



January 11, 2022

Re: Housing Element Community Workshop #1

To Laura Simpson, Planning Department, and Lisa Wise Consulting:

While the Housing Element will address several aspects of land management including identifying appropriate sites for development and upzoning, and how to streamline the ADU process, one priority we'd like to highlight is how to create more affordable housing. We believe that **affordable housing** should be more plentiful and easier to build in our city, and we would like for Housing Element programs to address this need.

**#1 Designate a city-owned parcel in the Downtown area for an affordable housing development**

In the Downtown Vision that was adopted in 2017, a downtown parking plaza was designated for affordable housing. Currently, the city's contribution to any future affordable development would be land and/or waived fees. One item to include in the Housing Element is Identifying and assessing how feasible a city-owned parcel in the downtown area could be used for affordable housing. A feasibility study might also mean committing to a downtown parking study since any development would be in place of parking spaces. Taking it one step further, we would love to see a city-owned parcel be designated for affordable housing.

**#2 Create an affordable housing fund**

Los Altos should create an affordable housing fund, and this fund would be created through commercial linkage and residential linkage fees (remodels where the addition exceeds, say, 2500 square feet). Every other city is able to fund affordable housing using money collected in this way. Los Altos cannot attract non-profit affordable housing developers to create affordable housing unless we have something to contribute. For example, a recent analysis of city contributions to affordable housing projects in our region showed the median to be \$166k per unit.

**#3 Waive development fees for affordable housing projects**

Development fees should be waived for affordable housing projects, in line with what other cities have established. In Mountain View, all park fees are waived for affordable projects. Parking requirements should also be reassessed for all-affordable projects. There are studies which show that residents in all-affordable developments have fewer cars.

**#4 Make impact fees proportional to the unit size**

A 500 square foot studio should not have the same impact fee as a 2500 square foot condo. We should be incentivizing smaller housing unit types which are more affordable by design.

#### **#4 Incentivize diverse housing types**

Lastly, in order to create more affordable housing, we would like the Housing Element to legalize and incentivize smaller housing types in residential neighborhoods. SB 9 has already legalized duplexes, but we would also like to see a program that allows our neighborhoods to have many housing types, for example cottage courts, courtyard buildings, and triplexes. Los Altos is a town of large lots, so it has space for more housing types. More housing types create housing opportunities across a wider spectrum of affordability.

#### **#5 Create opportunities for faith institutions to utilize excess land for housing**

Some churches in our community may have land that could be used for temporary or permanent housing. LifeMoves created a 100-unit, interim housing complex with services on a roughly 1 acre lot in Mountain View. Churches in our community might be willing to do this on a smaller scale, or churches might have teachers or staff that they need to house.

We appreciate how difficult it is to create a Housing Element. As residents of the city, we want to see a specific focus on how the city can encourage the development of affordable housing.

Respectfully,

The Los Altos Affordable Housing Alliance

**Los Altos Affordable Housing Alliance**

*Committed to educating and inspiring the Los Altos community to build housing that is affordable for those who live and work in Los Altos*

<https://losaltosaffordablehousing.org/>