



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

October 17, 2015

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

Re: Study Session, October 19, 2015 – Consideration of Rent Relief Options

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 measures that protect tenants. We support many of the options staff has presented in its very comprehensive report. However, we need to point out that the LWV does not have a position on rent stabilization or just cause eviction, as we have not studied these issues and come to a consensus. Thus, our comments are limited to those options which our organization can endorse. In addition, some of our comments are those that are drawn based on the information provided in the staff report, which we believe draws logical conclusions.

For example, as we stated earlier, we think working with CSA to expand their one-time rental assistance program, as discussed in the staff report, could be helpful. Another quick step would be to change the preferences for below-market-rate units and subsidized units, giving displaced tenants top priority. The staff report points out that there are long wait lists, but if displaced tenants are given top priority on the current wait lists and also given preference for BMRs and the new affordable housing developments in the pipeline, this could help some of those being displaced by escalating rents. Staff expressed some concern regarding the equity of such a priority program, but the LWV has talked with a major nonprofit housing developer which endorses such a priority.

Looking specifically at practices recommended in the FRPP, we recommend that it be **mandatory to offer** all tenants one-year leases when signing a new lease and at renewal. We believe that Mountain View should build upon the Palo Alto model, but strengthen it. The staff's discussion of the "Right to Lease" appears to present this option as a good step, although, once again, it is not a panacea. We also recommend that it be **mandatory** that landlords give 90-day notices for rent increases and notices to terminate, allowing tenants to leave with 30 days' notice during times of low vacancy rates (perhaps under 5%).

We think the City should require landlords to pay a rental registration fee to the City. This fee could be used to fund staff who will keep records of rent increases, to fund additional mediation staff, etc.

Under California law, if a lease is negotiated in Spanish, for example, then the lease is required to be in Spanish. We suggest a **BOLDFACE** notice at the beginning of the lease/rental agreement in the language of the tenant, should the tenant not speak or read English easily, advising the tenant that the lease will be provided in the preferred language of the tenant. Similarly, the “Right to Lease” should be in **BOLDFACE** in the tenant’s preferred language at the beginning of the lease. In addition, we recommend that along with the lease, the tenant be provided with a list of the tenant’s legal rights, including laws re return of security deposit, right of habitability, etc., again in the tenant’s preferred language. These are all relatively inexpensive accommodations that can help assure that the tenants understand their lease obligations and rights.

We would also like landlords to make it clear to tenants that additional tenants can be added to the lease, within legal occupancy limits.

We recommend raising/modifying the Rental Housing Impact Fees and ownership in-lieu fees to require developers to pay fees equivalent to whatever is the current actual cost of providing 10% BMRs on site as part of the development. Thus, the fees will be fluid, change with changing costs. And if the City is successful in negotiating units rather than fees, some affordable units will be built sooner. (We also recommend raising the office linkage fees, but this is a longer-term solution.)

We recommend giving City staff the authority to negotiate to purchase potential affordable housing sites, including rental developments that are for sale, similar to the authority recently provided to staff regarding purchase of parkland.

We also support liberalizing the relocation assistance ordinance, particularly by expanding eligibility and providing earlier notice to those in complexes that are to be redeveloped.

We have further suggestions, but generally think that unless many of the suggested practices in the FRPP are made **mandatory** rather than voluntary, very little will be accomplished. We do not want to see significant City resources put into proceeding with any of these practices unless we see some of them made mandatory and also know whether they have been successful in other cities where they have already been tried.

Thanks you for considering our input. We look forward to more discussion and information being presented on Monday night.

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

Cc: Dan Rich  
Randy Tsuda  
Linda Lauzze  
Vera Gil  
Regina Adams