

**From: Palo Alto Forward <[palo.alto.fwd@gmail.com](mailto:palo.alto.fwd@gmail.com)>**

**To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan [NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org)**

**Date: Fri 5/22/2020 12:47 PM**

Dear Mayor Fine and Palo Alto City Council Members and the NVCAP Working Group,

Palo Alto Forward (PAF) is a nonprofit organization of Palo Alto residents that envisions a more affordable, sustainable city with improved housing and transportation options for our diverse, multi-generational residents. We believe in thoughtful planning to meet our city's future population needs.

The North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP) is a rare opportunity to simultaneously address our housing shortage and climate change goals. The 60 acres encompassing the NVCAP is ideally located next to bus, rail, bike paths, El Camino Real, and the California Avenue business district making it an ideal place to build multifamily housing.

The NVCAP is a unique opportunity area to meet the City's existing Comp Plan goals to increase housing and will be the City's largest opportunity to meet the higher RHNA goals that are coming--goals that address the cost burdens and overcrowding of existing residents in our region.

While we understand the economic challenges in today's environment, the NVCAP is a plan for the future and we can provide greater flexibility in uses, densities and designs in order to meet changing conditions. With that, we ask that you consider the following criteria in evaluating NVCAP alternatives:

- More housing is critical and must include diverse housing types, including market rate and affordable homes with multifamily buildings and housing types that are affordable by design and offer opportunities for people of various income levels to live in our city.
- Subsidized affordable rentals and homeownership options must be incorporated throughout the neighborhood.
- Mixed use development should include a balance of housing and commercial space, with flexibility for types of use within commercial spaces.
- North Ventura has a large number of underutilized parcels. In order to allow for parcel assembly and street/path reconfigurations, zoning must allow for flexibility.
- In order for Palo Alto to meet higher RHNA allocations in a revised Housing Element (2023-2031), the city must select viable development sites for new homes. The Ventura Neighborhood and NVCAP can be an important part of the solution.

Thank you for considering these points during the evaluation of Alternatives.

Sincerely,

Palo Alto Forward Board of Directors

**From: Jon Moeller**

**To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan [NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org)**

**Date: Fri 5/22/2020 3:28 PM**

The North Ventura site is one of the few sites in Palo Alto that's both underdeveloped and suitable for mid and high density housing and mixed use space. Please don't ruin this opportunity by building large amounts of office space or low density residential.

jon moeller

**From: Ken Joye**

**To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan [NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org)**

**Date: Tue 5/26/2020 10:02 AM**

At the meeting in which the Working Group meets to consider alternatives, I ask that you consider these points:

The NVCAP study area encompasses ~60 acres; any alternative before you which does not discuss use of the entire study area should be discarded or refined to show use of the full acreage.

Can the Working Group specify use of "overlay districts" for BMR housing, similar to that used to move forward the Wilton Court project by Palo Alto Housing. Perhaps an overlay district should be placed within 1/4 mile of an express bus stop along El Camino Real. I suggest an overlay district be specified so that parcels within it may be developed more densely than would be allowed for market rate housing within its bounds. This should be considered because "*Housing for all ages, races, incomes, and for families*" is part of the NVCAP vision. Would the Working Group want to suggest a specific mix of Moderate-Income, Low-Income and Very-Low-Income units in its proposal?

Where would BMR rental units constructed via in-lieu fees likely be located, in the NVCAP study area or elsewhere?

If the Working Group would wish to maximize Missing Middle units, then the number of Low-Rise Block buildings should be minimized: 16% of units in the Townhomes typology would be BMR (3 of 18 units); 16% of units in the Low-Rise Greenway typology would be BMR (8 of 50 units); 12% of units in the Low-

Rise Block typology would be BMR (18 of 156 units). Would the Working Group want to suggest a specific mix of ownership vs. rental units in its proposal?

In 20-30 years, maybe very few workers will congregate in a central office and more will work predominantly at home or within walking distance of home. Can the Working Group specify an overlay district for “micro-offices”, such as for BMR housing?

Thought I believe that the community would be best served by permitting housing only in the NVCAP study area, my inclination would be to have any office development along Page Mill Rd which has these two advantages: (1) proximity to the Caltrain station and (2) less impact upon the bicycle boulevard. Also, the project at 441 Page Mill Rd is mostly office (it is a mixed-use building), would that typology be one which the Working Group would consider? How does it compare to the existing typologies?

With regards to housing, I would be inclined to have the densest/tallest structures along El Camino Real rather than Park Blvd and have the density/height of residential buildings lowest along Lambert and Park. That is, favor something like the Townhouse typology fronting along those two streets, with denser/higher building types in the center of the study area, rising toward El Camino Real.

In [Staff Report #10918](#) (page 32), alternative 3 is said to maintain “existing ECR ground floor retail”; that is represented by which building typology?

During the NVCAP presentation to the Planning & Transportation Commission, Commissioner Hechtman made a comment to the effect “it will take years/decades for housing to be built, we should allow one density initially and offer higher density later”; wouldn’t that perversely motivate every property owner to hold off until the point at which they could built at maximum density?

**From: Jeff Levinsky**

**To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan [NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org)**

**Date: Tue 5/26/2020 7:13 AM**

Dear NVCAP Members:

I lived and enjoyed being in the Ventura neighborhood for 15 years and walked through it every day. I was saddened to see so much of Northern Ventura transition into being an office park for firms that provide no local services but added traffic and congestion. I very much support Alternative M in your packet as it envisions much of North Ventura becoming housing with the addition of a community center, more park space, local services, safer bike travel, and beautified streets. In particular, Alternative M's focus on below market-rate housing is vital. Market-rate housing in our town is too expensive for the average family and we are already building more of it than the state requires. Meanwhile, we are far short of our goals for creating new below market-rate housing and Alternative M provides a way to produce hundreds of such units.

Traffic has also been a problem for decades in the northern blocks of Ventura. A few years ago, more intense use was proposed for the Cloudera site and the owner commissioned a traffic study to evaluate the potential impacts for just that one project. The study showed the additional traffic would be so substantial, including on Oregon Expressway travel times, that the owner dropped those plans. Please consider then that proposals in your packet to add new offices and/or housing on multiple sites within Northern Ventura would create even worse traffic problems. Rather than adding buildings, Alternative M instead transitions offices to housing, thereby actually reducing traffic at rush hour as well as improving our job/housing imbalance and helping North Ventura become more like other parts of our community.

Here's a simple way to think about it. When you consider each proposal for North Ventura, please ask yourself two questions: will it substantially help produce the below market-rate housing we need and will it reduce traffic congestion? The answers for Alternative M are yes and yes.

Thank you,

Jeff Levinsky

**From: Winter Dellenbach**

**To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan [NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org)**

**Date: Mon 5/25/2020 1:12 PM**

Dear NVcap Members,

The focus of housing here should be on affordability. In the recent city survey and the three plans it offered, affordable and BMR housing were largely left out, at best an afterthought. If in lieu BMR is supposedly the plan, then it will garner of pittance of what is needed and wanted by Ventura neighbors, those of us in adjacent neighborhoods, and by most Palo Altans.

Where is the planning for significant amounts of truly affordable BMR housing? Turn your attention to Alternative M as a plan that offers the greatest possibility for the housing that Palo Alto actually needs, for the parks and services that residents need and want, and that de-emphasizes office development that would only worsen our housing situation.

Winter Dellenbach

Barron Park

**From: [slevy@ccsce.com](mailto:slevy@ccsce.com)**

**To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan [NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org)**

**Date: Mon 5/25/2020 11:25 AM**

Dear NVCAP working group members and city council and PTC members,

My two main points for NVCAP are

1) a high target for housing in the NVCAP planning area is essential for meeting our new RHNA targets and unique among available places for a substantial increase in housing

2) Meeting our common goal to increase housing for low and moderate income residents can only be met with some increases in density. It is the only way to get enough units and the only way to make projects feasible.

My conversations with HCD staff indicate that they have enhanced enforcement powers but strongly prefer that cities exercise local control to meet their housing targets.

As the process unfolds I encourage council and PTC members to consult with the planning director and city council on these issues.

I will elaborate on these points after tying the NVCAP plan to our RHNA and housing element goals.

The language below is from the staff report for the PTC meeting on May 27, 2020 re ADUs. But the essence applies to the North Ventura area. Both are critical pieces of the City's effort to develop a local control plan that meets our Comp Plan and new RHNA targets.

From my professional work I know a good deal about the likely direction of new RHNA targets for Palo Alto.

The state HCD is targeting early June for the release of the Bay Area RHNA determination letter. So it should be known for the next NBCAP meeting in June.

Based on RHNA determinations for other regions and the new methodology that includes "catch up" for overcrowded and cost burdened households, it is probable that the Bay Area RHNA will be 2 to 3 times larger than the current one that Palo Alto and most cities are struggling to meet.

Based on the three options for allocating the regional total to cities (see slide 12 in the attachment) Palo Alto will receive an above average share of the regional total as we are 1) a high amenity area and 2) have a large excess of jobs over housing.

"ADUs provide much needed housing for Palo Alto and play a significant role in the City's efforts to meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation targets.

Staff expect ADU development will be advanced further in the upcoming Housing Element update. AB 671 requires that Housing Elements incentivize and promote the creation of ADUs at all income levels. As the City prepares to develop and adopt an updated Housing Element (must be adopted by January 2023), ADUs will play a large role."

There are several options before the NVCAP working group at this time. I encourage the working group to refine and bring forward two or more substantial housing options.

It is important to remember a couple of points in developing these alternatives:

1) This is a long term plan and what particular members or landowners think is feasible in the next year to two or three is irrelevant to the working group task or to the City's responsibility to make a best and extra effort to make housing work.

2) The development math and the unit count math does not work without some increases in density similar to the many beautiful 4 and 5 story buildings I see every day in my walks.

My final point is about making housing for low income residents (a major feature of the increased RHNA totals) work in practice.

I encourage the working group to hear from staff at Alta Housing (the new name for PAH) and remember what was needed to make Wilton Court possible. And that is getting sufficient density relative to parcel size to make projects feasible and to maximize the number of deed restricted units associated with market rate projects.

Stephen Levy

Director Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy

50 year resident of Palo Alto

**From: Gail Price**

**To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan [NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org)**

**Date: Sat 5/23/2020 1:47 PM**

Dear Palo Alto Elected Leaders and Staff,

I thought this would be of interest to you for short term and longer term planning purposes.

Thanks,

Gail Price  
Barron Park  
Palo Alto

<https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2020/05/commute-car-traffic-transit-bike-remote-work-coronavirus/611365/>

### **How Will Americans Commute After Lockdowns End?**

Will car traffic surge as lockdowns end, or will millions of Americans decide to bike, walk, or work from home permanently? Emerging research offers some hints.

#### **[Laura Bliss](#)**

- [@mslaurabliss](#)
- [Feed](#)

[Laura Bliss](#) is CityLab's West Coast bureau chief. She also writes MapLab, a biweekly newsletter about maps ([subscribe here](#)). Her work has appeared in The New York Times, The Atlantic, Sierra, GOOD, Los Angeles, and elsewhere, including in the book *The Future of Transportation*.

May 14, 2020

Traffic is light on Interstate 83 in Baltimore, but as lockdowns begin to lift, cars are poised to come back.  
Alex Wroblewski/Bloomberg

[More than zero](#), [fewer than 45](#), [ideally 16](#): Those are the number of minutes that workers would prefer to spend commuting, according to various studies. Research on travel behavior has consistently shown that people value the time it takes to get from their homes to their jobs — for solitary thinking, catching up on email, or just putting some distance, in time and space, between work and home lives.

Those preferences have been put to the test during the coronavirus pandemic, with millions of global office workers commuting between rooms or pieces of bedroom furniture rather than neighborhoods. Now, as coronavirus lockdowns loosen in parts of the world, a divergent picture of the post-pandemic commute is emerging. Peak rush-hour traffic in [Shenzhen is roughly 10% over its 2019 baseline](#), while [congestion in Auckland, New Zealand, is creeping up](#) every day. In North America, [gasoline demand](#) is rising and [cars are retaking the streets](#), while mass transit ridership remains low and working from home is the status quo for 2020 (and possibly onwards) at tech-forward employers such as [Google](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Meanwhile, many cities are encouraging active commuting, opening emergency routes for walking and biking during the pandemic; those concerned about rising vehicle congestion, emissions, and fatalities are seeking ways to make those changes permanent.

What will commutes look and feel like as offices reopen? Emerging research offers a few hints.

### **Few commuters miss driving their cars**

Given a taste of the work-from-home life, how many commuters will choose to stay put? [One online survey](#) conducted in April and led by the University of Amsterdam urban planning researcher Ori Rubin explored that and other questions among workers who commuted regularly before the pandemic but are now toiling in their abodes. Of the 1,014 surveyed, roughly half lived in the Netherlands; the rest were split between France, Germany, the U.K. and the United States. Some 70% of respondents had a master's degree or higher, and they were evenly split by gender.

The results reaffirm old findings about the value of commutes, but they also indicate that some people might shift to new travel modes if given the chance. About 69% of respondents said that they missed some element of their commute, but their answers varied dramatically depending on how — and how long — they traveled: The longer it took to get to their jobs, the less people missed it. While 55% of car commuters said that they didn't miss their work journeys at all, 91% of bike commuters said that they miss at least some parts of theirs.

Those feelings were connected to whether people planned to continue to work from home as economies reopen. Some 69% of those who did miss their commutes want to return to normal, while 72% of people who didn't miss commuting at all want to work from home more often. But 18% of that latter group, who mainly used cars, expected that their employers would require their return to the office.

A majority of drivers admitted they don't miss their commutes at all; only 9% of bike commuters agreed. (Rubin, O., Nikolaeva, A., Nello-Deakin, S., & te Brömmelstroet, M., (2020). *What can we learn from the COVID-19 pandemic about how people experience working from home and commuting?* Centre for Urban Studies, University of Amsterdam)

According to Rubin, this subset of commute-hating drivers should draw the attention of employers and urban planners concerned about congestion. "These are the most eligible candidates for a mode shift," he said. "If given the option, that's a substantial group that could shift to less commuting or a different adjustment" — perhaps to biking, the most loved of all commuting modes. While responses mostly came from the famously bike-friendly Netherlands, Rubin said that there were not significant differences between respondents from other countries.

However, with its heavy skew towards graduate-degree-holders, this survey did not reflect a representative swath of commuters. Additionally, feelings about working from home are likely influenced by school closures and other pandemic-related stressors, and could change under more normal times.

### **Some commuters hope to bike and walk more often**

Another survey conducted in April also points to the possibility of less driving among a certain subset. Led by Arizona State University urban planning professor Deborah Salon, this questionnaire probed 800 workers across the U.S., many of them concentrated in Arizona and other western states.

Since it was largely distributed through ASU's professional networks, Salon's survey attracted a disproportionate number of people with graduate degrees, and transportation researchers specifically. Readers beware: "These people are weird," said Salon, who is continuing the survey in hopes of attracting a nationally representative sample. [Any U.S. resident can take it here.](#)

Yet the [initial responses](#) may be telling. Compared to the 50% of respondents who said that they sometimes worked from home in the past, 68% said they foresaw working from home more often after lockdowns ease, at least part of the time. While that doesn't reflect actual employer policy changes that might be coming, that 18% change could indicate that a significant number of people will be getting off the road, Salon said. She also believes it probably undercounts the size of the shift that could be coming.

Expected change in daily travel among respondents. (D. Salon, Deborah Salon, School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning, Arizona State University, 2020)

Overall, the desire for "normalcy" is strong: Most respondents said they expected to see no change in their post-pandemic travel habits, no matter the modes. That included driving, which is how the vast majority of respondents previously got to work. Yet there were also signs of change: About 15% said they expected to rely less on shared modes such as public transit and ride-hailing, less than 10% said they expected to spend more time in the car, and about 20% said that they wanted to bike and walk more often.

Salon sees that as a promising sign for sustainability-minded planners. "A lot of cities are converting their streets to bike and pedestrian space as an emergency measure," she said. "Maybe cities could take this as an opportunity to say hey, if we want to have more non-motorized travel, then maybe we could make some of those conversions permanent."

### **Prepare for hellish traffic jams**

City planning interventions like those might be all the more urgent for the U.S. if [one non-peer-reviewed analysis](#) led by Dan Work, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at Vanderbilt University, is any indication.

Work and his colleagues measured what might happen to vehicle travel times, should the [widely held assumption that people move away from public transit](#) and shared rides come true. Using data from the American Community Survey for metropolitan areas where more than 5% of commuters ride transit, they plotted the historic relationship between average travel times and the number of vehicles on the road. They then projected how travel times would change depending on the number of people who shift to single-occupancy cars.

Unsurprisingly, the basic law of traffic — the more people on the road, the more drawn-out the drive — held true, and to stunning effect for some areas. Dense cities such as New York and San Francisco that are more reliant on public transit and have lower capacity for vehicle traffic were much more sensitive to

added cars, compared to more auto-oriented cities such as Los Angeles and Atlanta. For example, if just one in four transit and carpool commuters start to drive alone, San Francisco could witness a 20-minute increase in daily vehicle travel times. That shoots up to a 40-minute increase if three in four of those commuters switch.

Cities with strong transit usage are most at risk of travel-time spikes, which are shown as one-way commute times. ([Y. Hu](#), [W. Barbour](#), [S. Samaranayake](#), [D. Work](#), 2020. *Impacts of Covid-19 mode shift on road traffic*, Work Research Group.)

The analysis vividly illustrates the traffic-taming function that public transit provides in cities, as well as the importance of keeping buses and trains safe and available to riders in the future, Work said. Transit, as well as bicycling and walking, allows large numbers of people to move in a limited amount of space, unlike the alternative: “Road-building is an expensive proposition that doesn’t solve the underlying issue of high commute times in the long term,” he said.

Yet because this study was based on historic data alone, it does not account for two major coronavirus-era considerations: the possibility that large shares of commuters will now work from home, and that many [millions of newly unemployed U.S. residents](#) no longer have jobs to commute to. For them, the journey back to work could take longer than ever.

**From: Tirumala Ranganath**

**To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan [NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:NVCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org)**

**Date: Tue 5/26/2020 4:56 PM**

Respected Members of the NVCAP committee,

I have had an opportunity to look at the alternatives G, H, J, K, L, M, and in addition those proposed by the city staff.

The staff proposals as far as i can tell make an assumption that the right to operate the Fry's and Cloudera sites for office use indefinitely OR make very significant concessions to the developers to significantly increase housing density to make it financially attractive to them to build various mixes of housing. It is not clear to me why these concessions are being offered in light of the fact that the original concession for Fry's to operate has a sunset clause as far as I know. If this is the case I don't see why the concessions are being offered. Yes, the property owners would like to maximize their return, but it is not the city's responsibility to provide assistance to make this happen. Playing hardball is not a choice as far as I can tell for the property owners, since the city is not required to make Zoning Concessions ! The alternatives offered provide very little affordable housing when the density is low, the density becomes absurd when the affordable housing component becomes significant. (~ 2500 units is extraordinary). The city staff might be attracted to the high density option because it might solve the regional housing build requirements met in one fell swoop - but at the cost of extremely dense and congested layouts for the

residents - while at the same time taking pressure off the city to find more equitable location of affordable housing units throughout the town !

The alternatives G,H,J,K and L do not address the question of the Fry's and Cloudera sites effectively and head-on. Granting the status quo privilege to the owners of these sites is not a given. As far as I know there is the question of the zoning reverting back to housing for both of those sites, once Fry's has left the site (which has just happened I believe). The option J [ working group member Waldek Kaczmarek ] is quite dense (1400 units ?), with community space of around 7.6Ksf for close to a 50 acre development project ? Also, the legend is impossible to read and makes it difficult to make out what is going on ! Leaving 550Ksf of office space in the plan, given the current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainty of what is going to happen to the need for office spaces going forward, is hard for me to understand ! This option allows for roughly 28 housing units/acre.

The other options ( G, H, K and L ) that include affordable housing units bring down the density to ~ 27 units/acre, still too high, given the uncertainty of office needs post COVID-19. The outlier is option L [ working group member from Gail Price ] proposing a density of around 40 units/acre. All of the above concede the option of granting the owners of the Fry's site as well as Cloudera the existing exceptional zoning treatment - even though the sunset clause needs to be invoked and implemented .

This finally brings me to the option M (proposed by working with Keith Rekhda and Terry Holzemer as well as Becky Sanders from the Ventura Neighborhood Association as well as others knowledgeable in the area of affordable housing and zoning related issues) that takes the view the pandemic we are going through changes many things and that it is important to pay attention these changing needs and directions. Right of the bat one needs to concede that none of us really knows what the post COVID-19 scene is really going to look like from the point of view of business needs, office needs. What is clear is that we will need housing going forward and this option unabashedly accepts this viewpoint. I believe this is a prudent thing to do. Also, the option demands that the special zoning concessions for the Fry's site as well as the Cloudera property not be extended, beyond the present (given that Fry's is already gone !). The density being proposed is a more modest ~ 15 units/acre, roughly double what single family dwellings make use of. The emphasis is on community's overall well being - accommodating a variety of income levels and supporting teachers, police as well as other workers, whose services are essential to the functioning and well being of our community !

Thanks for your attention,

Sincerely,

T.R. Ranganath  
(Greater Ventura resident)

