



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

September 29, 2019

Mayor Lee Eng and Members of the City Council
City of Los Altos
1 N San Antonio Road
Los Altos, CA 94022

Re: Agenda Item #1, Special Council Meeting October 1st – 4898 El Camino Real Development

Dear Mayor Lee Eng and Members of the City Council:

The LWV urges the Council to approve the 28-unit proposal for 4898 El Camino Real. We agree with the Planning Commission that it would be a win-win to approve the 28 units rather than the 21-unit project. The height, bulk and mass of the two different proposals is identical. The developer is not asking for any additional incentives or waivers with the 28-unit proposal than with the 21-unit proposal.

We believe that seeing these two proposals side by side shows that basing approvals on density rather than on the appearance of the building is unfounded. In exchange for the increased density, the City will receive two more below-market-rate units (BMRs), badly needed in order to meet our RHNA goals. In addition, the project will have smaller units overall; we agree that smaller units are more “affordable by design” and we do not typically see one-bedroom units being built for sale in Los Altos. In addition, the City will receive substantially more money for park-in-lieu fees and traffic impact fees with the 28-unit development.

The two incentives the developer is requesting per the State Density Bonus Law and Los Altos ordinance are an increase in maximum height of 11 feet and a 20% reduction in the front yard setback. Both are considered “on-menu” incentives; it would be difficult for the City to make findings that would allow denial of these incentives. The developer is requesting a waiver regarding the height of the elevator tower, which seems reasonable given the additional height of the building.

We do urge the Council to consider changing the bedroom mix of the BMRs. The City has a policy that the BMRs should reflect the overall unit mix. In this case, in the 28-unit project, 3 of the 4 one-bedroom units are shown as very low-income BMRs. Half of the project, or 14 units, are three bedroom-units. We believe the BMR allocation should come closer to the overall bedroom mix of the development. We understand Staff’s position that the developer is providing more than is required, so has met the intent of the ordinance, but we would hope that one of the very low-income units could be a three-bedroom.

Sue Russell, Co-Chair, Housing Committee
LWV of the Los Altos-Mountain View Area

Cc: Chris Jordan Jon Biggs Sean Gallegos