elaine Gould

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## FW: Boston Properties

City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Tue 9/14/2021 7:41 AM

To: Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

-----Original Message-----

From: Karen Taoka [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday, September 13, 2021 4:48 PM

To: City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Cc: District6@sanjose.gov

Subject: Boston Properties

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Dear Mayor Licardo and Council Members

My name is Karen Taoka, and I am a resident District 6 in San Jose. I am writing to ask you not to approve the Special Use Permit and Vesting Tentative Map for the Almaden Boulevard Office Project. I enjoy walking the trails that are adjacent to the Guadalupe River. I am concerned that this project will affect wildlife and plant life along the river. As the city becomes more urban, it is important to preserve the natural habitats within the city. Once we lose them, we will never get them back.

Thank you for your attention

Karen Taoka

Sent from my iPad

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