



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

January 20, 2017

Mayor Mary Prochnow and Members of the City Council
City of Los Altos
City Hall, 1 North San Antonio Road
Los Altos, CA 94022

Re: Council Retreat - Council Priorities for 2017

Dear Mayor Prochnow and Members of the City Council:

The LWV of the Los Altos/Mtn.View Area supports affordable housing for all Californians. We are pleased to see that there are numerous efforts being made on the state and regional level to tackle what is considered to be a crisis in affordable housing. We encourage the City Council to join the Bay Area by doing its part to solve this crisis.

We ask the Council to make it a major goal to "Develop and adopt a strategy to increase the supply of affordable housing in Los Altos."

- Elements in this strategy might include revision of the second unit ordinance. A proposal to do this was included in the 2015 Housing Element, yet nothing has been done. The Council agreed to consider reducing the minimum lot size required for second units, and also parking requirements. The State of California has passed a new law, in effect as of January 1, 2017, which means the Los Altos ordinance is no longer compliant with State law. We therefore urge the Council to make revision of the second unit ordinance a high priority.

Once the ordinance is revised, we hope that the City will mount an educational campaign showing homeowners the advantages of building second units. This type of housing is one of the easiest ways that Los Altos can help build the housing that is so needed in our region, and much of it is affordable by design.

- Another element of this strategy is acceptance of the recently completed nexus study, as this study is the necessary analysis before adoption of commercial and housing impact fees. Rental housing impact fees are important in cases where a rental housing developer does not utilize the State Density Bonus Law, as due to the Palmer decision in 2009, the City can no longer otherwise require below-market -rate units in rental developments. And commercial linkage fees are another important funding resource if the City wants to try to help fund affordable housing.
- Finally, we urge the City in the Downtown Visioning to include consideration of affordable housing, including the possibility of using City-owned land such as downtown parking lots in a public-private partnership that would allow an affordable housing development to be financially feasible.

Thank you for considering our input.

Susan Russell
Co-Chair, Housing Committee, League of Women Voters of Los Altos/Mountain View Area

Cc: Chris Jordan, City Manager

Jon Biggs, Community Development Director