

May 1, 2023

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## **RE: Maracor's Proposal for 2628-2638 Union Avenue in San Jose**

Dear Brad,

Thank you for presenting Maracor's proposal for 2628-2638 Union Avenue in San Jose to Catalyze SV members at our Project Advocacy Committee on March 22, 2023. As we understand it, the project proposes a 6-story building composed of five wood-frame stories over one level of podium. The 220 units proposed will range from studios to three-bedroom homes. This proposal is 100% affordable and will be accessible to those earning between 30% and 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Onsite residential amenities include a childrens' play area, a fitness room, a bicycle repair station, and a dog run and wash area. It includes 160 vehicle parking spaces for a 0.73 parking ratio, as well as a secured bicycle room with capacity for cargo bikes. The building meets the City of San Jose's sustainability standards and will be solar-ready, yet we understand there is no commitment to install panels at this time. With community engagement underway, our members would like to offer the following feedback on the project:

### **Standout Elements:**



**Affordability:** Our members were very happy to see this project as 100% affordable and an option for those who desperately need affordable homes in this area of San Jose. This project proposes a mix of affordability levels ranging from 30% to 80% of the Area Median Income. Just as impressive, our members appreciated the unit mix, which includes three-bedroom homes to accommodate larger families. The variety of units sizes and levels of affordability were very well-received among our members, as this means people on fixed-income and most vulnerable to displacement will have more housing options. Yet some members were concerned about the presumed displacement of the existing retailers in order to construct this project, so they ask for considerations, ongoing dialogue, and a possible transition plan for them.



**Intensity/Zoning:** The project proposes 220 units on a 2.31-acre site for a density of 95 dwelling units per acre (du/ac). Our members welcomed this density as the site is within walking distance to grocery stores and one pharmacy. Our members see this as an opportunity to connect people to key community resources. Along those lines, our members appreciate and wish Maracor could incorporate more three-bedroom homes to accommodate larger families. This is especially important given the site is also less than one-mile away from Fammatre Elementary and Ida Price Middle School. Overall, our members support the moderate height of this proposal. We hope to see Maracor become a leader in exploring materials such as mass timber to truly reach the height/density we need to meet the region's housing goals.



**Vibrancy:** Catalyze SV members were excited to see a high number and variety of amenities available to residents. Among the best-received features are the inclusion of two courtyards with an integrated children's playground structure as well as picnic tables and sitting areas. Along those lines, our members liked the inclusion of a fitness room and a clubroom. We also appreciate the thoughtful inclusion of a dog run and dog wash area - something our members wish more developers would do. As we understand it, the project also incorporates small office spaces / conference room space which will be accessible to the residents, something we want to see more of throughout the region. One recommendation to increase the vibrancy is to explore making the courtyard with the children's area accessible to the neighborhood. Additionally, some members suggested including an outdoor water fountain, a public mural, and to rethink the monotonous color scheme for a slightly more colorful one.

### Elements to Improve:



**Sustainability:** As we understand it, this proposal will meet the basic City of San Jose's sustainability standards for new buildings. This will be achieved through a variety of means like an all-electric building, drought-tolerant landscaping, as well as water-efficient appliances. Our members understand that pursuing a third-party certification can be costly, and so they provided some suggestions to reduce the environmental impact of the new building. Some suggestions include installing solar panels, integrating a designated rideshare area, adding more short-term parking structures, as well as providing VTA transit passes. We understand the latter is being explored yet there wasn't a commitment from the development team at the time of the presentation. Transit passes enhance both the Sustainability and Transportation categories.



**Community:** Community engagement has occurred through a city-led meeting which was held on February 16, 2023. Our members were happy to hear the development team has been responsive to neighborhood concerns and has been working with the councilmember. Additionally, our members are thankful to Maracor for continuing to bring projects to our Project Advocacy Committee members for feedback. That being said, our members believe community engagement has been minimal this far and can be expanded to include traditionally underrepresented voices. Specifically, our members suggest engaging local nonprofit organizations supportive of affordable housing. We also suggest reaching out to unions that might construct this project. Our members also suggest holding family-oriented events to gather project feedback. Just as important, our members want to see continued engagement and dialogue with the existing businesses and retailers and hope Maracor can concretely support them as they transition out.

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feedback. Just as important, our members want to see continued engagement and dialogue with the existing businesses and retailers and hope Maracor can support them as they transition out.

We are very thankful to Maracor for continuing to bring projects to our Project Advocacy Committee (PAC). More importantly, we are ecstatic to see more affordable homes coming to an area of San Jose that desperately needs them. Our members look forward to seeing new homes geared towards working families within proximity of community assets like schools, pharmacies, and grocery stores. With two courtyards and a variety of amenities like a childrens' play area and picnic tables, the project promotes an active and connected community. The inclusion of a community room accessible to the surrounding community was welcomed by our members and hope it becomes yet another community asset. At 220 units ranging from 30% AMI to 80% AMI, this site is exactly the kind of bold housing solutions needed to tackle our housing challenges.

Sincerely,

Catalyze SV's staff and Project Advocacy Committee members,

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## About Catalyze SV

*Catalyze SV's Project Advocacy Committee is comprised of community members who identify, evaluate, & lead advocacy efforts around specific development projects.*