



June 29, 2020

Honorable Mayor Sam Liccardo and Members of the City Council  
City of San José  
200 East Santa Clara Street, 18th Floor  
San José, CA 95113

**Re: 3.1 Planning Commission Appointment**

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

We are writing today, joined by a broad coalition of respected community organizations and leaders, to call for greater equity and authentic representation on the Planning Commission.

The City of San José recently announced it would [invest \\$1.5M](#) to establish a new **Office of Racial Equity**, following mounting pressure from residents for the city to address systemic racism. While this is an important first step in addressing deep-seated injustices, the City can do more to address inequities that still plague communities of color in our city. Starting with the Planning Commission.

The City's Planning Commission, whose role is to provide recommendations on planning and development throughout the city, has historically lacked not only District representation but has been majority-white and majority-male dominant. In light of the COVID-19 health crisis that has further highlighted systemic inequities, and with nationwide demonstrations in support of Black lives, the upcoming Planning Commission appointments are a prime opportunity to see whether the city of San José understands the importance of promoting equitable, just governance.

Equitable planning decisions should seek to close the opportunity gaps in our city. According to the [Bay Area Equity Atlas](#), 48% of San José's residents of color live in low-resource neighborhoods, compared with just 17% of white residents. At SOMOS Mayfair we are guided by our [anti-displacement platform](#), developed by community members, that promotes development without displacement — we seek to encourage neighborhood growth that provides long-denied opportunities to historically disinvested communities in our city, investments which in turn benefit everyone.

It is from this platform that we, along with several other supporting community leaders, propose the following criteria for the upcoming planning commission selection. We deserve candidates who:

1. Demonstrate a value for racial equity in planning decisions and understand the negative impacts that land use, zoning, and gentrification have had on vulnerable communities
2. Have lived and/or work experience with communities that are marginalized by oppressive systems
3. Have a demonstrated track record of advocating for communities that are marginalized by oppressive systems

In our view, unless a majority of planning commission members meet the above criteria, the planning commission as a body is not qualified to make decisions that will directly impact the lives and well being of our communities.

**Signed,**

SOMOS Mayfair  
Destination: Home  
Sacred Heart Community Service  
YWCA Silicon Valley  
Community Health Partnership  
School of Arts & Culture @ MHP  
Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition  
CommUniverCity  
Asian Law Alliance  
Asian Americans for Community Involvement  
Bill Wilson Center  
Next Door Solutions  
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County  
African American Community Service Agency  
Grail Family Services  
Working Partnerships USA  
Law Foundation of Silicon Valley  
South Bay Labor Council  
SV@Home  
Alum Rock Santa Clara Street Business Association  
Latino Business Foundation of Silicon Valley  
Behavioral Health Contractors' Association of Santa Clara County  
Momentum for Health  
Veggielution  
Alum Rock Urban Village Advocates  
Amigos de Guadalupe: Center for Justice and Empowerment  
Tamara Alvarado, Community Advocate  
Mary Helen Doherty, Community Advocate