



Willow Glen Neighborhood Association

P. O. Box 7706,
San Jose CA 95150
408/294-WGNA
www.WGNA.net
July 28, 2008

Mayor Chuck Reed and Councilmembers
City of San Jose
200 East Santa Clara St.
San Jose, CA 95113

re: the Parkland Ballot Measure and the Fire Stations of Willow Glen

Dear Mayor Reed and Councilmembers,

The Willow Glen Neighborhood Association (WGNA) respectfully requests that the Council reconsider the motion for a ballot measure to authorize the building of a Fire Station (“Station 37”) on a portion of the Willows Senior Center/Lincoln Glen Park at 2175 Lincoln Avenue. WGNA is also very concerned about the plans to close Station 6 at 1386 Cherry at Minnesota Avenue and consolidate operations with Station 37.

In 2002, the voters of San Jose approved a bond of \$159 million to improve fire and emergency services by upgrading existing Fire Stations and constructing new ones: the voters did not vote to close stations, nor did they vote to degrade performance.

Response-time modeling by the Fire Department has identified an underserved region in southern Willow Glen / Cambrian (shown in yellow and pink in Fig. 1), and recommended placing a new station (Station 37) in the vicinity of Cherry at Foxworthy (dashed circle). The City’s Real Estate Department then proposed the Willows Senior Center site for the Fire Station, well outside the defined search area.

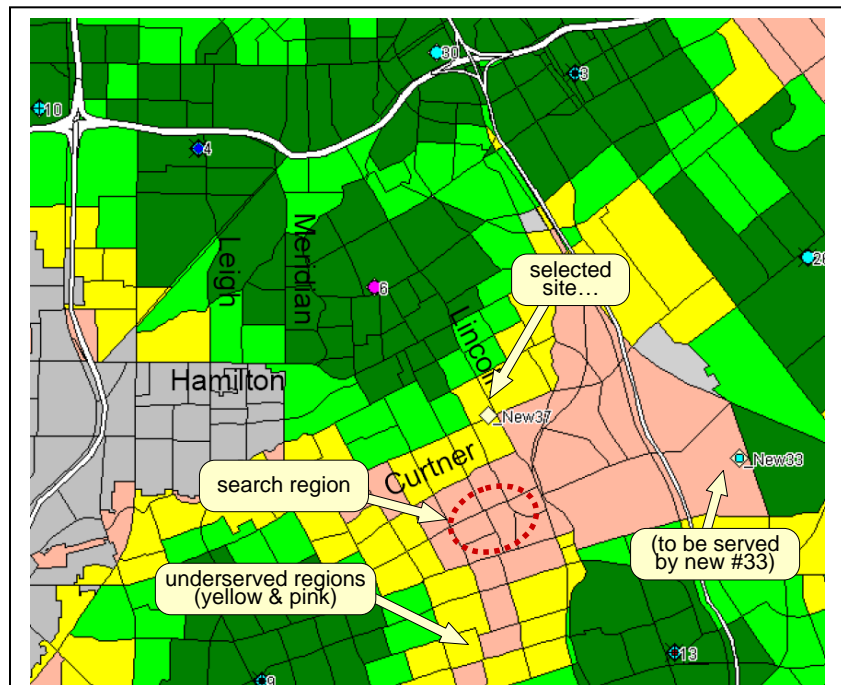


Fig. 1: current status

That site would take away land from the Senior Center / Lincoln Glen Park; it is on Lincoln Avenue, a street that is frequently impacted by backed-up commute traffic; and it is too far north and east to provide coverage in parts of the underserved regions it was designed to serve (see Fig. 2). The only redeeming feature is that, as City-owned parkland, the land is “free.”

The Fire Department is now also planning to consolidate Station 6 operations at the Station 37 location, and then close Station 6 and sell off the land. By their own modeling, if this were to

be done, then downtown Willow Glen and areas to the west would experience a considerable decline in service with response times estimated to be well below acceptable levels. (A to-be-annexed county pocket west of Meridian was not modeled, but would appear to be underserved as well.)

Of special concern: Station 6 is a busy station, with roughly 85% of calls for emergency medical response rather than fire suppression. The medical emergencies happen more often where there are more people (e.g., at busy parks or shopping districts), or where the residents are more likely to need service. The to-be-underserved western portions of Willow Glen include the very popular Willow St./Bramhall Park and the numerous existing and under-construction elderly care residential units on Meridian and near Pine, as well as the busy shopping district in downtown Willow Glen along Lincoln Avenue. These high-need areas are proposed to be covered by Station 37, which would require having fire engines running up Lincoln Avenue through that congested downtown Willow Glen, and/or by fire engines coming from Station 4. The problem with Station 4 on Leigh Avenue at Moorpark is that the engines often would be delayed by the Light-rail crossing at Fruitdale or by the backed up freeway on-ramp traffic on Moorpark. I’m sorry to have to be blunt about this, but if Station 6 is closed, emergency services will not be able to reach the crowded park and the elderly care facilities in time and people who might have been saved are going to die.

In our opinion, the correct action is to locate a new Station 37 at the appropriate location near Cherry at Foxworthy and to keep Station 6 open: serve the underserved pink and yellow regions of Fig. 1 without compromising existing service. We understand that there may be shortfalls in the construction bond, but we feel it would be a true waste of taxpayers’ money to build the new station at the wrong location where it doesn’t improve the overall coverage and where it would be necessary to construct yet another new station further to the southwest to provide the mandated level of service. Rather than taking this wasteful action, it would be better to wait un-

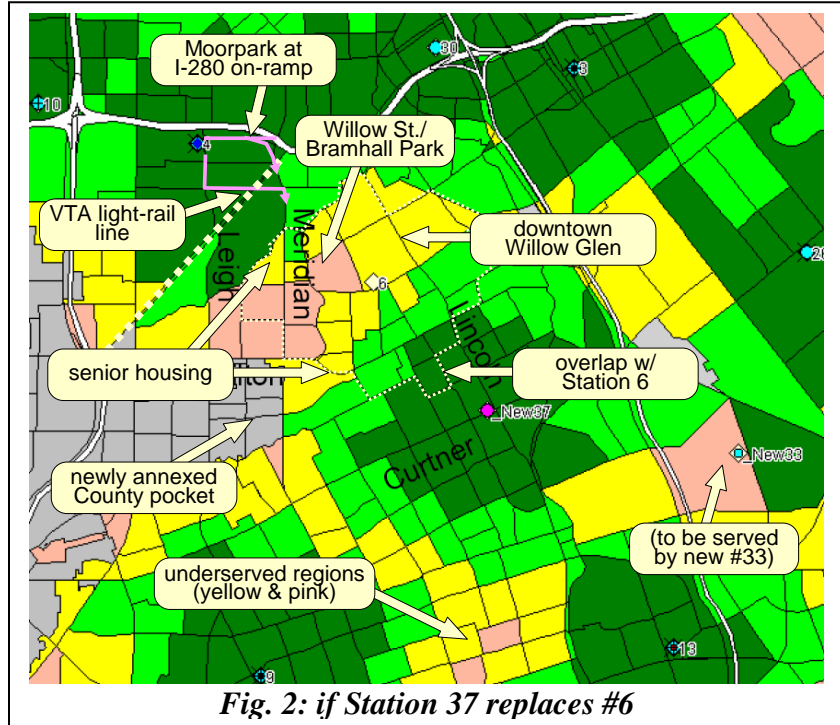


Fig. 2: if Station 37 replaces #6

til the additional funds can be identified so that land can be acquired for the needed Station 37 to be built at the correct location.

In summary, we urge you removed the ballot measure to place Fire Station 37 at the Willow Senior Center at Lincoln Glen Park, that you instruct the Fire Department to find an appropriate location for Station 37 that provides adequate coverage for the underserved southern Willow Glen and Cambrian areas, and that you keep the much-needed Station 6 at full operational capability.

Thank you,

Dr. Lawrence Lowell Ames
President, WGNA.

cc: Debra Figone, San Jose City Manager
Darryl Von Raesfeld, Acting Fire Chief