



November 29, 2022

Mayor Enander and Members of the City Council  
City of Los Altos  
1 N. San Antonio Road  
Los Altos, CA 94022

Re: Council Study Session – Sixth Cycle Draft Housing Element, November 29th

Dear Mayor Enander and Members of the City Council:

The League is pleased to see that HCD's comment letter to Los Altos indicates that the City should be able to adopt a compliant Housing Element. We are not very concerned with the site inventory because many sites such as Rancho Shopping Center, sites along San Antonio Road and El Camino Real will automatically be up zoned as a result of AB 2011. Therefore, even if Foothill Crossing, for example, is removed from the list, we believe the sites listed should be sufficient.

In addition, we believe that the City can and should easily comply with the requests from HCD that our SB 9, ADU and other ordinances should be rewritten so as to comply with State law. We believe these updates can be accomplished very quickly.

However, we acknowledge that some other concerns expressed by HCD have merit and want to focus on those issues. We agree with the Staff recommendation that in every instance where HCD wants programs to be completed earlier, the City should commit to earlier timeframes, Programs 1.C, 1.D, amongst others. Committing to an earlier deadline is especially critical with Program 3.A, because until a Downtown parking plan is approved it will be difficult to proceed with Program 1.H, designating a downtown parking lot as an affordable housing site. The RFP for housing on a downtown parking plaza is planned for the end of year 2023, but the downtown parking needs must be addressed before such an RFP is realistic. We also agree with HCD that parking standards throughout the City need to be reviewed and updated.

With respect to Programs 1.B and 3.B, HCD asks that the Housing Element commit to a specific height increase. We suggest 5 stories as the base for the CT district and 3 in the mixed-use zones.

Regarding Program 3.H, we hope the City will adopt a very speedy appeal process so that the design review process is truly expedited. We also suggest that the City set specific timelines for the entitlement process and monitor these timelines on an annual basis to make adjustments as necessary. In addition, we urge Staff to meet annually with developers to solicit input on how the streamlining process is working. We also agree with HCD that the third-party independent architect review be dropped.

Thank you for your consideration,

(Please send any questions about this email to [housing@lwvlamv.org](mailto:housing@lwvlamv.org))

Karin Bricker, President LWV of Los Altos/Mountain View Area

Cc: Gabe Engeland.      Nick Zornes      Angel Rodriguez



November 29, 2022

Dear Mayor Enander and Councilmembers,

The letter from HCD responding to our city's draft Housing Element was thorough. It recognized that we are working toward creating an environment that encourages much-needed housing. Mr. Zornes indicated clearly that steps need to be taken in the next iteration of the Housing Element. We would like to underscore some of his points.

Regarding parking requirements (Program 3.A) -

- We agree that there should be a specific commitment included in Program 3.A to study and update parking requirements throughout the city.
- The deadline for the parking amendments for downtown needs to be moved up to the end of 2024, if not sooner. The RFP for housing on the parking plaza (Program 1.H) has a deadline of fourth quarter 2023, but that RFP cannot be done until the parking is evaluated. We've seen how long it takes to permit affordable housing. If the permits for the parking plaza housing are to be issued in the planning period, the downtown parking needs to be addressed quickly.

Regarding zoning (Program 3.B) -

- Five stories should be the height limit through the El Camino Real corridor, for both CT and CN zoned areas.
- Projects with less than five units, not including density bonus units, should be approved administratively. Smaller projects (for example, a project on Lyell) do not need extensive review processes.

Regarding the appeals process for projects (Program 3.H) -

- We support Program 3.H, and want to strictly circumscribe the Council's power to appeal or deny projects. Our process should be quick: ten days to file the appeal, and then a hearing at the next Council meeting, taking into account our noticing requirements. Both Planning Commission denials and appeals of approvals should have to include the objective standard(s) the project purportedly violates. The Council should not be able to uphold or deny an appeal for reasons other than the subject of the appeal, nor should the Council be allowed to impose conditions unrelated to the subject of the appeal of an approved project. The Council should be able to impose conditions if it reverses a denial, but only the normal conditions always imposed, plus conditions related to the appeal.

Regarding alternative transportation (Program 4.J) -  
HCD is asking for specific projects to be included. We suggest

- A protected bike lane on El Camino. The new residents of this area, as well as existing cyclists, need a safe way to travel by bike. This proposal is already in the Complete Streets plan.
- A protected bike lane on San Antonio at downtown, also already included in the Complete Streets plan.
- Better pedestrian crossings at San Antonio & Main Street. The new residents of the former OA area along San Antonio will need to be able to cross San Antonio safely on foot.
- Fixing the circulation at Loyola Corners. Given that the Clock Tower building in Loyola Corners could be redeveloped for housing units, and other housing units could be built at Loyola Corners, the circulation needs to be fixed. As residents have been mentioning for years, the traffic patterns in and around Loyola Corners are counter-intuitive and dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Working with Caltrans to fix the dangerous El Camino/San Antonio intersection for pedestrians and cyclists.

We strongly support a review of the City's SB 9 and ADU ordinances for compliance with State law. We also strongly support an analysis of the average time a project takes to review and what results in delays.

We look forward to reading the final and approved Element. Most importantly, we look forward to more housing and more neighbors in our vibrant community.

Respectfully,  
The Los Altos Affordable Housing Alliance Steering Committee