

TO: NVCAP@cityofpaloalto.org  
CC: Jonathan Lait, Ed Shikada

RE: Perkins and Will Proposals

Dear NVCAP Working Group Members:

Thank you, Working Group Members, for volunteering your time and talents to the task of envisioning the future of north Ventura.

At its February meeting, PAN members voted unanimously to send a letter to you and to copy City staff outlining our concerns about the process and with the three Perkins and Will proposals.

PAN's primary concern is that none of the three options offered by the City's consultants address the housing problem as defined in the Housing Element of the Comp Plan. We understand that the three proposals were as much of a surprise to many of you as they were to us and other members of the community who are watching the process. As you well know, what the city desperately needs is below-market-rate housing, **that is**, housing at 80 percent of area median income and below. We need housing for teachers, first responders, service workers, people on fixed income and people who work for the city. None of the proposals target the City's **below-market-rate** housing needs or reflect your best efforts input at the meetings.

The proposals actually make the housing shortage worse because the **additional** commercial space **will exacerbate** the jobs-housing imbalance that we are trying to address in the first place. The property owner has indicated it cannot afford to build housing-only on the site. The proposals appear to solve the needs and interests of the owner and not the City and do not reflect the majority of the Working Group's intent as well.

A second concern is the net negative impact these proposals will have on Ventura and Mayfield. The most drastic of the proposals would essentially insert 1/10th of the city's population into one tiny neighborhood. And none of the proposals provide adequate parkland to serve the new neighbors in the plan area. Nor do the plans offer any amenities for the neighborhoods impacted. The density of all three proposals goes well beyond the current zoning of RM-30 and well beyond what is called for in the Comp Plan. The density singles out one neighborhood, the most modest neighborhood, the most socially and economically diverse, for density equal to Manhattan. Why?

A third concern is the failure to provide data requested from the staff. There have been repeated calls by members of the working group and the community for more data since the inception of the working group. An Existing Conditions Report was requested but never provided, and dozens of questions and suggestions ignored, apparently because the staff didn't have time to address the concerns of or to pull together the needed reports for the group the City appointed. How can you expect the working group to make decisions without having this valuable data?

A fourth and final concern is that the City has wasted money on consultants who have delivered proposals that have nothing to do with the wishes of the majority of the working group. One wonders where the consultants, 8 of whom were being paid to attend the last NVCAP meeting, found their ideas. They certainly didn't come from the working group meetings.

PAN recommends rejecting all three proposals and going back to the drawing board to look for creative and aggressive solutions to putting the type of housing we need at the site.

Here is just one such alternative proposal. What if we could build 400 below-market-rate housing units in Palo Alto at zero cost to residents? What if the City, working with the appropriate agencies, purchased the 12.38 acre Fry's site, through eminent domain if necessary, and built approximately 400 below-market units on it to replace the offices there now. Just \$6 million a year from the proposed business tax revenue would be enough to finance this, per one estimate that our volunteers have looked at. The City has used eminent domain before and to build housing!

This is the type of innovative idea we believe the City should be looking at to build the housing we need.

Thank you.

Sheri Furman  
Becky Sanders  
Co-Chairs  
Palo Alto Neighborhoods