

27 March 2018

To: Mayor and City Council  
City of Palo Alto  
Palo Alto City Hall, 7th floor  
250 Hamilton Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA

From: Commissioner William Riggs, Palo Alto Planning & Transportation Commission  
Vice Chair, Sue Monk, Palo Alto Planning & Transportation Commission  
Commissioner Michael Alcheck, Palo Alto Planning & Transportation Commission

Re: Minority Recommendation from PTC on Affordable Housing Combining District

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

This memo serves to: 1) provide context for an item on your April 9th agenda; and 2) highlight the minority opinion from the February 14 and March 14 meetings on the Affordable Housing (AH) Combining District.

During the PTC's two meeting review of the AH Combining District, staff presented two different draft ordinances. These draft ordinances are available for review in your packet. The second version of the ordinance was crafted to respond to some of the anticipated feedback from an ad hoc committee that was formed at the first meeting.

At the conclusion of the second meeting, a motion was put forward by a four member majority that ultimately recommended rejecting both the February 14th version of the AH Combining District as well as the more conservative March 14th version of the same AH Combining District.

The authors of this memo were unable to support such a motion and en lieu of that, we would like to provide this minority recommendation: please approve the Affordable Housing (AH) Combining District Draft Ordinance, as originally presented by staff on February 14th, with the following considerations:

1. Allow for a waiver of retail preservation for qualifying projects;
2. Include Research Park and General Manufacturing Districts;
3. Provide for flexibility when evaluating the precise distance from high capacity transit corridors; and
4. Allow FAR and height increases where appropriate.

We believe this recommendation is worthy of Council consideration for the following reasons:

- It is the most promising tool our body has considered to address the enormous shortage of affordable housing in our City. Such zoning overlay ordinances are "simple" policies that do not obfuscate existing zoning, but rather provide yet another tool in the toolbox for non-for-profit developers to use when attempting to bring forward the rarely proposed 100% affordable housing project.
- This AH Combining District Ordinance as written and recommended herein, does not automatically apply to any parcel in the City. Parcel owners that are within the radius of application would still need to apply for and receive approval for said zoning designation. Every application would still require yet another review at the PTC and Council levels, and Council would retain the power to condition approval as Council deems appropriate in Council's effort to encourage appropriate outcomes.

While our hope is that Council will accept our minority recommendation, we recognize that it will not solve all of our City's housing supply issues. That said, we believe that we must begin taking actions to address housing now, and we believe this recommendation is an important first step.

Thank you for your consideration.



William Riggs, PhD



Susan Monk



Michael Alcheck