



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

April 22, 2019

Mayor Lisa Matichak and Members of the City Council
City of Mountain View
500 Castro Street
Mountain View 94041

Re: City Council Meeting, April 23, Agenda Item 7.1 – Council Goal Setting

Dear Mayor Matichak and Members of the City Council:

The LWV supports a great number of the goals and projects outlined in the Staff Report as major goals for the Council to include in its work plan for the next years. As the LWV Housing Committee, we urge that many of the goals related to affordable housing and diversity of housing continue to be priorities of the Council.

At this particular time, however, we want to focus on possible policies to prevent or alleviate displacement as we see this as the most critical problem. We support the concept of comprehensively assessing the issues of displacement, including a policy of no net loss of affordable rental units. No net loss policies could be applied to loss of rent-controlled units and also units with expiring deed restrictions (such as Avalon). When these are lost, they should be replaced with at least the same number of deed-restricted units. No net loss should also be tied to the right of return at the rent at the time of displacement.

No net loss doesn't correlate perfectly to the situation where rental units are replaced with condos and/or townhomes, but it is possible to require the developer of the new condo or townhome complex to provide a higher percentage of below-market-rate units (BMRs) than would otherwise be required. For example, if the Council opts to require 15% BMR for new condo projects, then in a situation where rent-controlled units are replaced with condos, the percentage required could be 20% BMRs.

We also urge that other policies be studied which could mitigate the hardship that has recently occurred with displacement of tenants, often those who are long-term residents, economically vulnerable, and from minority demographic groups. For example, San Francisco last week adopted the Community Opportunity Purchase Act (COPA), a local ordinance modeled after the longstanding Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) of D.C. This is a procedural mechanism which allows tenants to purchase property within a certain timeframe, typically in partnership with well-established nonprofit housing developers. COPA in San Francisco, for example, requires property owners of residential buildings with three or more units to notify a City-maintained list of housing nonprofits to give them the first chance to submit an offer to purchase the property. TOPA is somewhat different, but the two programs have in common the concept that given time it might be possible for either a nonprofit, a land trust, or the tenants themselves to purchase rental properties while providing market-rate returns to property owners seeking to exit the rental business. We hope Council will consider asking Staff to consider such programs.

Another possible policy to consider is requiring a conditional use permit when affordable housing units are demolished. This puts an additional, but legal constraint on developers wanting to build condos or townhomes to replace rentals.

Another suggestion would be to incentivize developers to build on sites where demolition of existing affordable rentals would not occur. Perhaps higher FAR could be allowed in these situations.

Finally, we support modification of the relocation assistance ordinance to protect more displaced tenants.

Again, we support other proposals that would help produce affordable housing, such as exploring streamlined and/or lesser requirements in order to incentivize the construction of more ADUs, how the State Density Bonus Law may better coordinate with Mountain View ordinances, and requiring that condo and townhome developers include BMRs rather than paying fees. However, we believe that the focus should be on anti-displacement policies that allow Mountain View's low-income and diverse communities to sustain their residencies in the City.

Donna Yobs
Co-Chair, Housing Committee
LWV of the Los Altos/Mountain View Area

cc: Wayne Chen Audrey Seymour Ramberg Dan Rich Melvin E. Gaines Aarti Shrivastava