



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

February 13, 2017

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

Re: PTC Meeting - February 16th

Agenda Item#2 - El Camino Real Corridor Zoning Code Amendments

The LWV supports affordable housing and also increased density where appropriate. The LWV supports mixed-use housing, housing near transit, inclusionary zoning, and incentives for development of affordable housing. We believe that higher heights than what are proposed by staff for El Camino should be considered. We listened to many PTC members opining that higher heights are reasonable and we have stated our main reasons for agreeing below.

As many of you have said, the most appropriate area in Los Altos for increased density is along El Camino Real. This is a way of helping with the regional and Los Altos jobs/housing imbalance and related transportation problems, by building higher density housing along transit corridors. The LWV therefore urges support for both entirely residential development along El Camino, as well as mixed-used development. We believe that looking at floor area ratios (FAR) and building mass are more important than looking at density. Smaller units may lead to a smaller FAR while being a higher density than is typically imagined.

As for incentives for affordable housing, we acknowledge that Los Altos has inclusionary requirements, but point out that due to the Palmer decision, these are currently unenforceable with respect to rental housing, unless a developer is using the State Density Bonus Law (SDBL). So it is important that the SDBL is linked to local zoning ordinances.

We encourage the City to adopt policies that will encourage housing along El Camino, perhaps looking at the North Bayshore Precise Plan and/or the El Camino Precise Plan adopted by Mountain View and the Grand Boulevard Initiative. These plans provide incentives for developers to build a higher percentage of affordable housing than under the SDBL, in exchange for higher FARs. For example, Mountain View requires a developer to provide community/public benefits in exchange for additional FAR. Affordable housing in Mountain View is a top priority as a community benefit. We believe that Los Altos needs to do more to produce housing according to the Regional Housing Needs Allocation, and also should work closely with its neighbor, Mountain View, along the El Camino Real corridor.

As part of good land use planning for El Camino, especially if more residences are built, safe bike and pedestrian routes should be carefully considered. Also, higher building heights along El Camino should take into consideration transitioning to the neighboring zoning, which typically requires lower heights. These zoning changes should also take into account traffic issues going through adjoining neighborhoods. That said, we believe the City should be able to reconcile these interests with higher height limits than what is proposed for the Zoning Code Amendment Feb. 16th. 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