



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

March 15, 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 - March 16th

Agenda Item #3 - Affordable Housing Fees

The LWV supports affordable housing and also inclusionary zoning, which means including below-market-rate units (BMRs) within rental and for-sale complexes. Over 170 jurisdictions in California have used inclusionary zoning as a key tool for building affordable housing, beginning in 1970. The LWV believes that dispersing BMRs within a larger complex has been shown to be a socioeconomic and political success in California.

We commend the staff on an excellent report. As staff points out, Los Altos has relied upon inclusionary zoning as its main program for producing affordable units because the City has had little money to contribute to a nonprofit which might build an all-affordable project, as such projects need some local contribution in order to make them financially feasible.

We generally support the staff recommendations. We encourage the City to adopt **non-residential** affordable housing linkage fees in the range recommended by KMA on page 10 of the Summary. This will not only provide funds for affordable housing for which such non-residential development creates a need, but will level the playing field between Los Altos and neighboring cities which assess similar fees for such development.

We also urge the City to consider rental housing impact fees on projects with fewer than five units. This fee should perhaps be lower than the \$45 per square foot fee recommended by staff for larger rental projects. We agree with staff's proposal of a high fee in order to encourage projects to provide BMR units rather than pay fees, but even with larger projects the proposed fee might be higher than needed to accomplish this. And we urge the City to consider assessing fees for smaller **for-sale** developments, as well as teardowns and additions.

Finally, with regard to the use of the fees collected, we hope the City could work with the Housing Trust Silicon Valley so that fees collected in Los Altos could be used in Los Altos, assuming there were appropriate uses. One possibility is for aid to first-time homebuyers. In addition, we are optimistic that the City might consider a public/private partnership where City-owned land (downtown parking lot perhaps) could be leased by the City to a nonprofit which could build underground parking with affordable housing above the parking. This type of project is being planned for Burlingame. If this should happen, any fees collected in Los Altos could be used to help finance such a project.

In any case, affordable housing is a regional problem. It is appropriate for Los Altos to collect fees comparable to neighboring cities and then use these funds to help neighboring cities build affordable housing.

Sue Russell
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