



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
of the Los Altos-Mountain View Area
97 Hillview Avenue, Los Altos, CA 94022**

September 22, 2014

Mayor Chris Clark and Members of the City Council
City of Mountain View
500 Castro Street
Mountain View 94041

Re: City Council Study Session, September 23rd
Agenda Item 8.1 - Review of El Camino Real Precise Plan Public Draft

Dear Mayor Clark and Members of the City Council:

The LWV would like to comment on the public Draft of the El Camino Real Precise Plan (ECR PP). We are pleased to see that the vision for the El Camino Real corridor includes new housing for a range of incomes and life stages. We also note that Table 14 states that the Plan Priority for desired community benefits is affordable housing. We are also pleased that the EPC supported including a goal of 10 percent affordable housing units and a series of strategies to achieve this goal, and listed several possible strategies.

We would like to see a higher goal set than 10% and more attention to specific strategies. Several of you attended the recent CSA Hometown Heroes breakfast, where Martha Mendoza spoke so eloquently about the drastic need for affordable housing in our area, suggesting, as the LWV has before, that serious brainstorming sessions with the many innovative, imaginative, and talented minds working in Mountain View might lead to some potential solutions to the problem. There should be constant discussion about private-public partnerships with some of these local profitable companies, which desire more office space; this could lead to construction of affordable housing.

Once again, we note that the Diridon Station Area Plan recently unanimously adopted by the San Jose City Council includes the following language: "It shall be the policy of this plan to achieve a rate of affordable housing production at 15% of the housing units built within the plan area. Strategies to ensure the production of affordable units in the plan area will be developed as part of implementation of this plan, and may include, but are not limited to, the following:..." Many strategies are listed, including public-private partnerships, tax increment financing, assessment districts, public (community) benefits conferred through rezonings, and phasing of market-rate residential units contingent on achievement of affordable housing targets.

Phasing is included in the draft San Antonio Precise Plan, in an effort to ensure that a certain amount of housing rather than office space is built. There is a requirement that 620 housing units must be constructed in Phase 1 before any new office space is allowed in Phase 2. Making further office entitlements contingent upon the housing being built should be an effective mechanism for guaranteeing that the housing the City desires in the San Antonio area is actually built. Similar contingencies or triggers could be included in the ECR PP. Various levels of affordability could be built into the strategies. For example, one requirement might be that a certain percentage of

units affordable to those at less than 50% area median income (AMI) would have to be built as part of the first 200 new housing units, before additional market-rate units can be entitled. (This is one of the strategies included in the Diridon Plan.) These policies would have to be refined, but having these types of policies would ensure that various levels of lower-income units are provided. If such specific requirements/strategies are not included in the ECR PP, we are concerned that despite the worthy goal of providing housing for all income levels, very little that is affordable to those at lower-income levels will actually be built.

We are very concerned that many developers may not opt for the higher FAR's allowed in Tier 1 and Tier 2, as the "base" FAR's and building heights are fairly high. As a result, the affordable housing shown in Table 14 (and stated as a major feature of the vision for the El Camino Real corridor) might not be much of a reality. And, even if developers ask for these higher FAR's, the community benefit value being proposed is so low that it would not provide much in the way of affordable housing, even if affordable housing is always the prioritized community benefit. We would recommend that a contribution of \$20 per bonus square foot be adopted rather than \$15 per square foot, as the analysis states that a contribution in the range of \$15-\$20 is reasonable.

It is difficult to understand the community benefits analysis. First, it's not clear why it would have to be more of an incentive than State Density Bonus law. It would seem that perhaps some developers might prefer the additional FAR and some might prefer to follow the State Density Bonus law, depending upon the particular project. It is also hard to understand how a developer used the State Density Bonus law in nearby Los Altos at the Marie Callender site and included 17 **very-low** income rentals in the project. This type of concession from the developer would appear to be far higher than the \$15 (or even \$20) per bonus square foot being proposed here. Mountain View could perhaps learn more from nearby jurisdictions how the State Density Bonus law has been effective in creating below-market rate units.

We urge the Council to put stronger teeth in strategies for ensuring that affordable housing will be built as the El Camino corridor is revitalized. There are many that could be included to ensure that affordable housing actually would be built. It is critical to include these in the ECR PP itself in order to avert potential legal obstacles to our vision of reasonable affordable housing requirements.

Thank you for considering our input.

Sincerely,

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

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