



February 10, 2018

Palo Alto Planning and Transportation Commission
250 Hamilton Ave.
Palo Alto, CA 94301

Dear Chair Lauing and Commissioners,

Re: February 14, 2018, Agenda Item No. 4: Affordable Housing Combining District Draft Ordinance

The League of Women Voters of Palo Alto (LWVPA) supports efforts by the City to increase the supply of housing for all, particularly for those with lower incomes.

The Affordable Housing Combining District Draft Ordinance will go a long way to increase the supply of affordable housing in Palo Alto and LWVPA urges you to recommend its adoption to the City Council. However, in the interest of ensuring more affordable housing opportunities and units, we also urge you to consider the following changes to this draft ordinance.

- Expand the scope of the combining district to include the Research Park and General Manufacturing Districts.
- Include language that allows some flexibility regarding the one-half mile distance from the transit corridors. The language, "major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor," is too limiting and should be broader in scope.
- Allow the Planning Director to approve increases in the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and height where appropriate, particularly in the areas around University Avenue and California Avenue.
- Allow the Planning Director to waive the retail requirements in all districts. Retail usually requires more parking which is expensive to provide. Moreover, the presence of retail in an affordable housing project severely complicates the funding opportunities. Thus, a retail requirement may make an affordable housing project infeasible, even with benefits of the combining district.

For the last two bullets, LWVPA believes that it is important to streamline the entitlement process. To do so, the Planning Director, not the City Council, should have the authority to approve increases in FAR and height and to waive retail requirements.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bonnie Packer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bonnie Packer
President, League of Women Voters of Palo Alto