



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
of the Los Altos-Mountain View Area**

October 15, 2016

Mayor Bruins and Members of the City Council  
Chair Moison and Members of the Planning and Transportation Committee  
City of Los Altos  
1 N. San Antonio Road  
Los Altos, CA 94022

Re: Joint Study Session, October 18, 2016

Agenda Item#2 - Second Living Units

The LWV supports affordable housing and incentives for development of affordable housing. Second units have long been seen as a key way for Los Altos to provide some of its Regional Housing Needs Assessment (fair share) of affordable housing. Although we have noted in the past that regulations/deed restrictions requiring second units to be rent-restricted have not been monitored unless a complaint is filed, we believe that often these smaller units do provide affordable rents.

We urge the City to loosen its second unit regulations both to comply with State law and to encourage construction of second units, which will add to the diversity of housing in Los Altos. First, to comply with State law, the City should not require more than one parking space if the second unit has only one bedroom; also, tandem spaces must be allowed in an existing driveway.

We encourage the City to remove the requirement of a minimum lot size and instead rely upon other zoning guidelines, such as setbacks, lot coverage, height limits, etc., to ensure that the second units are appropriate. Mountain View recently changed its minimum lot size in exactly this way, as have other jurisdictions. This would allow many more second units to be built, but would still protect the neighborhood character. When Mountain View reviewed its minimum lot size requirement last year, out of nine jurisdictions surveyed, Los Altos was the outlier in requiring such a large minimum lot size. Another study included cities not surveyed by Mountain View, with similar results. Los Gatos, for example, required a minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet and Monte Sereno - 8,000 square feet.

Regarding the affordability requirement, we have understood that in the past the City has not strictly enforced the rent restrictions. If the City plans to hire a housing administrator to enforce these requirements, then we see some value in the requirement. Most cities, however, have not had affordability requirements, but have just expected that the smaller units would typically be more affordable than other housing. That was the position that the Mountain View Council took when they revised their second unit ordinance.

On the other hand, Piedmont has affordability requirements and the city is perhaps comparable to Los Altos, in that it is mostly single-family homes, is completely built out, and has limited land availability and local funds to support affordable housing. One option could be to offer additional

incentives to owners who provide rent-restricted second units, but not require all second units to be rent-restricted.

Thank you for considering our input.

Sue Russell

Co-Chair, Housing Committee

LWV of the Los Altos-Mountain View Area

Cc: Chris Jordan

Jon Biggs

David Kornfield

Jon Maginot