



**BAY AREA
AIR QUALITY
MANAGEMENT
DISTRICT**

December 8, 2020

Shannon Hill
Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
City of San Jose
200 East Santa Clara Street, 3rd Floor Tower
San Jose, CA 95113-1905

RE: Downtown West Mixed-Use Plan – Draft Environmental Impact Report

Dear Ms. Hill,

Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) staff has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Downtown West Mixed-Use Plan (Plan). The Plan requires a General Plan Amendment, Planned Development Rezoning, and Planned Development Permit for the redevelopment of approximately 81 acres of the Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP) area in the City of San Jose. The project applicant, Google LLC, proposes the following uses for this Plan: up to 5,900 residential units; up to 7,300,000 gross square feet (GSF) of office space; up to 500,000 GSF of active uses (e.g., retail, cultural, arts); up to 300 hotel rooms; up to 800 rooms of limited-term corporate accommodations; approximately 100,000 GSF for up to two event and conference centers; approximately 130,000 GSF for up to two central utilities plants; approximately 100,000 GSF for logistics warehouse(s); and approximately 15 acres of open space.

The Air District supports high-density mixed-use development projects near transit that have the potential to reduce air quality and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Air District staff commends the City for incorporating several emissions and exposure reduction measures in the DEIR, including the installation of MERV 13 filtration in all new on-site buildings, the planting of vegetative buffers between sensitive receptors and sources of toxic air contaminants (TACs), and the requirement for electrification of all buildings, with the exception of commercial cooking. Even with the robust set of mitigation measures included in the DEIR, the Plan is expected to result in significant and unavoidable impacts to air quality. The Air District recommends the following measures that can further reduce air pollution emissions and limit exposure to pollutants.

Transportation

Since the majority of operational criteria emissions are due to mobile sources, Air District staff have included here recommendations to add to and expand performance standards and proposed measures for the Enhanced Transportation

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Demand Management (TDM) Program, Mitigation Measure AQ-2h in the DEIR. The Plan proposes up to 4,800 commercial parking spaces and up to 2,360 residential parking spaces. Air District staff recommend that the City decrease the number of parking spaces available and implement best practice parking strategies to discourage single occupancy vehicle travel, such as parking cash-out, reduced parking requirements, shared parking, paid parking, and car-share parking. The Plan proposes sound measures to support transit use, but, given that the Plan is located in a transit-rich area, including Caltrain, ACE train, planned BART service, and proposed high-speed rail, we believe the Plan should be as ambitious as possible in encouraging the use of public transportation and active transportation. Additional TDM measures could include improvements to pedestrian and bicycle facilities on site, which could be expanded to specifically incorporate comprehensive and safe bicycle and pedestrian route and path connections with nearby activity centers and transit facilities, secure bicycle parking, expanded bike share and bike share membership, bicycle repair station and maintenance services, a fleet of bicycles, and bicycle valet parking.

In addition, the Plan proposes electric vehicle charging stations for 10 percent of the total number of parking spaces, with an increase to 15 percent with Mitigation Measure AQ-2g. Given the recent Executive Order N-79-20 to phase out gasoline cars and mandate 100 percent sales of new passenger vehicles to be zero-emission by 2035, as well as 100 percent of medium- and heavy-duty vehicles by 2045, it is critical that the Plan accommodate the electric vehicle charging infrastructure necessary to reduce emissions from the transportation sector and accelerate zero-emission technology. To align with this new Executive Order and to be able to support an influx of electric vehicles, Air District staff recommend increasing electric vehicle charging stations beyond 15 percent of the total number of parking spaces. In addition, Air District staff recommend that the Plan include additional requirements to increase EV ready spaces and EV capable spaces, as included in the [City of San Jose Ordinance No. 30311](#).

Health Risk

The Plan proposes that new sensitive uses, including potentially a childcare center, be located on the south end of the Plan boundary, which is 200 feet north of Interstate 280. Air District staff recommend that the City consider moving any sensitive receptors at least 500 feet away from freeways and other sources of toxic air contaminants. In addition to the inclusion of MERV 13 filters and the planting of vegetated buffers, Air District staff recommend the following best practices to reduce health risk, which can be found in Appendix B of the Air District's Planning Healthy Places Guidance ([https://www.baaqmd.gov/~media/files/planning-and-research/planning-healthy-places/php_may20_2016-pdf.pdf?la=en](https://www.baaqmd.gov/~/media/files/planning-and-research/planning-healthy-places/php_may20_2016-pdf.pdf?la=en)):

- Account for sensitive land uses when designing on-site housing, such as locating operable windows, balconies, and building air intakes as far away from any emission source as is feasible, and incorporating open space between buildings to improve air flow and pollution movement;

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- Limit ground floor use of buildings, to reduce exposure to local pollutants from a nearby at-grade highway or busy roadway; and
 - Phase the construction period to further reduce exposure to fine particulate matter and toxic air contaminants.

Backup Generators

The Plan proposes 47 diesel backup generators on the project site which will require Air District permits. Diesel combustion can cause local health impacts and contributes to GHG emissions. To meet State and regional climate goals, the Air District encourages projects go above and beyond current permitting requirements. In September 2018, the Air District launched the Diesel Free by '33 initiative to eliminate diesel emissions from Bay Area communities. Mayor Sam Liccardo of the City of San Jose signed Diesel Free by '33 to pledge the City's commitment to cut diesel use to zero by the end of 2033. To this end, the Air District recommends that the City compel the Project applicant to use the cleanest available technologies such as solar battery power, fuel cells, natural gas engines, or Tier 4 diesel generators. For more information on back-up generator alternatives, please see CARB's web page for Emergency Backup Power Options: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/public-safety-power-shutoff-psps-events/emergency-backup-power-options-commercial>.

Additional Measures to Reduce Emissions

To further reduce significant and unavoidable impacts, Air District staff recommend the following:

- Increase the percentage of electric off-road equipment where feasible;
- Source 100 percent renewable energy, whether from San Jose Clean Energy, PG&E, or on-site renewable, as mentioned in the Plan;
- Wire buildings for electrical hook-ups to accommodate plug-in electric trucks and transportation refrigeration units; and
- Provide for electric commercial cooking equipment, in addition to the rest of the buildings on site that will operate with 100 percent electric energy.

Jobs/Housing Balance and Environmental Justice

Given the significant, unmitigated impact due to this Plan's potential to exacerbate the jobs/housing imbalance identified in the 2040 General Plan, Air District staff is concerned about the associated increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT), which may further exacerbate air quality in San Jose, which is disproportionately impacted by air pollution and as identified by the Air District's Community Health Protection Program and Community Air Risk Evaluation (CARE) Program. We strongly recommend that the Plan include more residential units, at all income

levels, in order to help address current and future jobs/housing imbalances and associated vehicle use and emissions.

Air District staff is available to assist the City in addressing these comments. If you have any questions or would like to discuss Air District recommendations further, please contact Josephine Fong, Environmental Planner, at (415) 749-8637 or jfong@baaqmd.gov, or Kelly Malinowski, Senior Environmental Planner, at (415) 749-8673 or kmalinowski@baaqmd.gov.

Sincerely,



Greg Nudd
Deputy Air Pollution Control Officer

cc: BAAQMD Director Margaret Abe-Koga
BAAQMD Vice Chair Cindy Chavez
BAAQMD Director Liz Kniss
BAAQMD Chair Rod G. Sinks