



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

May 5, 2014

Chairman Robert Cox and Members of the Environmental Planning Commission
City of Mountain View
500 Castro Street
Mountain View 94041

Re: EPC Meeting, May 8th, Agenda Item 5.2 – Potential Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance Amendments

Dear Chairman Cox and Members of the EPC:

The League of Women Voters supports policies that encourage government as well as the private sector to provide adequate housing for all. That said, it is difficult to weigh in on the exact amount of relocation assistance that is appropriate in an ordinance.

However, based upon Council intent when the original ordinance was adopted in 2010, we commend the staff for proposing a very reasonable set of amendments. Once again, the staff report is very competent and seems to cover all the relevant issues. We are repeating here most of what we recommended in an earlier letter to Council as the draft amendments addresses almost all of our concerns.

The most important issue is probably the amount of the assistance. We agree that tying the benefits to the City's median rent makes much sense. First, this makes it more likely that displaced tenants will be able to relocate in Mountain View or nearby. In addition, it means that because the assistance is not tied to a specific number, the actual amount will fluctuate as rents in the area increase (or perhaps sometime decrease). Thus, the City won't have to repeatedly revisit this issue unless there is a desire to change the policy.

The timing of the payment also is an important change. It is absolutely true that the tenant should have the funds available over a longer period of time in order to be able to grab a vacant unit that is affordable at any time during the process. This change creates no additional burden to the landlord but could be very helpful to the tenant. We would prefer to see that the tenant receives half of the assistance within 15 days of making a request and the remaining half after the tenant has paid the last month's rent. We cannot see how this puts the landlord at risk of not receiving the rent due. We encourage the EPC to discuss the logistics of when the second payment should be made.

Similarly, having the City hire the relocation consultant would eliminate many concerns we have heard from displaced tenants, suspicious of being helped by someone hired by the landlord. Once again, this change creates no additional burden to the landlord and follows the practice that most cities use when environmental and other consultants are hired for a development project. Thus, we also agree with the staff's recommendation that the developer would pay for the relocation consultant, as is true under the present ordinance.

The one issue where we think Council may want to deviate from the staff recommendations is the issue of income limits. We definitely support raising the income limits to 80% of area median income (AMI). However, we note that none of the cities in the attached Exhibit 4 limit relocation benefits on account of income. We would prefer to see benefits paid to all who earn less than 100% AMI, as there is still a gap between what these households can afford and the market rate median rent, particularly with larger units.

We agree with staff's recommendation that the specific alternate mitigation of offering a tenant a permanent replacement unit would be fine to include in the ordinance, as the Council must agree to any alternate mitigation. Thank you for considering our input.

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

cc. Dan Rich
Terry Blount
Linda Lauzze