

Sept. 8, 2023

Dear Council Members,

Last night the PC voted 4-1 to recommend that Council approve the zoning ordinance amendments to Chapter 14.40 of the Los Altos Municipal Code. The amendments approved by the PC were proposed by staff to ensure that the City of Los Altos will comply with its 6th Cycle Housing Element Update.

Since only one council member attended last night and meeting minutes often do not capture the essence of discussions, I wanted to email the rationale for my “no” vote.

First, I support the programs of the 6th Cycle Housing Element with the objective of providing more housing development opportunities within Los Altos. Concerning the proposed amendments of Chapter 14.40 (the CN zone), **I am concerned with the change that permits residential only developments.** CN stands for *commercial neighborhood* and the CN districts within the City currently offer a mix of commercial uses comprised of retail and service.

Some of the proposed amendments in Chapter 14.40 address the following programs from the 6th Cycle Housing Element:

Program 3B: Modify Building Heights in mixed-use zoning districts.

*(...) The City will then evaluate and update the allowed heights in the commercial neighborhood (CN) District at minimum allowing an additional 10 feet and one story **to maintain first floor commercial uses and accommodate residential uses on upper floors to be provided as mixed-use developments.***

Program 3C: Remove the floor-to-area (FAR) restriction at Rancho Shopping Center and the Woodland Plaza.

*(...) The City will create new development standards **reflective of a mixed-use zone that requires both commercial and residential uses for the Rancho Shopping Center and the Woodland Plaza properties.***

Rancho Shopping Center and the Woodland Plaza (Lucky) are very large lots compared to other CN parcels. It is unknown to me why a prior council placed a 35% FAR on these parcels but clearly the council in 1989 recognized these two parcels as different from other CN parcels.

Permitting residential only developments on these two very large parcels could obliterate all commercial uses within the district and could violate Programs 3B and 3C of our Housing Element, which state that the City will maintain mixed use with first floor commercial uses.

Finally, I am requesting that the City Council authorize the Planning Commission to study other ordinances, such as those concerning noise, light, fencing, and landscape/trees to ensure those ordinances are appropriate for the much more intensive developments that will now be allowed (pending the changes).



Kate Disney

