

From: [Shiloh Ballard](#)
To: [District4](#)
Subject: Google's Downtown West: First speedbump cleared!
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Dear David,

Wednesday night, the San Jose Planning Commission voted unanimously to support Google's Downtown West Mixed Use project along with the Diridon Area Plan. Many of you tuned in and sent letters – Thank you! As a result and in partnership with many, many other great organizations and individuals, 46 people spoke at the hearing with only 4 in opposition.

But, this is just the first battle against a foe that has big, sharp, and many teeth. Sharks Sports and Entertainment (SSE), the parent company of the hockey team that also oversees several other business enterprises, is a lone and influential voice in opposition to the plan. The final vote before the City Council is slated for May 25th and we'll need your help.

What is Downtown West? For those of you who haven't had time to follow along, Google's Downtown West is an exciting opportunity to transition San Jose to its future vision of itself. It builds on many existing assets:

- A wonderful bike trail network including the Guadalupe Trail, the Los Gatos Creek Trail and the new Three Creeks Trail
- The Diridon Station which is slated to become a world class transit center with Caltrain, buses, light rail, BART, high speed rail and Amtrak
- Downtown San Jose and all its assets (like SAP Center)
- Google! This is all spurred and amplified by the huge investment Google is making in the Diridon Area
- And a City committed to weaving all these elements together to create a great place

The project, in combination with the Diridon Plan, promises to further shift Downtown San Jose into a great place where walking and biking are a breeze, where people can live life joyfully by bike, and as a result we can achieve San Jose's General Plan mode shift goals; to reduce driving to 40%, and increase biking and walking to 15%.

SSE Opposition: SSE is not in sync with this vision as they fear development will have negative impacts on their ability to get patrons in and out of the SAP Center. This is a fine concern but when weighed against the facts, it falls flat. The SAP Center has more parking per seat than the event centers for the Warriors, Niners, Earthquakes, Oakland A's and the Giants. Yet SSE demands more taxpayer dollars be spent on unneeded parking and street expansions.

As an aside, many of the aforementioned stadiums offer valet bike parking so that more people ride instead of drive to events. In fact, the Niners (pre-Covid) provided valet bike parking at every single event, thanks to the foresight of the Santa Clara City Council and the Niner's commitment to sustainability. SAP Center does not offer this service.

And here's the rub. Remember last year when SVBC and the County of Santa Clara did the first ever [public opinion poll](#) with the Mineta Transportation Institute at San Jose State University? One of the ideas we probed was around people's affinity towards driving. The results are fascinating and show that while overall, people would prefer not to drive as much, there are big differences between demographics. For example, women would like to drive less than men. Interestingly, people who voted for Trump enjoy driving much more than people who voted for Clinton.* And if you have kids, you're much more likely to be exasperated with driving than your non-parent friends. Given that reality, imagine if parents could load the kids up on bicycles, pedal down the Los Gatos Creek Trail to the SAP Center, enjoy Disney on Ice with the kids, and not have to navigate a bunch of car traffic on the way home. Also, according to the poll, 20% said that owning a car is not affordable to them, especially women of Latinx heritage and young adults.

Next Steps: With this information in mind, we hope the City Council will move forward to adopt a plan that works for everyone in our city, not just the demographics that enjoy driving and can afford a car.

Thank you to the Planning Commission for the unanimous vote. Thank you to the amazing professional staff at the City of San Jose who have worked hard on this plan. And thank you to the nonprofits and advocates that have rabble-roused and organized so that the plan addresses the needs of those who have historically been overlooked by redevelopment – these folks have been amazing! ([SV Rising](#), [Somos](#), [LUNA](#), [Working Partnerships USA](#), and many more.)

We look forward to a unanimous yes vote from the City Council that does not capitulate to a car-centric mentality.

Sincerely,
Shiloh Ballard
Executive Director

Read this on our website

**Note that Trump and Clinton supporters were the designated demographic indicator for political inclination given that when the poll was taken, the last presidential election had not yet happened.*



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