

Re: Agenda Item 7: Affordable Housing Combining District Ordinance, City Council Meeting April 9

April 6, 2018

Dear Mayor Kniss and Council Members:

The PAN Zoning committee proposed and the members of PAN voted yesterday to share with Council PAN's deep reservations about the Affordable Housing Combining District as currently proposed. We urge the Council to consider the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations for the following reasons:

We favor ***housing first for our most vulnerable residents*** and therefore urge that any sweeping ordinances of this magnitude be limited to true BMR housing (that is, incomes of 60% AMI) rather than the 120% AMI in the proposed ordinance. Our primary concern is the sophistry concerning the use of the term "Affordable Housing." For-profit developers should not enjoy the same bonuses and benefits as non-profits like Palo Alto Housing. The public should not be subsidizing developer profits.

Any new housing should get off on the right foot with neighborhoods and not pit neighbors against neighbors due to inadequate parking. The half-parking space per unit or bedroom proposed in the ordinance, with the Director of Planning having the discretion to reduce this yet further, will create serious neighborhood parking problems. As there is no way to monitor or enforce who owns a car and where they park it (except in RPP zones), assuming that people in apartment buildings don't own cars or that it's okay to park them down the street in residential neighborhoods is unreasonable. Funding for the additional parking spaces to insure an adequately parked property could come from the City's fund of in lieu development fees so as not to jeopardize the ability of organizations like PAH to qualify for funds and grants where funding to build adequate parking is not covered.

Many of us remember when there were meaningful bus routes throughout the city, bus routes that connected the neighborhoods to ECR, California Avenue and downtown. This was when Palo Alto had its own transit service, before VTA took over the operations and then shut the buses down one by one. There is no data to support that people who live in apartments will ride the bus and not own cars. It is misleading to claim that ECR and Cal Ave are transit rich when frankly there is only one significant public bus route and not enough trains to meet peak hour demand. It is simply wishful thinking to believe that people will not own cars if there is no parking available.

Our zoning committee has studied the recommendations of the Ad Hoc committee and believe its recommendations to council are reasonable and prudent. We urge you to accept those recommendations as an excellent compromise and vote against the AHCD zone as currently proposed.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Becky Sanders
Sheri Furman
Co-Chairs
Palo Alto Neighborhoods