

## 7/06/2007 Vodovich Project at 950 San Antonio Road LWV Letter re Plans for Mixed-Use Development

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
of the Los Altos-Mountain View Area  
97 Hillview Avenue, Los Altos, CA 94022  
July 6, 2007

Chair Kitty Uhlir and Members of the Planning Commission:

The League of Women Voters of the Los Altos-Mountain View Area supports a balance of housing choices, including retention of rental housing as opposed to conversions to condominiums, and housing that encourages each community to provide its fair share of housing as determined by our regional plan.

With regard to these positions and the 950 San Antonio Road development, we have already written to the Architecture and Site Review Committee expressing our two main concerns. We are making these comments again, because we have not yet seen a new plan from the developer regarding his proposal for below market rate ("BMR") units.

Initially, because of the Los Altos condo conversion ordinance, staff is requesting that the four vacant rental units at Los Altos Gardens, which the developer plans to demolish, be replaced with rental units in the new development. We agree with staff's recommendation. We also understand that the developer has proposed coming to an agreement with the residents of Los Altos Gardens. The LWV would like to see these tenants' interests protected, and, in particular, very-low and low-income tenants should be protected. Besides the developer's protecting current tenants by agreeing not to raise rents more than the lesser of 5% or CPI, (which we understood to be his proposal) some of the current rentals could be restricted as very-low income rentals. The exact number of these could be based upon the number of current residents who would qualify as very+low income households. These very-low income units must be restricted for 30

years, thereby protecting the current residents and also ensuring that there are affordable units in the long-term future. Depending upon how many current Los Altos Gardens residents qualify as very-low income, BMR restrictions could be placed, in addition, on the new rental units to be built. Again, all BMR rental units should be restricted as very-low income units.

We do not believe that any of the rental units should be restricted as either moderate-income or low-income units. Current rents are actually the same or lower than restricted low-income rents, and significantly less than restricted moderate-income rents. In fact, typically BMR programs do not include moderate-income rentals, because restricted moderate income rents are generally higher than market rents so these units do not add any affordability for the City. Attached is a chart which illustrates this conclusion. A restricted low-income rent for a one-bedroom unit would be \$1,592 minus \$31 for utility allowance, or \$1,561. This is more than what we think current residents are paying. Similarly, restricted moderate-income rent for a one-bedroom would be \$2,388 minus \$31 or \$2,357, far more than what current residents are paying and far more than typical market rate rents in the area. By making some of the current units restricted very-low income units and agreeing not to raise the rents significantly for all the current tenants, we believe all current tenants would be adequately protected.

Our second concern is that the City needs to have long-term BMR units and that the developer should fulfill his FULL BMR responsibility. This means that he should demonstrate that his economic burden in terms of providing BMR units is comparable to that of other developments within the City. We would like to see some of the new units as BMR units. With condos, we believe the appropriate level to target is moderate income. Since the 950 San Antonio Road development borders the mixed use/affordable housing overlay district but does not lie within it, the flexibility of the BMR ordinance allows the City to consider a variety of ways to meet the BMR requirements. There could be a mix of rental and ownership BMR units, as well as a mix of BMR units in the new development and at Los Altos Gardens. For example, 4 moderate-income condos plus 6 very-low income rentals (whether all in Los Altos Gardens or some there and some in the new development) might be a

reasonable proposal.

Sincerely, Susan Russell Co-Chair, Affordable Housing  
Committee League of Women Voters of Los Altos/Mountain View  
Area Cc: James Walgren

## 07/06/2007 100 First Street Project LWV Letter re Plans for Mixed-Use Development

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

July 6, 2007

Chair Megan Satterlee and Members of the Architecture and Site  
Review Committee:

Re: 100 First Street Project/July 18, 2007

The LWV of the Los Altos/Mtn. View Area has advocated consistently in previous communications that the City of Los Altos modify its below market rate ("BMR") housing program to distinguish between home ownership units and rental units. We have learned after several years of studying BMR programs that the most successful BMR programs in the Bay area target home ownership units to households with incomes at moderate-income levels (80 + 120% area median income (AMI)) and rental units to those with very-low-incomes (50% or less of AMI). (AMI for a family of four is \$105,500).

Regarding the "post office" site, where 20 ownership condos are proposed, we recommend that the Planning Commission and City Council request that 15% of the units (3 units) be targeted to be affordable to households at moderate income levels. Instead of setting the sales price so that a household at 120% of AMI can afford to purchase the unit, as the present Los Altos program does, we recommend setting the sales price so that a household at 90 or 100% of AMI can afford to buy the unit. This would make the units affordable to more households within the moderate income range and would mirror BMR programs in other nearby communities.

We also recommend other changes in the present BMR agreements that should make the BMR program more appealing to buyers. They reflect what has been done in successful programs in Sunnyvale and Palo Alto. Examples include assuming a 5% or lower down-payment, rather than the 10% down that the City now mandates in setting the purchase price, and specifying that only 30% of a household's income is used for affordable housing costs. Staff has indicated that some of these changes to the program should be made going forward.

We commend the City for recognizing the distinction between rental and ownership housing in terms of targeting appropriate AMI at the 420-426 Tyndall Street project. Specifying that the BMR unit be low-income if a rental, but moderate-income if ownership is helpful. Actually, we believe that rental units should be very-low-income in order to be significantly below market-rate rents. Again, this is the structure that successful BMR programs nearby follow. We note that requiring 15% of the units to be marketed as moderate income rather than 10% as low or very-low, along with the other recommendations we are making, should not impact the developer's bottom line, but these recommendations should make the BMR program more successful. We also recommend, as we have earlier, that the unit mix of BMR's reflect the total unit mix of the project.

Sincerely,

Susan Russell Co-Chair, Affordable Housing Committee League of Women Voters of Los Altos/Mountain View Area Cc: James Walgren, David Kornfield

[07/06/2007 Habitat for Humanity ProposalLWV Letter in support of Habitat for Humanity Proposal](#)

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
of the Los Altos-Mountain View Area,  
97 Hillview Avenue, Los Altos, CA 94022  
July 6, 2007

Mayor Laura Macias and Members of the City Council:

The League of Women Voters of the Los Altos/Mountain View Area commends the Council on its support of the conceptual residential development plan presented by Habitat for Humanity for the Wagon Wheel site. Habitat is one of the few agencies able to provide home ownership affordable to very-low-income families.

Mountain View has recently used its affordable housing funds to develop housing for very-low-income single persons, for very-low-income seniors, and now, with the Evelyn Avenue development, for very-low-income families. Thus, we see the Habitat proposal as one that will provide additional diversity of affordable housing in the City. We had some concern that a decision to proceed with the Habitat project would mean that the Evelyn Avenue development would be sidetracked, but we are pleased that the Council believes that the staff should be able to keep the Evelyn Avenue project moving along, and still find a way for the Habitat site to be purchased in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Donna Yobs 1157 Karen Way, Mountain View, CA 94040 Co-Chair,  
Housing Committee League of Women Voters of Los Altos/Mountain  
View Area Cc: Kevin Duggan, Elaine Costello

[07/06/2007 Mayfield Mall Development](#)  
[LWV Letter in Support of Toll Brothers Proposal](#)

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

July 6, 2007

Mayor Laura Macias and Members of the City Council:

The League of Women Voters of the Los Altos/Mountain View Area has consistently supported high-density housing for the Mayfield Mall site. Higher residential densities near public transportation, or smart growth, has been encouraged by the League for many years.

The present plan is the result of a lengthy process, including many neighborhood meetings, Council and Environmental Planning Commission meetings, and numerous studies by outside consultants. Toll Brothers has made numerous changes, which should satisfy most of the neighborhood concerns. We think that the present Toll Brothers proposal of single-family homes along the edge of the site provides appropriate transition to the Monta Loma neighborhood.

We hope the Council will recommend proceeding with the most recent "Vision for Mayfield". This housing is clearly needed by the community and this project is an excellent example of smart growth.

Sincerely,

Donna Yobs  
1157 Karen Way,  
Mountain View, CA 94040  
Co-Chair, Housing Committee  
League of Women Voters of Los Altos/Mountain View Area  
Cc: Kevin Duggan, Elaine Costello