

**McGill, Pam**

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**From:** Matt Fernald [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 4, 2023 7:48 PM  
**To:** City Council  
**Subject:** Moffett Blvd Precise Plan -- comments

**CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL - Ensure you trust this email before clicking on any links or attachments.**

Hi MVCC,

I received details about a Moffett Blvd precise plan from Lucas Ramirez a few weeks ago. I didn't realize Moffett was under consideration for redesign, and I'm excited about the mixed-use plans.

My comment is this:

- I think it would be a massive safety/aesthetic improvement to make as much of Moffett as possible single lane, and change all the intersections to traffic circles.

My other comment is more general: Mountain View should have more traffic circles! I'm always shocked when new traffic lights go up where a single-lane traffic circle with yield signs would do. (Examples, you ask? Jose Antonio Vargas Elementary School on Whisman; California St betw San Antonio Rd and Pacchetti Way; ~50% of the traffic lights on Google campus). Much safer and cheaper in the long-run.

Thank you for reading,  
Matt Fernald



December 5, 2023

**RE: City Council Meeting December 5, 2023  
Item 3.1 Study Session: Gatekeeper Process Updates**

Dear Mayor Hicks and esteemed members of the City Council:

The Mountain View Chamber of Commerce would like to thank the City Council and Staff for providing this opportunity for a thoughtful and comprehensive review of the City's historic "Gatekeeper" process, which remains a critical component for creating the Mountain View of the future. We are urging the City Council to go with Option B with some additional considerations, and not to support Option A as is recommended in the Staff Report. **Option B is an equitable process, provides greater opportunities for innovation, and simplifies the permitting process**, all of which are primary goals of the Housing Element, Precise Plans, and Economic Vitality Strategy.

In our September 11, 2023 letter, the Chamber expressed its deep concerns regarding how the City views and processes requests for major land use changes, and called for the replacement of the Gatekeeper process with a more pragmatic, business friendly model that supports investment, not curtails it.

As was discussed in the September Study Session, Mountain View has a unique character that makes it attractive to residents, employers, and visitors alike – which is why our General Plans and Precise Plans are so important. Our city is also recognized as a leader and innovator that employs forward-thinking practices, such as our award-winning actions in sustainability and environmental transparency, which requires our policies and plans to undergo careful review and revision as conditions change.

To ensure Mountain View retains its distinctive identity, and to bolster its economic vitality, we must be able to nimbly adapt to market, economic and social changes that may not have been foreseeable at the time of General Plan and Precise Plan adoption. These improvement projects, which often are both a vital source of community benefit and provide needed reinvestment in underutilized, aging, vacant and even blighted areas of the City, frequently fall under Gatekeeper.

Thus, the Chamber believes it is in Mountain View's best interest to view "Gatekeepers" regularly and opportunistically for how they can enhance our community. At the previous Study Session, the Chamber recommended that the Council establish and maintain a clear and open process for considering projects that are not strictly in conformance with adopted plans, yet welcome creativity and offer benefits of high value to the community.

**RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARDS TO THE STAFF REPORT**

Fundamentally, the Chamber is seeking a process that welcomes all projects and provides frequent and reliable opportunities for proponents to bring their proposals to Council for advance consideration. The process should be timely, efficient, equitable to all project types and sizes, cost effective, and encourage creative land use and development.

The Staff Report presents the Council with several options for potential changes to the Gatekeeper review process. We appreciate the opportunity to offer the following recommendations for your consideration.



## 1. Gatekeeper Process Review: Option A is More Restrictive than the Current Process and Should be Rejected by Council

- Under this option, eligibility for consideration of a GP/Zoning Change by Council and participation in the Gatekeeper process would rest **solely** on a project's conformance with newly established and very prescriptive Qualifying Criteria (See item 4 below for more specific comments on the Qualifying Criteria).
- Projects that are unable to meet the Criteria would require Staff to deem them as ineligible for consideration by Council. And to make matters worse, there is no appeal process to Council.
- Additionally, Projects that meet the Criteria would still need to go to a Council Authorization hearing for consideration.

Given these circumstances, Option A is actually *more restrictive* than the current Gatekeeper process, which at least allows all projects to participate and make their best case to Council, and which uses flexibly drawn criteria to guide consideration, not determine eligibility.

The proposed framework, combined with the introduction of Qualifying Criteria that would be infeasible to most projects, would effectively shut down Gatekeeper projects. Option A accomplishes few, if any, of the goals the Chamber has been espousing, and we recommend that Council reject this alternative.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Gatekeeper Review Process: The Chamber Supports Option B With Alternative Consideration

Although the Chamber favors Option C, we appreciate and value Staff's concerns about resources. Thus, the Chamber would support "Option B With Alternative Consideration."

- We support establishing a streamlined path for projects that provide certain Community Benefits to move forward with a development application without requiring Council Authorization. Inherently, these would be exceptional projects that achieve top Council and community goals and priorities.
- Projects allowed to move forward with a development application would still come to the EPC and Council for study sessions at the outset of the process, allowing ample opportunity for Council feedback and public input.
- However, we have some concerns regarding the feasibility of the Community Benefits suggested in Table 6, as discussed in detail below.
- We strongly support providing a path for projects that do not meet the objective Criteria (and are unable to provide one of the Community Benefits on the list) to request "Alternative Consideration" by Council. Allowing all applicants to have the opportunity to present their projects to the Council is critically important, with clear guidance on Community Benefits that adjust the commitment to the size of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> We note also that Mountain View would be the only one of the 16 cities studied that requires projects to meet "Qualifying Criteria" to propose General Plan and Zoning changes.



- We recommend that Council allow applicants that request Alternative Consideration to be heard by Council at an Authorization Hearing within 90 days of filing such request.
- Combined, the above modifications to the review process should help alleviate the historically competitive aspect and provide the timeliness, reliability, and equity the process requires.

### **3. Streamlined Gatekeeper Projects**

The chamber supports all three of the criteria for Streamlined Gatekeepers listed in the staff report (p17), including projects proposing text amendments. We suggest that staff do further work to define what kind of text amendments would be considered minor enough to be allowed through, and it would be up to staff discretion whether to allow a project to apply immediately or proceed to a Gatekeeper. The key to making this work is to have frequent enough Gatekeeper hearings so that projects don't have to wait very long to move forward.

### **4. Qualifying Criteria: The Chamber Opposes the Establishment of “Qualifying” Criteria As Written but Encourages Council to Provide Guidance to Developers on Council Priorities**

- The Chamber fully supports the City Council providing the development community with guidance on the City's priorities in any given year. With such guidance, we expect project proponents will do their best to incorporate features that align with Council goals.
- We also support the Council's interest in encouraging proponents to bring forward projects that offer significant Community Benefits “above and beyond” standard requirements.
- However, the Chamber opposes the establishment of “Qualifying” Criteria for eligibility to participate in the process as written. The goal is to allow all project proponents to bring forward their proposals, and equally important, for the Council and public to see and hear all proposals.
- Additionally, the list of Community Benefits in Table 6 is too narrow and too prescriptive, offering limited options that realistically may not be feasible for most if not all projects (especially smaller scale projects), and feels skewed towards larger projects. We recommend that Staff seek input from the development community to help develop and refine the Criteria.
- To further support feasibility and allow more good projects of varied types to qualify, we suggest expanding the list of Criteria to include a broader range of City priorities, and to allow applicants to “mix and match” by providing Community Benefits from more than one category. It would be important to have the magnitude of the commitment be adjusted to the size of the project.
- Funding should also be an option for meeting the Criteria (e.g., providing funding towards the provision of public facilities, or money that can be used to support City subsidy of 100% affordable housing projects, etc.)

### **5. Community Design Principles**

We support the idea of establishing a set of “Community Design Principles” to provide guidance to applicants, prior to submitting a Gatekeeper application, on basic principles that are important to the



community and should be incorporated into their proposals, where applicable. The principles identified in the areas of Trees and Biodiversity, Historic Preservation, Active Transportation, and accommodation of Existing Businesses will help elevate all projects.

## 6. Frequency of Authorization Hearings

We thank Staff for its commitment to holding hearings at least twice per year. This is a significant step forward in addressing concerns about timeliness and reliability. We suggest Council policy include a provision that hearings shall be held at least once every 6 months, or more frequently as needed at the discretion of the Council.

## 7. Mandatory Requirement re: Spot Zoning

The Staff Report includes a “Mandatory Requirement” for eligibility that the “Project does not create spot-zoning or an isolated land use”. We ask that Staff explain the rationale for this new mandatory requirement and provide some specific examples of situations where this might apply. Inherently, Gatekeepers introduce new uses or a mix of uses (such as industrial to residential conversions), and it’s not clear under what conditions a proposal would be considered spot zoning.

## CONCLUSION

According to the City’s *Draft Economic Vitality Strategy*, “Being perceived as a welcoming, reliable, and consistent city to work with is a competitive advantage in the region, and stakeholders believe Mountain View is missing an opportunity to set itself apart from its neighbors in this area.”<sup>2</sup>

As we’ve said previously, the current Gatekeeper process worsens that reputation and erodes the hard work that the City and Chamber have done to reverse this perception and show we are open for business. It’s time to remove the stigma of Gatekeepers – give the process another name, and adopt a new, more welcoming process that invites creative and innovative ways of enhancing our community for all.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "C. H. H.", is written over a light blue circular stamp or watermark.

President & CEO  
Mountain View Chamber of Commerce

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<sup>2</sup> City of Mountain View Draft Economic Vitality Strategy, Aug. 3, 2023



December 5, 2023

Honorable Mayor & City Council Members  
City of Mountain View  
500 Castro Stree  
Mountain View, CA 94041

Subject: City Council Study Session – Gatekeeper Process Updates

Dear Mayor & Council Members,

On behalf of the LASD Board of Trustees and staff, I would like to express our appreciation for your interest in reopening a Gatekeeper authorization process in 2024. As you know, we are working in collaboration with your staff toward creation of a new school campus in the San Antonio Precise Plan area, including four acres of joint use open space and a new two acre City park parcel. The prolonged effects of the pandemic and the state of the economy on new development have hampered our ability to close on all of the partnership TDR Program projects that were authorized by City Council in early 2018. We are optimistic that your pending Gatekeeper process will provide the opportunity for us to publicize the program and reach out to potential TDR purchasers as they contemplate new development proposals.

Thank you very much for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

Bryan Johnson  
President  
Los Altos School District Board of Trustees

*Board of Trustees*

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December 4, 2023

Re: December 5, 2023, Agenda Item 3.1 – Gatekeeper Process Updates

Dear Mayor Hicks and Members of the City Council:

The League of Women Voters (LWW) supports policies that encourage the development of housing, particularly affordable housing.

The League thanks staff for its research on comparable processes in neighboring jurisdictions. In general, we encourage the continued opportunity to advance innovative projects that further community goals.

The League supports the staff recommendation of holding at least two Gatekeeper meetings per year, as required in the Housing Element and to catch-up on the projects that have been waiting for the process to reopen.

Please send any questions about this letter to Kevin Ma, Co-Chair of the Housing Committee, at [REDACTED]:

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Katie Zoglin". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Katie Zoglin  
President  
Los Altos-Mountain View Area LWW

C: Lindsay Hagan  
Aarti Shrivastava  
Kimbra McCarthy