

THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF PALO ALTO



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

April 11, 2012

Dear Chair Martinez and Commissioners,

The League of Women Voters of Palo Alto has reviewed the latest draft of the Housing Element that is before you tonight. As we have said previously in our testimony before you, we approve most of the proposed new housing element.

Goal H1 supports a major League housing goal: “maintain the quality and vitality of both the immediate and larger neighborhoods” and Goal H2 and its policies and programs as we advocate a diverse housing supply, with emphasis on economic diversity. As it is difficult to build affordable units, it is appropriate to place special attention to mechanisms that will support affordable housing. We are glad to see the variety of programs to support Goal H2 and to note that the possibility of exceeding the 50-foot height limit is still included. Our land shortage requires such measures. We also approve Goal H3 with its measures to strengthen our BMR program and Goal H4 emphasizing continued efforts against housing discrimination.

We do have some serious concerns:

1. We still believe that the vision statement of a Housing Element should clearly mention that the community seeks to provide an adequate supply of diverse housing opportunities.
2. Not only has the goal that the city meets its fair share of the regional housing need not been included, it is not now included in even a policy or program. It is vaguely mentioned in program H2.2.1 that perhaps some incentives might help contribute to the city’s fair share. The League recommends a stronger statement.
3. We also believe that it is necessary to encourage an increase in supply of housing by instituting minimum density requirements for multiple family zones.

The LWV of Palo Alto believes that it is important to have a valid Housing Element. Without an approved housing element it will be difficult to set appropriate controls on development, and the state could limit funds. We urge you to move the Housing Element forward quickly.

Sincerely,

Mary Alice Thornton, President
LWV of Palo Alto