



Tuesday, August 31, 2010

Mayor Chuck Reed and Councilmembers,
Planning Commissioners
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

RE: Ohlone Mixed-Use Development - SUPPORT

Mayor Reed and Members of the City Council and Planning Commission:

Since 1958, Greenbelt Alliance has worked to both protect the iconic landscapes that define the Bay Area and to promote walkable urban neighborhoods. Our Compact Development Team (CDT) endorses and advocates for livable, transit-accessible communities with a wide range of housing options for families of all sizes and income levels. The CDT has evaluated the Ohlone Mixed-Use project proposed by Green Republic using an established set of guidelines. We write to you today to share our endorsement of the plans Green Republic has offered for the Ohlone development, proposed for the large site that includes VTA property at West San Carlos and Sunol Streets. We support this development because we feel it will be a major gain for the neighborhood. Due to its location, its pedestrian-friendly aspects, and its inclusiveness, we strongly encourage the City Council and Planning Commission to support this project.

We have endorsed the Ohlone project for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, the site—close to the Race Street and Diridon VTA light rail stations, two VTA bus lines, and within a mile of the Diridon Caltrain station—is an ideal location for this type of compact, residential infill development: rich in transit connections, and also steps away from Downtown San Jose. Second, we appreciate the emphasis on reduced parking, as a means of ensuring the new community is oriented around transit rather than cars. We applaud the retail element of the project as a way to discourage unnecessary driving by bringing services closer to where people live. Finally, the Ohlone project's focus on pedestrian-oriented design and green space will enliven the current surroundings and provide better transit linkages. Well-designed plazas, wide sidewalks, curb bulb-outs, and new bike lanes will offer safe pedestrian routes for residents and neighbors alike.

Green Republic's commitment to building a high-quality community is enhanced by its plan to rent 20 percent of homes at below-market rates. In doing so, Green Republic is helping the City of San Jose meet its obligation to provide homes we can all afford. Other elements of the project, such as the opportunity to achieve remediation of a vast brownfield in a key location and the dedication of a new four-acre public park nearby, give us additional confidence that this development will have a positive impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

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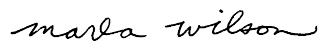
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In designing this project, Green Republic has taken a very inclusive approach by trying to understand and prioritize the concerns of local residents. Green Republic has held countless public meetings and workshops to educate the community about the project and address residents' concerns about height, density, and other issues such as design, often adjusting the proposal accordingly. This robust community outreach has helped shift residents' views in support of the project.

With 650 to 675 homes situated on more than eight acres, the Ohlone achieves the caliber of compactness one would expect in an urban environment such as San Jose. While the efficiency of land use proposed for this site is impressive, we recognize that parking requirements on the site have proven onerous. The compactness of this project should be maintained to preserve what makes this project special—the fact that it makes the most of the site. This is because compact development within San Jose's existing urban footprint helps alleviate development pressure on the Bay Area's open spaces, and also translates into economic benefits for local business owners in a tough economic climate. For these reasons, Greenbelt Alliance encourages San Jose decisionmakers to fully support the compact nature of the Ohlone development.

In closing, we urge the Planning Commission and City Council to support the Ohlone. We are confident that this development will be a profound gain for the Midtown area and for San Jose as a whole.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "marla wilson".

Marla Wilson
Sustainable Development Associate