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## **Minority Report & Opinion** **Planning for North First Development Plan**

**SUBJECT: RDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATION  
TO THE SAN JOSE CITY COUNCIL ON 4/15/08  
NORTH FIRST STREET DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

This is in response to the SJM&N editorial 3/11/08, on the future of Coyote Valley, and North First Street, this is a different view, and is a personal opinion of material presented to the Task Force.

During Kansen Chu's council campaign, his constituents said, "we want to see a Master Plan for North First Street," there needs to be a more detailed look at the impacts this proposal will have to the community. Under Kansen's direction, the Council approved a Task Force to work with the RDA and city staff. The Task Force comprised of 25 selected volunteers to facilitate ideas on the future growth in North San Jose [this was not a Master Plan] for a city the size of Mt. View.

Midway after the Task Force was started, up to 1/3 members dropped out, because they knew their voice would not be heard, knowing RDA and staff had already made the decision to go forward. One can only speculate and conclude, the City's presentation had pre-conceived concepts, and the Task Force was only a public relations creditability to the City Council, and cake frosting to the public at large.

Today, the area hosts many attractive industrial buildings, fully landscaped with large trees, on site parking, an employment center, an existing tax base, having public services for industrial application, and not for heavy density housing. Each project will stand alone, but collectively will be serious constraints to the City, and they were not resolved by the Task Force even as "Guiding Principles."

In over one hundred personal interviews in the City of San Jose, not one person agreed to destroy hundreds of thousands sq. ft. of industrial buildings to build heavy density housing [up to 90 DU/AC] with limited parking is not realistic, and a public transportation system goes from no where to no where, with few passengers. San Jose claims to be a "green city," then why would anyone demolish those industrial buildings, loss of building materials, knowing that we are having a shortage of these commodities, destroying a job center, a tax base, heavy public debt, and for what?

A reasonable question was asked during the study period, how many new companies started or expanded during the last year in this RDA area? The Task Force never got that answer, or monies spent on attracting new development, other than heavy residential development, draw your own conclusions, why or why not?

Examine the environmental and economic building conditions as proposed by RDA and staff, there will be new social demands that are unknown such as; police, fire, libraries, parks, imported water shortages, recycled water, flood control [FEMA], trails, land and building costs for new schools, increase in sanitation/flow cap limitations [San Jose Santa Clara Waste Water Treatment Plant and other city partners]. Who or whom will pay for all of these services, and what will be the long term financial requirements to maintain the above public facilities?

Builders must pay enormous fees up front should be a real concern, this is a gamble under the best circumstances, and what if San Jose cannot deliver the needed community infrastructures? Are the schools first, do they build the parks, do they deal with water issues, do they build roads, do they require financial bonds, do they hire more police officers, do they build libraries, do they purchase lands for public use in advance prior to building heavy residential housing? During land preparation, how many of the industrial buildings will be destroyed, can the City justify empty land values? RDA must protect the industrial base for employment, because without jobs, the residential will be empty with questionable value.

Common sense, and logic tells the reader, any development of this size, must have a Master Plan, and have a complete understanding of the relationship how "one action, causes a change to another action," be it environmental or financial. The caution light should be on for all future participants, for the impacts will influence more than just the North First Street RDA, including Santa Clara and Milpitas.

In the adjacent Alviso District, former Council Member Marjorie Mathews took the lead with the approval of the City Council formed the Alviso Master Plan Task Force, six years of community participation, and produced a Master Plan adopted by the San Jose City Council. The goal was to preserve open space, encourage development, preserve existing structures, let it evolved with time, and be kinder and more gentle to the environment to work, play, and live. The North First Street development will violate this trust, Alviso has parks - B.Q. tables, base ball and soccer fields, small community swimming pool, school, library, community center, and open space, with a village environment. Already the City is looking at Alviso for the public needs from North First Street development with no Master Plan. Be assured, Alviso, will be impacted, and not for the betterment of the citizens.

Let North First Street evolve, mature, into an employment center, this is a delicate balance, and the Task Force was not allowed the time to address these issues. The motto seem to be, "do you prefer this or this," you should not become concerned over details, we must have it back to the council with a finished report by a specific date. When the staff recommended a guiding principle, there was little or no discussion as to details, impacts were not understood, is professionally known as a "chicken or egg mentality." Colored pen zoning on a map, does not substitute for a Master Plan!

North First Street development as planned, is a TITANIC waiting to happen, for there are some ice bergs on the horizon, regardless of global warming. This is not one persons opinion, talk to the average citizen about their present job opportunities, life style, and the freedom to work, play, and live. Younger employees do not want to live in a brave new world atmosphere, they would like to have a B.Q., personal space, a family, having adequate parking to drive from hone to work and back. What if their job moves to another location, or how does one carry groceries on public transportation, is a no brainier, under the best of conditions.

Recommendation: Take time out, the City of San Jose should develop a Master Plan, by involving every property owner [or their representative] in the North First RDA, for any new proposed changes in zoning, it will have a major economic impacts upon their land values, or place restrictions which prohibit their development, because public infrastructures, and other support systems have been oversold.

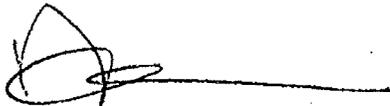
CONCLUSION: I am strong advocate for private property rights, development rights, but I cannot help question without a clear resolve in advance, "what if" any part of the City RDA's formula does not have the ability to perform? That is in the spirit in which this minority opinion is written.

Just proceed with caution, like the City did in Evergreen, and recently Coyote, how can there be such a difference in development philosophy there [NIMBY], vs. the North First Street area, with massive transportation. ecological/environmental, infrastructure problems, including air quality, or simply put, just too many people in a confined area? Does that sound unreasonable, for the Goose may not lay the Golden Egg in the Golden Triangle?

Perhaps the San Jose Mercury News Editorial Board next Editorial should read-

## **PLANNING FOR NORTH FIRST STREET MUST NOT MEAN HASTY DEVELOPMENT**

Respectfully submitted,



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OPINION

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## Editorials

# Planning Coyote must not mean hasty development

What's a paltry \$2.5 million when you've already spent seven times that amount?

On that logic, the San Jose City Council today is likely to accept the contribution of several million additional dollars from Coyote Valley investors to finish the development plan they've been financing for the now-rural valley.

Finishing the plan is fine, as long as no public money is going into it, and as long as the housing developers understand this is their gamble. That they're willing to risk some \$20 million total on a plan that may or may not be built hints at the magnitude of profits to be made in Coyote.

When it's finished, the city council will be the arbiter of whether the plan meets the needs of the public and high environmental standards. Even then it may sit on a shelf for decades until the time is right to begin building in Coyote.

Plotting out a coherent, environmentally sensitive community in Coyote seemed like a good idea in 2002, when this effort began. Industrial development seemed

imminent in the northern half of the valley, and under the existing zoning, car-clogged housing sprawl could have followed.

Several things have changed since then. The economy never really bounced back, so San Jose's other industrial areas now have plenty of available space. On top of that, the city approved a huge increase in building capacity for North San Jose. Making better use of that underdeveloped area is wiser than paving over farmland.

It hasn't helped that the developer-financed Environmental Impact Report on the Coyote plan was a disaster of errors and omissions. A total rewrite is under way.

It's still reasonable to have a good community plan in place for the eventual development of the valley. But until significant job growth and a broad economic expansion require it, housing in the remote area will only drain resources from existing neighborhoods. Preventing that is the city council's main responsibility, no matter how much money developers have paid to write a plan.