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Subject: Say No To Opportunity Housing

[External Email]

Submitted to the Mercury News: An open letter to the Mayor and City Council of San Jose

Dear Mayor Liccardo and the San Jose City Council,

All of the board members of the North Willow Glen Neighborhood Association, many neighbors in North Willow Glen, as well as many other residents throughout the city, stand firmly against Opportunity Housing (OH). There are many reasons why NWGNA is against OH and few reasons to be for it. We would like to emphasize why we think the General Plan Task Force was in error in voting for OH and why the timing is wrong for pushing through OH at this time.

The City of San Jose is in the middle of its well-thought-out 2040 Plan that is now on target to add thousands of units of both market-rate and affordable housing in our city. Between Downtown West, the Google project, and the many urban villages that are underway, San Jose expects to be able to ease the housing crunch considerably.

By remaining committed to the approved 2040 plan that adds additional dense housing (60+ units per acre), the costs for support services are far more economical for the city than would be the case with Opportunity Housing. We need to build densely in transportation corridors by building up instead of spreading out.

With OH, the stress on infrastructure will be immense. An assessment must be made of the impact to existing neighborhoods of changing R1 status to any proposed OH plan, which could allow four units plus two Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) and a junior ADU on each existing lot. Sewer capacity, water use in older neighborhoods like North Willow Glen, and garbage collection across the city will all be impacted by changing a single-family home into seven residential units. Undoubtedly, trees will be removed and

lots will be paved over, keeping rainwater from being absorbed into the water table. Without tree cover, temperatures in the city will increase, which will undoubtedly exacerbate climate change.

Parking will have another huge impact. Seven units on one lot with two cars each will add up quickly to neighborhoods that already have parking issues, which will continually frustrate our residents.

Concerning ADUs, the city has only recently relaxed requirements that will allow for these structures to be built or converted. Let's give that plan some time to add to the housing stock.

If OH is allowed, will it lead to properties becoming more affordable? We think that a property that has a single-family home on it will be more affordable to buy than a property with seven rental units on it. We believe that allowing the OH proposal to go forward will lead to a city in which fewer and fewer residents can afford to buy, leading to many more people renting units that are owned by outside investors.

While our city and the rest of the world work our way through COVID, it remains to be seen what the impact will be of where residents work and how much they travel outside of their homes compared to pre-pandemic norms. Major local employers are seriously considering changes to how much their employees will work on their campuses versus a hybrid or full-time work-at-home model. Companies are working through these complex cultural questions, and the direction that they will take will not be defined for some time. There are too many unknowns to determine what work patterns will develop and how this affects where people will choose to live post-pandemic.

It is the wrong time to implement a plan like Opportunity Housing and North Willow Glen Neighborhood Association strongly opposes this plan. Let the large-scale, existing development plans for urban villages, Downtown West, and the Google project play out before making such a drastic change to our neighborhoods and our city.

Bill Rankin
President
North Willow Glen Neighborhood Association

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