

# San Jose residents say 7-story apartments too big for Willow Glen



by [Vicente Vera](#) July 17, 2024



San Jose residents are raising concerns about a seven-story housing project being proposed on Willow Street in the Willow Glen neighborhood. If approved, the development would replace the liquor store pictured here. Photo by Vicente Vera.

A proposed seven-story apartment and townhome project could bring 126 homes and a new retail space to Willow Glen, but many residents in the neighborhood are not happy about the plan.

Almost 200 people called in to a June 3 community meeting hosted by San Jose Planning Department officials. Callers [raised concerns](#) about the imposing presence of such a large apartment complex on Willow Street near residential neighborhoods.

[Willow Glen](#) residents said they're worried about congestion, strain on the electrical grid and sewage system, the loss of privacy and blocking the skyline.

But Alex Shoor, executive director of housing advocacy organization [Catalyze SV](#), said [higher income communities](#) like Willow Glen need to play their part in helping alleviate the housing crunch.

"This is how you solve the housing crisis," he told San José Spotlight. "You increase the number of homes in a project, you move up the heights along main streets like Willow and you build community benefits like ground floor retail that the neighborhood can benefit from and enjoy."

If approved by city officials, the project developers would demolish a 5,500 square-foot building that houses a liquor store at 940 Willow St. to make room for the less than an acre housing complex.

"Every neighborhood in San Jose has got to build a lot of housing. That's the only way we reach our goals and prevent displacement and inequality in the community," Shoor said.

He also said he would like to see the developers, REDCO Development, engage more with Catalyze SV and the community.

Housing would range from studio apartments to three-bedroom townhomes, and 26 of the homes will be listed as affordable. John Tu, city planning division manager, said the project is still at the development review and environmental review stages before heading to the San Jose Planning Commission and City Council for approval.

"Planning staff have been listening to and noting public comments and concerns," Tu told San José Spotlight. "Ultimately, the city's review and decisions must be consistent with city and state law provisions regarding size, density, design, land use and other considerations."

Willow Glen resident John Pisacane told San José Spotlight he's been in San Jose for 35 years and originally lived in New York City, where skyscrapers abound.

He lived away from the hustle and bustle of the Big Apple, but immediately recognized the congestion caused by large, [tightly packed buildings](#) and the traffic that came with them whenever he went out.

"The problem is here in Willow Glen we have small streets and limited services, it's not like we have a big Target, Walmart or grocery store down the street," Pisacane told San José Spotlight. "So a new place with nice townhomes or small condos, something

like that might make for a nice neighbor, but having a seven-story building might warp your view of the world.”

REDCO Development co-founder Chris Freise said at the meeting this project is not the only seven-story housing complex planned in Willow Glen. San Jose’s planning director greenlit a plan last year for more than [200 apartments in the neighborhood](#) on a 2.2-acre lot at 1050 St. Elizabeth Drive.

“This push and pull of housing versus historic character (of the neighborhood), as it was called out, and the infrastructure comments — it’s happening all over the Bay Area,” Freise said at the community meeting. “Our team has done a very nice job, in my opinion, of trying to articulate the architecture, particularly the height and the design.”

Just a few blocks from the proposed development is [downtown Willow Glen](#), where several businesses and eateries line the street.

Nancy Mass said at the meeting she lives across the street from the proposed project and is concerned because of how tall the building will be compared to all the other structures in the area.

“The scale is completely out of proportion with the surrounding area,” she said. “How are you going to mitigate the impact of our privacy by ensuring that windows and balconies do not provide direct view into our homes, windows or backyards?”

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