



CITY OF  
**PALO  
ALTO**

# Planning & Transportation Commission Action Agenda: September 13, 2023

Council Chambers & Virtual  
6:00 PM

## Call to Order / Roll Call

6:03 pm

Chair Summa called to order the September 13<sup>th</sup> Planning and Transportation Commission meeting.

Ms. Veronica Dao, Administrative Associate, conducted the roll call and announced all commissioners were present.

## Oral Communications

The public may speak to any item not on the agenda. Three (3) minutes per speaker.<sup>1,2</sup>

Chair Summa invited members of the public to share their comments with the Commission on items not on the Agenda.

Ms. Veronica Dao, Administrative Associate, announced there were no speakers for oral communications.

## Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

The Chair or Commission majority may modify the agenda order to improve meeting management.

Chief Planning Official Amy French announced there were no changes from staff.

## City Official Reports

### 1. Directors Report, Meeting Schedule and Assignments

Ms. Amy French, Chief Planning Official reported that the PTC would likely not meet on September 27<sup>th</sup>, barring any unforeseen circumstances, so give you back your night. The October 11<sup>th</sup> Agenda has Safe Streets and a Study Session on Amendments as part two for what is being discussed at this meeting. City Council approved the parklets, Permanent Parklets Ordinance, on a 7-0 vote, and so that included changes to Title 17 that the Planning and Transportation Commission recommended at their last meeting. In addition, the Sobrato

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1 project was approved on a 7-0 vote. Next Monday they have two items, one is the priority  
2 development area application that we've submitted. Staff is calling it BASA, which is for  
3 Bayshore, Alma, and San Antonio. Staff had applied back in July and are now going to Council to  
4 get a support resolution to move ahead with the PDA application. Elsworth Place and 2901  
5 Middlefield are both PC's going towards Council Action; on October 2nd City Council will hear  
6 the Electrification Equipment Ordinance.

7 Mr. Rafael Rius, Senior Engineer with the Office of Transportation, stated he did not have  
8 anything new to report.

9 Commissioner Hechtman asked when the decision would be made as to cancelling the  
10 September 27th PTC meeting.

11 Ms. French responded that it would likely to be cancelled because staff was planning to  
12 continue this Study Session to October 11th, to give time to staff and the consultant to prepare  
13 for the next meeting.

14 Chair Summa commented that she thought staff would be returning with new information, not  
15 that this meeting would need to be continued.

16 Ms. French answered that it's Part II, at the next meeting with another report.

17 Chair Summa stated they would revisit cancelling the September 27<sup>th</sup> after the Study Session.

## 18 **Study Session**

19 Public Comment is Permitted. Three (3) minutes per speaker.  
20

21 2. Study session on Amendments to the Land Use Element of the Palo Alto  
22 Comprehensive Plan and Palo Alto Municipal Code Title 18 (Zoning) to Implement  
23 Housing Element Programs 1.1A and 1.1B

24 Chair Summa introduced Item 2, the Study Session on amendments to the Land Use Element of  
25 the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan and the Palo Alto Municipal Code and called for the staff  
26 report.

27 Ms. Amy French, Chief Planning Official, introduced staff's consultant Jean Eisberg from  
28 Lexington Planning, who provided the staff presentation.

29 Consultant Jean Eisberg introduced herself and provided some background on the study  
30 session. In May the Planning Commission recommended, and the City Council approved and  
31 adopted the Housing Element. The City sent that Housing Element to HCD in June, and then  
32 received a comment letter requesting changes from HCD just a few weeks ago in August. There

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1 are two parallel path efforts happening now. The top are revisions of the Housing Element.  
2 Staff expects that to come back to the Commission, probably before the end of the year.  
3 However, the current study session is regarding the implementation of the Housing Element.  
4 Specifically, Program 1.1, which under State Housing Element Law, has a very specific timeline,  
5 so staff is starting the implementation of that program now. The other are zoning amendments,  
6 which the Planning Commission will see within the next six months, and over the next several  
7 years, in addition to the implementation of other programs. State Housing Element Law says  
8 that when rezoning sites to meet the RHNA, that rezoning needs to happen in the first year of  
9 the Plan adoption, which technically was supposed to happen last January 2024. So those  
10 rezonings must take place by January of next year, January 2024. That's Program 1.1A and the  
11 subject of tonight's discussion. Staff have added Program 1.1B, which is rezoning in the GM  
12 (general manufacturing) and ROLM area (research, office, light manufacturing) within a specific  
13 area of the city. They are rezonings required beyond the RHNA and are additional rezonings  
14 that were approved as part of the Housing Element, which carry the same timeline in the  
15 Housing Element. Because they affect the same sections of the zoning ordinance, staff  
16 proposed to do them all together. Chapter three of the Housing Element analyzed physical  
17 feasibility of existing zoning standards. It took from proto-typical sites across zoning districts in  
18 the city and tested the combination of development standards. From that key questions  
19 included *Do these current zoning standards allow development at planned densities*; and that's  
20 the combination of heights, and setbacks, and floor area ratio (FAR) and residential densities.  
21 The second question is *Do any of these standards represent constraints for development?*  
22 Working with an architect and analyzing these sites, it was determined that yes, there are some  
23 constraints. Specifically, in the landscape coverage requirements, which is similar to lot  
24 coverage requirement, only requiring green space at the ground level represented a constraint.  
25 In certain districts height, lot coverage and parking constraints in getting to that planned  
26 density that was identified in the Housing Element. Program 1.1 calls for increasing residential  
27 density and FAR where residential density is not regulated. Our step here is taking that  
28 information and identifying the specific modifications to the zoning standards. Created with  
29 the help of an architect, the chart in the Staff Report starts to reveal the relationships between  
30 lot coverage, between FAR and height. Staff recommends specific FAR's, which are a proxy for  
31 density in zoning districts that don't regulate density, or that regulate [19:43 TIMESTAMP :  
32 inaudible] density and FAR. A few key changes that are proposed in the draft ordinance includes  
33 Program 1.1A, first thing is the rezoning of sites that are inventory sites and currently do not  
34 allow multi-family housing. This being the R1 District, which is generally a single family district.  
35 The Housing Element identifies faith based institutions, typically parking lots on churches or  
36 other religious institution sites, in that ROLM district and the RP district, which is research park,  
37 GM and PF – which is public facility. Currently those zoning districts do not permit multi-family  
38 housing and this draft ordinance would allow multi-family housing on these Sites Inventory  
39 sites. The second program is to upzone to increase density as stated in the Housing Element, or  
40 floor area ratio where it's regulated. Third is to modify standards to reduce constraints like the

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1 landscape coverage constraint previously mentioned, to ensure the development is feasible at  
2 planned densities. When all those different land-use controls are combined, a project can still  
3 meet the planned density. The rezoning includes other statutory requirement on sites that  
4 accommodate lower income households; projects need to be allowed to build out at 100%  
5 residential uses. Some specific changes include, depending on the district, current densities of  
6 20-50 units an acre get bumped up to 30-50 units an acre. Zoning districts that currently don't  
7 regulate density, wouldn't regulate density going forward. Floor area ratios (FAR) are between  
8 0.5 and 1.25 and go up to between 1.25 and 2.5. Another key modification allows landscape  
9 coverage requirements to be met above the ground level. Another key aspect of the program is  
10 specific zoning standard changes for three of the Stanford University owned sites. The  
11 development standards are still underway and are not included in the packet. Staff will include  
12 that in the public hearing next month. The City is working on responses to the HCD comment  
13 letter, and so there may be additional sites with site specific standards proposed over the next  
14 month. Shifting to program 1.1B. There are three tiers of development standards for GM, and  
15 ROLM zoning districts and those are intended for the highest FAR's and densities, opportunity  
16 sites, and the existing condition would still apply to areas outside of the opportunity zoned  
17 areas where those base district regulations would still apply. So essentially, same zoning  
18 districts, but three different tiers of intensity. There's a more significant increase according to  
19 Program 1.1B, density going from thirty units an acre to ninety units an acre, with a number of  
20 these development standards changing. The FAR has to increase to accommodate that density,  
21 the height goes from thirty-five to fifty feet, depending on the zoning district, to up to sixty  
22 feet, giving modifications to the lot coverage, and then a parking reduction in that two-plus  
23 bedroom category. Attachment A has changes to the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive  
24 Plan needs to be internally consistent, so the Housing Element needs to be consistent with the  
25 Land Use Element, but also consistent with the Zoning Ordinance, as required by State Law.  
26 There are some key amendments that are required to the land use designation definitions in  
27 the Comprehensive Plan to make sure that multi-families already allowed in all of the land use  
28 designations, while making sure that the densities and the FARs are consistent. In some cases  
29 where the density or FAR expressed in the comp plan may be exceeded in the zoning ordinance.  
30 This provides some breadcrumbs to introduce that concept. Comments are annotated in the  
31 electronic version of the Packet online, however, they did not print in the hard copy. Some of  
32 the effects of these zoning changes include: these zoning changes will help meet State Law  
33 requirements and the timeline to complete by January, this completes some key programs of  
34 the Housing Element, and these zoning changes will improve the physical feasibility to meet the  
35 planned densities that are identified in the Housing Element, and can help increase unit yield,  
36 which can also increase affordable housing production based on the City's inclusionary  
37 requirement, and/or generate more in-lieu fees. As a consequence of these changes, this will  
38 reset the base density and the bonus density allowed under State Density Bonus Law, so there  
39 could be State Density Bonus Law projects being larger than what we might see today. This  
40 draft ordinance creates a new chapter in the Housing Element. Staff tried to make it as simple

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1 as possible to identify the proposed changes, but it does add some complexity. Our Housing  
2 Element opportunity sites now will need to look in two chapters to understand what  
3 regulations apply to the zone, under proposed Chapter 18.14, as well as the base district  
4 chapter. Staff's recommendation is requesting the Commission hold a study session to provide  
5 feedback on the draft ordinance, including the Comp Plan amendments and the zoning  
6 amendments, and then related to the six year complexity. Right now, the draft ordinance is  
7 proposed to be applicable only to the opportunity sites. With Commission approval, it could  
8 instead apply to all sites in the city, not just the Housing Element opportunity sites.

9 Commissioner Hechtman inquired about Appendix D, the Housing Element list of opportunity  
10 sites as he didn't find it in the Agenda Packet and confessed it wasn't clear to him that they  
11 may be adding more opportunity sites to that list.

12 Ms. Eisberg explained Appendix D has not been included and based on the comments from  
13 HCD, the City is exploring and revisiting some existing sites as they have been approached by  
14 developers who are interested in adding sites to the opportunity sites list, so, yes, it's possible  
15 some additional sites could be added, and eventually Appendix D could change at the next  
16 iteration of the Housing Element.

17 Commissioner Hechtman asked for clarification regarding one of the early slides which  
18 indicated the deadline for rezoning, January 31 of next year, as to certain segment of the  
19 rezoning and the GM ROLM which are intended to happen at the same time for efficiency  
20 reasons. When he thinks of rezoning, traditionally it means changing the base district  
21 designations. However, based on the information in the Staff Report, they are not. What they  
22 are doing is providing a new chapter and some text amendments to change what's allowed on  
23 opportunity sites in the base district designations.

24 Ms. Eisberg responded that was correct. This new chapter essentially modifies the development  
25 standards in the base district, but without changing the base district.

26 Commissioner Hechtman summarized that they're looking at language... on four attachments  
27 from the Housing Element, a new chapter, and some ordinance changes, which are based on  
28 the Housing Element as it was approved by the Council but before revisions to address the  
29 August letter of the HCD. So, it's possible that the versions of these attachments that we've  
30 seen tonight, and we'll discuss in the study session, are actually going to need to be changed to  
31 address comments from HCD in the last round.

32 Ms. Eisberg answered that was true to some extent. Based on her review of the HCD letter,  
33 there are questions about the sites inventory, so that's the Appendix D that she failed to  
34 include in the packet, and there didn't seem to be HCD concerns about Program 1.1A or B, so,  
35 staff is moving forward based on the statutory timelines, but they feel confident about moving  
36 forward with this program.

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1 Commissioner Reckdahl requested clarification about the email that Commissioner Akin sent  
2 out talking about how the state interprets both FAR and density.

3 Mr. Yang explained that under density bonus law, a property owner can come in and propose a  
4 project that meets the density that is stated in the city's code, or in the city's General Plan; and  
5 if they are meeting that density, they can request an unlimited number of waivers from the  
6 City's physical development standards.

7 Commissioner Reckdahl noted it's not unconstrained, it's just that the number of restraints is  
8 reduced.

9 Mr. Yang Right stated that when a maximum density is specified, the constraint is that  
10 maximum density, but the other constraints such as FAR, height, and setbacks may need to be  
11 waived. If you don't specify a maximum density, which is the case for Palo Alto in zones like the  
12 CS zone and State Law uses FAR as a proxy. In those cases, a property owner is entitled to a  
13 percentage increase in FAR in line with the amount of affordable housing they provide under  
14 density bonus law, but the City retains some level of control over the physical development,  
15 they wouldn't be controlling a units per acre regulation in that situation.

16 Commissioner Reckdahl asked if Mr. Yang was also saying something about one can use the  
17 highest density that's used in the city.

18 Mr. Yang responded that it's not the highest density that's used in the city, unless there is an  
19 inconsistency between the zoning code and the general plan.

## 20 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

21 Chair Summa opened the study session up for public comment and explained that the group  
22 will get up to fifteen minutes, and then three minutes for each individual speaker.

23 Former Councilmember Greg Schmid (Speaking for Paul Machado, Ann Balin, Joyce Schmid,  
24 Mary Gallagher, Jo Ann Mandinach) thanked the PTC and expressed concern that the state is  
25 forcing Palo Alto to put up new buildings based on numbers that are outdated. The consultant's  
26 report recommends major changes in zoning throughout Palo Alto, that would foster  
27 tremendous amounts of new dense housing. A rebuilding order to avoid builders remedy.  
28 Based on that report the consultant suggests six thousand plus new housing units will be  
29 needed in Palo Alto between 2023 and 2031. However, those housing numbers were based on  
30 job growth projections made in 2019 and have since been shown to be completely and  
31 dramatically wrong. The basic assumptions about business growth are wrong and therefor the  
32 projected number of new dense housing is also wrong. The numbers in the current planned bay  
33 area started with an overly aggressive jobs forecast by HCD to take place in the bay area  
34 between 2023 and 2031 and the planners added a gag rule making it illegal to have any public

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1 discussion of lowering the number of projected new jobs during the period 2023 to 2031. From  
2 now until 2031, the planners have forbidden anyone to challenge those numbers of projected  
3 new jobs. The world has changed dramatically since then. COVID has fostered remote working,  
4 that has been widely accepted. The number of in-office workdays at many corporations has  
5 been cut by up to forty percent, creating a forty percent decrease in the use of existing  
6 workspaces. Workforce numbers and the number of workers has leveled off and are even  
7 falling throughout the bay area. The Department of Finance (DOF) and the Department of  
8 Housing and Community Development (HCD) have quietly responded to the changing  
9 workplace environment by updating their numbers and actions. The DOF had ruled in 2019 that  
10 the new jobs and housing numbers in the bay area generated by Planned Bay Area were  
11 “reasonable”. In early 2020, they forecast a bay area population increase of 17% to occur  
12 between 2020 and 2030. However, they quietly updated their 2020-2030 forecast. Instead of an  
13 increase in population, they now predict a population decrease of 1.7% in the bay area.  
14 Decrease of 1.2% for Santa Clara County. The DOF now says that population in the bay area will  
15 not be growing over the next seven years, it will actually be getting smaller. HCD is also  
16 reworking their base numbers. We can see this by the fact that when they rejected our Housing  
17 Element in August 2023, they demanded that we build new housing in commercial areas. In just  
18 one limited area, the GM ROLM. The consultants are asking us to eliminate up to 1,400 job sites  
19 for new housing, but without adjusting the 2019 jobs number that justifies the housing need.  
20 Both state agencies are now in accord that their aggressive new jobs forecast made four years  
21 ago, and the subsequent need for new housing, were dramatically overstated. But they are  
22 keeping this quiet and not changing any of the requirements based on the changed new  
23 numbers. This is the first opportunity the public has to openly discuss the housing element in  
24 the last ten months because of that gag rule passed. The city’s Comprehensive Plan requires us  
25 to review the ratio of jobs to employed residence every four years. The last review was 2019 so  
26 a review is due this year. The FTC needs to discuss this review before approving the housing  
27 numbers projected to you. The PTC or the City needs to hold an open public meeting with  
28 representatives from HCD and DOF to publicly discuss alternative jobs to housing ratio. The  
29 California code mandates HCD to produce a guidebook for such discussions however, HCD has  
30 never published a guidebook. The PTC should pay special attention to the longer term financial  
31 impact of building dense housing. Most dense housing developments have their affordable  
32 units subsidized by the market rate units through inclusionary zoning. This raises the market  
33 rate costs substantially. This will not result in a lowering of the price of housing, as promised in  
34 the original Planned Bay Area. Why are these two agencies that have critical roles proceeding  
35 without a public review? Obviously because they will fiscally benefit both from any job growth  
36 and the income in capital gains taxes paid by new workers. The community needs to  
37 understand what the current data shows us. The jobs growth forecast made four years ago is  
38 just not happening. HCD and DOF understand this but refuse to give up fiscal benefits that  
39 floated them; benefits that are paid for by local governments and residents. By you and me.  
40 Paid in dollars and loss of quality of life. Because we are being forced to build new housing

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1 based on old and outdated numbers, we deserve to have a full and open public discussion.  
2 Thank you for your attention.

3 Mr. Adam Schwartz, Palo Alto resident, commented that he has lived here for eight years, and  
4 his kids attended the schools in Palo Alto. This community has much to offer including plentiful  
5 jobs, great weather, and a tolerant culture. The severe shortage of housing is holding the city  
6 back. This makes it extraordinarily expensive for people to live here and drives out adult  
7 children and prevents aging parents from moving here to receive care from family. It forces  
8 retail workers and teachers to drive super commutes every day burning greenhouse gases as  
9 they go. It prevents lower income people from moving here. We need to allow taller buildings,  
10 we need to eliminate parking minimums, we need to speed up the approval process. We need  
11 to affirmatively further fair housing by building new homes by existing schools, parks, and  
12 shops. Baseline, minimal step forward, are the proposals from the staff today. This ongoing  
13 housing element process is a great opportunity to make strides forward. We need abundant  
14 homes for all. Yes, new homes set aside for people with lower incomes who are going to pay  
15 reduced rents, and yes to new homes at market prices, which is the only way to stop the  
16 increase in housing rates. No to artificial scarcity. Please, allow new homes. Thank you.

17 Ms. Deborah Goldeen provided public comment and confessed being a bit confused about  
18 what's going on. City of Palo Alto made up a plan, which did not require that any density  
19 housing be built but made it so that no density housing would be built in it's primarily  
20 residential areas. This plan was sent to the State and the State said no, instead they want  
21 density housing in all of the city. Ms. Goldeen agreed. She was on the 400 block of Sherman  
22 today and 80% of the office buildings on that block are vacant. It's stunning. There's no housing,  
23 because nobody can live here, and we all know this, so that has to change. And then my next  
24 stop was a dental office visit where the office manager was a planning commissioner like  
25 yourself, of all things, for City permitting. People have been objecting for years. Ms. Goldeen  
26 expressed concerns about the parking requirement being reduced, which is causing an issue  
27 with street parking. Nobody cares. The State's taking our rights away, it's undemocratic. She  
28 knows there's a lot of people who are convinced that it's going to work, and they are going to  
29 push back on the State, and it's just not. Not only is it not going to work, but it's also wrong and  
30 bad.

31 Ms. Jennifer DiBrienza, President of the Palo Alto School Board commented that she's speaking  
32 as a resident of Evergreen Park, and for the most part, in support of the zoning changes. As a  
33 Board member, she's very concerned about the long term health of the city's schools. She  
34 urged the city to broaden their consideration of where the housing can go and broaden the  
35 applicability to all sites. With so much housing being built in certain concentrated areas, she  
36 worries about some of the local schools that have already become very small and don't have  
37 any planned housing to be built and may have to close as a result. Kids will have to travel  
38 farther, young kids, either walking and on bikes during high traffic times or in more cars, adding

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1 to greenhouse gas emissions. With too much housing concentrated in some areas, those  
2 schools will be overburdened and will have to overflow kids to other areas of the city, again,  
3 adding to the traffic and to the emissions. For the sake of Palo Alto's schools, she urged the PTC  
4 to consider them when considering possible sites and to really consider the entire city, so that  
5 the new housing is spread across the whole city. Ms. DiBrienza thanked the PTC for their work.

6 Ms. Annie Ashton, Executive Director of Palo Alto Ford, provided comment regarding the  
7 housing crisis. She believed that the zoning changes proposed are insufficient to meet what the  
8 community needs. They may be physically feasible, but they are not in any way economically  
9 feasible. As evidence, none of the recently approved or submitted PHZ projects could be built  
10 under these proposed standards. There could be a housing incentive program that would allow  
11 for projects to go to even higher levels of FAR, and lot coverage zoning. She asked the PTC to  
12 consider raising base zonings to a level that makes projects feasible, and also advise planning to  
13 make sure that the housing incentive program is able to bring these projects to a level where  
14 they are feasible because this is not enough. She additionally suggested the PTC extend these  
15 changes throughout the city as it not only looks better for the housing element numbers, but  
16 also for projects outside of the housing inventory. Project deals come and go, why not let all of  
17 these sites participate in these zoning changes. Sufficient upzoning is good for the schools, it  
18 helps the community reach their climate goals, and it's good for local businesses. As described  
19 most recently in the city's adopted economic development strategy, number ten is building  
20 housing near downtowns. The current baselines are completely ineffective. Please support a  
21 housing incentive program that will raise them to something that is constructable, and support  
22 extending these changes citywide.

23 Mr. David Hirsch, Architectural Review Board (ARB) Boardmember, thanked Chair Summa and  
24 the Commissioners and provided public comment and suggested two ideas, first being the  
25 downtown. Palo Alto has a great opportunity to offer long term leases on many downtown  
26 parking lots, to developers with a direction to locate the parking below grade and provide for  
27 housing above. They must fit comfortably in these denser core areas and provide a significant  
28 percentage of the Housing Element requirements. By using the request for proposal process,  
29 this important effort will provide the following significant benefits: One is the city can prioritize  
30 offers that will maximize affordable housing and provide significantly larger than present  
31 requirements because the developer doesn't have to put up the purchase money for these  
32 expensive projects; they would be leased. Leased terms can be negotiated to make each project  
33 a success. The mix of affordable housing and market rate housing is a healthy concept and one  
34 that is very common in most progressive European countries. Downtown shops and restaurants  
35 would benefit from the increase in local population without any increase of vehicular  
36 congestion. The housing density could be increased as it will relate to existing massive  
37 commercial office and hotel buildings already in the downtown. And, because the downtowns  
38 are discreet entities, there's no impact on the separate residential neighborhoods. The City  
39 would gain rental income which could escalate in time, and they will become the owners at the

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1 end of the lease period, if they choose to. It seems that's a very good opportunity to answer the  
2 issues of affordable housing and market rate housing while self-supporting each other in a way.  
3 The second idea is a Development Director and a staff. If it's true that we're going to build  
4 6,000 plus units of housing, then the City will have to imagine how that is going to be  
5 accomplished. Who's going to build it, how will it be controlled. Over 6,000 new residential  
6 units and a present family of about 2.3 people per unit is an assumed population increase in  
7 Palo Alto by more than 20%. The actual scope of work to produce this in this next eight year  
8 period, if achieved, will be a massive effort. It cries out for an experienced Development  
9 Director. One who can coordinate all aspects of the urban design aspects of that new housing.  
10 Presentations to Palo Alto City Council and community become one of the most necessary tasks  
11 so this Director will need talented assistants who can translate the large scale concepts and do  
12 images that clearly define the proposed elements and formal descriptions. Imagine this  
13 transition from our history of being reactive, to finding ourselves as a proactive community  
14 looking to the future with anticipation.

15 Mr. Albert Lustre with the Northern California Carpenter's Union Local 405 provided public  
16 comment and stated that it's great to see changes on the Housing Element but he hasn't seen  
17 changes affecting labor. He asked who was going to build the projects, are they going to  
18 implement a liberal wage, healthcare, apprenticeship, or local hire requirements. These are  
19 things that Redwood City, Menlo Park, Foster City, the San Mateo County, Daly City and a  
20 couple other cities in Santa Clara county they are working on. The reason why is because  
21 earning a liberal wage ensures that the construction workers can live in those places. We're  
22 getting pushed everywhere. We can't afford to live in Palo Alto. Commutes last for hours. It's  
23 time away from families, and our kids. There has been a lot of tax fraud in all of the  
24 construction sites, and there's no healthcare. Cities pay for healthcare, because eighty percent  
25 of the construction workers depend on some type of government aid. They become a burden to  
26 the system. Apprenticeship is the only opportunity we have to be successful. Local Hire needs  
27 to be regulated. He urged the Planning Commission to implement some area labor standards to  
28 include liberal wage, healthcare, apprenticeship, and local hire.

29 Ms. Leah Russin commented that this proposal demonstrates all the problems with Palo Alto.  
30 Instead of simplifying and clarifying the process, it seems to add layers of complexity. There is a  
31 need for local regulations to be clear and flexible and encourage new housing. This does not  
32 seem to do enough of that. As a Baron Park homeowner, and parent of two young children, she  
33 encouraged the PTC to look critically at the process being proposed for approval for new  
34 housing. Look for all the ways to ease and hasten the process throughout our city. As a former  
35 College Terrace homeowner, she watched opportunities go by as Stanford rebuilt adjacent  
36 single family homes with more of the same, instead of having the flexibility of zoning to build  
37 townhomes or duplexes. The city needs more housing at every income level in every  
38 neighborhood, and not just on the fringes of town but in Baron Park, downtown, and more.  
39 Palo Alto will be stronger as a city if they address the legacy of structural racism and welcome

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1 new housing throughout it. Schools will be more robust with more families in the  
2 neighborhoods. The air will be cleaner [TIMESTAMP 1:04 Audio interference]. She asked the  
3 PTC to think critically about the message they are sending with this proposal.

4 Mr. Hamilton Hitchings commented that he supports the GM and ROLM upzoning, because  
5 those buildings are old. When staff did the analysis, they showed they were most likely to be  
6 developed with the first bridge that you can bike to google. He believed those up buildings are  
7 particularly right for development. One of the reasons for the wrong GM zoning is because they  
8 can go higher, however, he noticed they capped the limit at sixty feet, however, the other side  
9 of San Antonio, he was hoping they might be able to go even higher, like seventy feet and asked  
10 the PTC to consider a seventy foot height limit on the other side of San Antonio. He didn't  
11 remember reduced landscaping being discussed in the PTC or the City Council during the  
12 Housing Element working group. As more housing is built, there still needs to be livable areas,  
13 which means ground floor landscaping and setbacks from the street and sidewalk are needed  
14 and strongly discouraged any proposal that allows a developer to move all landscaping to  
15 courtyards and rooftops. It appeared to him that this proposal will remove twenty percent  
16 landscaping from GM properties, and he did not recommend this for two reasons. First the City  
17 is not trying to give special subsidies to GM right now, instead trying to encourage more  
18 housing and they are making it harder for a developer to justify building residential. It's very  
19 counter productive to remove the landscaping. It only helps developers to not build  
20 underground parking. And while it's cheaper, this basically is designed so they can put all the  
21 parking on the first floor. The problem is that actually reduces the total amount of housing  
22 because it's one less level of housing. He also believed it creates a much less livable area if at  
23 ground level there are a bunch of cars and garage parking that should really be moved to  
24 underground. He appreciated staff bringing this up as a study session so there could be public  
25 comment.

26 Mr. Scott O'Neil provided public comment and stated that he has a letter in the packet which  
27 noted HCD had said the City needs to be addressing constraints, not just RHNA, and looking at  
28 past project proposals to determine what that might require. Outside of GM and ROLM, the  
29 proposed development standards are around half of the average of Palo Alto's recent history of  
30 proposals. Which HCD has explicitly told the City it needs to try and loosen its constraints. He  
31 respectfully disagreed with the consultant when she said those programs won't be impacted by  
32 future changes. HCD will review the zoning knowing full well that no one has proposed a 1.25  
33 FAR project on El Camino. Moreover, adopting a rezoning that looks plausibly at production  
34 only in GM and ROLM would confirm the fair housing concerns HCD has expressed in that area.  
35 The City is in a fair housing hole and one way to stop digging that hole is to take these proposals  
36 more broadly. He shared a tip for reviewing HCD rejection letters. At the beginning of each  
37 rejection is a boiler plate sentence – "If you satisfy some, many, or most of the legal  
38 requirements". Almost no one gets some. Barring some rank technical incompetence. Most  
39 means the City is close, and it's not. The second tip is that the rejection is an eight page mini

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1 letter. That page count in a mini letter would qualify as a very bad first rejection. They haven't  
2 made much progress since November on the most important issues. The second draft remains  
3 very far from compliance. He hoped his information was helpful for calibrating expectations  
4 about what will be required to have any enforceable zoning code at all, in the foreseeable  
5 future.

6 Ms. Liz Gardner requested she be moved down to the end of the list because she was driving  
7 and trying to navigate around an accident.

8 Ms. Jenny Michel addressed the Chair, Commissioners, staff, leavers, and members of the  
9 public and commented that she was born at Stanford, raised at Baron Park, and currently a long  
10 time renting resident, a Menlo Park mom of IEP, Deaf/Hard of hearing student, a commercial  
11 property manager by trade. She provided some background and explained that her family  
12 helped to keep the zoning exclusive. Ironically, when she was a teacher in Menlo park, in the  
13 early 2000's, she became homeless and lived out of her car for two winters on the streets in  
14 Palo Alto, near German. The jobs are already here. They're not going anywhere. Stanford will  
15 always produce high quality, in demand, talent. The mild climate and abundant resources  
16 create an oasis for people. The PTC's job is to remove barriers and help the city to grow. The  
17 barriers are specifically baseline zoning. She suggested they open up the zoning for all R1  
18 districts and agreed that the baseline assumptions with RHNA are off. They would probably  
19 need about 6,000 housing units alone to serve the hospital and related call centers. The stats  
20 for the support staff are more of a closer ratio 4:1 to the office tagged desk job people. She  
21 would argue Palo Alto needs to zone for baseline assumption closer to 20-30 thousand housing  
22 units. Housing has the physical land to easily accommodate that goal compared to other  
23 municipalities. She had evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that various aspects of the local  
24 white collar and biotech workforce are flown in weekly. They are driving climate breakdown  
25 and the load on other municipalities and regions are not being calculated. By housing the  
26 workforce currently in demand, that can be stopped.

27 Mr. Michael Quinn commented on Scott's comments regarding his letter. On page 59 of the  
28 Ordinance, which states that the rezoning is limited to inventory sites. The occupied inventory  
29 sites have been identified by HCD as one of the single weakest aspects of Palo Alto's Housing  
30 Element. His contributions to some of the work done by Palo Alto before it was submitted  
31 consisted largely of contacting property owners about their properties in the inventory and  
32 asking them directly if there was any possibility that they could be redeveloped. The response  
33 was overwhelmingly negative, and it is clear that Palo Alto has not met it's legal obligation to  
34 research those sites. His understanding was that by limiting the rezoning to the inventory sites,  
35 Palo Alto is effectively doubling down on what is already a losing hand. This will not go  
36 unnoticed, and it creates a pretty significant problem if the town is serious about getting the  
37 Housing Element approved. His belief is that the City is not serious. The current price of a home  
38 in Palo Alto was transactive last year, and around 2.8 million and the cost on average was about

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1 1,700 per square foot. Mr. Schmid talked about a degradation of quality of life in the fact that  
2 he doesn't feel that he and his neighbors should have to pay for that. Mr. Quinn respectfully  
3 asked him and the other members, and particularly the Board of Palo Altans for sensible zoning,  
4 exactly how much of a tax subsidy they receive every year through [TIMESTAMP 1:16  
5 Unintelligible] and just to perhaps revisit some of the sentiments on who is or is not a leach.

6 Sam Gersten commented that along with his wife and baby daughter, he has been renting an  
7 apartment on Middlefield Road right by the Safeway, for the last couple of years. He's a  
8 member of the Midtown Residents Association Board and the Board of Congregation Emek  
9 Beracha El Camino but was speaking up because he wanted to afford to stay in Palo Alto with  
10 his family and continue to contribute to the community and help Palo Alto thrive. His rent has  
11 already gone up \$250 dollars a month this year and without more apartments supply in Palo  
12 Alto, prices are going to keep going up and they won't be able to stay much longer in Palo Alto.  
13 Palo Alto has failed to build significant housing and its plans keep getting rejected for feasibility.  
14 It's too focused on keeping failed land use policies from the 1950's in place. They need to go  
15 above and beyond what's been proposed and take drastic steps to allow far more housing on  
16 far more sights throughout the City. Zoning standards have got to be drastically changed. Floor,  
17 height, density, and parking requirements are way out of touch with what the population  
18 needs. Approvals need to be sped up and eliminate barriers like tree and retail ordinances. As a  
19 member of the Midtown Residents Association Board, he has seen high rents drive out  
20 businesses and residents and while on the Synagogue Board he has seen bureaucratic  
21 blockades stop basic security related means, a fence to protect his congregation from anti-  
22 sematic attacks. The current regulatory system and bureaucratic blocks need to change so that  
23 future generations can feasibly live in Palo Alto.

24 Ms. Liz Gardner thanked the Commission for their patience and commented that she is head of  
25 household, for a family of three, and her two sons are 4th generation Palo Altans. They are  
26 section 8 voucher holders in Palo Alto, and she's a grateful parent of Palo Alto unified school  
27 district students and caring for an in-law that is ill and also aging in place. It's been pretty  
28 hectic, and rents are being raised and the reach for home ownership has gotten farther and  
29 farther away. The City needs a lot of housing of all kinds and at all income levels. She was  
30 disappointed when City Council rezoned RM 30 – fourteen acres. It was really sad because that  
31 was right in the middle of town near schools, shopping, and jobs. She supported what Jennifer  
32 DiBrienza said regarding putting so much housing out on the outskirts. Her concern is there will  
33 be a situation where they will have to bus kids to different campuses. She would like to see  
34 housing within the city near services, libraries, rec centers, doctors, and dentists; those kinds of  
35 things that are supporting the community. Particularly for low-wage workers who are making  
36 longer and longer commutes. Wages just aren't going up. She really supports more housing  
37 closer to city centers.

38 Chair Summa closed Public Comments and brought the item back for Commission discussion.

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1 Commissioner Lu requested information on the timelines, and if the joint session in November  
2 with Council for the rezonings rights and the joint session in November on the new Housing  
3 Element will be the same meeting.

4 Mr. Yang answered that he did not believe a joint session is planned for this ordinance. This  
5 ordinance planned to return in a month for action.

6 Commissioner Lu asked if they would presumably address the new Housing Element in  
7 November and then if there are any revisions to the sites or zoning from that meeting, would  
8 they meet again in December or January to update the zoning.

9 Mr. Yang explained they are planning on treating the revised Housing Element as sort of a  
10 separate track from this ordinance and if there were additional amendments to the code that  
11 were required, [TIMESTAMP 1:23:25 Video skipped] that would come back later on as the  
12 revised Housing Element is closer to adoption.

13 Commissioner Lu commented that in the back of his mind it will be hard to separate what  
14 would potentially make HCD happier versus what's in the Housing Element that was already  
15 proposed and rejected and asked if there was an issue in trying to change the zoning in the  
16 direction of the future Housing Element.

17 Mr. Yang responded that staff is looking for the Commission's recommendation and direction  
18 on FAR to go with what's being proposed right now. One of the questions, for example, is  
19 should these updates be limited to inventory sites, or should they apply more broadly.  
20 Inventory sites are legally required, but the Commission may believe it makes sense to expand  
21 that.

22 Commissioner Lu inquired what pushback have they done on the jobs allocation and HCD  
23 numbers, if any.

24 Mr. Yang replied that there was a process several years ago, before the RHNA was set, where  
25 members of the public and some City Officials spoke before ABAG and it advanced various  
26 positions and arguments on why they believed some of the forecasts were incorrect, and that  
27 ABAG should apply a different RHNA to the city. That was the process, now is the opportunity  
28 to influence those figures and that's the the situation that the City is in right now.

29 Commissioner Lu asked if any other cities have had any traction trying to compress those  
30 numbers through any other avenue.

31 Mr. Yang answered no, and that he believed there was some litigation in Southern California,  
32 where some of the Southern California cities attempted to challenge the RHNA allocation and  
33 he didn't believe they were successful in doing so.

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1 Commissioner Lu asked if anyone could provide context on communications or developments  
2 for the Stanford housing sites. There's one listed as McDonald's which has a large builder's  
3 remedy proposal and there's another listed at the Rivian Offices which has a large office  
4 proposal and inquired how the context or communication worked for those sites.

5 Chair Summa responded that they have a placeholder for those three sites in the staff report  
6 because staff was not ready with those. Which is why they plan to bring it back to PTC in  
7 October.

8 Mr. Yang added that staff has been in communication with Standford regularly, throughout the  
9 developing of the Housing Element and also over the summer, and recently regarding those  
10 sites. The lines of communication are open.

11 Commissioner Lu commented that they are very conservative with the Stanford sites, and have  
12 picked out these three relatively small sites and for two of them they've moved ahead with  
13 pretty significant different plans, which breaks his mental model of how they'll work with  
14 Standford and whether it would actually be practical to try to change zoning for other Stanford  
15 sites, and whether that would be perceived as an adversarial move or something that's actually  
16 welcomed before developers control certain parts of the Stanford parcels. It sounded like there  
17 isn't deeper context available for how those two proposals went.

18 Commissioner Akin commented that he'd like to support the approach of creating the new  
19 Section 18.14 as part of the code, regardless of what they end up doing to the baselines, it  
20 seemed very likely that the sites in the housing inventory may need to be treated specially, and  
21 the structure gives them a framework for doing that, and he'd like to support going ahead with  
22 that approach. He stated that the packet suggests that the effects of applying these changes to  
23 baseline zoning might not be significant and inquired if there will there be an analysis in detail  
24 before they see this issue again.

25 Ms. Eisberg responded that yes, they treated the sites inventory differently because that was  
26 the direction of the Housing Element, and the requirement under State Law. If they need to  
27 rezone those RHNA sites, those are the sites that they would rezone. The Appendix D, which  
28 was not included in the packet, shows that within the same zoning districts, the surrealistic  
29 capacity of 20, 30, 40 an acre, it's different for different sites with the same zoning district, is  
30 why it was difficult for staff to adjust the base zoning when there are series of different  
31 standards. Thus, they created a new chapter. The assessment in the staff report said those  
32 inventory sites, after staff, the public and consultants had gone through them, that yes there  
33 are some changes underway, but they were identified as the most likely sites to redevelop in  
34 the next eight year period. The thinking is that if staff made these zoning changes across the  
35 board, the base districts, they would be catching many sites that they do not expect to  
36 redevelop. They're existing uses that they would expect to continue during the next eight years,

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1 and maybe the next eight years after that. If those sites do turnover, it's probably less likely in  
2 the current eight year period and maybe more likely in the future. Staff could do an order of  
3 magnitude estimate of additional development that could happen but felt it's not clear that the  
4 6,000 units are going to redevelop during the next eight years. They are trying to set that up so  
5 that can happen, but they were not trying to do a very specific analysis on that question.

6 Commissioner Akin commented that he thought that could be useful because the question will  
7 likely come up again.

8 Vice Chair Chang commented that she thought an order of magnitude analysis, even if it's as  
9 simple as this is the land area, and this is the implication of how many more units would be  
10 allowed if all of that land area were to be redeveloped. It is not like a likeliness component, but  
11 if all of it were vacant right now and if were all to be redeveloped at that density, how many  
12 more units would that generate versus what the current zoning allows. If it allows 1.25 FAR  
13 because she doesn't think they have a very good idea of how much area in the city is zoned GM  
14 or ROLM. Additionally, how many more acres if they broadened the 18.14 to the rest of the  
15 city, are they putting under that zone. She believed that kind of broad implication would be  
16 helpful.

17 Ms. Eisberg replied that typically they do not do that sort of assumption of complete demolition  
18 and redevelopment (interrupted)

19 Vice Chair Chang stated that she thought that they are not understanding any kind of order of  
20 magnitude right now, that only a certain percentage of ROLM is included in figure four. If they  
21 were to broaden this 18.14 to all our ROLM, what percentage is currently being affected by  
22 18.14. If they were to broaden it to all of the city code, how much more would be affected and  
23 similarly for all the other zones. She had no grasp of what percentage of each zone is currently  
24 being impacted, so she didn't understand what the potential long term impact is of a decision  
25 to roll out these impacts for the entire city. Housing cycles aside, and housing opportunity sites  
26 aside. Even that kind of order of magnitude type analysis would be very helpful in terms of  
27 helping her understand what the actual impact of that decision would be. One of the  
28 observations she had was about the ground floor landscaping. She expressed concern within  
29 the Figure 4 GM and ROLM areas about the impact from an environmental perspective because  
30 if there's a potential to cover large swathes of land in concentrated areas by 101 and South Palo  
31 Alto, where for high density housing is planned and developers could cover a 100% of the land  
32 with development, but they don't have permeable land for rainwater. There are ways to get  
33 around that with respect to engineering, but people are being asked to think about permeable  
34 surfaces. She also knows that in that area they had an underpass that flooded every single year,  
35 and people couldn't bike over to the Baylands until the new bike bridge was added. It is  
36 wetlands over there, and she was concerned about the potential environmental impacts would  
37 be with a large storm. She questioned if there are other things that need to be considered with

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1 respect to the lot coverage. She is less worried about housing opportunities sites and increasing  
2 the lot coverage elsewhere in Palo Alto, because when looking at the housing opportunity sites  
3 map, they're kind of sprinkled all over the place and it's not large swathes that could potentially  
4 be 100% covered with concrete, but she is concerned about that one particular neighborhood.  
5 Which, as it is, is already going to be so different from the rest of Palo Alto. Vice Chair Chang  
6 addressed the three Stanford sites. There was the Housing Element Working Group, Stanford  
7 was a part of the Housing Element Working Group, and Stanford presented the PTC on their  
8 ideas of how they could contribute to the Housing Element. They gave several reasons why they  
9 couldn't more broadly contribute to the Housing Element. Research Park, and the large amount  
10 of land that Stanford has for Research Park is absolutely something that a lot of Palo Alto, and  
11 many City Council members are interested in looking at for the next Housing Element cycle, but  
12 that's not on the table for this one, as she understands it.

13 Commissioner Hechtman thanked the members of the public who spoke, and contributed in  
14 advance with written communications. It has been really robust, and we are hearing different  
15 sides and different concerns on this critical issue for Palo Alto's future. He called out former  
16 Council member Schmidt and thought that he both forcefully and gracefully made the point  
17 that this entire exercise of planning for a particular number of housing units in the next RHNA  
18 cycle is based on figures that have already demonstrated inaccuracy. He found the information  
19 interesting and thought the way Mr. Schmidt explained it helped him to understand it. It got  
20 him thinking that if that were true, what was the result? Based on what may be largely  
21 inaccurate numbers, it forced the city of Palo Alto to engage in a process to decide where 6,100  
22 new housing units could go. The Council has, with a lot of work force, PTC, and the other  
23 branches, ultimately identified 6,100 plus sites where that many units could go. If the HCD  
24 RHNA numbers are off by 100%, then what they really should have been planning for is 3,000.  
25 His belief is that in this RHNA cycle, it's highly unlikely that 3,000 new units will be built. Even if  
26 accurate lower numbers were figured, what this process has caused is potentially a longer term  
27 planning than RHNA thought. Currently the question is being asked how many units they might  
28 build, and how will they accommodate 6,100 units in the next eight years. In the next RHNA  
29 cycle when looking back we're going to see what really happened with the jobs market, and we  
30 are already set up for the next cycle. It may be that the sites will cover a large part of our RHNA  
31 needs for the next cycle. So, in that sense it's a benefit. Part of the reason he doesn't see them  
32 hitting 3,000 units in this cycle is economics. They are opportunity sites because they haven't  
33 been redeveloped in the last five or eight or ten or fifteen years. And part of the reason they  
34 haven't redeveloped residentially is the money isn't there. The profit of paying for that land,  
35 building housing, it's not showing up in the black or in the black enough to attract the  
36 development community. Now we are going to upzone, at least the opportunity sites, through  
37 this process, and that's going to increase their value. The people who own those sites are going  
38 to realize the value in the sale of those properties, and so the development community is still  
39 going to have to contend with what are now higher land prices to try to fit their projects. That is  
40 going to have a stifling effect on the kind of robust housing development that some might hope

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1 for in the next cycle. Mr. O’Neil submitted an email on the 11th and raised some interesting  
2 points. He made an assertion that while an economic or feasibility analysis is not expressly  
3 required by Housing Element law, it’s impliedly required to fully perform the site constraint  
4 analysis that is required by State Law and Commissioner Hechtman inquired if staff had any  
5 reaction to that notion.

6 Mr. Yang responded that it’s something that we’ve been discussing with their Housing Element  
7 consultant and with HCD. It was not staff’s understanding that a financial feasibility analysis was  
8 required as part of the Housing Element process, and so they are clarifying with HCD what HCD  
9 is looking for.

10 Commissioner Hechtman asked Ms. Eisberg to pull up the GM ROLM Housing Element focus  
11 area on Packet Page 73. He thought that was the area that Mr. O’Neil was talking about in  
12 asserting that nearly all of the opportunity sites are located in what he called a corner of south  
13 Palo Alto. Commissioner Hechtman inquired what percentage of the 6,000 plus new units are  
14 being accommodated in that area that is highlighted in blue or purple on the map.

15 Ms. Eisberg confessed she didn’t know, but I would try to figure that out if he wanted to move  
16 on.

17 Commissioner Hechtman stated he felt that Mr. O’Neil was trying make the point that it’s a  
18 high percentage, and that has some implications on a fair housing distribution. A number of  
19 public commenters shared that thought and he wondered if staff had a reaction to that  
20 consideration of whether packing that percentage in this area is going to continue the concerns  
21 of HCD and be counter to fair housing distribution.

22 Mr. Yang responded that his question might be better addressed to the Housing Element  
23 consultant team, because they’ve worked on AFAH analysis for many jurisdictions and are  
24 familiar with HCD’s approach to those issues. Staff’s initial take is that this area of Palo Alto,  
25 while not heavily residential right now, is actually a very high resource area in terms of an  
26 assortment of support services and amenities that one would want to see in a residential  
27 neighborhood. Thus, staff wouldn’t consider it a fair housing issue.

28 Ms. Eisberg followed up and stated that it looked like there are about 1,900 units zoned GM  
29 ROLM, not just in this area, but mostly in that area, so maybe 30% of the 28% of the inventory.

30 Commissioner Hechtman thanked Ms. Eisberg and said that was very helpful.

31 Commissioner Reckdahl commented that one thing the City is doing is we’re upzoning,  
32 increasing the residential density and asked if they should be decreasing the commercial  
33 density. That would make it less profitable to do a commercial, which would make it more likely  
34 to be residential.

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1 Ms. Eisberg answered that she believed there is a separate program in the Housing Element  
2 that looks at that very topic of potentially reducing commercial allowance. However, it's not  
3 part of this program.

4 Commissioner Reckdahl asked why it isn't part of this program.

5 Mr. Yang explained that this program is specifically about reducing... changing the physical  
6 constraints on sites that are on the inventory list. There's a very specific requirement in State  
7 Law, and that it is done by January 31st of 2024. There are a whole host of other programs that  
8 are going to occur over the eight year period.

9 Commissioner Reckdahl inquired if it would make Palo Alto's Housing Element more credible if  
10 we did that now.

11 Mr. Yang responded perhaps. All of our programs in the Housing Element are geared towards  
12 increasing the viability of housing production, and one of staffs challenges is prioritizing how  
13 they're going to tackle those.

14 Commissioner Reckdahl thought that this would have a lot of leverage because one of the  
15 biggest constraints that's preventing residential development is the fact that commercial  
16 development is so lucrative, or at least has been. One of his concerns is that when looking at  
17 the Fry's location and then at West Bayshore, both of those had townhouse projects.  
18 Townhouses are very popular right now, and more profitable than other rental units. If ROLM  
19 GM becomes townhouses, they're not going to meet the Housing Element and posed the  
20 question of if they should be adding to the GM ROLM, a minimum density that would  
21 encourage high density development there, either on some of the lots or all of the lots. And if  
22 so, should it be part of this program.

23 Mr. Yang explained that they do have a minimum density of, he thought, 20 units per acre  
24 proposed in the GM ROLM area, and it could certainly be higher if the PTC believed that makes  
25 sense.

26 Commissioner Reckdahl commented that he thought it would be a good thing. Another thing  
27 being proposed is increasing the density for both RM-20, 30, and 40. Increasing the maximum  
28 density, but not increasing the minimum density. In the same type of thing, at least maybe for  
29 RM-40, would they want to be bumping that minimum density up also to ensure that they get  
30 some high density projects. They city wants a variety of housing projects in Palo Alto, but not all  
31 micro units, however, they also don't want all townhouses either. Would it make sense to  
32 change the RM-40 minimum density?

33 Mr. Yang replied that is certainly something that the PTC could correct.

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1 Commissioner Reckdahl inquired about another program in the Housing Element that is not  
2 counting the FAR for three or four bedrooms, anything above two bedrooms don't count  
3 towards FAR to encourage more family sized units. However, he assumed that's the same as in  
4 the commercials, that would be a future program.

5 Ms. Eisberg answered that was right. She also believed that's a separate program to encourage  
6 family friendly housing.

7 Commissioner Reckdahl commented that it seems pretty easy to do, and he's not sure why they  
8 are not including that now, however he did understand there was a lot to go through.

9 Commissioner Templeton commented that she was going to do some follow up questions and  
10 comments based on some things her colleagues had said. Regarding comments from  
11 Commissioner Akin and Vice Chair Chang, she respectfully summarized how she felt about the  
12 material so far, and that doesn't speak to the potential, and it's still a work in progress.  
13 However, she had a sense that this presentation is not yet at the level of persuasiveness that  
14 this city is going to need to accept it. Meaning that the nature of the questions so far has been  
15 *where's the data, why are you suggesting that, help me understand*. Her suggestion would be to  
16 make their argument more persuasive to the general audience and that will help them be able  
17 to get on board. The PTC is channeling feedback from the public, feedback as they read through  
18 all the information and they need it to be a little more airtight, as far as a recommendation. She  
19 questioned lot coverage, permeability, underground parking and explained that she had the  
20 opportunity to hear from another local municipality that is trying to update their storm  
21 infrastructure because of what happened earlier this year, as far as a natural disasters and the  
22 space Vice Chair Chang mentioned has a significant risk to flood. When her kids were at the  
23 preschool that was in that space and it rained, the entire lot was flooded, and they couldn't get  
24 their kids out. It was pretty serious, and that's not a situation where you want to put an  
25 underground parking garage. She's really concerned about that and isn't sure if that's feasible.  
26 It is very close to the bay and will the geography of that terrain support taller houses. We don't  
27 want to have another situation like the early 20th Century in San Francisco where they build on  
28 too much sand. They need to make sure they understand that and that's in terms of  
29 persuasiveness, these are the kinds of things she's thinking about. Natural disasters, if there  
30 were an earthquake, or a flood, how is that specific space going to respond, and have they  
31 made sure that they can build safely there for 1,900 homes. People should be confident that  
32 they have built in a safe location. Regarding lot coverage, even people in dense housing or  
33 lower income, or lower priced point housing, those people need to be able to see plants and  
34 flowers too. She shared the concerns that have been expressed around that. Regarding a  
35 minimum density that Commissioner Reckdahl mentioned, it's a really interesting proposal. She  
36 just wanted to make sure that, like Commissioner Hechtman said, that Palo Alto can distribute  
37 spaces of minimum density throughout the city and not only in one area. She realized the way  
38 that this had been presented to us, the PTC's scope is just these two areas, however, going

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1 forward the PTC will be keeping an eye on that and making sure that there are also other  
2 spaces. Climate change, natural resources protecting the bay, and the Baylands are something  
3 else to think about. If they put a large number of very high density projects there, it's going to  
4 be different for what impact it will have on nearby environments. She recognized that they  
5 have had some amount of CEQA investigation there, but a lot of people make a lot of trash, a  
6 lot of sewage, a lot walking, and a lot of damage to the environment. They have to be  
7 thoughtful that they don't over intensify or impact on the Baylands because it's very close.  
8 Clustering in a very specific part of town is something she's very sensitive to and understands  
9 that the City wants to take advantage of places that present opportunities, but they also have  
10 to think about where they will be positioning this presumably entry level housing in an  
11 industrial zone, right beside 101. Looking at it through an environmental justice lens, is this  
12 going to be a less healthy part of Palo Alto. Are those residents going to have more impact on  
13 them by just the place where they're going to live, which ties back into... is this space not being  
14 like-enough to the rest of Palo Alto. On the one hand, there's some possibilities there that are  
15 really positive, being closer to work, bikeable to the Baylands and companies off the Baylands,  
16 et cetera, on the other hand, what are they doing to the community if a please is created that is  
17 so physically separate. It's easy to write that off and say, gosh, every neighborhood is different,  
18 but they are talking about a significant difference here and maybe that's what they have to do,  
19 but they need to be very intentional and aware of if that's the choices they are deciding to  
20 make.

21 Chair Summa thanked all of the commenters and emails they received on this topic. It's all very  
22 helpful. In particular, she was very interested in what Mr. Schmid brought up and is especially  
23 troubling when you look at the failure of the RHNA process over the last fifty years. Every cycle  
24 failed to achieve what it was supposed to achieve. By that, the market rate numbers were  
25 achievable, and the subsidized rates were never achievable, and the delta between the two got  
26 broader and broader with each RHNA cycle over eight years. This raises the question *why we*  
27 *continue doing it*. They need something better, and when we do complete it, it should be based  
28 on realistic data and there should be a process by which that can be adjusted. Nobody expected  
29 COVID and the massive effects and changes in the way people do business, and the way we live.  
30 It was a remarkable thing, actually. To the issues before us tonight, which are really the changes  
31 to address a more urgent statutory requirement to the Comp Plan and then to the Municipal  
32 Code and also to decide if we want to extend the new part of the municipal code 18.14, she's  
33 very concerned about reducing landscape standards also, because in the BASA area it will be  
34 very different than the rest of Palo Alto, and they aren't making room for anything except  
35 maybe courtyards above podium parking, which she finds very undesirable, and on rooftops. If  
36 they are going to have rooftops stand in for open space, then standards are needed for those  
37 rooftops, such as how much green they should have and how much shade they should have.  
38 Otherwise, they won't be usable by anybody. It will be a real heat island out there and she  
39 shared some of her colleagues' concerns that this is just going to be like 'not the other part' of  
40 Palo Alto. Which doesn't feel right to her. They may have to do it, but her concern is that it is

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1 going to be a very different area, and she didn't see the walkable amenities that maybe some  
2 people do in that area. Landscaping is a big deal to her, but that then affects height and  
3 footprint. Those are some of the trade-offs. Another consideration is the consequence  
4 associated with parcels that are opportunity sites that are not developed in this cycle, for the  
5 next cycle, and requested a reminder of what that consequence is.

6 Mr. Yang explained that if there are sites that are used in two consecutive housing elements  
7 that are not developed and the City want to use them again, they would then be required to  
8 provide a certain level of by-right development.

9 Chair Summa added that's one of the actual practical and real disadvantages of having an  
10 unrealistic number of units to produce in the first place. That would be unfortunate if it wasn't  
11 the City's fault, and it was due to the numbers being wrong. She is not interested in extending  
12 the new title 18.14 to the rest of the city. She believed there are too many unknowns and  
13 especially with HCD not having something suitable for the City yet, a housing element suitable  
14 for them, and didn't feel they have enough information on what those impacts would be. It  
15 makes it clunkier to use the document, because staff will have to look in two places. Chair  
16 Summa referred to Packet Page 72, and 18.20.030, Table 1. The change here was to an existing  
17 piece of code, and the change was to call out, instead of just multiple family housing, it was to  
18 make multiple family housing that are opportunity sites and multiple family housing that are  
19 not opportunity sites. She inquired about there not being CUP permitted in the multiple family  
20 housing element opportunity sites box, for MOR, and if that was a mistake or if staff didn't  
21 want it there.

22 Ms. Eisberg explained there's two separate lines there because they need to allow multi-family  
23 housing by-right, on those opportunity sites. However, in these zones there are, outside of the  
24 opportunity sites, other sites that are zones with potential hazardous materials in this area, and  
25 those are required to have a CUP.

26 Chair Summa questioned if for the housing opportunity sites, they don't need to put Permitted  
27 for MOR or CUP, for MOR.

28 Ms. Eisberg clarified that for MOR, currently there's no housing opportunity sites proposed in  
29 the MOR district.

30 Chair Summa thanked Ms. Eisberg for clarifying that. Chair Summa commented that she didn't  
31 know that the presentation needs to be more persuasive, and didn't quite understand that  
32 point; however, she didn't have other specific questions. She is very concerned about the  
33 landscaping and those impacts, particularly in the BASA area, because she believed the rest are  
34 spread out, and it's something they have to do regardless of how they may or may not like it.

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1 Vice Chair Chang commented that she concurred with Chair Summer and Commissioner Akin  
2 regarding extending 18.14 to the rest of Palo Alto and agreed with the current staff proposal to  
3 keep it a separate section for a number of reasons. One is that as highlighted by Commissioner  
4 Reckdahl, it sounds like these changes tie into a number of other programs and because they  
5 are located in one place right now, it's very easy to see how they could pull the other programs  
6 in and make it easier to find them. Secondly, there will be some changes to the Housing  
7 Element, and currently everything that they've touched in one location. She knows there's  
8 litigation in southern California and potentially coming forward in other parts of the state, and  
9 they're going to see how this whole process goes forward. She is one of the folks that thinks  
10 that some of the underlying assumptions potentially for the Housing Element numbers, may be  
11 unrealistic and there are situations where it doesn't serve Palo Alto's best interest to have  
12 inaccurate numbers to begin with because of some of these by-right implications for future use  
13 of the same sites. She believes it's best to keep things separate, for now, but that it may make  
14 sense once they've lived with 18.14 for a while, to revisit it at that time. Regarding the tables,  
15 Vice Chair Chang inquired how many Research Park housing opportunity sites are there right  
16 now, in the current Housing Element.

17 Ms. Eisberg stated she would look that up.

18 Vice Chair Chang liked Commissioner Reckdahl's comment about incorporating a minimum  
19 density component and would love to see the tables when the PTC sees this again. If they could  
20 see what the current minimum density is, they could adjust those, if necessary; and if there is  
21 no minimum density, it could be flagged because it's not currently in our tables. That would be  
22 helpful. She did recognize that they can't do everything right now and they are trying to pick  
23 and choose and implement those things that are required by law to be done in January 2024  
24 first. Her preference would be that when they adopt an ordinance, they adopt a minimum  
25 density, because she doesn't see why these multi-family parcels should be any different from  
26 our other multi-family parcels. There should be a minimum density because there is a specific  
27 goal for these. A number of other proposals that the PTC has approved, through the last twelve  
28 to twenty-four months, have densities that have not come anywhere near what could have  
29 been built on the properties because townhomes are so lucrative. If they want to see a variety  
30 of housing, that needs to happen. Commissioner Reckdahl's point about not counting FARs  
31 above a certain number of bedrooms, which is another program, goes hand in hand with part,  
32 1.1. If it's possible, she hoped that when they do adopt 18.14, staff will be able to incorporate  
33 both the minimum density, as well as that specific piece about the FAR above a certain number  
34 of bedrooms being a freebie. That will incentivize the right types of proposals to come in.

35 Commissioner Lu commented that he understands the dilemma of staff, regarding the point of  
36 being persuasive. This is a study session so they can figure out what the opportunities are to  
37 make the Housing Element better. Clarifying his point about Stanford, they offered three sites,  
38 and then proposed very different plans on two of them. One of them with the Builders Remedy,

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1 and he doesn't understand how the politics of Stanford landownership works, or to what extent  
2 leasers have the ability to advance proposals themselves. Something happened very  
3 dramatically for two of these three sites. This points to less cohesion in Stanford's approach  
4 than one might think. Given that, it seems totally reasonable to upzone parts of the Research  
5 Park and zone it like a GM zone and put the ball in their court. They don't have to pick the ball  
6 up. Secondly, they've already shown a willingness to build a pretty big builders remedy project  
7 on the McDonalds and fish market sites. He is generally fine with this extended zoning. Zoning  
8 on El Camino is like patchwork. El Camino is very difficult to get a unified zoning approach. In  
9 the GM and ROLM zones there's also less of a patchwork, but still a bit of a patchwork. The  
10 practical differences seem marginal as commissioners have mentioned. Most of those sites  
11 won't be developed, it's certainly cleaner, and the PTC may be predisposed to approve those  
12 sites anyway, they don't need to add them all into the Housing Element sites so that potential  
13 issues down the line are also kind of avoidable. He agreed that cramming housing along San  
14 Antonio is not ideal and while it may not be a horrible place, it is not clearly fair, or affirmatively  
15 fair. They should explore more opportunities to put out RFD's for downtown and Cal Ave  
16 parking lots, there are many more and they may not need to include all of them, including more  
17 should be considered. Similar upzoning for the shopping center, or maybe Cubberly, as  
18 Research Park. He supports clearer requirements for ground floor landscaping, clearer setbacks  
19 for El Camino, San Antonio area, along that vein; and minimum density, as people have  
20 mentioned. He would support holding the line on underground parking, where possible. He has  
21 strong negative feelings about surface parking and podiums. He would support lowering  
22 parking minimums as well, and including other programs to the extent that they can, as  
23 Commissioner Reckdahl mentioned for commercial offices.

24 Commissioner Hechtman commented that he heard a couple of commissioners mention  
25 reduced landscaping. His review of the Staff Report suggested that relocating landscaping is  
26 maybe a more accurate description and requested clarification, as his understanding was a  
27 certain percentage is still required but it can now be above the ground floor, where it will be  
28 enjoyed by the occupants of that building and possibly somewhat in a more private way. We're  
29 not reducing landscaping requirements, we're relocating them.

30 Ms. Eisberg stated he was correct.

31 Commissioner Hechtman continued with the comment from Commissioner Reckdahl about  
32 looking at reduction of the commercial areas as a compliment to entice greater residential.  
33 Believed they should examine that; however, he fears that when we do, they are going to find  
34 that it's actually going to be a site constraint. There's no vacant commercial land in Palo Alto  
35 right now. It's all built, it's being used, or it's vacant and available for rent. Let's say there's a  
36 50,000 square foot commercial building, and this new zoning that we're talking about will allow  
37 them to add 30,000 square feet of housing above it. If they have to reduce the commercial from  
38 50,000 to 30,000 square feet developers won't do that because the commercial is too valuable.

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1 Yes, it should be considered, however they need to be wary that they don't disincentivize  
2 people from rebuilding on their property in doing so. Similarly, he thinks that they should look  
3 at minimum density, but they need to very carefully consider it so to avoid a minimum number  
4 of units you have to have, with a maximum height and a maximum FAR. Would they be forcing  
5 people to have studio and one bedrooms, because that's all that will fit in the 30 units. There  
6 should be a number that's low enough, while ensuring that they don't end up with five units on  
7 a property that could accommodate 50. He liked the idea of a minimum, but I think we've got  
8 to look at that to get it right. The Chair correctly pointed out in conversation with Mr. Yang, that  
9 one of the negative by-products of an overreach by the HCD in setting our RHNA numbers is if  
10 these units, which we are identifying in this cycle, go through another cycle and still aren't built,  
11 then they become by-right development. If somebody is going to build by-right in Palo Alto, do  
12 they want them to build by-right where it has already been decided there should be housing  
13 compared withbuilders remedy applicants and SB 330 applications where they really don't want  
14 the density they're proposing, but they can get it by-right. A number of the commissioners have  
15 commented on their view of whether chapter 18.14 should or should not extend beyond  
16 opportunity sites. He doesn't feel he has the appropriate amount of information available to  
17 form an opinion. Maybe staff can go into more detail on the potential benefits and detriments  
18 of having 18.14 apply outside of opportunity sites, maybe with a couple of examples.  
19 Commissioner Hechtman provided comments on the language of the ordinances. Starting on  
20 Packet Page 72, we've got multiple family Housing Element opportunity sites subject to  
21 regulations in Chapter, and we've correctly cited 18.14.020, but then multiple family other  
22 sites, those that are not opportunity sites – but in also referencing 18.14.020 which, if it's not  
23 an opportunity site... That reference should not be there. If ultimately, it's going to be decided  
24 that it will comply to everything, fine. But if it's a multi-family that's not an opportunity site, so  
25 that 18.14 doesn't apply to it, then that reference needs to be removed. Packet Page 76,  
26 18.16.060B, is an added clause, starting with Accept. It says: Chapter 18.24. and the new  
27 language *Accept that sites designated as Housing Element*, there needs to be a comma there.  
28 This one appears three times here. First on Packet Page 77, the new subpart C at the very  
29 bottom of that page that says, "Combining district use regulations and design buildings  
30 standards shall not apply to exclusively residential project on Housing Element opportunity sites  
31 designed to accommodate lower income households". Staff needs to add "see 18.14.020". The  
32 same thing happens on Packet Page 79, the same language about low income households,  
33 toward the top of the page, and it appears on Page 75. It's the same reference, Commissioner  
34 Hechtman asked staff to take a look at that. Regarding if 18.14 will apply outside of opportunity  
35 sites, it's been clear throughout this project that the Council is not interested in opportunity  
36 sites in R-1 zones properties, with one exception, and that's the faith based properties. If we  
37 decide to apply 18.14 more broadly, across the city, that has to be accounted for. The intention  
38 will not be to also apply that to the R-1's not owned by faith based organizations. Relating to  
39 that, if it applies to other than opportunity sites, a faith based organization can buy an R-1  
40 house in a neighborhood and go multi-family. That's not an intention, however, that needs to

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1 be considered as another unintended consequence to look at as the discussion moves forward  
2 with extending 18.14 beyond the opportunity sites.

3 Commissioner Akin commented that he's not ready to commit to extending 18.14 yet, however  
4 he's not opposed to the idea of updating the baselines later, when there is better justification  
5 for doing so. He spent some time going through current projects in the pipeline to see what the  
6 City's FARs have been lately. In the first fifteen projects he had time to review, the mean FAR  
7 that is in the pipeline today is 2.2. One might say that's surprisingly high, but that average is  
8 high because there are a few builders remedy and density bonus projects in those first fifteen.  
9 Seven out of those fifteen are under 2 FAR. And two of them are under a FAR of 1. There's  
10 building going on today, even though higher FARs are not allowed. The right approach for the  
11 baseline is not completely clear to him, so he's not ready to apply it this early.

12 Chair Summa commented that is very interesting data and thanked Commissioner Akin for  
13 taking that time.

14 Commissioner Templeton expressed an interest in clarifying so that her persuasive comment  
15 earlier was understood. When asking staff to make proposals more persuasive, it was because  
16 she heard at least three commissioners ask for data to back up their recommendation, she was  
17 not talking about sales persuasive, rather technical persuasive. Be able to make it very clear  
18 what the recommendation is based on and justify it in a way that the PTC can all see at least  
19 where staff is coming from, even if they may not all agree. Having that objective data to  
20 support their recommendation would be very helpful for the community.

21 Chair Summa inquired about the blue annotations in the borders of the Comp Plan and wanted  
22 to verify that it was in fact... all the proposed changes are between Packet pages 40 and 44.

23 Ms. Eisberg responded yes, it's just the changes to the Land Use Designation definition.

24 Chair Summa continued that she doesn't think anybody has specifically commented on that, it  
25 was such a small amount of suggested changes she wanted to make sure that was correct and  
26 say that they all seem appropriate her. Regarding the value of commercial versus residential  
27 development, she believed the value per square foot is getting almost the same, and the  
28 difference is, partially, because the rental structure for commercial is very different than  
29 residential, and because the long-term leases not a hundred individual unit families  
30 complaining about things; it's a very different kind of property to own. Additionally, they have  
31 tried very many ways for a long time in Palo Alto, to reduce adding new commercial  
32 development but that's really on their plate tonight. She strongly believes that underground  
33 parking and podium parking are not desirable. She agrees with her colleague about that, and  
34 inquired if they aren't we reducing personal outdoor space, are they not requiring that for  
35 individual units... or was that eliminated.

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1 Ms. Eisberg answered that right now, this ordinance does not propose any changes to private  
2 open space. A few years ago, the City may have made changes to whether one could do  
3 common versus private, but this ordinance does not make any changes to private open space  
4 requirements.

5 Chair Summa thanked her for that clarification.

6 Commissioner Reckdahl commented regarding extending 18.14, he is in the same boat as  
7 everyone else. Down the road they probably do want to flow some of that back, but right now  
8 18.14 should be for the opportunity sites. Once all these programs are developed, they can  
9 revisit it for the rest of the city. He doesn't believe they are missing anything by holding off and  
10 not giving benefits to someone who's not going to use it. As far as relocating landscaping, as  
11 Commissioner Hechtman said, he had mixed feelings about it, because it is a constraint. He  
12 doesn't have an issue with the back of the lot. His concern with the front of the lots and  
13 creating about neighborhoods. Walking by podium parking and walking by trees are two  
14 different experiences. You have to have that ground floor, but at the back of the lot you can  
15 have it elevated, and that would make it easier to have underground parking and make it easier  
16 to build. Clustering everything down to GM and ROLM reminded him of Willie Sutton. He  
17 robbed banks because that's where the money was. The City is putting everything in that area  
18 because that's where the land is. That area is more likely to be developed than something  
19 that's brand new, second story, and very lucrative because of renting out office space. He does  
20 feel it is a little unfair to put it down there, but it's much more plausible that it's going to be  
21 redesigned than a new office building would be redesigned. Commissioner Hechtman talked  
22 about a minimum. Commissioner Reckdahl agreed there could be bad side effects, the big thing  
23 is it has to be high enough that they aren't forced to do some type of high rise and if the  
24 constraint is height that probably would be appropriate. He believed something along the scale  
25 down on San Antonio probably would be acceptable and a limit of sixty might be giving up  
26 units, and also giving up feasibility. Bumping that up would give us more room to implement a  
27 meaningful minimum density as well.

28 Vice Chair Chang asked if Ms. Eisberg had an answer to her question earlier about the Research  
29 Park sites, and where they are.

30 Ms. Eisberg answered there are seven sites and a total of 232 housing units going towards the  
31 RHNA.

32 Vice Chair Chang clarified there's seven sites, and three of them are the Stanford sites on El  
33 Camino.

34 Ms. Eisberg apologized and stated she was looking at PF. It's just that 330 El Camino site. So, it's  
35 just the Stanford site. There is just one.

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1 Commissioner Templeton requested clarification of if it's 232 all Stanford sites, or just the one.

2 Ms. Eisberg responded it's just one Stanford site, 3300 El Camino.

3 Vice Chair Chang continued and explained that if they are going to be pulling out those Stanford  
4 sites separately, unless they are thinking about extending the proposed changes in Table 2  
5 more broadly beyond 18.14 to all of Research Park, she didn't think it's helpful to have  
6 Research park covered in Table 2. Research Park is a huge opportunity for housing and without  
7 a really long and thoughtful discussion about what the maximum landscape coverage, what the  
8 maximum lot coverage, what the maximum density should be, what the maximum height  
9 should be, they shouldn't put anything there. It's a huge housing opportunity for the city, it's  
10 also a huge opportunity for planned neighborhoods, they just saw something that was zoned  
11 RM-30 go away, doesn't want their intention for this area to be incorrect. They could  
12 conceivably go really high in some places and go low in other places but they need to also  
13 consider carving out large parks, for a school; and feels strongly about removing Research Park  
14 from Table 2, because they're already defining those three Stanford sites separately in 18.14  
15 and Research Park merits a lot more thought unless they plan to rezone Research park more  
16 broadly that is a much larger discussion than something that should be done at the PTC. It's not  
17 constrained the same way as the rest of Palo Alto. Then related to that, it's a segway about  
18 Figure 4. When looking at Figure 4 and thinking about the BASA area and GM ROLM, this is just  
19 a plea for us to please look at this area. It's not a PTC level decision to be made, but it is a  
20 school board and City Council level decision to be made. Please think about services for the  
21 1,600 units that are going to go in there with probably 1,600 kids, if not double that. That's  
22 elementary schools in Palo Alto. That is four elementary schools. There is a great deal of  
23 planning that needs to go into developing Research park.

24 Chair Summa agreed fully.

25 Commissioner Reckdahl noted that south of San Antonio is actually Mountainview High School,  
26 and Mountainview School District, so the GM should really be reaching out to Mountainview.

27 Vice Chair Chang said yes, south of San Antonio is, but that little corner of Figure 4 is not and  
28 that's where, by her calculations and a prior iteration of the Housing Element inventory list, it  
29 was about 1,600 units.

30 Commissioner Reckdahl stated that in Figure 4, the area in the far right there is Palo Alto city  
31 but Mountainview school district.

32 Vice Chair Chang stated she would love the data on that, but regardless, there's at least one  
33 elementary school going in there, if not two.

34

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1 Commissioner Reckdahl totally agreed that between planning and parks and bike paths and  
2 schools, there's a lot of stuff that needs to be planned.

3 Commissioner Templeton commented that there are lots throughout this city, most notably  
4 Research Park that has a tremendous vast opportunity for them to consider in a completely  
5 different way. There are challenges like the plumes are there, and it's beautifully landscaped  
6 already. If they ripped all that out and didn't put something back that would be a loss for the  
7 community. Additionally, she worked at tallest building over there and bird strikes were very  
8 common. They can't go very high. It was only a two or three story building on top of a hill.  
9 Those are migratory paths, this is right by the Baylands, it would be devastating to the wildlife  
10 community to have very tall buildings with that much glass that residential would require. She  
11 would be very concerned, even with the technology for safe windowpanes, which it had and  
12 even was named as being bird friendly. They lost multiple birds a day and it was really hard. She  
13 would not want to think about encouraging high buildings in that space and it would be a huge  
14 mistake. Yes, it is an opportunity for housing, but there has to be a balance between both  
15 housing and the needs of the natural resources and the environment. There's also the flooding  
16 risk which had already been mentioned but she wanted to make sure for good coverage that it  
17 was mentioned again because it floods a lot there, and it is right by the bay and that land is  
18 already saturated. It's going to be pretty risky to build underground parking in those spaces.  
19 She couldn't think of any underground lots on the other side of 101, and maybe the 101 makes  
20 it far enough away where it would be suitable. As far as schools are concerned, this area is  
21 pretty close to Cubberly, which is why they retained the property. It would be a huge  
22 development project to get that high school usable again. We do have some adjacent sites like  
23 Greendale and preschool and family buildings that could probably turn into an elementary  
24 school, but those facilities are also very outdated. While the land exists, the facilities don't exist  
25 and that's been a source of much debate over the last half decade, maybe more, about what  
26 direction they should go with that property. It's a long ways off, even though the property is  
27 there.

28 Chair Summa commented that she appreciated the comments about bird safety, it's really  
29 important. Obviously, they won't put underground parking where the soils do not allow for that  
30 in any location. She was more concerned with podium parking on El Camino and Commissioner  
31 Lu said she was anti underground parking and podium. She believes underground parking  
32 should be kept underground, when possible, to free up the ground grade for other uses such as  
33 housing or parks. Regarding podium parking, she considers unsightly and just not something  
34 they would want in Palo Alto.

35 Chair Summer asked Ms. Eisberg and Ms. French if they received what they needed in terms of  
36 feedback from the PTC.

37

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1 Ms. Eisberg responded it had been very helpful, and she appreciated all of the input. She will be  
2 passing along the comments to staff and the consultants. The zoning ordinance can really add  
3 on to the zoning stuff, but she knew they have a number of comments about bigger planning  
4 issues that will need to be considered.

5 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

6 3. Approval of Planning & Transportation Commission Draft Verbatim Minutes of  
7 August 9, 2023  
8

9 Chair Summa requested a motion.

10

11 MOTION

12 Commissioner Hechtman moved to approve the draft verbatim minutes of August 9, 2023 as  
13 revised.

14

15 SECOND

16 Commissioner Reckdahl seconded the motion.

17

18 Chair Summa requested a roll call vote.

19

20 MOTION PASSED 6 (Akin, Chang, Lu, Summa, Hechtman, Reckdahl) -0 -1 (Templeton abstain)

21 **Commission Action:** Motion by Akin, seconded by Lu. Pass 6-0-1 (Templeton abstain)

22

23 **Committee Items**

24 None

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## 1 Commissioner Questions, Comments or Announcements

2 Chair Summa called for a motion to cancel the late September PTC meeting.

3

### 4 MOTION

5 Vice Chair Chang moved that they officially cancel the PTC meeting on September 27th.

6 After confirming with Mr. yang that a motion was not necessary, Vice Chair Chang retracted her  
7 motion.

8 Commissioner Templeton reported that Senator Josh Becker is having an open house. He  
9 recently relocated his district office from San Mateo down to Menlo Park, which is very  
10 accessible. She encouraged everyone to go by on Friday September 22nd between 2:00 and  
11 4:30.

12 Commissioner Hechtman reported that The City, in conjunction with Valley Water, was going to  
13 replace the levee gate at Byxbee Park and it was thought that the project was going to take  
14 possibly three summers and during that entire period the travel path would be closed. Last  
15 week he spoke with Valley Water while they were doing an inspection of the improvement and  
16 they told him that they've decided they don't need to do that massive replacement project for  
17 maybe another twenty or thirty years and will instead do a refurbishment of the existing  
18 improvement which would likely close the path for only a summer. Additionally, it will be a  
19 couple of summers from now. That is great news for hikers and bikers that love to get out that  
20 way.

21 Commissioner Reckdahl commented that September 29th there will be a moonlight run down  
22 to the Baylands. It used to be a great party before COVID, so hopefully it regains its momentum.

23 Commissioner Templeton reported that she attended the Parkland, for the expansion  
24 dedication of the Parkland at Boulware Park over near the Fry's site, the Mayor was there, and  
25 Council Member Lauing was there, and it was really nice. She met members of the Ventura  
26 community who were all excited and she met the guy who found the lot and connected the  
27 owners of the lot and the city people so we could buy it. It was really cool, and I just wanted to  
28 share as she thought of all the hard work the PTC put into that project. It's a great project and  
29 the whole thing is already demolished and underway, so it's exciting.

30 Chair Summa reported she attended the Council meeting last night and they approved the  
31 PTC's unanimous recommendation to change the underlying land use from CS for the three

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1 commercial sites, to mixed use, which is the SOFA, and it was incorporated into the staff's  
2 recommendation. Chair thanked staff for their hard work on that.

3 **Adjournment**

4 9:00 pm

5

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