



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: Good evening, everyone. Welcome to the September 13th Planning and Transportation Commission and Ms. Dao, will you call the roll please?

ROLL CALL

Ms. Veronica Dao, Administrative Associate: Chair Summa?

Chair Summa: Here.

Ms. Dao: Vice-Chair Chang?

Vice-Chair Chang: Here.

Ms. Dao: Commissioner Akin?

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2 Commissioner Akin: Here.

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4 Ms. Dao: Commissioner Hechtman?

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6 Commissioner Hechtman: Present.

7

8 Ms. Dao: Commissioner Lu?

9

10 Commissioner Lu: Here.

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12 Ms. Dao: Commissioner Templeton?

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14 Commissioner Templeton: Here.

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16 Ms. Dao: Commissioner Reckdahl?

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18 Commissioner Reckdahl: Here.

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20 Ms. Dao: We have quorum.

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Chair Summa: Thank you so much and at this time we have public comment, and that's for anyone who'd like to make comments to the Board, the Commission about things that are not on the agenda. Veronica, do we have any speakers either here or in zoom?

Oral Communications

The public may speak to any item not on the agenda. Three (3) minutes per speaker.^{1,2}

Ms. Dao: One raised hand on zoom from Michael Quinn. You can unmute yourself.

Michael Quin: Now might now be the right time to comment on the rezoning so I think I'll save it for later, thank you.

Chair Summa: Okay, thank you for that, and join us later.

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

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

Chair Summa: So, at this time I can ask if there are any Agenda changes, additions or deletions?

Ms. Amy French, Chief Planning Official: No changes.

Chair Summa: No changes, so now it's time for any City official reports that we have.

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1 City Official Reports

2 1. Directors Report, Meeting Schedule and Assignments

3 Ms. Amy French, Chief Planning Official: Thank you, I'm going to share my screen. Good
4 evening, Amy French, Chief Planning Official, I have on the screen our meeting schedule coming
5 up and a couple of items to share, so we are not likely to meet on September 27th, barring any
6 unforeseen circumstances, so give you back your night. A October 11th Planning Commission we
7 have Safe Streets and we have a Study Session on Amendments to what we're doing tonight,
8 Part two. Then, just a recap, the City Council, I did mention this at our last meeting, that I would
9 share what we're doing with this PDA application, so I wanted to just kind of cover what's
10 happened this week with Council briefly, and then what's upcoming for next Monday. So, this
11 week, Council had a busy week and they approved the parklets, Permanent Parklets Ordinance,
12 on a 7-0 vote, and so that included changes to Title 17 that the Planning and Transportation
13 Commission recommended. And then last night Sobrato project was approved as well, on a 7-0
14 vote. Next Monday, we have a couple of items, and I should say we had representation from
15 Planning Commissioners at both of those. And then next Monday we have two items, one is this
16 priority development area application that we've submitted. We're calling it BASA, which is the
17 Bayshore, Alma, San Antonio, there's a map on the side here, kind of dashed purple-y mulberry
18 colored line. And as well, a One Priority site. So we've submitted an application by a quick
19 deadline back in July, and now we're going to Council to get a support resolution to move
20 ahead with this PDA application. And, I can say more about that later, but it's not on the

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1 Agenda to talk in depth or have interactive conversation, I apologize for that. And then also
2 next Monday we have Elsworth Place and the 2901 Middlefield, both PC's going towards
3 Council Action; and then on October 2nd, the Council will hear the Electrification Equipment
4 Ordinance that we took up, was it just last week, anyways, on the 30th, two weeks ago. And, so,
5 we'll have a new rep for that. In October, as well as prescreening for a development agreement
6 amendment. So, that's basically what I have to say, I think we might have Rafael, who would
7 like to speak.

8

9 Chair Summa: Thank you. Rafael, Mr. Rius.

10

11 Mr. Rius: Hey, I'm here, yes, Rafael Rius, Senior Engineer with the Office of Transportation. I
12 don't really have any updates for the Commission today, but available for any questions.

13

14 Chair Summa: Okay, thank you for that. I guess that's the end of the staff report...

15

16 Ms. French: I think so. I'm just sharing on my screen though, if anyone wants to go and look at
17 the report, I'm happy to send that out for next Monday's PDA.

18

19 Chair Summa: Okay.

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1 Ms. French: And I have some bullets on the screen if anyone just wants to linger, looking at
2 that. But it's time to move on, so...

3

4 Chair Summa: Okay, and I see a light from Commissioner Hechtman.

5

6 Commissioner Hechtman: Thank you Chair. Ms. French, When will the decision be made
7 whether the September 27th PTC meeting will be canceled? Is it likely to be cancelled
8 (interrupted)

9

10 Ms. French: I believe... Yeah, it's likely to be cancelled because we're planning to continue this
11 item to October 11th, to give time to staff and the consultant to prepare for the next meeting
12 on this; too quick turnaround.

13

14 Commissioner Hechtman: So, are we already deciding now, or are we waiting 'til the end of our
15 discussion tonight to decide? I'm trying to figure that out.

16

17 Ms. French: Yeah, good question. Well, we've done that before, where we waited until the end,
18 and we needed it. So, I guess it's the pleasure of the Commission, but I'm... I'm happy enough if
19 someone wants to make a motion and do that, if that's desired.

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1 Commissioner Hechtman: Well, I guess my thought on that is let's have our discussion under
2 Agenda Item 2 tonight, and I think the hope is we'll get through and be able to make
3 comments, and then it will make sense to come back at the first meeting in October, to resume
4 that discussion, but let's see when we get through our discussion tonight, whether that still
5 makes the best sense.

6

7 Chair Summa: That's fine. I thought in October though, you were coming back with new
8 information, I didn't think this meeting would need to be continued.

9

10 Ms. French: I guess it's Part II, being for action at the next meeting with another report.

11

12 Chair Summa: Okay. So will this be a continued meeting, or a new meeting?

13

14 Ms. French: No, yeah.

15

16 Chair Summa: Okay. That's what I thought. Okay.

17

18 Commissioner Hechtman: So, the only reason then, we would have to have the meeting on
19 September 27, is if for some reason, after four or five hours of discussion tonight, we're still at
20 it and exhausted, and need to continue this discussion from this Agenda Item to the 27th.

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Chair Summa: I hope that's not true, but I believe that's correct, so we might as well do that at the end of the meeting, if everyone is agreeable. Thank you. Anyone else?

Study Session

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

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

Chair Summa: Seeing no light, we'll go to Item 2, which is Study Session on amendments to the Land Use Element of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan and the Palo Alto Municipal Code. And with that, I believe Ms. French has a presentation, or Ms. Eisberg.

Ms. Amy French, Chief Planning Official: Yes, we're joined by Jean Eisberg, who is on our screen, she'll present. Thank you, Jean.

Chair Summa: Thank you very much. Ms. Eisberg.

Ms. Jean Eisberg, Consultant: Okay thank you; good evening, Chair Summa and members of the Commission, I'm Jean Eisberg with Lexington Planning, a consultant for the city. So, tonight we are talking about implementation of the Housing Element. Just to recap where we are: In May the Planning Commission recommended, and the City Council approved and adopted the

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1 Housing Element. The City sent that Housing Element to HCD in June, and then received a
2 comment letter requesting changes from HCD just a few weeks ago in August. So, there's two
3 parallel path efforts happening now. The top is revisions of the Housing Element. We expect
4 that to come back to the Commission, probably before the end of the year. But, that is not the
5 subject of tonight's meeting. So, tonight, we're not talking about the Housing Element, the
6 changes to the Housing Element, things related to the RHNA. What we are talking about is
7 implementation. So, specifically there is a program 1.1, which under State Housing Element
8 Law, has a very specific timeline, so we're starting the implementation of that program now,
9 and then other zoning amendments, the Planning Commission will see coming forward in the
10 next six months, and over the next several years, in addition to implementation of other
11 programs. And so, State Housing Element Law says that if you are rezoning sites to meet the
12 RHNA, those rezoning need to happen in the first year of the Plan adoption, which technically
13 was supposed to happen last January 2024, and so those rezonings must take place by January
14 of next year, January 2024. So, that's Program 1.1A and the subject of our conversation tonight.
15 We are adding on to that Program 1.1B, which is rezoning in the GM (general manufacturing)
16 and ROLM area (research, office, light manufacturing) within a specific area of the city. And
17 these are rezonings required beyond the RHNA. So, these are just additional rezonings that
18 were approved as part of the Housing Element, and they carry the same timeline in the Housing
19 Element, and so because they effect the same sections of the zoning ordinance, we're
20 proposing to do them all together. So, a little more context from the Housing Element, Chapter

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1 three of the Housing Element analyzed physical feasibility of existing zoning standards. It took
2 from proto-typical sites across zoning districts in the city and tested the combination of
3 development standards. And so, the key questions were *Do these current zoning standards*
4 *allow development at planned densities;* and that's the combination of heights, and setbacks,
5 and floor area ratio (FAR) and residential densities. The second question was *Do any of these*
6 *standards represent constraints for development?* And so working with an architect and
7 analyzing these sites, we determined that yes, there are some constraints. Specifically, in the
8 landscape coverage requirements, which is like a lot coverage requirement, but requiring green
9 space at the ground level, represented a constraint. And in certain districts, additionally height,
10 lot coverage and parking constraints in getting to that planned density that was identified in the
11 Housing Element. And so, what Program 1.1 does, is calls for increasing residential density and
12 FAR where residential density is not regulated, and then again, this recommendation for a
13 couple changes to other development standards. So, our step here is taking that information
14 and then identifying the specific modifications to the zoning standards. And so, working with
15 this architect, this chart, which is in the Staff Report, starts to reveal the relationships between
16 lot coverage, between FAR and height, and so, you'll see that the Staff report recommends
17 specific FAR's, which are a proxy for density in zoning districts that don't regulate density, or
18 that regulate [19:43 TIMESTAMP : inaudible] density and FAR. But this is just to give you an idea
19 of how we came up with these numbers. And so, using those site tests and these formulas,
20 identifying the development standards you see in the draft ordinance. So, just to summarize a

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1 few key changes that are proposed in the draft ordinance. So first, and by Program 1.1A, first
2 thing is the rezone sites that are inventory sites and currently do not allow multi-family
3 housing. So, this is the R1 District, which is generally a single family district, the Housing
4 Element identifies faith based institutions, typically parking lots on church or other religious
5 institution sites, in that ROLM district, the RP district, which is research park, GM and PF –
6 which is public facility. So today, those zoning districts do not permit multi-family housing and
7 this draft ordinance would allow multi-family housing on these Sites Inventory sites. Second
8 program is to upzone to increase density as stated in the Housing Element or floor area ratio
9 where it's regulated. Third is to modify standards to reduce constraints like that landscape
10 coverage constraint that I mentioned, to ensure the development is feasible at planned
11 densities, so that when you combine all those different land-use controls, a project can actually
12 still meet the planned density. And then lastly, the rezoning includes other statutory
13 requirements, for example, on sites that accommodate lower income households, projects
14 need to be allowed to build out at 100% residential uses. So, some specific changes, depending
15 on the district, the numbers are a little bit different, but in general the current densities of 20-
16 50 units an acre get bumped up to 30-50 units an acre. Zoning districts that currently don't
17 regulate density, wouldn't regulate density going forward. FAR's, floor area ratios, the range
18 right now are between 0.5 and 1.25, and you see those going up to between 1.25 and 2.5. And
19 the other key modification, as I mentioned, allowing that landscape coverage requirement to
20 be met above the ground level, and you can see what that might look like here, you've got an

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1 open space above a parking podium, rather than at the ground level. Another key aspect of the
2 program is specific zoning standard changes for three of the Stanford University owned sites,
3 and the development standards are still underway, and are not included in the packet. We will
4 include that in the public hearing next month. But those are those three sites that you can see
5 them pictured here below. Additionally, at the same time, I mentioned that the City is working
6 on responses to the HCD comment letter, and so we may see some additional sites with site
7 specific standards proposed over the next month. So, stay tuned for that. So, shifting to
8 program 1.1B, so this is a specific focus area in these two zoning districts. Generally, west of
9 Bayshore Freeway, and surround by purple here and this kind of funny shaped blue donut here.
10 So, there's three tiers of development standards for these GM, ROLM zoning districts and I
11 don't think I explained it that well in the Staff Report, so just to put a finer point on it, these
12 mapped areas are intended for the highest intensity, and so you see the highest FAR's are
13 densities proposed for this specific area. Second is opportunity sites, those are Housing Element
14 opportunity sites. Outside of this mapped area, elsewhere in the city, there's a bump for
15 moderate and more moderate intensity. And then lastly, the existing condition would still apply
16 to areas outside of the opportunity zones areas outside of the mapped area, where those base
17 district regulations would still apply. So essentially, same zoning districts, but three different
18 tiers of intensity. Now, in that mapped focus area, there's a more significant increase according
19 to Program 1.1B, Density going from thirty units an acre to ninety units an acre, and so you see
20 a number of these development standards changing, because all the development standards

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1 work together. So the FAR has to increase to accommodate that density, the height goes from
2 thirty-five to fifty feet, depending on the zoning district, to up to sixty feet, again modifications
3 to the lot coverage, and then a parking reduction in that two-plus bedroom category.
4 Attachment A, is changes to the Comprehensive Plan. So, as you may recall, the Comprehensive
5 Plan both needs to be internally consistent, so the Housing Element needs to be consistent with
6 the Land Use Element, but also consistent with the Zoning Ordinance, as required by State Law.
7 And so, there are some key amendments that are required to the land use designation
8 definitions in the Comprehensive Plan to make sure that multi-families already allowed in all of
9 the land use designations, but making sure that the densities and the FARs are consistent. So, in
10 some cases where the density or FAR expressed in the comp plan, may be exceeded in the
11 zoning ordinance. This provides some breadcrumbs to introduce that concept. So, you'll see
12 those comments annotated, the electronic version of the Packet online, you can see these
13 annotations, they did not print in the hard copy, so everyone received an updated copy of this
14 Attachment 1, but we'll make sure that's more clear the next time around. So, what are some
15 of the effects of these zoning changes? So, first of all, these zoning changes will help meet State
16 Law requirements and that timeline to complete by January. And so, that's why we're pushing
17 this forward now, even though the Housing Element is still being revised. Second, this
18 completes some key programs of the Housing Element, all of the programs in the Housing
19 Element are required to be implemented and so this jumpstarts us on that effort. Third, these
20 zoning changes will improve the physical feasibility to meet the planned densities that are

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1 identified in the Housing Element, and in that way, can help increase unit yield, which can also
2 increase affordable housing production based on the City's inclusionary requirement, and/or
3 generate more in-lieu fees. So, as a consequence of these changes, this will reset what's called
4 the base density and the bonus density allowed under State Density Bonus Law. And, so you
5 could see State Density Bonus Law projects being larger than what you might see today. And
6 then lastly, this draft ordinance creates a new chapter in the Housing Element. And we've done
7 that to try to make it, in some ways as simple as possible to identify the proposed changes, but
8 it does add some complexity. So, our Housing Element opportunity site now will need to look in
9 two chapters to understand what regulations apply to the zone. Well, this new Chapter 18.14 as
10 well as the base district chapter. So our recommendation tonight is asking the Commission to
11 hold a study session to provide feedback on the draft ordinance, including the Comp Plan
12 amendments and the zoning amendments, and then related to the previous slide, the six year
13 complexity, the staff report poses the question to the Commission. Right now, the draft
14 ordinance is proposed to be applicable only to the opportunity sites, but for your consideration,
15 it could instead apply to all sites in the city, not just the Housing Element opportunity sites. This
16 could have some advantages in that we wouldn't need to create the separate chapter, we could
17 just amend the base districts, and could simplify the code for staff, for applicants, for decision
18 makers, but would apply to that broader range of sites. As Ms. French indicated, we're planning
19 to come back for a public hearing with the PTC about a month from now, October 11th, and

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1 then we would anticipate a hearing with the City Council in November. That concludes my
2 presentation, I'm happy to answer questions. Thank you.

3

4 Chair Summa: Thank you very much Ms. Eisberg. Do I have any clarifying questions from... Mr.
5 [Commissioner] Hechtman?

6

7 Commissioner Hechtman: Thank you, three questions. First, Appendix D, to the Housing
8 Element is the list of opportunity sites, and it's referenced throughout our packet tonight, but I
9 couldn't find in our packet, a copy of it. Did I miss it? Or is it not there, and per one of your
10 slides, it looks like it's possible, it wasn't entirely clear to me that we may be actually adding
11 more opportunity sites to whatever is on that list now.

12

13 Ms. Eisberg: Yes, so, I will include it in the next report. It is an Appendix, or an attachment to
14 the Housing Element and it is the sites inventory list. And so, based on the comments from
15 HCD, the City is exploring and going back in and looking at some existing sites, the City has been
16 approached by developers who are interested in adding sites to the opportunity sites list, so,
17 the City is looking at options for that sites inventory, and yes it's possible some additional sites
18 could be added, and eventually Appendix D could change at the next iteration of the Housing
19 Element.

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1 Commissioner Hechtman: Thank you. The second question, one of your early slides indicated
2 our deadline for rezoning, January 31 of next year, as to certain segments of the rezoning and
3 the GM/ROLM which we are intending to do at the same time for efficiency reasons. When I
4 think of rezoning, what I think it traditionally means is changing the base district designations.
5 But from I read in the staff report, we're not ... I couldn't tell that we're actually doing that on
6 any property. What we're really doing is providing a new chapter and some text amendments
7 to change what's allowed in ... on opportunity sites at least, in the base district designations. Is
8 that right?

9

10 Ms. Eisberg: That's right. So, you're revealing some of the complexity that we've created. We
11 created this new chapter that essentially modifies the development standards in the base
12 district. But you're right, we are not changing the base district.

13

14 Commissioner Hechtman: Okay. And then the final question, which I think you've alluded to
15 here, we're looking at language here... we've got four attachments tonight with language from
16 the Housing Element, and a new chapter, and some ordinance changes, and I think those
17 appear to be based on the Housing Element as it was approved by the Council but before
18 revisions to try to address the August letter of the HCD. So, it's possible that the versions of
19 these attachments that we've seen tonight, that we'll discuss in the study session, are actually

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1 going to change, need to be changed to address comments from HCD in the last round. Is that
2 ... am I understanding that possibility right?

3
4 Ms. Eisberg: To some extent. I would say that based on my review of the HCD letter, there are
5 questions about the sites inventory, so that's the Appendix D that I failed to include in your
6 packet, they weren't so much questions about Program 1.1A or B, so, we're moving forward
7 with this based on the statutory timelines but also we feel confident about moving forward
8 with this program.

9
10 Commissioner Hechtman: Alright, those are my preliminary questions. Thank you.

11
12 Chair Summa: I'm not seeing any other lights, oh, Commissioner Reckdahl.

13
14 Commissioner Reckdahl: Can I have some clarification about the email that Commissioner Akin
15 sent out talking about how the state interprets both FAR and density, maybe is Albert online,
16 can he give us some clarification?

17
18 Mr. Yang: Yeah, I'm sorry, could you repeat the question.

19

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1 Commissioner Reckdahl: The question that Commission Akin sent, asking about density and
2 FAR and how that.... If you don't designate... if your district does not specify a maximum
3 density, FAR is the proxy, and if you're using the housing density bonus law, you can waive that
4 and use whatever the highest density that's used by the City. Can you clarify those points?

5

6 Mr. Yang: Yeah, so, under density bonus law, a property owner can come in and propose a
7 project that meets the density that is stated in the city's code, or in the city's General Plan; and
8 if they are meeting that density, they are... they can request an unlimited number of waivers
9 from our physical development standards. So, let's say we have a density of 30 units per acre, if
10 they come in and propose 28 or 29 or 30 units per acre, but they are proposing larger units than
11 we are anticipated, they could request a waiver to exceed our FAR potentially exceed the
12 height regulation, or intrude into setbacks. And that is the case (interrupted)

13

14 Commissioner Reckdahl: So, it's not unconstrained, it's just that the number of restraints are
15 reduced.

16

17 Mr. Yang: Right. The constraint... when you specify a maximum density, the constraint is that
18 maximum density, but the other constraints such as FAR, height, and setbacks may need to be
19 waived.

20

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1 Commissioner Reckdahl: Okay.

2

3 Mr. Yang: If you don't specify a maximum density, which is the case for us in zones like the CS
4 zone, then HCD will use, and State Law uses FAR as a proxy. So, they will look at your FAR [TIME
5 STAMPED 34:14 Scrambled Audio] and they'll say Oh, you know, you could accommodate
6 (interrupted) sixty units per acre. Something like that.

7

8 Chair Summa: Can you back up a little, and repeat, you were breaking up.

9

10 Mr. Yang: Oh, I'm sorry. So, in zones where we do not regulate through maximum density,
11 State Law instead looks to FAR as the proxy. And in those cases a property owner is entitled to a
12 percentage increase in FAR in line with the amount of affordable housing they provide, under
13 density bonus law, but that is ... the City retains some level of control over the physical
14 development, but we again, we wouldn't be controlling a units per acre regulation in that
15 situation.

16

17 Commissioner Reckdahl: Okay. And didn't your reply also say something about you can use the
18 highest density that's used in the city?

19

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1 Mr. Yang: It's not the highest density that's used in the city, it is if there is an inconsistency
2 between the zoning code and the general plan...

3

4 Commissioner Reckdah!: Okay. Yup. That makes sense. Okay Thank you.

5

6 Chair Summa: Any other questions? Okay then, I think we will go to the public at this time. I
7 know we have one group of five, do we others and how many speakers do we have Ms. Dao.

8

9 Ms. Dao: One group of five and six in person and I see five hands online.

10

11 Chair Summa: Okay. Alright, so the group will get up to fifteen minutes and three minutes for
12 each speaker, so we can go ahead and call our speakers.

13

14 **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

15

16 Ms. Dao: So, we'll start with our group of speakers, we have Greg Schmid, speaking on behalf of
17 Paul Machado, Ann Balin, Terri Holzimer, Jo Ann Mandinach, Joyce Schmid, and Mary Gallagher.

18

19 Chair Summa: Thank you and welcome former Council Member Greg Schmid.

20

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1 Greg Schmid (Speaking for Paul Machado, Ann Balin, Joyce Schmid, Mary Gallagher, Jo Ann
2 Mandinach): Thank you for the honor of speaking to you tonight on behalf of pass. The goal of
3 the PTC is to provide an open forum for public discussion of issues critical to the future of our
4 community. I'm talking with you tonight because I'm very concerned that the state is forcing
5 Palo Alto to put up a rash of new buildings based on numbers that are completely outdated.
6 Tonight's PT Agenda is based on a consultants report. This report recommends major changes
7 in zoning throughout Palo Alto. Changes that would foster tremendous amounts of new dense
8 housing. The rebuilding order to avoid builders remedy. Consultant tells us that six thousand
9 plus new housing units will be needed in Palo Alto between 2023 and 2031. But those housing
10 numbers were based on job growth projections made in 2019, that have been shown to be
11 completely and dramatically wrong. The consultants basic assumptions about business growth
12 are wrong and therefor the projected number of new dense housing is also wrong. The
13 numbers in the current planned bay area started with an overly aggressive jobs forecast by HCD
14 to take place in the bay area between 2023 and 2031. Then the planners added a gag rule. They
15 made it illegal to have any public discussion of lowering the number of projected new jobs
16 during the period 2023 to 2031. Yes, you heard me right. From now until 2031, the planners
17 have forbidden us to question those fallacious numbers of projected new jobs. Old numbers
18 generated four years ago. And, as we all know, the world has changed since then. Quite
19 dramatically. We know that COVID has fostered remote working, that has been widely
20 accepted. The number of in-office workdays at many corporations have been cut by up to forty

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1 percent. That's a forty percent decrease in the use of existing workspaces. And further, work
2 force numbers, the number of workers has leveled off and are even falling throughout the bay
3 area. The two state agencies involved in the planning process ... Department of Finance, and
4 the Department of Housing and Community Development have quietly responded to the
5 changing workplace environment by updating their numbers and actions. The DOF had ruled in
6 2019 that the new jobs and housing numbers in the bay area generated by Planned Bay Area
7 were "reasonable". In early 2020, they forecast a bay area population increase of 17% to occur
8 between 2020 and 2030. But in April of this year, they quietly updated their 2020-2030
9 forecast. Instead of an increase in population, they now predict a population decrease of 1.7%
10 in the bay area. Decrease of 1.2% for Santa Clara County. That's right. The DOF is now saying
11 that population in the bay area will not be growing over the next seven years, it will actually be
12 getting smaller. HCD is also reworking their base numbers. We can see this by the fact that
13 when they rejected our Housing Element on August 2023, they demanded that we build new
14 housing in commercial areas. In just one limited area, the GMROL, the consultants are asking us
15 to eliminate up to 1,400 job sites for new housing, but without adjusting the 2019 jobs number,
16 that justifies the housing need. Both state agencies are now in accord that their aggressive new
17 jobs forecast made four years ago, and the subsequent need for new housing, were
18 dramatically overstated. But they are keeping this quiet and not changing any of the
19 requirements based on the changed new numbers. Where does PTC come in? One, this is the
20 first opportunity the public has to openly discuss the housing element in the last ten months.

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1 Because of that gag rule passed. The city's Comprehensive Plan requires us to review the ratio
2 of jobs to employed residence every four years. The last review was 2019. So a review is due
3 this year. The FTC needs to discuss this review before approving the housing numbers projected
4 to you. Two, the PTC or the City needs to hold an open public meeting with representatives
5 from HCD and DOF to publicly discuss alternative jobs to housing ratio. The California code
6 mandates HCD to produce a guidebook for such discussions. But it's difficult to have one since
7 HCD has never published such a guidebook. The PTC should pay special attention to the longer
8 term financial impact of building dense housing. Most dense housing developments have their
9 affordable units subsidized by the market rate units through inclusionary zoning. Which raises
10 the market rate costs substantially. This will not result in a lowering of the price of housing, as
11 promised in the original Planned Bay Area. Why are these two agencies that have critical roles
12 proceeding without a public review? Obviously because they will fiscally benefit both from any
13 job growth and the income in capital gains taxes paid by new workers. The community needs to
14 understand what the current data shows us. The jobs growth forecast made four years ago is
15 just not happening. HCD and DOF understand this but refuse to give up fiscal benefits that
16 floated them. Benefits that are paid for by local governments and residents. By you and me.
17 Paid for in dollars and loss of quality of life. Because we are being forced to build new housing
18 based on old and outdated numbers, we deserve to have a full and open public discussion.
19 Thank you for your attention.

20

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1 Chair Summa: Thank you very much Councilmember Schmid, our next speaker Ms. Dao.

2

3 Ms. Dao: Next is Adam Schwartz.

4

5 Chair Summa: Thank you.

6

7 Mr. Adam Schwartz:_Good evening Commissioners my name is Adam Schwartz, I have lived
8 here for eight years and my kids attended the schools here and my wife lives here too. Our
9 community has so much to offer including plentiful jobs, great weather, a tolerant culture, but a
10 grave problem is holding us back. The sever shortage of housing. Which makes it extraordinarily
11 expensive for people to live here. This drives out our adult children, like mine. It prevents our
12 aging parents, like mine, from moving here to receive care from family. It forces our retail
13 workers and teachers to drive super commutes every day burning greenhouse gases as they go.
14 It prevents lower income people from moving here. Please, make it easier to build new homes
15 in Palo Alto. We need to allow taller buildings, we need to eliminate parking minimums, we
16 need to speed up the approval process. We need to affirmatively further fair housing by
17 building new homes by existing schools, parks, and shops. Baseline, minimal step forward, is
18 the proposals from the staff today, to this Commission, and then on to the City Council. This
19 ongoing housing element process is a great opportunity to make strides forward. We need
20 abundant homes for all. Yes, to new homes set aside for people with lower incomes who are

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1 going to pay reduced rents, yes to new homes at market prices, which is the only way to stop
2 the march of prices upward and upward and upward. No to artificial scarcity, which drives up
3 homing prices. Please, allow new homes. Thank you.

4

5 Chair Summa: Thank you.

6

7 Ms. Dao: Next is Deborah Goldeen.

8

9 Chair Summa: Thank you.

10

11 Ms. Deborah Goldeen: You'll have to pardon me, I'm very unfamiliar with the language involved
12 with these proceedings, and I'm a little bit confused about what's going on , but if I'm correct
13 City of Palo Alto made up a plan, which did not require that any density housing be built, but
14 made it so that no density housing would be built in it's primarily residential areas. And they
15 sent this to the state and the state said no, no, no, no. That's not what we mean, you really
16 need to put some density housing in all of your city, and I can't say I can't agree with this
17 enough and I believe the State is entirely within their rights to do this. I have lived here for sixty
18 years and I'm absolutely appalled at what's happened. It's stunning. I have been doing
19 volunteer work for Potma, going around California Avenue, and I was on the 400 block of
20 Sherman today. Do you guys know that 80% of the office buildings on that block are vacant? It's

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1 stunning. Why? Well there's no housing, because nobody can live here, and we all know this, so
2 that has to change. And then my next stop, at one of my stops was a dental office where the
3 dental office manager was a planning commissioner like yourself, of all things, for city, permit
4 with city and we started chatting and she's like what the hell is wrong with Palo Alto? We
5 figured it out, we got our housing element met, what happened to you guys? And I You
6 know, I'm at.... If the stake comes down hard on you guys, I've been watching this whole thing
7 go down for so many years and I feel like you've brought it on yourselves. You know, people
8 objecting... Oh the parking, we can't have the parking, you know, requirement reduced, well,
9 nobody on my street parks in their driveway. I'm the only one. I have both my cars off the
10 street, but house on the corner, they've got all their four cars in the street, the house across
11 from them, they have their two cars in the street. Nobody cares. Yeah, so, and then there's this
12 move a foot of... oh the State's taking our rights away, it's undemocratic, just gotta say
13 something... you know, that's not going to work. I know there's a lot of people who are
14 convinced that that's going to work, and they are going to push back on the State and it's just
15 not. Not only is it not going to work, it's wrong and bad. Thank you.

16

17 Chair Summa: Thank you Ms. Goldeen.

18

19 Ms. Dao: Next is Jennifer DiBrienza.

20

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1 Chair Summa: Welcome Ms. DiBrienza, who I believe is our PAUSD School Board Chair.

2

3 Ms. Jennifer DiBrienza: Thank you so much, how 'bout yourself? My name is Jennifer DiBrienza,
4 I'm President of the Palo Alto School Board, I am speaking today as a resident of Evergreen
5 Park, and I am speaking in support of really, all these zoning changes and more. As a Board
6 member I'm really concerned about the long term health of our schools. I urge this city to really
7 broaden their consideration of where the housing can go and broaden the applicability to all
8 sites. With so much housing being built in certain concentrated areas, I worry about some of
9 our schools that have already become very small and don't have any planned housing to be
10 built, they might have to close as a result. Kids have to travel farther, young kids, either walking
11 and on bikes during high traffic times or in more cars, adding to our greenhouse gas emissions.
12 And then with too much of our housing concentrated in some areas, some of our schools will be
13 overburdened and will have to overflow kids to other areas of the city, again, adding to the
14 traffic and to the emissions. So, for the sake of our schools, I urge you to consider them when
15 you're thinking about where sites are possible and to really consider the entire city, so that the
16 new housing is spread across the whole city. Thank you so much for your work.

17

18 Chair Summa: Thank you.

19

20 Ms. Dao: Next is Annie Ashton.

-
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1 Ms. Annie Ashton: Good evening, I'm Executive Director of Palo Alto Ford and I'm here because
2 I believe we are in a housing crisis. I also believe that the zoning changes proposed are
3 insufficient to meet what we need. They may be physically feasible, and I'm sure you're looked
4 at the physical analysis that was prepared, but they are not in any way economically feasible. As
5 evidence, none of the recently approved or submitted PHZ projects could be built under these
6 proposed standards. None. I understand that there could be a housing incentive program that
7 would allow for projects to go to even higher levels of FAR, lot coverage zoning, I understand
8 that, that process is in there. So, I am here to ask you to consider one, raising those base
9 zonings to a level that makes projects feasible. At the very best. At the very worst, also advise
10 planning to make sure that the housing incentive program is able to bring these projects to a
11 level where they are feasible because this is not enough. I also would advise that you extend
12 these changes throughout the city it not only looks better for our housing element numbers
13 that the state will be looking at again, but projects happen outside of the housing inventory, it
14 happens all the time. Project deals come and go, you just never know, so why not let all of
15 these sites participate in these zoning changes. Sufficient upzoning is good for our schools, it
16 helps us reach our climate goals, it's good for our local businesses. As described most recently
17 in the city's adopted economic development strategy, number ten is build housing near our
18 downtowns. So again, I just urge you to please support higher baselines, these are completely
19 ineffective baselines. At the very least then, support a housing incentive program that will raise

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1 them to something that is constructable, and support extending these changes citywide. Thank
2 you very much.

3

4 Chair Summa: Thank you.

5

6 Ms. Dao: Next is David Hirsch.

7

8 Chair Summa: Welcome Mr. Hirsch, who is, I'll mention, is on our Architectural Review Board.

9

10 Mr. David Hirsch: Thank you Chair Summa, and Boardmembers [Commissioners]. I just have
11 two very simple ideas here, I'm not talking to the entire Housing Element, just two simple ideas.
12 One is the downtown. Palo Alto has a great opportunity to offer long term leases on our many
13 downtown parking lots to developers with a direction to locate the parking below grade and
14 provide for housing above. They must fit comfortably in these denser core areas and provide a
15 significant percentage of our Housing Element requirements. By using the request for proposal
16 process, this important effort will provide the following significant benefits: One is the city can
17 prioritize offers that will maximize affordable housing, prioritize to the offerer, significant larger
18 than present requirements because the developer doesn't have to put up the purchase money
19 for these expensive projects, they'd be leased, and leased terms can be negotiated to make
20 each project a success. The mix of affordable housing and market rate housing is a healthy

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1 concept and one that is very common in most progressive European countries. Downtown
2 shops and restaurants will benefit with the increase in the local population without any
3 increase of vehicular congestion. The housing density can be increased as it will relate to
4 existing more massive commercial office and hotel buildings in the downtown. And, because
5 the downtowns are discreet entities there's no impact on the separate residential
6 neighborhoods. The City will gain the rental income which can escalate in time and they will
7 become the owners, or it will become the owners at the end of the lease period. If they choose
8 to. So, it seems to me that's very good opportunity to answer the issues of affordable housing
9 and market rate housing self-supporting each other in a way. So the second idea is a
10 Development Director and a staff. If it's true that we're going to build 6,000 plus units of
11 housing, then we really have to imagine that is going to be accomplished. Who's going to build
12 it, how's it going to be controlled in the city. Over 6,000 new residential units and a present
13 family of about 2.3 people per unit is assumed the population of Palo Alto will increase by more
14 than 20%. The actual scope of work to produce this in this next eight year period, if achieved,
15 will be a massive effort. It cries out for an experienced Development Director. One who can
16 coordinate all aspects of the urban design aspects of this housing. Presentations to Palo Alto
17 City Council and community become one of the most necessary tasks so this Director will need
18 talented assistants who can translate the large scale concepts and do images that clearly define
19 the proposed elements and formal descriptions. Imagine this transition from our history of

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1 being reactive to finding ourselves as proactive community looking to the future with
2 anticipation. Thank you.

3

4 Chair Summa: Thank you very much.

5

6 Ms. Dao: Next is Albert Lustre.

7

8 Chair Summa: Thank you.

9

10 Mr. Albert Lustre: Good evening Commissioner my name is Albert Lustre with the Norther
11 California Carpenter's Union Local 405. It's great to see some changes on the Housing Element
12 but I haven't seen nothing on the Labor. Who's going to build the projects? Are we going to
13 implement a liberal wage? Healthcare? Apprenticeship? Local hire? [TIMESTAMP 1:00
14 Unintelligible] Redwood City, Menlo Park, Foster City, the San Mateo County and Daly City, and
15 a couple other cities in Santa Clara county they are working on. And the reason why is because
16 earning a liberal wage ensure that the construction workers can live here. We're getting pushed
17 everywhere. We can't afford to live in this area. We have to commute for hours and hours.
18 Myself, I have to commute three hours each day back and forth. It's outrageous. It's a ... you
19 don't have time to spend with your families, and with our kids. Also, the other thing that's
20 happened is we have a lot of tax fraud. Tax fraud and wage theft going around in all of the

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1 construction sites. Just about every single construction site in the area. And then healthcare.
2 Who provides healthcare? At the end of the day, the cities pay for healthcare, because eighty
3 percent of the construction workers depend on some type of government aid. They become a
4 burden to the system. Apprenticeship let's be honest, not all of us are going to be doctors, and
5 we're not going to go to school. Some of us are good with our hands. But we need good paying
6 jobs. And for some of us, it's the only opportunity we have to be successful. Local Hire, who are
7 we going to hire locally? If we don't have nobody to do these projects. We all depend on the
8 construction worker, just look at this building. Who built it? So, I want to ask the Planning
9 Commission are you guys going to implement some area labor standards for us, in Menlo Park,
10 Foster City, Daly City, Redwood City and the county of San Mateo and those include liberal
11 wage, healthcare, apprenticeship and local hire. Thank you for your time.

12
13 Chair Summa: Thank you Sir, I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch your name. Next time you should
14 probably speak in the period of public comment where it's items that aren't Agendized, but
15 thank you very much for your comments. Okay, very brief please.

16
17 Mr. Lustre: And I knew that question was going to be asked. But this is planning commission, if
18 we don't plan who is going to build the projects, who's going to do it? It's part of the planning.

19
20 Chair Summa: Thank you sir. I really do appreciate it. Our next speaker?

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Ms. Dao: Yes, now it's online speakers, first is Leah Russin.

Chair Summa: Go ahead Leah, Ms. Russin.

Ms. Leah Russin: Good evening, can you hear me?

Chair Summa: Yes. Go ahead.

Ms. Leah Russin: Great. Thank you. This proposal demonstrates all the problems with Palo Alto. Instead of simplifying and clarifying the process, it seems to add layers of complexity. We need our local regulations to be clear and flexible and encourage new housing. And this does not seem to do enough of that. As a Baron Park homeowner, and parent of two young children, I encourage you to look critically at the process preposing and getting approval for new housing. And look for all the ways to ease and hasten the process throughout our city. As a former College Terrace homeowner, I watched opportunity after opportunity go by as Stanford rebuilt adjacent single family homes with more of the same, instead of having the flexibility of zoning to build townhomes or duplexes. We need more housing at every income level in every neighborhood. Not just on the fringes of town but in Baron Park, downtown, and more. We will be stronger as a city if we address the legacy of structural racism and welcome new housing

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1 throughout our city. Our schools will be more robust with more families in our neighborhoods.
2 Our air will be cleaner [TIMESTAMP 1:04 Audio interference] please think critically about the
3 message you are sending with this milk toast proposal. Thank you.

4

5 Chair Summa: Thank you very much. Next speaker please.

6

7 Ms. Dao: Next is Hamilton Hitchings.

8

9 Chair Summa: Go ahead Mr. Hitchings.

10

11 Mr. Hamilton Hitchings: Can you hear me?

12

13 Chair Summa: Yes we can.

14

15 Mr. Hamilton Hitchings: Hi, My name is Hamilton Hitchings, I support the GM and ROLM
16 upzoning, because those buildings are old. When those city staff did the analysis they showed
17 they were most likely to be developed also with the first bridge that you can bike to google, it
18 allows you to build... and even to facebook, it allows you to go to work without having to get in
19 a car. So, I think those up buildings are particularly right for development. One of the reasons
20 for the wrong GM zoning is because we can go higher, however, I noticed they capped the limit

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1 at sixty feet, however, once I think you get to the other side of San Antonio, we were hoping
2 they might be able to go even higher, like seventy feet. So, I ask that everybody consider a
3 seventy foot height limit on the other side of San Antonio. You know, I want to talk mostly
4 about reduced landscaping, which is something we did not discuss in the Housing Element
5 working group, which I was a member of, although these are my comments. And I don't
6 remember being previously discussed in the PTC or the City Council. As we built more housing,
7 we still want to build livable areas, which means we need ground floor landscaping and
8 setbacks from the street and sidewalk, thus I would strongly discourage and hope that
9 members of the PTC will also speak to this, any proposal that allows a developer to move all
10 landscaping to courtyards and rooftops, we need some landscaping between the road or
11 sidewalk, and the building. As was shown in the photos in the presentation. It appears to me
12 that staff.. this also proposal will remove the twenty percent landscaping from GM properties,
13 and I would not recommend this for two reasons, first of all, we're not trying to give special
14 subsidies to GM right now, we're trying to encourage more housing and what we give up zoning
15 to commercial, we're making it harder for a developer to justify a building residential, so it's
16 actually very counter productive to remove the landscaping. And, the last thing I wanted to say
17 is I think that part of the reason for this removing of the landscaping, is to help developers not
18 build underground parking. And while I understand it's cheaper, this basically is designed so
19 they can build ground floor, they can put all the parking on the first floor. The problem is, that
20 actually reduces the total amount of housing because it's one less level of housing you can build

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1 for the same height level. And I also think that it just creates a much less livable area if at
2 ground level you just look at a bunch of cars and garage parking lot and that should really be
3 moved to underground and that's one of the reasons we should push back on this elimination
4 of ground floor landscaping. I appreciate staff bringing this up as a study session so we could
5 comment and share our thoughts and that's what I have. Thank you.

6

7 Chair Summa: Thank you very much. Our next speaker please.

8

9 Ms. Dao: Next is Scott O'Neil.

10

11 Mr. Scott O'Neil: Hi, thank you. I have a letter in your latest packet which I noted HCD has said
12 the City needs to be addressing constraints, not just RHNA, and looking at past project
13 proposals to determine what that might require. Outside of GM and ROLM, the proposed
14 development standards are around half of the average of Palo Alto's recent history of
15 proposals. Which HCD has explicitly told the City it needs to try and loosen its constraints. So I
16 respectfully disagree with the consultant when she says these programs won't be impacted by
17 future changes. HCD will review the zoning knowing full well that no one has proposed a 1.25
18 FAR project on El Camino, in forever. Moreover, adopting a rezoning that looks plausibly at
19 production only in GM and ROLM would confirm the fair housing concerns HCD has expressed
20 in that area. The City is in a fair housing hole and it needs to stop digging and one way to do

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1 that is to take these proposals more broadly. I would also like to share a tip for reviewing HCD
2 rejection letters. At the beginning of each rejection is a boiler plate sentence – “If you satisfy
3 some, many, or most of the legal requirements”. Almost no one gets some. Barring some rank
4 technical incompetence and we didn’t. Most means we’re close. We’re not. Our second
5 rejection is an eight page mini letter. That page count in a mini letter would qualify as a very
6 bad first rejection. As a second, it is a disaster. We haven’t made much progress since
7 November, on the most important issues. Our second draft remains very far from compliance. I
8 offer this hoping it’s helpful for calibrating expectations about what will be required to have
9 any enforceable zoning code at all in the foreseeable future. If it doesn’t, I hope you won’t find
10 it useful reviewing HCD’s next letter, but you may. Thank you.

11

12 Chair Summa: Thank you. Next speaker please.

13

14 Ms. Dao: Next is Liz Gardner.

15

16 Chair Summa: Thank you. Go ahead Ms. Gardner.

17

18 Ms. Liz Gardner: Hi, sorry, can you guys put me down at the end of the list, I’m driving, there’s
19 an accident on the road, and I’m trying to pull over.

20

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1 Chair Summa: Okay. We can do that. How many speakers do we have left?

2

3 Ms. Dao: Three other ones.

4

5 Chair Summa: We'll just put her at the end. Thanks.

6

7 Ms. Dao: Okay. Then next is Jenny Michel.

8

9 Chair Summa: Okay. You can go ahead.

10

11 Ms. Jenny Michel: Okay thank you. Dear Chair, Commissioners, staff, leavers, members of the
12 public, I'm Jenny Michel. Born at Stanford, raised at Baron Park, currently a long time renting
13 resident, a Menlo Park mom of IEP, Deaf/Hard of hearing student, a commercial property
14 manager by trade. Palo Alto is where my housing and stability story started in the early 80's. To
15 be clear, for the record, my family and I helped to keep the zoning exclusive. Ironically, when I
16 was a teacher in Menlo park, in the early 2000's, I became homeless and lived out of my car for
17 two winters, on these streets in Palo Alto, near German. The jobs are already here. They're not
18 going anywhere. Rest assured. Stanford will always produce high quality, in demand, talent. Our
19 mild climate and abundant resources creates literally an oasis for people. Our job here is to
20 remove the barriers keeping people from being here helping us to grow. And strengthen our

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1 precious city. The barriers are specifically baseline zoning. And, I appreciate the first speaker,
2 the neighbor from Mylands, he actually makes an articulate argument for not just dense zoning
3 in our transportation districts like Oregon, Page Mill, Alma, Charleston, Meadow. I would
4 suggest we open up the zoning for all R1 districts. And I agree, the baseline assumptions with
5 RHNA are off. But, you probably need about just 6,000 of housing units alone to serve the
6 hospital and related call centers. Right. For each job, the neighbor listed, in his stats, as
7 someone in facilities in commercial real estate, he left out the stats for the support staff. Which
8 is more of a closer ratio 4:1 to the office tagged desk job people. I'd argue Palo Alto needs to
9 zone for baseline assumption closer to 20-30 thousand housing units. Yes. Bad news. Housing
10 has the physical land to easily accommodate that goal compared to other municipalities.
11 Finally, note, I do have evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that various aspects of our white
12 collar and biotech workforce are flown in, weekly. We're driving climate breakdown and our
13 load on other municipalities and regions are not being calculated. By housing the work force we
14 currently demand, we'll stop that. Thank you for your consideration.

15

16 Chair Summa: Thank you.

17

18 Ms. Dao: Next is Michael Quinn.

19

20 Chair Summa: Thanks. Go ahead.

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Mr. Michael Quinn: Hello, thank you and good evening. For the first part of my comments I'm just going to address something that's a little bit narrow. Scott mentioned in his letter something that I think is very important. On page 59 of the Ordinance, it is written, I understand, that the rezoning is limited to inventory sites. The occupied inventory sites have been identified by HCD as one of the single weakest aspects of Palo Alto's Housing Element. My contributions to some of the work done by Palo Alto before it was submitted consisted largely of contacting property owners about their properties in the inventory and asking them directly if there was any possibility that they could be redeveloped. The response is overwhelmingly negative and furthermore it is clear that Palo Alto has not met it's legal obligation to research those sites. So, if I'm understanding things by limiting the rezoning to the inventory sites, Palo Alto is effectively doubling down on what is already a losing hand. This will not go unnoticed, and it creates a pretty significant problem if the town is serious about getting the Housing Element approved. Then again, I believe the town is unserious. The next part of my comments are exclusive to me, they are just me. And, I say this for myself. The current price of a home in Palo Alto was transactive last year, I believe was around 2.8 million and the cost on average was about 1,700 per square foot. The first speaker, I believe was Mr. Schmid. Ordinarily I would not address an individual was a former politician in town, and I just want to touch on a couple of things. He talked about a degradation of quality of life in the fact that he doesn't feel that he and his neighbor should have to pay for that. I would respectfully ask him and the other

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1 members, and particularly the Board of Palo Altans for sensible zoning, exactly how much of a
2 tax subsidy they receive every year through [TIMESTAMP 1:16 Unintelligible] and just to
3 perhaps revisit some of his sentiments on who is or is not a leach. Thank you, have a good
4 night.

5

6 Chair Summa: Thank you. I think we're... we have Sam and if Ms. Gardner gets back in time.

7

8 Ms. Dao: Correct. Yes, Sam if you can unmute yourself.

9

10 Sam Gersten: Hi. How's it going? I'm Sam Gersten and along with my wife and baby daughter,
11 I've been renting an apartment on Middlefield Road right by the Safeway, last couple of years.
12 I'm a member of the Midtown Residents Association Board and the Board of Congregation
13 Emek Beracha El Camino, but I'm speaking up not on behalf of any organization, just because
14 honestly, I want to afford to stay in Palo Alto with my family, I want to continue to contribute to
15 the community and help Palo Alto thrive. My and my neighbor's rent have already gone up
16 \$250 dollars a month this year and without more apartments supply in Palo Alto, prices are
17 going to keep going up and we won't be able to stay much longer in Palo Alto. The bottom line
18 is, Palo Alto has failed to build significant housing and its plans keep getting rejected for
19 feasibility. It's too focused on keeping failed land use policies from the 1950's in place. We need
20 to go way above and beyond what's been proposed and take drastic steps to allow far more

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1 housing on far more sights throughout the City. Zoning standards have got to be drastically
2 changed. Floor, height, density, and parking requirements are way out of touch with what the
3 population needs. Let's also speed up approvals, eliminate barriers like tree and retail
4 ordinances. I'm on the Midtown Residents Association Board, I've seen high rents drive out our
5 businesses and residents and while on the Synagogue Board I've seen bureaucratic blockades
6 stop us from basic security related means. Like a fence to protect us from anti-semitic attacks.
7 The current regulatory system and bureaucratic blocks need to change so that future
8 generations can feasibly live in Palo Alto. Thank you.

9

10 Chair Summa: Thank you. Is Ms. Gardner back or... I don't see her.

11

12 Ms. Dao: Let's see...

13

14 Commissioner Reckdah]: She's there. I can see her hand.

15

16 Chair Summa: Oh, Okay, we can go ahead. It looks like she's here.

17

18 Ms. Liz Gardner: Hi, Thanks for your patience there, everything is good. So, yeah, my name is Liz
19 Gardner, I'm head of household, family of three, my two sons are 4th generation Palo Altans, we
20 are section 8, voucher holders in Palo Alto, we've always you know, said... reiterate, I'm a

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1 grateful parent of Palo Alto unified school district students and we are also caring in town,
2 caring for an in-law that is ill and also aging in place. It's been pretty hectic, yeah, I know for a
3 lot of people, with rents being raised and you know the reach for home ownership has gotten
4 farther and farther away. We do need housing. We need a lot of housing. We need all kinds of
5 housing income levels. I was sorely disappointed of course last night, when the CC did rezone
6 RM 30 – fourteen acres, that was really sad because that was right in the middle of town near
7 schools, shopping, and jobs. One thing I'd like to sort of support is what Jennifer DiBrienza said
8 which is putting so much housing out on the outskirts. You know, I'm really afraid there's gonna
9 be, you know, a situation where we're going to have to bus kids to different campuses. Is that
10 what we want Palo Alto to be? You know, last night was a disappointment, I would like to see
11 housing within our city's near services, libraries, rec centers, doctors, you know, dentists; those
12 kinds of things that are supporting our community. And especially for low-wage workers who
13 are, somebody else mentioned, having to do, you know, longer and longer commutes for, you
14 know, for wages. Wages just aren't going up. So, I really support more housing closer to city
15 centers. Thank you very much.

16

17 Chair Summa: Thank you very much. That concludes our Public Speakers, so we'll bring it back
18 to the Commission, who would like to go first? Any takers? Okay. Commissioner Lu and then
19 Commissioner Akin.

20

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1 Commissioner Lu: I want to ask a clarifying questions. First, on the timelines, so we will have a
2 joint session in November with Council on these rezonings rights, and we will also have a joint
3 session in November on just the new Housing Element. Will those be the same meeting, or
4 would those be like two different joint sessions?

5

6 Mr. Yang: I don't believe a joint session is planned for this ordinance. This ordinance is going to
7 come back, we're planning, in a month for action.

8

9 Commissioner Lu: Okay. I think I was potentially misreading the presentation and completing
10 the new Housing Element. So, we would presumably address the new Housing Element in
11 November and then if there are any revisions to the sites or zoning, coming out of that, would
12 we then meet again in December or January to update the zoning again?

13

14 Mr. Yang: So, I believe we are planning on treating the revised Housing Element as sort of a
15 separate track from this, this ordinance. So, yes if there were additional amendments to the
16 code that were required, [TIMESTAMP 1:23:25 Video skipped] a line with a revised Housing
17 Element that would come back, you know, probably later on as that revised Housing Element is
18 getting closer to adoption.

19

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1 Commissioner Lu: Got it. So, we want to keep that as a separate track, but mentally in the back
2 of my mind it will be hard to separate what would potentially make HCD happier versus what's
3 in the Housing Element we already proposed and was rejected. And, So there's no issue in
4 trying to change our zoning in the direction of our future Housing Element or do you
5 recommend against that for this meeting.

6
7 Mr. Yang: I think we're looking for the Commission's recommendation and direction on far to
8 go with what's being proposed right now. One of the questions, for example, is should these
9 updates be limited to inventory sites, or should they apply more broadly. You know, inventory
10 sites is what is strictly, legally required but the Commission may believe it makes sense to
11 expand that.

12
13 Commissioner Lu: Got it. Okay. A couple of more questions. What pushback have we done on
14 the jobs allocation and HCD numbers, if any.

15
16 Mr. Yang: Yeah, so, there was a process several years ago, at the beginning, before the RHNA
17 was set, where members of the public and I believe some City Officials spoke before ABAG and
18 you know, it advanced various positions and arguments on why they believe some of these
19 forecasts were incorrect, and that ABAG should apply a different RHNA to the city. That was the

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1 process, now is the opportunity to influence those figures and, we're in the situation that we're
2 in right now.

3

4 Commissioner Lu: Got it. And we haven't seen any other cities have any traction trying to
5 compress those numbers through any other avenue.

6

7 Mr. Yang: No, I believe there was some litigation in Southern California, where some of the
8 Southern California cities attempted to challenge the RHNA allocation and I don't believe that
9 was successful.

10

11 Commissioner Lu: Cool. One last question for now, I just want to fill in the mental model of
12 zoning for these sites versus zoning more broadly. Has the key study... can anyone give context
13 on communications or developments for the Stanford housing sites? There's one listed as
14 McDonald's which has a large builder's remedy proposal and there's another listed at the Rivian
15 Offices which has a large office proposal. Like, was there... like how does the context or
16 communication work for those sites? Like, was there any advanced communication, like, are
17 these Stanford decisions or decisions from sub-leasees...

18

19 Chair Summa: We have placeholder for those three sites in our staff report because staff was
20 not ready with those. So, they're going to bring that back to us in October.

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1

2 Mr. Yang: I guess we can say that staff has been in communication with Standford regularly,
3 throughout while we were developing the Housing Element and also over the summer and
4 recently regarding those sites. So, there's open lines of communication.

5

6 Commissioner Lu: Okay, I ask to fill in my mental model because we're very conservative with
7 the Stanford sites, we have picked out these three relatively small sites and for two of them
8 they've moved ahead with pretty significant different plans, that kind of breaks my mental
9 model of how we'll work with Standford and whether it would actually be practical to try to
10 change zoning for other Stanford sites and whether that would be perceived as an adversarial
11 move or something that's actually welcomed before whatever developers control certain parts
12 of the Stanford parcels. It sounds like there isn't deeper context available for how those two
13 proposals went, which is fine. Yeah, and I'll yield my time.

14

15 Chair Summa: Commissioner Akin and then Commissioner [Vice Chair] Chang.

16

17 Commissioner Akin: Thank you Chair. So, I have an observation and a follow up question for
18 staff. I'd like to support the approach of creating the new Section 18.14 as part of the code,
19 whatever we end up doing to the baselines, it seems very likely to me that the sites in the
20 housing inventory may need to be treated specially, and the structure gives us a framework for

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1 doing that, so I'd like to support going ahead with that approach. And, that falls onto the
2 question, the packet suggests that the effects of applying these changes to baseline zoning
3 might not be significant. The question is will there be an analysis in any more detail on this
4 question before we see this issue again? Thank you.

5

6 Ms. Eisberg: Yeah, that's a great question. So, yes they treated the sites inventory differently
7 because that was the direction of the Housing Element, that was the requirement under State
8 Law. If we need to rezone those RHNA sites, those are the sites that we need to rezone. The
9 Appendix D, which I did not include, you'll see that within the same zoning districts, the
10 surrealistic capacity of 20, 30, 40, it's an acre, it's different for different sites with the same
11 zoning district, which is why it was difficult for us to adjust the base zoning when there are
12 series of different standards. So, we created this chapter. So, the assessment in the staff report
13 said, alright, these sites inventory sites, you know, city staff has gone through them, consultants
14 have gone through them, members of the public have gone through them, yes there are some
15 changes underway, but they were identified as the most likely sites to redevelop in the next
16 eight year period. And so, the thinking is that if we made these zoning changes across the
17 board, the base districts, you're catching a whole bunch of sites that we do not expect to
18 redevelop. They're existing uses, that we would expect to continue during the next eight years,
19 and maybe the next eight years after that. And so, if those sites do turnover, it's probably less
20 likely when the next current eight year period maybe more likely in the future. Can we do an

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1 analysis to support that? I mean we could do sort of an order of magnitude estimate of
2 additional development that could happen, but I think it's not clear that the 6,000 units are
3 going to redevelop during the next eight years. We're trying to set that up so that can happen,
4 but we're not trying to do a very specific analysis on that question. I think we could do some
5 kind of order of magnitude assessment on what that potential additional increment could be.

6

7 Commissioner Akin: Thank you, I think that could be useful because I suspect the question will
8 come up again.

9

10 Chair Summa: Thank you. Commissioner [Vice Chair] Chang, and then Commissioner
11 Hechtman.

12

13 Vice Chair Chang: Thank you. I actually think that order of magnitude analysis, even if its as
14 simple as this is the land area, and this is the implication of how many more units would be
15 allowed if all of that land area were to be redeveloped. You know, so it's not like a likelihood
16 component, if that makes sense Ms. Eisberg, but like if all of it were vacant right now and if
17 were all to be redeveloped at that density, how many more units would that generate, if that
18 makes sense, versus what the current zoning allows. Is that clear? In other words, if right now it
19 allows 1.25 FAR and all of that... because I don't think we all have a very good idea of how much
20 area in our city is zones GM or ROLM. And then, how much more, how many more acres if we

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1 broadened the 18.14 to the rest of the ... to the whole zone, how many more acres are we
2 putting under that zone. So, I think that kind of broad implication would be helpful. Does that
3 make sense?

4

5 Ms. Eisberg: Yes, I would... typically we don't do a sort of assumption of complete demolition
6 and redevelopment (interrupted)

7

8 Vice Chair Chang: No, right, but I think that we're not understanding any kind of order of
9 magnitude like, right now, only a certain percentage of ROLM is included in figure four. If we
10 were to broaden this 18.14 to all our ROLM, how much more are... kind of what percentage is
11 currently being affected by 18.14. If we were to broaden it to all of the city code, how much
12 more are we affecting? And similarly for all the other zones. I don't have any grasp of what
13 percentage of our, each zone is currently being impacted, by, so I don't understand what the
14 potential long term, long long term impact is of a decision were I to decide to roll out these
15 impacts for the entire city. Housing cycles aside. And housing opportunity sites aside. Does that
16 make sense?

17

18 Ms. Eisberg: Yes.

19

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1 Vice Chair Chang: Okay. So, even that kind of order of magnitude type analysis would be very
2 helpful in terms of helping me wrap my head around what the actual impact of a decision
3 would be. Okay. So that's first point building on Commissioner Akin's point. The second thing
4 that I wanted to mention, know I'm sort of losing my train of thought... So one of the
5 observations I had was that... similar to one of the public commenters about the ground floor
6 landscaping. I was just concerned particularly within the Figure 4 GM and ROLM areas about
7 the impact there from an environmental perspective because if there's a potential to cover
8 large swathes of ... large swathes of land in concentrated areas as in that area by 101 and South
9 Palo Alto, where we're planning for pretty high density housing, where potentially developers
10 could cover a 100% of the land with development and we don't have permeable land for
11 rainwater. And I know that this is... there are ways to get around that with respect to
12 engineering, but I also know that when I ready my utility mailers, we're being asked to think
13 about like permeable surfaces, and et cetera, et cetera, and I also know that in that area we
14 had an underpass that flooded every single year, that we couldn't bike over to the Baylands
15 until we had the new bike bridge that was added. So, there's a creek over there, it's wetlands
16 over there, and so I'm just worried about the potential... you know we had a big storm last
17 year... I'm just worried at the potential environmental impacts. My question is are there any
18 like... we've done CEQA analysis on the housing element but are there other things that we
19 need to think about with respect to ... with respect to the lot coverage. I'm a little bit less
20 worried about housing opportunities sites and increasing the lot coverage elsewhere in Palo

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1 Alto, because when I looked at our housing opportunity sites map, they're kind of sprinkled all
2 over the place and it's not large swathes that could potentially be a 100% covered with
3 concrete, but I am concerned about that one particularly neighborhood. Which, as it is, is
4 already going to be so different from the rest of Palo Alto. So, that was one comment. And then
5 finally, before I cede my time, I wanted to kind of address something that I think that
6 Commissioner Lu was trying to get at, which was regarding the three Stanford sites. I just
7 wanted to provide some context, that members... Stanford... there was the Housing Element
8 Working Group, Stanford was a part of the Housing Element Working Group, there were ...
9 Stanford also presented to us as part of the PTC on their ideas of how they could contribute to
10 the Housing Element and that was... those were their ideas. They gave several reasons for why
11 they couldn't more broadly contribute to the Housing Element, and so I think it would
12 potentially speak for Stanford but that was what they were willing to do at this point in terms of
13 the parcels. There might have been a few more, but I think that Research Park, and the large
14 amount of ... the large amount of land that Stanford has for Research Park is absolutely
15 something that much of Pal... a lot of Palo Alto, and I know many City Council members are
16 interested in looking at for the next Housing Element cycle, but that's not really on the table for
17 this one, at least, that's my understanding. Thanks.

18

19 Chair Summa: Commissioner Hechtman.

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1 Commissioner Hechtman: Thank you. So I'm anticipating we'll have a couple rounds for
2 comments so I've got... I'm going to focus this round if you will, on some public feedback that
3 we've received, and I want to thank the members of the public who have spoken tonight to us,
4 and also to those who have contributed in advance of this, by written communications. If you
5 listen and read through all of that, it's really robust and we're hearing different sides, and
6 different concerns on this obviously critical issue for Palo Alto's future. And I particularly
7 wanted to call out former Council member Schmidt, and I thought that he both forcefully and
8 gracefully made the point that this entire exercise of planning for a particular number of
9 housing units in the next RHNA cycle is based on figures that have already demonstrated their
10 inaccuracy, factually. And I thought that was really interesting and I just thought the way he
11 explained that, really helped me understand it. So I appreciate that, but what it did was it got
12 me thinking about... and incidentally I don't have any reason to dispute any of what he was
13 saying, but it got me thinking about okay... so, let's say that's true, what was the result. And
14 here's what occurred to me. Based on what may be largely inaccurate numbers, the numbers
15 we were presented forced the city of Palo Alto to engage in a process to decide where, call it
16 6,100 new housing units could go. And we did that. The council has, with a lot of work force,
17 PTC, and the other branches, but ultimately we identified 6,100 plus sites, sites where that
18 many units could go. Now, I think that if the HCD RHNA numbers are off by 100%, in other
19 words they are double what they really should be if we applied really more accurate job
20 forecasts for the period to 2030, and I don't know that that's fair, but if we just said that, then

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1 what we really should have been planning for is 3,000 units but we planned for six. My belief is
2 that in this RHNA cycle, I think it's highly unlikely that we're going to see 3,000 new units be
3 built. I don't think we'll get there. So that even if the true numbers, if you want to call them
4 that, were presented we wouldn't even achieve it. You know, if they were half that they... what
5 we had to work for. And so, really what this process has caused is potentially a longer term
6 planning than RHNA thought of. So this is while ... right now we're asking the question how
7 many units might we build, we need to accommodate 6,100 units in the next eight years. I don't
8 think that's going to happen, but having already made these decisions, in the next RHNA cycle
9 when looking back we're going to see what really happened with the jobs market, we are
10 already set up for the next cycle. We've already... obviously there'll be some tweaking at that
11 point, but it may be that the sites we have will cover a large part of our RHNA needs for the
12 next cycle. So, in that sense I think it's a benefit. And I also... the other thing ... part of the
13 reason I say I don't think that we're going to hit 3,000 units in this cycle is really the
14 economics... you know, these opportunity sites that we have identified, they haven't. They are
15 opportunity sites because they haven't redeveloped in the last five or eight or ten or fifteen
16 years. And part of the reason they haven't redeveloped residentially is the money isn't there.
17 Right. The profit of paying for that land, building housing, it's not showing up in the black or in
18 the black enough to attract the development community. So, what's going to happen now. We
19 are going to upzone, at least the opportunity sites, through this process, and that's going to
20 increase their value. And the people who own those sites, are going to realize that value in the

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1 sale of those properties, and so the development community is still going to have to contend
2 with what are now higher land prices to try to fit their projects. And so I think that is going to
3 have a stifling effect, if you will, on the kind of robust housing development that some might
4 hope for, in this next cycle. So, alright, so that's again, responding to Council member Schmidt's
5 comments which really made me think about it, and I appreciate that. Mr. O'Neil, who spoke to
6 us tonight, had submitted a letter, an email really, on the 11th, and he raised some interesting
7 points, and I wanted ask staff about a couple of them. In the email, he made an assertion that
8 I'll paraphrase: that while an economic or feasibility analysis is not expressly required by
9 Housing Element law, it's impliedly required to fully perform the site constraint analysis that is
10 required by State Law. And so I was curious if staff had any reaction to that concept, that
11 notion.

12
13 Mr. Yang: Yeah, it's something that we've been discussing with our Housing Element consultant
14 and with HCD as well, it was not our understanding that that financial feasibility analysis was
15 required as part of the, you know, Housing Element process, and so we are clarifying with HCD
16 what they are looking for.

17
18 Commissioner Hechtman: Alright. Thank you. And then the other question, another part of his
19 email, and actually for this, Ms. Eisberg, can you pull up the GM ROLM Housing Element focus
20 area? I think it's Packet Page 73, it was all part of your slide pack. Great, thank you. So, I think

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1 this is the area that Mr. O’Neil was talking about. So, it’s assertion was that nearly all of the
2 opportunity sites are located in what he called a corner of south Palo Alto. And, I think that he
3 was referring to what we’re seeing on this map, and so I wanted to first find out if staff knew
4 what percentage of the 6,000 plus new units are being accommodated in this area that we see
5 either highlighted in blue or purple on this map. Do we have a rough sense of that? Is it 50% or
6 80%?

7

8 Ms. Eisberg: I don’t know, but I can try to figure that out while you are... if you want to move
9 on.

10

11 Commissioner Hechtman: Okay, and then the point that I think Mr. O’Neil was trying to make is
12 it’s a high percentage, he was asserting, and that has some implications on a fair housing
13 distribution, and we heard a number of our public comments tonight, you know, talking about
14 distributing housing throughout the city. So I wondered if staff had a reaction to that
15 consideration of whether packing whatever the percentage is, in this area is going to raise...
16 continuing concerns by HCD, that it’s counter to fair housing distribution.

17

18 Mr. Yang: So, I think this question might be better addressed to our Housing Element
19 consultant team, because they are ... you know, they’ve worked on AFAH analysis for many
20 jurisdictions and are familiar with HCD’s approach to those issues. Our initial take, though, is

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1 that this area of Palo Alto, while not heavily residential right now, is actually a very high
2 resource area in terms of assortments of support services and amenities that you would want to see
3 in a residential neighborhood. And so, we wouldn't consider it a fair housing issue.

4

5 Commissioner Hechtman: Thank you, those are my questions for now.

6

7 Ms. Eisberg: And just to follow up, it looks like there's about 1,900 units zoned GM ROLM not
8 just in this area, but mostly in this area, so that's maybe 30% of the 28% of the inventory.

9

10 Commissioner Hechtman: Alright, that's very helpful. Thanks.

11

12 Chair Summa: Thank you. Commissioner Reckdahl and then Commissioner Templeton.

13

14 Commissioner Reckdahl: Thank you. I'll ask some questions about feasibility. One thing we're
15 doing is we're upzoning, increasing the residential density. But we're not decreasing the
16 commercial density. Should we be doing that? That would make it less profitable to do a
17 commercial, which would make it more likely to be residential.

18

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1 Ms. Eisberg: I think there is a separate program in the Housing Element that looks at that very
2 topic of potentially reducing commercial allowance. So it's not part of this program, but I
3 believe it will be coming forward as part of a separate program.

4

5 Commissioner Reckdah!: Okay. Why isn't it part of this program?

6

7 Mr. Yang: This program is specifically about making... reducing... changing the physical
8 constraints on sites that are on our inventory. There's a very kind of specific requirement in
9 State Law, that you do that thing, by January 31st of 2024. We have a whole host of other
10 programs. This is program 1.1A, we have a whole host of other programs that you know, are
11 going to occur over the eight year period.

12

13 Commissioner Reckdah!: Okay. Would that make our Housing Element more credible if we did
14 that right now?

15

16 Mr. Yang: Perhaps. You know, all of our programs in the Housing Element are geared towards
17 increasing the viability of housing production, and you know, one of our challenges is
18 prioritizing how we're going to tackle those. And so, (interrupted)

19

20 Commissioner Hechtman: We're juggling a lot of balls right now, and I understand.

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1

2 Mr. Yang: Yeah.

3

4 Commissioner Reckdahl: But I do think that this would have a lot of leverage because one of
5 the biggest constraints that's preventing residential development is the fact that commercial
6 development is just so lucrative, or at least has been. So, okay. Another question about
7 feasibility is that, one thing that I'm worried about is if you look at the Fry's and then you look
8 at West Bayshore, both those had townhouse projects. Townhouses are very popular right now,
9 and more profitable than other rental units. If the whole ROLM GM becomes townhouses,
10 we're not going to meet our Housing Element. So should we be adding to the GM ROLM a
11 minimum density that would encourage high density development there. Either on some of the
12 lots or all of the lots. And if so, should that be part of this program?

13

14 Mr. Yang: So we do have a minimum density of I believe 20 units per acre proposed in the GM
15 ROLM area, it could certainly be higher if the PTC believes that makes sense.

16

17 Commissioner Reckdahl: Okay yeah, I think that would be a good thing. Another thing would
18 be, right now we're proposing increasing the density for both RM-20, 30, and 40. Increasing the
19 maximum density but we're not increasing the minimum density. So, in the same type of thing,
20 at least maybe for RM-40, do we want to be bumping that minimum density up also to ensure

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1 that we get some high density projects. We want a variety of housing projects in Palo Alto, we
2 don't want all micro units, but we also just don't want all townhouses either. So, are we
3 considering changing the RM-40 minimum density?

4

5 Mr. Yang: That's certainly something that the PTC could correct.

6

7 Commissioner Reckdahl: Okay. And okay, another one was that... another program in the
8 Housing Element is not counting the FAR for three or four bedrooms, anything above two
9 bedrooms don't count towards your FAR, to encourage more family sized units. But I assume
10 that's the same as in the commercials, that would be a future program, it would not be part of
11 this zoning change?

12

13 Ms. Eisberg: That's right. I believe that's a separate program to yes, encourage family friendly
14 housing.

15

16 Commissioner Reckdahl: Okay. I mean again, it seems pretty easy to do, I'm not sure why we're
17 not including that now, but I do understand we have a lot ... a lot to go through. Okay, thank
18 you.

19

20 Chair Summa: Commissioner Templeton.

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Commissioner Templeton: Thank you. So many good questions tonight, I'm going to do some follow up questions and comments based on some things my colleagues have said. First, I'm thinking about some comments from Commissioner Akin and Vice Chair Chang. I want to respectfully summarize how I'm feeling about the material we have so far, and that doesn't speak to it's potential and I know you guys are still working on it. But, I'm getting a sense that this presentation is not yet at the level of persuasivity that this city is going to need to accept it. And what I mean by that is I listen to the nature of the questions we've had and it's all you know, where's the data, why are you suggesting that, help me understand... and I would say, you know, as we go, we're going to be seeing this a few different times, that would be my first just general piece of feedback, is make your argument more persuasive to the general audience and that will help all us be able to get on board. So the reason we're asking these questions is we're channeling some of the feedback we've heard from the public, we're channeling some of our detailed feedback as we read through and we need this to be a little more airtight, as far as a recommendation. It feels too loose right now, so that's my general feedback. I don't know if that is actionable to you, but hopefully that is helpful. And then to the questions about lot coverage, permeability, underground parking; I had an opportunity yesterday to hear from another local municipality that is desperately trying to update their storm infrastructure because of what happened earlier this year, as far as a natural disaster and I think about the space that we're talking about and I think Vice Chair Chang mentioned this, the flooding is a

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1 pretty serious risk there. I used to have my kids at the preschool that was in that space and
2 anytime it rained the whole lot was flooded and we couldn't get our kids out. Like, it's pretty
3 serious, and that's not a situation where you want to put an underground parking garage, to
4 whoever mentioned that in the public, I'm really concerned about that. I'm not sure that's
5 feasible. Then we think about just geographic location, this is very close to the bay, and is the
6 geography of that terrain going to support taller houses, right. We don't want to have another
7 situation like you know, early 20th Century San Francisco where we build on too much sand.
8 Right, we need to make sure we understand that and that's in terms of persuasiveness, these
9 are the kinds of things I'm thinking about. Natural disasters, if we had an earthquake, if we had
10 a flood, how is that specific space that has not been yet developed for homes, have we made
11 sure that we understand that and can build safely there to extent that we are talking about and
12 this is not twenty homes or a hundred homes, we've talking 1,900 homes. So, we need to make
13 sure that people there can be confident that they have built in a safe location. The lot coverage,
14 yeah, I mean even people in dense housing or lower income, or lower priced point housing,
15 those people need to be able to see plants and flowers too. And not just at the bay, but in their
16 vicinity, so I share the concerns that have been expressed around that. Let's see, you said
17 something about minimum density, my colleagues have said... that was Commissioner
18 Reckdahl, I think it's a really interesting proposal, I just want to make sure that like
19 Commissioner Hechtman said, that we can distribute spaces of minimum density throughout
20 the city and not only here. But I realize the way that this has been presented to us, our scope is

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1 just these two areas. So, we don't have to get into that tonight, but as you go forward, we'll be
2 keeping an eye on that and making sure that we have other spaces. Climate change, we've
3 talked a little about the kinds of things we have to deal with, natural resources protecting our
4 bay, and our Baylands, something else to think about. If we put a large number of very high
5 density projects there, it's going to be different for what impact we have on our nearby
6 environment. And I recognize that we have had some amount of CEQA investigation there but
7 just a lot of people make a lot of trash, a lot of sewage, a lot of just even walking, a lot of
8 destruction to the environment, or maybe damage, not destruction. Maybe that's a better
9 word. But we have to be thoughtful that we don't just over intensify or impact on the Baylands
10 because it's very close. The clustering was mentioned; that this is all very specifically in one part
11 of town, I'm very sensitive to that, I understand that we want to take advantage of places that
12 present opportunities, we also have to think about where we're positioning this presumably
13 entry level housing in an industrial zone, right beside 101. So, the environmental justice lens,
14 looking at it through that lens, is this going to be less healthy part of Palo Alto. Are those
15 residents going to have more impact on them by just the place where they're going to live. And
16 that ties back into the last thing I want to mention is this space not being like-enough to the
17 rest of Palo Alto. On the one hand, there's some possibilities there that are really positive, right,
18 you get to be closer to work, you're bikeable to the Baylands and companies off the Baylands,
19 et cetera, on the other hand, what are we doing to our community if we create a place so
20 physically separate. And it's easy to write that off and say you know, gosh, every neighborhood

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1 is different , but we're talking about significant difference here and maybe that's what we have
2 to do, but we need to be really intentional and aware of if that's the choices we're deciding to
3 make. Thank you very much.

4

5 Chair Summa: Thank you Commissioner Templeton. And I would like to make a few comments,
6 and then we'll go for another round. First off I'd like to thank all of the commenters and emails
7 we got on this topic. It's very helpful. Particularly, something that interests me particularly,
8 which isn't really on our Agenda this evening, but that is the State and Regional process, which
9 Council member Schmid brought up and that has been especially troubling and especially
10 especially troubling when you look at the failure of the RHNA process over the last fifty years.
11 Every cycle failed to achieve what it was supposed to achieve. And, almost worse every year. By
12 that I mean that the market rate numbers were achievable and the subsidized rates were never
13 achievable and the delta between the two got broader and broader with each RHNA cycle over
14 eight years. So, the question is to me, why do we keep doing it. We need something better, and
15 when we do do it, it should be based on realistic data and there should be a process by which
16 that can be adjusted, I mean, nobody expected COVID and the massive effects, and changes in
17 the way people do business, and the way we live. It was a remarkable thing, actually. And so, I
18 would like to take a little moment to opine about that. But then back to the issues before us
19 tonight which are really the changes to address a more urgent statutory requirement to the
20 Comp Plan and then to the Municipal Code and also to decide if we want to extend the new

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1 part of the muni-code 14, I forget what it's called... 18.14, I think it is, to the rest of Palo Alto.
2 So, that's really what's before us tonight and just in general, I think that I'm very concerned
3 about the reduce landscape standards also, because especially in the... are we calling it the basa
4 area now? Is that it's name? Especially there, because it will be very different than the rest of
5 Palo Alto, and we are not We aren't making room for anything except maybe courtyards
6 above podium parking, which I find very undesirable, and rooftops. And, I've said it many times,
7 but if we're going to have rooftops stand in for open space, then I think we need standards for
8 rooftops. And how much green they should have and how much shade they should have.
9 Otherwise they won't be usable by anybody. That's going to be a real heat island out there and
10 I share some of my colleagues concerns that this is just going to be like 'not the other part' of
11 Palo Alto. Which doesn't feel right to me. We may have to do it. Thirty percent is not... I mean it
12 is more spread out, we're not putting everything there, but that's not my concern. But my
13 concern is this is going to be a very different area, and I don't see the walkable amenities that
14 maybe some people do in that area. So landscape is a big deal for me, but that then affects
15 height and footprint. So, those are some of the trade-offs. I do think... I always forget this, but
16 I'm sure somebody can remind me, I think there is a consequence associated with parcels that
17 are not... that are opportunity sites that are not developed in this cycle, for the next cycle, but I
18 forget what it is. Am I correct? So...
19

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1 Mr. Yang: Yes, that's right. If we ... if there's ... if there are sites that are used in two
2 consecutive housing elements that are not developed and we want to use them again, then
3 they need to provide a certain level of by-right development.

4

5 Chair Summa: That's right. That's right. Thank you for reminding me. So, that's one of the
6 actual practical and real disadvantages of having an unrealistic number of units to produce in
7 the first place. And that's ... that would be unfortunate, if it wasn't our fault, if the numbers
8 were just wrong. So, thank you for that. And then, I am not interested in this time in extending
9 the new title 18.14 to the rest of the city. I just feel like there are too many unknowns and
10 especially with HCD not having something suitable for them yet, a housing element suitable for
11 them, and I don't think we have enough information on the impacts. And I know it makes it
12 clunkier to use the document, because you have to look two places, but I think for now, I would
13 be not interested in extending it to the rest of the city. I had a really specific question, and it's
14 on Packet Page 72, and it's 18.20.030, Table 1. The change here was to an existing piece of
15 code, and the change was to call out, instead of just multiple family housing it was to make
16 multiple family housing that are opportunity sites and multiple family housing that are not
17 opportunity sites. And I was wondering, there is no CUP permitted in the multiple family
18 housing element opportunity sites box for MOR, and I was wondering if that was a mistake or if
19 we some how didn't want it there.

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1 Ms. Eisberg: Yeah, that's a great question. So, there's two separate lines there because we need
2 to allow multi-family housing by right on those opportunity sites.

3

4 Chair Summa: Right.

5

6 Ms. Eisberg: However, in these zones there are... outside of the opportunity sites, other sites,
7 there are zones with potential hazardous materials in this area, and those are required to have
8 a CUP.

9

10 Chair Summa: So, for the housing opportunity site we don't need to put Permitted for MOR or
11 CUP for MOR?

12

13 Ms. Eisberg: Oh, for MOR there's currently... currently there's no housing opportunity sites
14 proposed in the MOR district.

15

16 Chair Summa: Okay, that was the other possibility I thought. Okay. Thank you for clarifying
17 that. And then, I did not have other specific questions about this, other than it is ... I don't know
18 that it needs to be more persuasive, I'm not quite understanding that point, but I didn't have
19 other specific questions. I had some and then I eliminated them as I realized I understood them.
20 But I am very concerned about the landscaping and the impacts, particularly in the Basa area,

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1 because I think the rest are spread out and ... this is something we have to do; regardless of
2 how we may like it or not like. So, I am going to stop there and Commissioner [Vice Chair]
3 Chang has her light on.

4

5 Vice Chair Chang: Thank you. So, this is kind of my second round of comments, is it okay to go
6 on with the second round now? Okay, great. Okay, so I'll just start with my opinion on
7 extending 18.14 to the rest of Palo Alto, and I can concur with Commissioner [Chair] Summa
8 and Akin that I agree with the current staff proposal to keep it a separate section, for a number
9 of reasons. One is that as highlighted by Commissioner Reckdahl, it sounds like these changes
10 tie into a number of other programs and because they are located in one place right now, it's
11 very easy to see how they would... how we could pull the other programs in, and so it's easy to
12 find them. And so that's one reason. Secondly, it sounds like there may be some changes... well,
13 there will be some changes to the Housing Element, and that way again, if though it seems
14 unlikely, by Ms. Eisberg's assessment, that they will touch on these things, they may or may
15 not, so that way we can just have everything that we've touched in one location, and finally, I
16 know there's litigation in southern California and potentially coming forward in other parts of
17 the state, and so we're going to see how this whole process goes forward. And, I'm also one of
18 the folks that think that some of the underlying assumptions potentially for the Housing
19 Element numbers, may be unrealistic and there are situations where it doesn't serve our best
20 interest to have an accurate numbers to begin with because of some of these by-right

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1 implications for future use of the same sites. And so, I think it's best to keep things separate, for
2 now, it may make sense once we have lived with these ... lived with 18.14 for a while, for us to
3 roll it in, but that's the same amount of work later on, as it would be right now, and in the
4 meantime if we need to make some changes or tweaks because we've... because we're
5 incorporating additional programs, at least we can find everything in one place. So, that's my
6 logic for that. I... regarding the tables, I did have concerns about... a question about Research
7 Park. How many Research Park housing opportunities... housing opportunity sites are there
8 right now, in this Housing Element. I don't remember there being many, if any, other than the
9 handful that are right on El Camino.

10

11 Ms. Eisberg: I will look it up.

12

13 Vice Chair Chang: Okay, thank you. I just didn't know that there were any others. Okay. And
14 then I really liked Commissioner Reckdahl's comment about incorporating a minimum density
15 component and would love to see the tables when we see this again. I would love it if we could
16 see in the tables for each zone – what the current minimum density is, so that we could adjust
17 those, if necessary; and if there is no minimum density, for that to be flagged because it's not
18 currently in our tables. Sorry, I'm looking at an electronic copy and I'm trying to find those
19 tables. So, that would be helpful. And, I do recognize that we can't do everything right now in
20 the... that we're trying to pick and choose and trying to implement those things that are

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1 required by law to be done in January 2024 first. But I do think that if we ... oh I do see it for the
2 CC, I see it in Table 1, but I don't see it in Table 2, for the GM, maybe because there isn't a
3 minimum density. So, I think that my preference would be that when we adopt an ordinance,
4 we do adopt a minimum density, because we do want to make sure that there... I don't see why
5 these multi-family parcels should be any different from our other multi-family parcels. There
6 should be a minimum density because there is a specific goal for these. And we've seen with a
7 number of other proposals that we've approved, that have come through the PTC in the last
8 twelve to twenty-four months that the densities have not come anywhere near what could
9 have been built on the properties precisely because townhomes are so lucrative. And so, if we
10 want to see a variety of housing, we want to do that. Also, very much related to that,
11 Commissioner Reckdahl's point about not counting FARs above a certain number of bedrooms
12 which is another program, I know that we can't incorporate all the programs at once, but I do
13 think that if we are doing this part, 1.1, those things go hand in hand. And so I would hate for us
14 to have a delay over the course of eight years in implementing that other program, which is a
15 pretty small kind of addendum and that might... you know we'll have all these developments
16 happen without that additional bonus, that would properly incentivize the mix of the type of
17 units that want in a development. And so, you know, somebody that is really gung-ho about a
18 particular development puts there application in, not realizing, because our code doesn't have
19 it, that they could actually kind of get a bonus, and FAR, for building a three or four bedroom
20 unit, where we would really like to see that. And all we get are a bunch of tiny little units,

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1 because we'd like to see that type of development in Palo Alto. Where we have some two
2 bedroom units, some studios, as well as some units from families, all together. And so, if it's
3 possibly, I'm really hoping that when we adopt 18.14, that we're able to incorporate both the
4 minimum density, as well as that specific piece about the FAR above a certain number of
5 bedrooms being a freebie. Just so that... because that way we'll incentivize the right types of
6 proposals coming in. And I'm going to stop right there. Thanks.

7

8 Chair Summa: Commissioner Lu.

9

10 Commissioner Lu: I just want to leave some comments. So, I totally understand the dilemma of
11 staff, on that point of being persuasive. Like, we generally said that we weren't happy with the
12 Housing Element when we adopted it, I think Council member Lauing said something about
13 how this is something we can improve along the way, and that this is actually like an
14 opportunity to... like there are opportunities to make it better. And so, I think we're kind of
15 getting a blank slate back based on what was in the Housing Element and this is the study
16 session so we can figure out what the opportunities to make it better are. My point about
17 Stanford, I just want to clarify. So, they offered three sites, and then proposed very different
18 plans on two of them. One of them with the Builders Remedy, and so like, I don't understand
19 what happened. I don't understand how the politics of Stanford land ownership works, or to
20 what extent lesser ... like leasers have ability to advance proposals themselves. We think of

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1 Stanford as kind of like very deliberate conservative, long-term actor, but something happened
2 for... and something happened very dramatically for two of these three sites. So, this points to
3 less cohesion in Stanford's approach than we might think. Given that, it seems totally
4 reasonable to me to upzone parts of the Research Park like many of us have wanted and zone it
5 like a GM zone and put the ball in their court. And first of all, they don't have to pick us up on
6 anything, but secondly, they've already shown a willingness to build a pretty big builders
7 remedy project on the McDonalds and on the fish market. So, like, they've taken us up when
8 we haven't offered it as well, so yeah, would definitely consider that an opportunity. One point
9 on extended zoning, I'm generally fine with this. I think on El Camino, it's a real patchwork. Like,
10 every other block has like, a couple buildings on it seemingly, but I realize that El Camino is very
11 difficult to like, get a unified zoning approach on. In the GM and ROLM zones there's also less of
12 a patchwork, but still a bit of a patchwork. The practical differences seem marginal as
13 commissioners have mentioned. Many of those sites... most of those sites won't be developed,
14 it's certainly cleaner, and we may be predisposed to approve those sites anyways, and we don't
15 need to add them all into our Housing Element sites so, potential issues down the line are also
16 kind of avoidable. Okay, so, just a roundup of a couple of more things. I definitely agree that
17 cramming housing along San Antonio is not ideal and while it may not be a horrible place, it is
18 not clearly fair, or affirmatively fair. I, yeah, in addition to the Research Park, I think we should
19 explore more opportunities to put out RFD's for downtown and Cal Ave parking lots, I think
20 we've ... I don't know... have a handful of parking lots... surface parking lots there. But, there are

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1 many more and we may not need to include all of them, but we should consider including
2 more. Along the lines of the Research Park, I don't know, I think we should just take a
3 moonshot and do similar upzoning for the shopping center, or maybe Cubberly. So, some other
4 things I would strongly consider supporting. Clear requirements for ground floor landscaping,
5 clearer setbacks for El Camino, San Antonio area, like along that vein; minimum density, as
6 people have mentioned. I would also support holding the line on underground parking, where
7 possible. I just have very strong negative feelings about street... like surface parking, and
8 podiums. I would support lowering parking minimums as well, and yeah, including other
9 programs to the extent that we can, like Commissioner Reckdahl mentioned on commercial
10 offices. Yeah, so that's a roundup of thoughts for now.

11

12 Chair Summa: Thank you. Commissioner Hechtman.

13

14 Commissioner Hechtman: Thank you. So, I wanted to react to some of the things I've heard
15 from my fellow Commissioners. First, a couple of commissioners mentioned what they call
16 reduced landscaping. My review of the staff report suggested that relocating landscaping is
17 maybe a more accurate description and I want staff to clarify that. Because my understanding is
18 where landscaping is required, at a certain percentage, that percentage is still required but it
19 can be now above the ground floor, where it will be enjoyed by the occupants of that building,

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1 possibly somewhat in a more private way. So, I wanted to understand if I was understanding
2 that correctly. We're not reducing landscaping requirements, we're relocating them.

3

4 Ms. Eisberg: Yes, that's correct.

5

6 Commissioner Hechtman: Alright. Reducing ground level and increasing above ground level, I
7 suppose, by an equal amount. So, people on the street perhaps won't have the same level of
8 enjoyment but there will still be the same amount of green space in the area. Alright. Comment
9 from Commissioner Reckdahl about looking at reduction of the commercial areas as a
10 compliment to entice greater residential. And I think we should examine that. My fear is that
11 when we do, what we're going to find is that it's actually going to be a site constraint. If I've got
12 a... first of all, there's no undeveloped commercial land in Palo Alto right now. It's all built, it's
13 being used, or it's vacant and available for rent. But there aren't like ... green fields where
14 people are going to build. So, let's say I've got a 50,000 square foot commercial building, and
15 this new zoning that we're talking about, will allow me to add whatever, 30,000 square feet of
16 housing above it. I might do that. Right. If you tell me that to add the 30,000... I can add the
17 30,000 square feet of housing, but I have to reduce my commercial from 50 to 30, from 50,000
18 to 30,000 square feet, right, I'm not going to do it. Because the commercial is too valuable. And
19 so, I think we should look at it, but my... but I think we need to be wary that we don't
20 disincentivize people from rebuilding on their property, when we do that. And, kind of similarly,

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1 I do think that we should look at minimum density but we need to look at that very carefully
2 because what we want to avoid is ... if there's a minimum density, are we going to... you know,
3 we've got a minimum number of units you have to have, but we also have a maximum height
4 and a maximum FAR, and so, are we going to get that minimum density, are we forcing people
5 to have studio and one bedrooms. Because that's all that will fit in the 30 units. So, I just think
6 ... but there should be a number that's low enough, that that doesn't happen while ensuring
7 that we don't end up with five units on a property that could accommodate 50. So, I like the
8 idea of a minimum, but I think we've got to look at that to get it right. Let's see... the Chair
9 correctly pointed out that, in conversation with Mr. Yang, that one of the sort of negative by
10 products of an overreach by the HCD in setting our RHNA numbers is if these units, which we
11 are identifying in this cycle, go through another cycle and still aren't built, then they become
12 by-right development. And I think that's accurate, but when I think about it, if somebody is
13 going to build by-right in Palo Alto, I want them to build by-right where I've already decided we
14 should have that housing. Whereas, now we get builders remedy applicants and SB 330
15 applications where we really don't want the density they're proposing, but they can get it by-
16 right. So, it's a correct point, but at least by possibly overstating our analysis here, we are
17 directing future growth to where we've decided we want it. Let's see, a couple more points. I
18 was curious from staff, you know when I look at the FAR figures that we're looking at, and I
19 think this is Table 1, Packet Pages 14 and 15, Packet Pages 14 to 17, what I see is, when we're
20 talking about really pumping up FAR, to something like 2.5, that only happens in the GM and

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1 ROLM areas. There is in the CDC, it's 2.0, but you can get up to 3 with a TDR (Transfer
2 Development Rights). So, help me understand why ... what's the thought process that we want
3 to have that kind of 2.5 density only in the GM and ROLM and not in other areas of town where
4 we're making opportunity sites, where that higher FAR might make the difference to a potential
5 developer about whether a project is going to pencil out or not.

6
7 Ms. Eisberg: Yeah, so, this program is really just making sure that there are no constraints to
8 meeting these planned densities identified in the Housing Element. That's purely it. Some
9 public commenters noted that many of the recent projects actually have higher FARs, so, recall
10 that our next step, we're going to bring back this program 3.4, the Housing Incentive Program,
11 and that's going to look at bumping up FARs further. And so, that's really the mechanism the
12 City has advanced in the Housing Element, as a policy decision for making those subsequent
13 FAR changes and that's when you're going to see increases in FAR, increases in height. This
14 program is frankly more modest, it's just trying to confirm that we can meet the planned
15 densities identified in the RHNA.

16
17 Commissioner Hechtman: Okay, that's really helpful. Thank you, Ms. Eisberg. Alright. A number
18 of the commissioners have commented on their view of whether chapter 18.14 should or
19 should not extend beyond opportunity sites. Right now at this point, I don't feel like I have
20 enough information to give an informed opinion. I'm really happy that staff articulated it; it was

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1 the subject of a paragraph in the staff report, and what I would hope is that when this comes
2 back to us, for action in October, that maybe staff can go into more detail on the potential
3 benefits and detriments of having 18.14 apply outside of opportunity sites, maybe with a
4 couple of examples. So that really, we can get a sense of you know, could this be a good thing,
5 or could this really have some unintended consequences outside of the opportunity sites. So,
6 I'm hoping to see that. Finally, I've got a few small comments on the language of the
7 ordinances. If we can start on Packet Page 72, and this is actually the table that Chair Summa
8 was referring to, so we've got multiple family Housing Element opportunity sites subject to
9 regulations in Chapter, and we've correctly cited 18.14.020, but then multiple family other
10 sites, so those are not opportunity sites – but we're also referencing 18.14.020 which if it's not
11 an opportunity site... I don't think that reference should be there. If we're ultimately going to
12 decide that it's going to comply to everything, fine. But if it's a multi-family that's not an
13 opportunity site, so that 18.14 doesn't apply to it, then I think that that reference needs to be
14 removed. Packet Page 76, 18.16.060B, you've added a sentence. Actually, you've added a
15 clause, but you've written it as a sentence starting with Accept. So, it says: Chapter 18.24. and
16 then the new language which Accept that sites designated as Housing Element blah blah blah, I
17 think there needs to be a comma there. And then you've got the same... this is one that appears
18 three times here. But first on Packet Page 77, you've got a new subpart C at the very bottom of
19 that page that says "Combining district use regulations and design buildings standards shall not
20 apply to exclusively residential project on Housing Element opportunity sites designed to

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1 accommodate lower income households". I think you need to add there basically, see
2 18.14.020. And I think the same thing happens on Packet Page 79, you've got the same
3 language about low income households, toward the top of the page, and it appears one other
4 place... 79, 77, and sorry, the first one is actually on 75. So, it's the same reference, so take a
5 look at that. And then the final thing I wanted to mention is, and this really relates to this issue
6 of whether 18.14 will apply outside of opportunity sites. So, one thing we've done... first of all,
7 it's been clear throughout this project that the Council is not interested in opportunity sites in
8 R-1 zones properties, with one exception, and that's the faith based properties. And so, if we
9 decide to apply 18.14 more broadly, across the city... I think we have to account for that.
10 Because I'm pretty sure the intention will not be to also apply that to the R-1's not owned by
11 faith based organizations. And kind of a related... something that is related to that, a thought I
12 had is, is, we need... here's the scenario, if it applies to other than opportunity sites, and I'm a
13 faith based organization, can I buy an R-1 house in a neighborhood and go multi-family. I know
14 that's not an intention, and so we just make sure... we need to make sure, that we don't
15 inadvertently, again another unintended consequence to look at as we move forward with this
16 discussion of whether or not to apply 18.14 before... beyond the opportunity sites. So those are
17 my comments, and I really appreciate staff giving us this opportunity to dialogue on these draft
18 ordinances.

19

20 Chair Summa: Thank you. Commissioner Akin.

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Commissioner Akin: Thank you Chair. So, I'm following up on the do we extend 18.14 to the baseline zoning question and I think like some of my colleagues, I'm not ready to commit to that yet. I'm not opposed to the idea of updating the baselines later, when we have a little better justification for doing so. Just out of curiosity, you guys know that I'm inclined to do this sort of thing, so when I had a spare hour this afternoon, I went through the projects in the pipeline to see what our FARs are lately. So, I only made it through the first fifteen, but of those, the mean FAR that is in the pipeline today is 2.2. So, it's... you might say that's surprisingly high, and it was to me, but that average is high because there are a few builders remedy and density bonus projects in those first fifteen. Seven out of those fifteen are under two. And two of them are under one. So, there's building going on today, even though higher FARs are not allowed. So, what the right approach is for the baseline is not completely clear to me. So, I don't want to apply this too early. Thank you.

Chair Summa: Very interesting. Thank you for spending your hour well. Commissioner [Vice Chair] Chang, and then Commissioner Templeton.

Vice Chair Chang: I didn't want to go again yet, until other people (crosstalk)

Chair Summa: Commissioner Templeton.

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Commissioner Templeton: You're so kind Vice Chair. So, I just wanted to clarify because the Chair commented on it, and I want to make sure that my comment earlier was understood. When I'm asking staff to make proposals more persuasive, since that comment I've heard at least three commissioners ask for data to back up the recommendation, and that's what I mean. So, it's not... I'm not talking about sales persuasive, I'm talking about technical persuasive, in other words, be able to make it very clear why the recommend... what the recommendation is based on, and justify it in a way that we can all see at least where staff is coming from, we may not all agree, but having that objective data there to support the recommendation, I think would be very helpful for the community. Thank you.

Chair Summa: Commissioner [Vice Chair] Chang would you like to go now?

Vice Chair Chang: Only if you haven't done your second round. If you have a second round, no.

Chair Summa: Oh. I have a question because... and it has to do with the blue annotations in the borders of the Comp Plan. Because we haven't really touched on that very much, so I just wanted to verify that it was in fact... all the proposed changes are between Packet pages 40 and 44. Is that right?

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1 Ms. Eisberg: Yes, it's just the changes to the Land Use Designation definition, just those.

2

3 Chair Summa: Okay. Because I don't think anybody has specifically commented on that, and I
4 was... it was so... it was such a small amount of suggested changes that I was surprised, so I
5 wanted to make sure that was correct and say that they all seem appropriate to me. And, I
6 want to say something about the value of commercial versus residential development. Because
7 I think the value per square foot is getting almost the same, I think the difference is, partially,
8 because the rental structure for commercial is very different than residential and ... because the
9 long-term leases and not having, you know, a hundred individual unit families complaining
10 about things, I just think it's a very different kind of property to own. So, I think that's one
11 thing. And we have tried very many ways for a long time in Palo Alto, some of us, to try to
12 reduce adding new commercial development but I don't think that's really on our plate tonight.
13 And, I was going to say also, I'm very... very strongly believe that underground parking and
14 podium parking are not desirable. I would agree with my colleague about that, and that... oh, I
15 was going to ask... aren't we reducing personal outdoor space but keeping... aren't we not
16 requiring that now for individual units. Didn't we eliminate that? Or am I wrong.

17

18 Ms. Eisberg: Amy, maybe you can help me. Right now, this ordinance does not propose any
19 changes to private open space. I do recall that a few years ago the City may have made changes

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1 to whether you could do common versus private, but this ordinance does not make any
2 changes to private open space requirements.

3

4 Chair Summa: Okay, thank you for clarifying that. And I think, I think that's it. So, I see
5 Commissioner Reckdahl's light on.

6

7 Commissioner Reckdahl: Yeah, couple comments, 18.14, I think I'm in the same boat as
8 everyone else. I think down the road we probably do want to flow some of that back, but right
9 now let's just get 18.14 for the opportunity sites, once all these programs are developed then
10 we can say, well, what do we want to put back into the rest. And I suspect that most of those ...
11 if it was a highly likely to be developed, it'd be on the opportunity sites. I don't think we're
12 missing anything by holding off and not giving benefits to someone who's not going to use it.
13 The next is the relocated landscaping, as Commissioner Hechtman said, I have mixed feelings
14 about this, because it is a constraint. The back of the lot... I have no problem with it at all. The
15 front, I'm more worried about walkable neighborhoods and if you're walking by a podium
16 parking, or you're walking by trees, those are two different experiences. So, maybe for the first
17 front half or front third of a lot, you can... you have to have that ground floor, but in the back of
18 the lot you can have it elevated, that would make it easier to have underground parking and
19 make it easier to build. The others, some comments that we've gotten from the Commission
20 and also from the public about, you know we're clustering everything down to GM and ROLM,

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1 but it kind of reminds me of like Willie Sutton. He robbed banks because that's where the
2 money was. We're putting all that stuff down there because that's where the land is. I mean
3 those areas have dumpy buildings, they're single story, they're more likely to be developed
4 than something that's brand new, second story, and very lucrative because their renting out
5 office space. So, I do feel it is a little unfair to put it down there, but it's much more plausible
6 that that's going to be redesigned than a new office building would be redesigned.
7 Commissioner Hechtman talked about a minimum. I agree, there could be bad side effects, the
8 big thing is it has to be high enough that we force them to do some type of high rise, and once
9 you hit... they're going to build a three story office building... I mean residential building, then
10 they almost, certainly if they had the freedom, would go up to three, four five stories, and if the
11 constrain is height, one of the callers said you know, we should bump that higher than sixty
12 down there. And I think that probably would be appropriate, you know, I walk by... I'm in south
13 Palo Alto I walk over to San Antonio, and they have the Dean down there, if you haven't been
14 by there, drive by the Dean on San Antonio, it's a beast, it's seventy, eighty-five feet
15 [TIMESTAMP 2:42:40 Audio skipped] part of it. There's a lot of units there. And when it first was
16 built, it was like Oh my God! And now I walk by it every week and I'm used to it and it's not a
17 big deal. You know, I think something that scale down on San Antonio probably would be
18 acceptable and a limit of sixty might be giving up units, and also giving up feasibility, also. So, I
19 think bumping that up would give us more room to implement a meaningful minimum density
20 also. I think that's it. Okay, thanks.

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Chair Summa: Commissioner Templeton. Oh. Commissioner [Vice Chair] Chang would you like to go now?

Vice Chair Chang: Yes Please. I wondered if Ms. Eisberg had an answer to my question earlier about the Research Park sites, and where they are.

Ms. Eisberg: So there are seven sites and there's a total of 232 housing units going towards the RHNA.

Vice Chair Chang: Okay, so, part of it... there's seven sites, and three of them are the Stanford sites on El Camino, is that correct?

Ms. Eisberg: The RP?

Vice Chair Chang: I'm just wondering where they are because it's really surprise... Hillview and Foot Hill, okay thank you.

Ms. Eisberg: I'm sorry, I was looking at PF. I just had a backwards moment. Excuse me. Okay. So that's ... it's just that 330 El Camino site. So, it's just the Stanford site. Just the one.

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Vice Chair Chang: It's just the one. Okay. That helps. The reason is, as I was looking at Table 2, so Packet Page...

Commissioner Templeton: Can you clarify, it's 232 all Stanford sites, or just... is that what you meant by just the one.

Ms. Eisberg: It's just one Stanford site, 3300 El Camino.

Vice Chair Chang: So there is only one Research Park site, so, I guess because we're going to be pulling out those Stanford sites separately, I'm wondering, I personally, unless we're thinking more broadly about extending the proposed changes in Table 2, my preference... unless we're thinking about extending the proposed changes in Table 2 more broadly beyond 18.14 to all of Research Park, I don't think it's helpful to have Research park covered in Table 2, because Research Park is a huge opportunity for housing and without a really long and thoughtful discussion about what the... about what the maximum landscape coverage, what the maximum lot coverage, what the maximum density should be, what the maximum height should be, I really don't think that we should put anything there. And the reason being is because that's a huge, huge housing opportunity for the city, it's also a huge opportunity for planned neighborhoods, and I... memory is short in this city, we just saw something that was zoned RM-

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1 30 go away, and I don't want to kind of inadvertently say... Oh, this was our intention for this
2 area, because Research Park is massive, we could conceivably go really high in some places and
3 go low in other places and intentionally do that. I mean we could have some of the highest
4 developments anywhere in Palo Alto there. But we need to think about it. We should also be, I
5 mean really thinking about a planned community there. If we put a ton of housing there, we
6 should be carving out large parks, carving out space for a school, so that is... I actually feel
7 pretty strongly about removing Research Park from Table 2, because we're already defining
8 those three Stanford sites separately in 18.14 and it just is... it think Research Park merits a lot
9 more thought unless we plan to rezone Research park more broadly and I think that's a much
10 much larger discussion than something that should be just done at the PTC. Like it needs to be...
11 it's a big discussion for our community. I don't think it... I think it should be separately
12 agendized in my opinion, because I know there would be a lot of public comment and I
13 wouldn't feel comfortable voting on it. So, that's my first part... reaction, and even if it were in
14 this table, I just don't think we should say above the ground floor, for example, because that's a
15 large area. There's no need for it to be up above the ground floor there for landscaping. I mean
16 maybe it's appropriate for part of Research Park, but there are giant parcels. It's not
17 constrained the same way as the rest of Palo Alto. So, I just think we... I'm not saying it's not
18 necessary, I'm just saying that we just need to think more about it, for Research Park. For the
19 heights, for every single column, for Research Park. Then related to that, it's a segway about
20 Figure 4. When I look at Figure 4, and when I think about the Basa area and GM ROLM this is

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1 just a plea to... you know I wish our esteemed Board Chair of PAUSD were still here and maybe
2 she's listening online, and maybe there are other PAUSD Boardmembers or staff listening, and
3 maybe there's a City Council member listening or who will review the minutes, but please
4 please please, let's do some planning in this area before onesie two-sie developments start
5 going up in this Figure 4 area. We're planning for unprecedented housing density, in this
6 unprecedented height, and unprecedented lot coverage in an area... and Commissioner
7 Templeton has mentioned some environmental concerns, I've mentioned environmental
8 concerns, I think a couple other Commissioners have. This is near marsh land, this is near
9 migratory bird routes, we're talking about heights that are higher than most of Palo Alto. It's
10 near the freeway, so we... we've talked about this for months here. So, this is not near San
11 Antonio and bus routes, we need schools, services, all of us have said this is a different ... we
12 don't want a different different part of Palo Alto. And if it is a different different part of Palo
13 Alto, then we want it to have adequate services, rather than bussing our kids from here all the
14 way to Addison or something like that. Or to Nixon. So, I was talking to an L.A. USD, Los Altos...
15 Los Altos, not unified, Los Altos school district, Boardmember and they've done some
16 interesting stuff with Mountainview, in which a lot of the San Antonio developments have
17 generated a lot of new population there, and they planned for a park land, and they planned for
18 housing and I don't understand the details of it, but there's been some land swaps done with
19 cities and school districts. I mean I think we need to get creative here, and so it's a plea for us to
20 please look at this area. It's not a PTC level decision to be made, but it is a school board and city

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1 council level decision to be made. To please think about services for the 1,900 or 1,600 or
2 whatever it is, units that are going to go in here with, you know, probably 1,600 kids, at least, if
3 not double that. That's elementary schools in Palo Alto. That is four elementary schools. So, we
4 need to plan for that. And .75 high schools. Right there.

5

6 Chair Summa: Thank you. Couldn't agree more.

7

8 Commissioner Reckdahl: One thing I want to chime in about, south of San Antonio is actually
9 Mountainview High School, a Mountainview School District, so the GM we should really be
10 reaching out to Mountainview and...

11

12 Chair Summa: That's true.

13

14 Vice Chair Chang: Well, yes, south of San Antonio is, but that little corner of Figure 4 is not. The
15 corner of Figure 4 is not and that's where, by my calculation and a prior iteration of the Housing
16 Element inventory list, it was about 1,600 units, or 1,500 units there, so...

17

18 Commissioner Reckdahl: But in Figure 4 the area in the far right there, that is Palo Alto city but
19 Mountainview school district.

20

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1 Commissioner Templeton: I would love to address this as well.

2

3 Vice Chair Chang: Ok, well, I would love the data on that, but regardless, there's at least one
4 elementary school going in there, if not two.

5

6 Commissioner Reckdah!: But I agree with between planning and parks and bike paths and
7 schools, there's a lot of stuff that needs to be planned. Yeah. Totally agree.

8

9 Chair Summa: Couldn't agree more. Commissioner Templeton.

10

11 Commissioner Templeton: Thank you kindly Chair. So, as usual, Vice Chair Chang and I are
12 sharing a room tonight, we wanted to talk about the same topics, so I have a slightly different
13 take but I think it's a good discussion, I'm really glad you brought these things up. So, first
14 things first, that's where the lots are, I have to respond to that, I've been holding it in so, no,
15 that's where these lots are. But there are lots throughout this city, most notably Research Park
16 has a tremendous vast opportunity for us to be looking at in a completely different way. Now it
17 does have challenges like the plumes are there, I wanted to mention the landscaping because
18 you brought that up. I used to work over there, it's beautifully landscaped already and if we
19 changed it and ripped all that out and didn't put something back that would be a loss for our
20 community. Also, I worked at probably the tallest building over there and I can tell you bird

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1 strikes were very common and we can't go really very high, I believe that was a two or three
2 story building on top of a hill. You just can't go high over there and that brings me back to that's
3 where the lots are, and can we go five or six stories. No way. No way. We will, I mean these are
4 migratory paths, this is right by the Baylands, it would be devastating to our wildlife community
5 to have very tall buildings with that much glass that residential would require. I'd be very
6 concerned, although I know we do have some technology where we can have safe window
7 panes and what not, but we had technology on this building that I worked at and even the
8 company was named in a bird friendly way, but we lost multiple birds a day and it was really
9 hard on us, so I would not want to think about like encouraging high buildings in that space and
10 I think it's a huge mistake. It's not to say I don't want people to be able to have housing here, I
11 do, but you have to balance it with the needs of the natural resources, the environment. So,
12 just throwing that out there as a counter point, it doesn't mean ... not trying to be contrary just
13 to say there's some things we need to think about, and we would if a building project came to
14 us, we'd be able to talk about it then. So, just throwing that out because this comes up every
15 time that we talk about it. There's also the flooding risk and I know a few of us have mentioned
16 it, I'm just mentioning it again for good coverage because it floods a lot there, and it is right by
17 the bay and that land is saturated and it's going to be pretty risky to build underground parking
18 in these spaces. I don't know... I can't think of any underground lots on the other side of 101,
19 now I don't know if 101 makes it far enough away where it would be suitable, but you know,
20 I'm thinking like IKEA, that's above ground as well. So, okay, and then ... the school plan. This

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1 area is actually pretty close to Cubberly, I know that's one of the reasons they retained the
2 property, that it would be a huge development project to get that high school usable again for
3 that purpose. And we do have some adjacent sites that ... like Greendale and preschool and
4 family stuff that you could probably turn into an elementary school, but those facilities are also
5 very outdated. So, while the land exists, the facilities don't exist and that's been a source of
6 much debate over the last half decade, maybe more, about what even direction we could go
7 with that property. So, it's a long ways off, even though the property is there, at least for this
8 set of sites, I think. So, that's what I wanted to add. Thank you.

9

10 Chair Summa: Yes, I appreciate the comments about bird safety, it's really important. And,
11 obviously we're not going to put underground parking where the soils do not allow for that
12 anywhere. I was more worried about ... on El Camino... about podium parking and
13 Commissioner Lu said that I had a backwards moment and said I was anti underground parking
14 and podium. Anti underground parking, which I really think when we can put it underground
15 and keep at grade for other uses, whether it's housing or parks; and podium parking, I consider
16 unsightly and just not something we want to add to the mix in Palo Alto. Just in general, yeah.
17 So, I am wondering if my colleagues... I see no lights and I want to check with Ms. Eisberg and
18 Ms. French and see if they've gotten what they need here tonight in terms of feedback from us
19 or if there's something we haven't covered.

20

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1 Ms. Eisberg: Nope, this has been very helpful, thank you, I appreciate all of your input. I will be
2 passing a long a lot of comments to staff and consultants. The zoning ordinance can really on do
3 the zoning stuff, but I know we have a number of comments about bigger planning issues that I
4 will certainly relay.

5
6 Chair Summa: Okay. Thank you then. Last call for comments on this issue or we will close it and
7 go on to our last item of the evening which is approval of minutes from... Draft verbatim
8 minutes from August 9th.

9

10 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

11 3. Approval of Planning & Transportation Commission Draft Verbatim Minutes of July
12 12, 2023

13
14 Chair Summa: Do I have a motion?

15
16 MOTION

17
18 Commissioner Hechtman: Move approval as revised.

19
20 Chair Summa: Thank you, a second?

21
22 SECOND

-
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Commissioner Reckdahl: Second.

Chair Summa: We have very anxious seconders. So, okay, with that said, I don't think there are any member of the public who want to speak, so, we can call the vote Ms. Dao.

VOTE

Ms. Veronica Dao, Administrative Associate: Commissioner Akin?

Commissioner Akin: Yes.

Ms. Dao: Vice-Chair Chang?

Vice-Chair Chang: Yes.

Ms. Dao: Commissioner Hechtman?

Commissioner Hechtman: Yes.

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1 Ms. Dao: Commissioner Lu?

2

3 Commissioner Lu: Yes.

4

5 Ms. Dao: Commissioner Reckdahl?

6

7 Commissioner Reckdahl: Yes.

8

9 Ms. Dao: Chair Summa?

10

11 Chair Summa: Yes.

12

13 Ms. Dao: Commissioner Templeton?

14

15 Commissioner Templeton: Abstain.

16

17 Ms. Dao: Motion carries 6-0-1.

18

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

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

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Chair Summa: Thank you very much.

Committee Items

None

Commissioner Questions, Comments or Announcements

Chair Summa: And now, I don't know if any of my colleagues have questions, comments or announcements or any information such as that, that they'd like to share. Yeah, we have to do that too. Okay. So, and also we have to officially cancel September 27th.

MOTION

Vice Chair Chang: I move that we officially cancel the PTC meeting on September 27th.

Chair Summa: Do I have a second?

SECOND

Commissioner Akin: Second.

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1 Commissioner Templeton: Is a motion needed for this? Can't staff cancel the meeting if they
2 want to?

3

4 Chair Summa: I think...

5

6 Commissioner Templeton: They don't need us to do this.

7

8 Chair Summa: I think Albert... I think our attorney asked us... Mr. Yang, do you need a motion
9 to cancel the 27th?

10

11 Mr. Yang: No, we're okay.

12

13 Vice Chair Chang: Fantastic. I retract the motion.

14

15 Chair Summa: Oh, I have three lights. Commissioner Templeton.

16

17 Commissioner Templeton: Thank you. I'm putting my other hat on just to inform you and
18 members of the community that Senator Josh Becker is having an open house, he recently
19 relocated his district office from San Mateo down to Menlo Park, very accessible. Come by and
20 say hi to us on Friday September 22nd between 2:00 and 4:30. Thank you.

-
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Chair Summa: Commissioner Hechtman.

Commissioner Hechtman: So, I think it may have been mentioned a couple years ago the city had a project they were going to replace the ... I'm trying to think of the name... the thing that lets in the water, out past...

Chair Summa: The valve?

Commissioner Hechtman: No, the gates, out past Bixby Park, along the water there, there's an old, sorry, I'm just worn out. The City, in conjunction with Valley Water, so last week though, and it was ... while I'm happy they're going to replace that, it was a project that was going to take possibly three summers and during the entire period that travel path would be closed. So, I wasn't excited about that, but last week Valley Water was doing an inspection of that improvement that I can't think of the name of... and so I happened to be biking out there and I talked to them and they told me that they've decided that they don't need to do that massive replacement project for maybe twenty or thirty years, instead what they need to do is a refurbishment project of the existing improvement and that's maybe going to take a summer. And that's maybe a couple of summers from now. So, that was great news for hikers and bikers that love to get out that way.

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Chair Summa: Commissioner Reckdahl.

Commissioner Reckdahl: Another thing is September 29th there'll be the midnight run, or probably moonlight run down to the Baylands. It used to be a great party before COVID, so hopefully it gets back to its old self. So.

Chair Summa: Commissioner Templeton.

Commissioner Templeton: I forgot to mention, I attended the Parkland, the expansion dedication of the Parkland at Booware Park over near the Fry's site, maybe last week and the mayor was there, and Council Member Lauing was there, and it was really really nice. I got to meet members of the Ventura community who were all excited and got to meet the guy who found the lot and connected the owners of the lot and the city people so we could buy it. It was really cool, and I just wanted to ... I was thinking of you guys, because I know we all worked really hard on that stuff, so, just to say it's a great project and the whole thing is already demolished and underway, so it's exciting.

Chair Summa: That is very happy news, I couldn't go. But I also.. I ended up going to the Council meeting last night, even though Commissioner Hechtman and I switched, he couldn't go... he

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1 wasn't banking on Monday and Tuesdays, I don't think and he couldn't go, so I went and I'm
2 happy to say, if you didn't already know, that the staff ... our unanimous recommendation to
3 change the underlying land use from CS for the ... the three commercial sites there, to mixed
4 use, which is the SOFA, was incorporated into the staff recommendation and the Council
5 unanimously accepted it too. So, thank you very much to the staff for doing that, and it worked
6 out nicely, I think. It was a long night, but other than that. Thank you and with that, I think we
7 are adjourned.

8

9 **Adjournment**

10 9:00 pm

11

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