



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

September 15, 2014

Chairman Cox and Members of the Environmental Planning Commission
City of Mountain View
500 Castro Street
Mountain View 94041

Re: Environmental Planning Commission Meeting, September 17
Agenda Item 5.1 - Study Session – San Antonio Precise Plan

Dear Chairman Cox and Members of the EPC:

The LWV would like to offer some initial comments on the public draft of the San Antonio Precise Plan (SAPP). We are pleased to see that the plan includes phased office development in order to ensure that housing is built in the area. We are also pleased to see that affordable housing is prioritized as a community benefit. But we do not see much housing affordable to those with lower incomes actually being built under the present SAPP.

We are very concerned that despite affordable housing being prioritized as a community benefit, the value of ~\$325,000 for a 1.85 FAR project on a 1-acre site seems to be an extremely low value in exchange for the development rights the developer is receiving for such an increase in FAR. \$325,000, even if leveraged by the City, would not even cover the cost of building 2 housing units affordable to those at incomes at less than 50% area median income.

We are also concerned that many developers may not opt for the higher FAR's allowed in Tier 1, as the "base" FAR's and building heights are fairly high. As a result, developers may not be providing much in the way of community benefits at all. In addition, we support the SAPP's strategies regarding the need for a public school in the area, but it is likely that the pressure to build a school here may make this a higher priority than affordable housing in terms of community benefits. We think both a school and affordable housing need to be included in the area.

We would like to see various levels of affordable housing built into the strategies. Just as further office entitlements are contingent upon housing being built, a certain percentage of units affordable to those at less than 50% area median income should have to be built as part of each phase of housing approved, before additional market-rate units can be entitled. This is especially important in the SAPP area, where there are now, and will be even more in the future, so many low-wage workers and because the housing is near good public transit.

The Diridon Station Area Plan recently unanimously approved in San Jose states that "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..." The implementation tools are suggested, but the details are still to be worked out. We

encourage the City to adopt a similar target for affordable housing in all the Precise Plans being adopted and to put some teeth into the implementation.

Mountain View has been allowing developers to proceed ahead of rezonings with higher densities and FAR's than currently allowed. Other cities have asked for some "value recapture" with upzonings, based upon the increase in the value of the land created by rezoning. This value is typically much higher than the \$325,000 than the Precise Plan team's feasibility analysis specified. Some cities have been more pro-active in seeking development agreements in order to get affordable housing units built. We encourage Mountain View to be pro-active with strategies to provide housing affordable to those at the lower income levels who are being forced to leave the City due to rapidly increasing rents.

Having just gone through the Housing Element process, we know you are well aware that the City does not expect to provide anywhere near its fair share/RHNA allocation for those with incomes at less than 50% area median income. The RHNA allocation for new housing units at the lower income levels is 1,306 units, and the Housing Element estimates that possibly 270 will be built. Clearly, there is an enormous need for more housing for those with lower incomes, especially if Mountain View wants to continue to be a city that prides itself on its diversity.

We would encourage the City to postpone adopting this Precise Plan until more robust mechanisms are in place for ensuring that affordable housing is built, before entitlements are granted to the developers who are eager to move forward with market-rate (luxury) housing and office space.

Thank you for considering our input.

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

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