



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

May 11, 2014

Mayor Clark and Members of the City Council
City of Mountain View
500 Castro Street
Mountain View, CA 94041

Re: City Council Study Session May 13, 2014 – 2015-2023 Draft Housing Element

Dear Mayor Clark and Members of the City Council:

The League of Women Voters would like to comment on the Draft Housing Element. We will not repeat all of the comments made in our April 14th letter to the EPC, as that letter is attached as part of the Staff Report, but will try to be concise in hitting the key points.

Most important, we continue to be very concerned that the Draft Housing Element does not include more aggressive steps that could lead to housing affordable to the many diverse socio-economic groups that live or work in Mountain View. We endorse the EPC's concern with the growing imbalance between jobs and housing and urge the Council to brainstorm on ways to ease this problem. Actively tracking this imbalance in the Housing Element would indicate the City's commitment to improving this situation.

Along with the EPC, we strongly support reassessing all the fees related to development of affordable housing. This would include the Rental Housing Impact Fee, the Commercial Housing Impact Fee, and the in-lieu fees presently paid by developers of multi-family ownership housing.

We note that the staff report indicates that the second unit ordinance should be re-evaluated to encourage more development of second units and we strongly agree. We also agree with the suggestion that more staff effort be put into facilitating lot consolidations.

We would like the Council to consider passing a new condo conversion ordinance, based upon local vacancy rates in rental units, rather than being based on the total number of rental units in the City, as the present citizen initiative does. With the rental units currently under construction, it is unlikely the number of rental units will ever fall below the 15,373 units referenced in the present ordinance, making that threshold in the ordinance moot.

The comments we made to the EPC regarding the list of potential sites for lower-income housing are still pertinent, as none of the sites that are already proposed for higher income housing (e.g., 801 W. El Camino and 420 San Antonio) have been removed from the list. If just those two sites are removed from the list on 7-2, the total number of potential units would fall from 1,388 to 940, far below the RHNA allocation of 1,306.

We urge the City to talk to nonprofit housing developers to learn their recommendations on how the City could improve their efforts to build affordable housing, as well as to learn which of the sites on the list on 7-2 are realistic possibilities for lower-income housing.

We encourage the City to be more innovative in its approach to housing; this could include exploring ideas with some of the highly innovative employers in Mountain View, such as Google.

Finally, we think the City should be more pro-active in using City-owned sites for affordable housing and in pursuing the possibility of affordable housing on the federally-owned site at Moffett and Middlefield. Thank you for considering our input.

Sincerely,
Donna Yobs
Co-Chair, Housing Committee
LWV of the Los Altos/Mountain View Area

cc. Dan Rich
Martin Alkire
Margaret Netto
Terry Blount
Linda Lauzze