

**From:** [Mary Beth Train](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Subject:** Housing Element Goals, Policies, and Programs  
**Date:** Sunday, August 21, 2022 5:25:39 PM

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In short, I would like to see more housing built in Palo Alto, with units in various sizes and types. I would like more specific language for housing on city-owned property and faith-based organizations. I support greater density on El Camino, Alma, San Antonio, the southern parts of Middlefield, as well as ADU's. Various types of housing can exist together, such as in the Downtown neighborhood.

I encourage the adoption of the suggestions from Palo Alto Forward. I am a 45-year resident of Palo Alto, first living in an Eichler on Middlefield and now at Channing House. Thank you! -- Mary Beth

**Mary Beth Train - Home office phone 650-324-7346 \*voice only, not text\***  
**-[mbt3305@yahoo.com](mailto:mbt3305@yahoo.com)**

**From:** [Hamilton Hitchings](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Cc:** [Lait, Jonathan](#); [HeUpdate](#)  
**Subject:** Input to Housing Element Review by City Council Monday Aug 21, 2022  
**Date:** Sunday, August 21, 2022 3:49:53 PM

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Dear City Council and Jonathan Lait,

Although I was a member of the HEWG below are my personal additional suggestions for the council to consider during the Housing Element Program Review on Monday night:

\* Do we really need to revise the municipal code to mirror everything that's in state law or is this just a safeguard in case state law gets overturned. E.g. program 1.3.

\* In program 1.4 in the HEWG we only discussed and agreed to build housing over city parking lots but this has since been expanded to all city-owned parcels, which I think is too much for this cycle. Further, there is no requirement for the minimum percentage of units that are affordable, which should be at least "primarily" or ideally 100% affordable housing. We should not be using public lands for market rate housing.

\* Program 1.6 items C and D: Should limit Stanford El Camino sites to 50' and for the additional proposed upzoning beyond that require additional affordable housing of 20% or ideally 25% overall. Many of Stanford's staff need affordable housing to live in Palo Alto. In their participation in the housing element, Stanford representatives have strongly advocated for upzoning but strongly resisted any additional requirements for affordable housing in exchange.

\* Program 1.6 item E: For Stanford Transit Center PC, require explicit language that states all or a majority to be used for affordable housing.

\* Program 1.6 F & G: Put more teeth into Stanford building a housing pipeline for the next housing cycle such as being required to provide a certain percentage of our overall RHNA number, e.g. 20%.

**\* Add a program to rezone at least all housing sites on RHNA Housing Site list so they can only build housing and ground floor retail where required when redeveloped but no office. This will help make our RHNA list more defensible against HCD challenges and increase housing production.**

\* Program 3.3D: I don't think the housing overlay program should be extended to religious institution sites within R-1 districts.

\* Program 3.5 C: if you limit ARB hearings to two, then developer loses their incentive to

follow ARB directives

\* Program 6.3 B, Strengthen language to ensure rezoning sites that allow both housing and office on the same site so it more financial advantageous to build housing instead of office

\* 6.4 A - Safe Parking Program should do background checks to screen out sex offenders and violent convicted felons. This will make the program safer for nearby residents, school children and the other safe parking participants. It will reduce neighborhood opposition and allow greater expansion of the program thus serving more homeless. Despite, what some folks say, homeless car dwelling is not typically deep in residential child-centric areas but instead on el camino and commercial areas so this will bring more homeless into these neighborhoods so safety is a legitimate concern.

Please consider all of the above changes to the Housing Element. Thank you.

Hamilton Hitchings

**From:** [slevy@ccsce.com](mailto:slevy@ccsce.com)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Cc:** [Lait, Jonathan](#); [Wong, Tim](#)  
**Subject:** Housing Element update  
**Date:** Saturday, August 20, 2022 12:25:16 PM

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Dear Mayor Burt and council members,

For the GM/ROLM sites, please ask staff to suggest strong incentives to encourage housing on these sites.

Despite recent council incentive programs, to my knowledge no owner has proposed converting to housing. It is reasonable to expect HCD to look for some substantial changes in current policy on these sites to make them attractive to owners for housing and inclusion in the site inventory.

With regard to city-owned parking lots, I support housing on these sites along with preserving sufficient parking capacity, but I am concerned that requiring mainly BMR units will produce few if any feasible projects and we will lose housing opportunities.

I believe the same applies to 27 University Avenue.

The city has a good PHZ policy that is bringing forth proposals now that include 20% BMR units spread across income groups. I believe apply the PHZ concept to 27 University Avenue can encourage a substantial number of total AND BMR units.

The goal, I believe, is to develop programs/incentives that encourage feasible projects.

Stephen Levy

**From:** [Ruth Robertson](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Subject:** Letter on Agenda Item 5 City Council Meeting August 22  
**Date:** Friday, August 19, 2022 9:01:39 PM

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Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Ruth Robertson and I am a homeowner in Palo Alto for close to 30 years. I am asking that you approve the inclusion of renter protection in the Housing Element.

There are many reasons people choose to rent in Palo Alto besides proximity to employment. I want to add to the list additional reasons that are not often taken into consideration.

One of my adult children is a renter in Palo Alto and chooses to live near us so they can care for my husband and me in our retirement years. By helping renters we can help families take care of one another and stay together. We can help elderly folks live out their years in the community they are familiar with. In addition, we can help many who grew up and went to school here return to the city and the families they love.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ruth Robertson

**From:** [Olga \\*](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Subject:** Public comment on Renter Protection program  
**Date:** Friday, August 19, 2022 6:49:23 PM

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Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Olga Ortmann and I rent an apartment locally. I am writing today to strongly encourage you to support anti-displacement programs like the latest Safe Parking Program site at First Congregational Church and the renter protections included in the Housing Element's Programs. The combination of outrageous rents, insane inflation, and low-paying jobs creates a demoralizing situation where hardworking people are pushed into homelessness because of greed and corruption. It affects all of us bringing down the quality of life even for those who are not at that level yet! And if it is allowed to continue more and more destitute people will be needlessly created on daily basis.

I also want to bring your attention to highly immoral practice pertaining to BMR rentals that should be illegal because it is greatly contributing to housing problems and unfairly enriches the landlords who also collect tax benefits. As market rent dropped dramatically due to covid Tax Credit properties throughout Santa Clara county in Redwood City, Palo Alto, Los Altos, Mountain View, Sunnyvale and Santa Clara shocked thousands of tenants with a 3% hike at the worst possible time in 2021. For 2022 they raised it another 5% on top of the previous increase. When I questioned the management, I was told that it is due to COLA. But COLA was never intended for rent increase calculation, only to take care of retirees! Furthermore, according to published SSA data, it was set at 1.6% for 2020, for 2021 at 1.3%, and for 2022 it is 5.9%. How did they come up with 3% and 5%? Not only the increase was predatory and unjustifiable, but it makes so-called below market rate rent (BMR) units price higher than market rent units, which should never take place by definition! To add insult to the injury, people who lost their income cannot move to bring the rent down and Section 8 is no longer available to newly destitute people. I am aware that other Tax Credit properties located in the same Santa Clara County did not endure the increase, such as those in the city of San Jose. Nobody can explain to me why. I also know that even if HUD came up with the rent increase it is up to the individual property owners to accept it or not. Who and what allows them to do it?

Bottom line - collecting higher than market rent for BMR units should be criminal because the owners not only get unjustifiably high rent but also get tax benefits on top of it! It has to be stopped immediately and the BMR rent revised!

Please do not hesitate to contact me for more info pertaining to the subject!

Sincerely,

Olga Ortmann

**From:** [Cat Sanchez](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Subject:** A letter about next week's agenda items  
**Date:** Friday, August 19, 2022 1:40:45 PM

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Dear Honorable Councilmembers,

My name is Cat Sanchez. I rent an apartment on Curtner Ave by Happy Donuts. I moved there from on-campus housing at Stanford when I got a job after graduating. I lived on campus for 5 years and have been in my apartment for about 6 months. I have considered myself a Palo Alto resident the whole time because I shop and drive and dine in Palo Alto.

I am a really lovely 20-minute bike ride from my office on campus and I really love all the parks my dog and I can go to on the weekends. My area of Palo Alto is very friendly, and I love my neighbors!

I am lucky to be able to afford to live in an apartment, but so many do not have that luxury. They work here, but they cannot afford to live here. Imagine that. But they are important members of our economy and our community. Renter protection keeps all of us in our homes.

Also, the Safe Parking Program site at First Congregational Church is 4. FOUR. Parking spots. How can we deny that? These are people who are already in our community. The concerns being brought up against this are trivial and really speak to a discomfort with having to see how the other half life.

As someone who was housing insecure my entire childhood, who has spent time sleeping in a car, I am very upset that this is even something we are discussing denying. There are many in this community who are one bad month from being homeless themselves. I've seen credible numbers that close to half of everyone in our community are renters at risk of displacement from our community. Four parking spots in a church parking lot is the smallest possible grace we could give someone who but "there but for the grace of God" go we.

Please, please do not give in to the NIMBY sentiments of people who would rather live in a bubble of ignorance at the price of further harming people who are already so "down on their luck." Those are people who cannot understand how impossible it is to climb out of the kind of hole you are in when you live in a car. No one choose that.

In short, please, please approve the Safe Parking site at First Congregational. Please also approve the inclusion of renter protection in the Housing Element Goals, Policies, and Programs. Both of these are exactly what a city government owes its people.

We are here too, and we cannot stay if we are priced out.

Thank you,

**Cat Sanchez, AA, BA, MA**

Assistant Dean for the Office of Community Standards

Pronouns: she/her/hers

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**White Silence is Violence – there are no [White Allies](#)**

**We cannot “cooperate” to fix a system in which we are complicit**

The Muwekma Ohlone people are the Traditional Owners of the land on which I live and work. I offer my gratitude and respect to their Elders past and present.

*Please note: I may not regularly check or respond to email after 5pm or on weekends. Be assured that I will respond as soon as possible, likely the next business day.*



**From:** [Angela He](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Subject:** Renter Protection in the Housing Element  
**Date:** Friday, August 19, 2022 1:39:01 PM

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Dear City Council Members,

I am a renter in Palo Alto. I love living in Palo Alto because of the proximity to my workplace, beautiful trees, and vibrant downtown.

I am writing to encourage you to support tenant protections in the Housing Element's Programs. In particular, I care deeply about requiring a 90-day notice for a rent increase of 6% instead of the state's 10% threshold for noticing. As a graduate student, I am on a meager stipend and pay far more than 30% of my income towards rent. Without adequate notice of a rent increase, I would have little time to look for another (somewhat) affordable apartment in Palo Alto in an already highly expensive and competitive rental market.

Though the Housing Element does not mention rent control, I would like you to strongly consider implementing rent control in Palo Alto. At my income level, I am just a hundred dollars away from being unable to afford to live in Palo Alto. I wish to continue to live in Palo Alto during my time as a graduate student at Stanford so I can continue to be part of the Palo Alto and Stanford community.

Furthermore, almost half of your constituents are renters at risk of displacement.

Please support your renting constituents by approving the inclusion of renter protection in the Housing Element. Your renting constituents are equally important as home-owning constituents to the Palo Alto community. We too care deeply about Palo Alto and enjoy going to the farmers' markets, parks, and strolling around the beautiful neighborhoods.

Sincerely,  
Angela He