



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

February 26, 2012

Mayor Mike Kasperzak and Members of the City Council
City of Mountain View
500 Castro Street
Mountain View 94041

Re: Council Meeting February 28, 2012
Agenda Item: 8.2 - Habitat for Humanity Development

Honorable Mayor Kasperzak and Councilmembers:

The League of Women Voters of the Los Altos-Mountain View Area feels there is value in adding ownership housing for lower-income households to the mix of affordable housing in the City of Mountain View. We recognize the financial difficulties in doing this. But Habitat for Humanity has developed an admirable model, the use of "sweat equity" to make it possible for lower-income families to become homeowners. Therefore, we support the staff recommendation to use City housing funds to allow Habitat for Humanity to purchase an extension to their option agreement on the 300 Chiquita property. This would not add any unreasonable cost to the project, as compared with the other NOFA projects under review.

Habitat was fortunate in being able to negotiate a low price for the property for this project, but the low price came with a shorter purchase option than that obtained by the other nonprofit developers requesting NOFA funds. Now, as more time is needed and as property values escalate in Mountain View, it is not surprising that the owner would request additional funds in order to extend the purchase option.

We are hopeful that the NOFA process will prove to be a more efficient and expeditious way for getting affordable housing built than the prior City process of first developing an affordable housing strategy and then proceeding to implement it. Nonetheless, development of affordable housing is typically a time-consuming process, as the City always wants residents, and especially neighbors, to have ample opportunity to review both the design and all other critical factors of these developments. Therefore, this need for additional funds for the purchase price is not unreasonable or unusual, in our opinion.

Another option the City could consider would be purchasing the property, before the current purchase option expires, on behalf of Habitat. If for some reason the Habitat development did not proceed, the City would still have a property that has increased in value.

Sincerely yours,

Donna Yobs
1157 Karen Way
Mountain View, CA 94040
Co-Chair, Housing Committee
LWV of the Los Altos-Mountain View Area

Cc: Dan Rich, Randal Tsuda, Adriana Garefalos, Linda Lauzze