

September 21, 2020

Melanie Griswold, Melissa Durkin & Scott Johnson
Green Republic Blossom Hill
84 West Santa Clara Street, Suite 600
San Jose, CA 95113

RE: Proposed Republic @ Blossom Hill development in San Jose

Dear Melanie, Melissa & Scott,

Thank you for presenting your proposal for the Republic @ Blossom Hill project at the Blossom Hill Light Rail Station to the Catalyze SV Project Advocacy Committee. As we understand it, the proposal is for 328 homes including a 6-story market-rate, mixed-use building with 239 units & a 5-story affordable housing development with 89 apartments. It also includes 15,000 square feet of neighborhood-serving commercial space, a public plaza, improvements to Canoas Creek Trail, and transit improvements in the 212 space light rail parking lot. The two residential buildings would have 323 vehicle parking spaces, 309 for bicycles, and 55 for motorcycles. The development is located on the Blossom Hill Station parking lot and next to VTA Line 27 bus stops that will be improved and relocated to Blossom Hill Road. We would like to submit the following feedback on the project:

Positive Elements:

- **Affordability:** Republic @ Blossom Hill is making an impressive commitment to affordable housing with 28% of the homes (89 units) as affordable. Not only is this well above VTA's and San Jose's standard, but with 65% of the units for extremely-low income households, the project focuses on future residents most in need. We also appreciate that 43% of units will be 2 & 3 bedrooms & are impressed with the building amenities & outdoor space.
- **Vibrancy:** In addition to great amenity space, Republic @ Blossom Hill provides a vibrant paseo, perimeter park, & public plaza with seating for commuters and visitors to enjoy. We appreciate the amount of ground-floor retail & activity space. Adding a café or small market near the public plaza to the proposal would be a great amenity for transit riders & community members. We appreciate the community room and hope to see additional activation of the public space through community organized activities, a weekly farmers market, or a daily farm stand to serve commuters.
- **Transportation:** Planned next to Blossom Hill Station, Canoas Creek Trail, & a Blossom Hill Road bike lane with planned improvements, this project is well-positioned to encourage sustainable transportation choices. Republic @ Blossom Hill takes advantage of the locations by providing ample bike parking, upgrading the creek trail, & creating a

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advocacy@CatalyzeSV.org

loop trail to facilitate bike access. The planned bike share station & scooter parking will also benefit commuters & residents. The project encourages transit by relocating & updating the VTA bus stop, renting parking spaces separately from market-rate apartments, & exploring car share spaces.

Elements to Improve:

- **Sustainability:** Beside ample bike parking and trail creation, we did not see any elements of sustainability that went beyond San Jose's existing standard. To create a more sustainable development, Green Republic should strive for LEED Platinum, or implement additional water or energy efficiency measures. We also believe that this development misses an opportunity to generate onsite energy by putting solar panels above the VTA parking lot and on the roofs of the residential buildings. Additional ways of improving sustainability would be to add native plants or impervious surfaces to the parking lot.
- **VTA SmartPasses:** With this development located at Blossom Hill Station on VTA land, transit passes should be provided to residents. The VTA Smart Pass program is a cost-effective means of encouraging transit use, reducing vehicle trips, and providing a valuable amenity to residents. Under VTA's existing SmartPass pricing, Green Republic would pay \$135 per resident per year, or the equivalent of paying for 4.5 single-ride tickets a month. If the same resident planned on frequently using VTA Light Rail, the Annual Pass would cost \$990 (double for households with 2 riders). With Republic @ Blossom Hill situated at Blossom Hill Station, transit passes as an amenity will add value to the market-rate housing and help subsidize passes for the affordable homes.
- **Increased Density:** Developing Blossom Hill Station is a once in a lifetime opportunity; Green Republic should consider adding a floor & additional units to both buildings. For concerns about the height, we believe the state density bonus for affordable housing or Signature Project exemptions should allow additional height if the design can't fit 7 floors within 85 feet. While we understand that there are concerns with the amount of parking, we believe that VTA SmartPasses, ample bike parking, & car share could allow for Transportation Demand Management plans to reduce parking. Stacked parking is another solution that could increase parking efficiency. Our members want to see more density on this site to both increase the number of homes & provide VTA with maximum ridership.

This project will create much needed affordable and market-rate homes next to a light rail station, a great creek trail, & future protected bike lanes. It will also create vibrancy through neighborhood-serving commercial space, a public plaza, pedestrian walkways, and improvements to Canoas Creek trail. With our feedback incorporated into the design, we look forward to seeing this project move through the entitlement process & becoming a lively station area on Blossom Hill Road in San Jose.

Sincerely,
Catalyze SV's staff, Board, and Project Advocacy Committee members

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www.CatalyzeSV.org
advocacy@CatalyzeSV.org

CC: Mayor Sam Liccardo (mayoremail@sanjoseca.gov)
Kelly Kline (kelly.kline@sanjoseca.gov)
Joel Devalcourt (joel.devalcourt@sanjoseca.gov)
Jerad Ferguson (jerad.ferguson@sanjoseca.gov)
Rosalynn Hughey (Rosalynn.Hughey@sanjoseca.gov)
Melanie Griswold (mgriswold@republic-urban.com)
Scott Johnson (scott.johnson@eahhousing.org)
Michael Van Every (mvanevery@republic-urban.com)
Daniel Rhine (daniel.rhine@eahhousing.org)
Kelly Snider (KellySniderConsulting@gmail.com)
Melissa Durkin (mdurkin@republic-urban.com)
Jessie O'Malley Solis (jessie.o'malleysolis@vta.org)
Josselyn Hazen (josselyn.hazen@vta.org)
Kathleen Podrasky (kathleen.podrasky@vta.org)
Jessica Hitcock (jessica.hitchcock@vta.org)
Janet Smith-Heimer (janetsmithheimer@gmail.com)
Perla A. Rodriguez (perla@volersa.com)
Johnny Khamis (district10@sanjoseca.gov)
Denelle Fedor (denelle.fedor@sanjoseca.gov)
Matt Mahan (matthew.mahan@gmail.com)
Catalyze SV (Advocacy@CatalyzeSV.org)

About Catalyze SV

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