



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
of the Los Altos-Mountain View Area
97 Hillview Avenue, Los Altos, CA 94022**

November 15, 2010

Mayor Bryant and Members of the Mountain View City Council
City Hall, 500 Castro Street
P.O. Box 7540
Mountain View, CA 94039-7540

Re: November 16, 2010 City Council Agenda No. 5.1 – General Plan Strategy Endorsement

Dear Mayor Bryant and Members of the Mountain View City Council:

The LWV of the Los Altos/Mountain View Area would like to comment on the proposed General Plan Strategy to be discussed at the public hearing on November 16th. Overall, we think the draft document has many strengths and we commend everyone who has been involved in getting us to this point.

We are pleased to see the emphasis on encouraging higher density housing near transportation centers and also the encouragement of mixed use and of village centers where feasible. We also think that the stress on specific “change areas” is appropriate, as this focuses on those areas most likely to be redeveloped in the next few decades, and makes it clear that the character of existing residential neighborhoods is to be maintained. Allowing higher density housing, encouraging mixed use, and rezoning more land as residential should make it more feasible for affordable housing to be built within the City.

We support the goals listed for San Antonio Center and hope these will be kept in mind as development proposals are brought to the City. For example, “minimizing the visual impact of parking areas through site design and landscaping” did not seem to be well-addressed in the recent Merlone-Geier proposal for the site.

Regarding development in the North Bayshore area, including housing, we appreciate that the draft General Plan anticipates taking into account the potential impact of sea level rise in that area.

We especially commend the draft General Plan for many of its parking policies. We like the encouragement of “unbundling” of parking and alternative means of meeting parking requirements, as well as consideration of changing some minimum parking requirements. These policies should encourage use of public transit as well as reduce the cost of housing slightly. Also, these policies, along with allowing more intense development around transit centers, should help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We encourage more emphasis on form-based codes; these are discussed for some areas, but we would like to see more stress on form-based codes rather than density, as “density” is not a good metric for how housing looks.

We appreciate the policy to “support assembly of smaller parcels to encourage infill development”, but would prefer stronger language, such as “provide incentives for assembly of smaller parcels...”

We are happy that the draft Land Use and Design policies for the General Plan include many suggestions made by community members, as well as by the Council and Environmental Planning Commissioners during the planning process. Reviewing these comments, we believe that the Land Use section of the General Plan could be improved by adding a statement such as “It is the intent of the General Plan that land use in the City should take into account the goals of diversity and inclusivity in the City’s population, as per the policies in the Housing Element that support this goal.” Many community members voiced a desire for this goal to be explicit in the General Plan.

In conclusion, overall we support the proposed General Plan Strategy including the suggestions made by the EPC, but we would prefer to see stronger language in certain areas as noted above as the General Plan continues to be revised.

Sincerely,

Donna Yobs
Co-Chair, Affordable Housing Committee
League of Women Voters of Los Altos/Mountain View Area
1157 Karen Way
Mountain View, CA 94040

Cc: Kevin Duggan
Randal Tsuda
Martin Alkire