



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

September 13, 2015

Mayor McAlister and Members of the City Council  
City of Mountain View  
500 Castro Street  
Mountain View, CA 94041

Re: Study Session September 15<sup>th</sup> re Companion Unit Regulations

Dear Mayor McAlister and Members of the City Council:

The LWV supports actions that provide affordable housing for all Californians. Based on this position, we support consideration of liberalizing companion unit regulations so that these units might provide more affordable housing. We think the fact that only 11 companion units have been built in Mountain View since 2000 indicates that a review of these regulations is important in order to see if more affordable housing might be achieved by amending the regulations.

We commend the staff report for its thorough analysis, including much information about the companion unit regulations in nearby communities. We agree with staff that probably many of the regulations need further research before Council makes its final decision regarding amending this ordinance.

Our main concern with the staff recommendation is the analysis regarding rent-restricted units. A number of jurisdictions require that such second units are occupied either by family members or by a lower income tenant. We think that it should be relatively easy for the City to ask the administrative agency that is enforcing the BMR program to enforce any restrictions on rent-restricted units. We also think that additional incentives, such as reduced parking requirements or total waiver of park fees, should be considered as a way to encourage these rent-restricted second units.

We also note that many cities do not have as restrictive a minimum lot size. Redwood City, for example, simply states that the minimum lot size is the same as the zoning district. Some members of the EPC were interested in this issue and as a result staff has prepared the summary on page 6 of the Staff Report showing how many parcels might qualify for second units depending upon the minimum lot size requirement. (We also want to point out that Los Altos appears to be the outlier in requiring 150% over lot size, but Los Altos is planning to review its second unit ordinance in the near future to reevaluate this.)

Some members of the EPC questioned whether requiring the standard setbacks, lot coverage, height limits, location of the unit, etc. would be sufficient to ensure that neighborhood character is preserved and that minimum lot size is not really as critical; we would like further discussion of this point as we think it might be sufficient to depend upon the existing standards being followed.

For second units that are not rent-restricted, we think that reducing park fees would be an incentive worth considering if the City wants to encourage more companion units.

Thank you for considering our input.

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

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