



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

May 5, 2017

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

Re: Council Meeting - May 9th

Agenda Item #7 - 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. 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 and applaud the recommendations of the PTC. 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 encourage the City to adopt the **non-residential** affordable housing linkage fees recommended by staff and the PTC. This will provide funds for affordable housing for which such non-residential development creates a need, and will also level the playing field between Los Altos and neighboring cities which assess similar fees.

We agree with staff's recommendation of a \$45 per square foot fee on larger rental projects in order to incent developers to build units rather than pay fees. 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. And we urge the City to consider assessing fees for smaller **for-sale** developments, as well as teardowns and additions, such as the PTC suggested considering. The fees would be based on additional square footage built by the new homeowner, so would not be nearly as onerous as the staff report indicates.

Finally, with regard to the use of the fees collected, our first hope is 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 planned for Burlingame. If this should happen, any fees collected in Los Altos could be used to help finance such a project. The fees could be collected for a number of years and saved for such a project.

It is also possible for the City to work with the Housing Trust Silicon Valley, as staff has pointed out, so that fees could be used in Los Altos, such as for first-time homebuyers. 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
Co-Chair, Housing Committee
LWV of the Los Altos/Mountain View Area

Cc: Chris Jordan Jon Biggs David Kornfield Jon Maginot