

Pancholi, Diana

Subject: FW: Livable Mountain View Comment on Item 5.1 "R3 Zoning District Update - Goals, Phasing, Sub-Districts, and Location Criteria"

From: Cox, Robert <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Monday, March 11, 2024 10:58 PM

To: epc@mountainview.gov

Subject: Livable Mountain View Comment on Item 5.1 "R3 Zoning District Update - Goals, Phasing, Sub-Districts, and Location Criteria"

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Chair Dempsey, Vice Chair Gutierrez, and Member of the Mountain View Environmental Planning Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Item 5.1 "R3 Zoning District Update - Goals, Phasing, Sub-Districts, and Location Criteria".

First, we appreciate staff's summary of the history of the proposed R3 zoning district update and summary of the public outreach to date, as well as the long list of goals and issues that arise out of this public outreach. We agree with staff that providing pedestrian friendly neighborhoods with a focus on building and property frontages is essential. We also concur that respectful transitions and buffers between new development and lower density neighborhoods and the retention of tree canopy is key to retaining neighborhood character. We encourage the development of local public serving retail. But we question that all of this can be best done under the framework of a single R3 zoning district update across the entire city.

Therefore, we believe that the focus of the current R3 project should be to bring the city into compliance with the Housing Element and other new state laws. The Housing Element and the new state laws will have major affects on the our new city developments. Our community will face impacts from the required upzoning, the decrease in park fees collected, and the removal of parking requirements required by these state mandates. Our city should take time to adjust to these impacts rather than immediately moving into a "one size fits all" upzoning of our city's R3 areas.

We therefore do not support project goal #5 "Create opportunities for increased densities in targeted areas" at this time. New R3 designations should be restricted to the proposed R3-A, R3-B, and R3-C sub-districts. The proposed R3-D1 and R3-D2 are essentially new R4 designations and should be beyond the scope of the R3 project. Density increases should be discussed in the context of precise plan updates and the general plan update. Doing this will enable us to determine how each area best fits into an overall plan to achieve goals like pedestrian friendly neighborhoods, respectful transitions between old and new development, and providing local public serving retail.

Robert Cox, Louise Katz, Toni Rath, Muriel Sivyer-Lee, Hala Alshahwany, Jerry Steach, Maureen Blando, Leslie Friedman, Nazanin Dashtara, and Sean O'Malley

For the Steering Committee of Livable Mountain View

Pancholi, Diana

Subject: FW: Public comment on R3 rezoning project: address mandated changes first, then consider upzoning

From: Toni R <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Monday, March 11, 2024 9:38 PM

To: epc@mountainview.gov

Subject: Public comment on R3 rezoning project: address mandated changes first, then consider upzoning

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Members of the Environmental Planning Commission,

I would like to provide input for item 5.1 "R3 Zoning District Update" and **support the phased approach** staff outlined in their comprehensive report. With the recently completed housing element the city expects to already grow in size by 50% over the coming years. The R3 district represents ~50% of the dwelling units in the city and a general upzoning will put enormous pressure on shared resources (parks, schools, roads, etc.) and leave no room for mistakes as opposed to an approach that is tailored to individual neighborhoods, for example with a precise plan update.

Regarding the discussion of potential density increases in the R3 zone in the staff report: Maintaining a sense of the existing character is important to residents in R3 areas and adjacent parcels, myself included. I live in Cuesta Park in the R3-1.5 zone. The prevailing character is shown below (this is near 1087 Boranda Ave), most closely resembling density in an R1 or R2 zone:



In the staff report, the low end of density in the R3 zone is portrayed as a row house, which is already much denser (picture from staff report below). Clearly, the density in some areas is significantly below what is shown in the picture, so taking the picture as a starting point for further density increases would be a drastic change to the existing neighborhood character that is to be rejected:



Thank you for your consideration,

Toni Rath, resident of Cuesta Park



March 12, 2024

Re: March 13, 2024, Agenda Item 5.1 – R3 Zoning District Update

Dear Chair Dempsey and Members of the Environmental Planning Commission:

The League of Women Voters (LWV) supports policies that promote clarity and consistency in the development process and encourage infill development and increased density along transportation corridors.

Regarding question one in the staff report, the League broadly supports the draft goals, including goal 5, which would create opportunities for targeted density increases.

Regarding question two, the LWV supports the combined approach. That approach may reduce duplicated efforts and is more resource-efficient than the phased approach. It is too early to tell whether the combined approach would result in the City missing the Housing Element deadline. The City can revisit its approach closer to December 2025.

Regarding question three, it is premature at this stage to choose what range of densities and character sub-districts should have. The City has not done the development prototype study under program 1.3.a. As a result, it is uncertain which building types are feasible to construct and therefore assignable to sub-districts.

Please send any questions about this letter to Kevin Ma, Co-Chair of the Housing Committee, at housing@lwvlamv.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Zoglin".

Katie Zoglin
President
Los Altos-Mountain View Area LWV

C: Eric Anderson
Amber Blizinski
Dawn S. Cameron

Pancholi, Diana

Subject: FW: R3 Zoning concerns

From: Jessica Gandhi <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 1:32 PM

To: epc@mountainview.gov

Cc: Soosh Gandhi <[REDACTED]>; Jessica Gandhi <[REDACTED]>; Muir Chuck <[REDACTED]>

Subject: R3 Zoning concerns

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Chair Dempsey, Vice Chair Gutierrez, and Members of the Mountain View Environmental Planning Commission, I'm writing to you in regard to the agenda items related to the R3 zoning initiative. I am a member of the North Whisman Neighborhood Association and have been involved with educating my neighbors on the proposals for the R3 Zoning changes over the past few years, as well as meeting with city officials to share our neighborhood's concerns and desires for the future as related to these changes.

I read through the overview of the Zoning process to date and was pleased to see that it covered the history pretty thoroughly. However, I also saw that the city is deciding to go back to using the originally proposed R3 zoning options from 2020 rather than the revised versions offered up in 2022 post community feedback. This does not sit well with me nor members of my neighborhood as we felt those revised versions were more in line with what the public was suggesting. So my first request is that we don't jump to approve any blanket decisions that will set these standards in stone going forward. Additionally, I would like to see the city instead take a more holistic view of each project by taking into consideration surrounding structures (single-family homes, businesses, parks) and ensuring that community members have an opportunity to be involved in decisions related to the specific structural proposals that will affect their homes and neighborhoods as they arise.

Next, I would like to request that the EPC not focus efforts on upzoning, but rather stick to bringing our city into compliance with the Housing Element and new state laws that are already going to affect our city in many ways. Adding another push to increase density through the R3 zoning is too much too soon.

Finally, I just want to reiterate to the council, commission and staff members that it is imperative we protect the neighborhoods, residents and parks that make our city so special by being very careful in where and how we build increased density structures. There is a reason so many people and businesses have come to settle in this area we call home and if we are not careful in how we grow, we will change the face and nature of this city into something that barely resembles the Mountain View we know and love. Please don't make rushed decisions and don't let the voices of the long-time residents be quashed by those pushing to turn us into another faceless metropolis.

Thank you for your time,

Jessica Gandhi

28 year resident of Mountain View

24 year member of the North Whisman Neighborhood Association

[REDACTED]

Pancholi, Diana

Subject: FW: City of Mountain View's R3 rezoning standards.
Attachments: Emily & Wake Forest Dr.pdf; Conceptual side view single story vs 6 story MFD.pdf

From: Chuck Muir <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 4:41 PM
To: epc@mountainview.gov
Cc: Julie Muir <[REDACTED]>
Subject: City of Mountain View's R3 rezoning standards.

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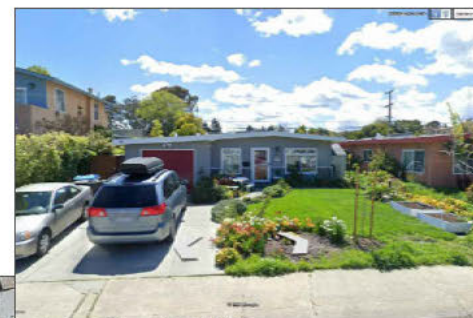
Dear Environmental Planning Commission,

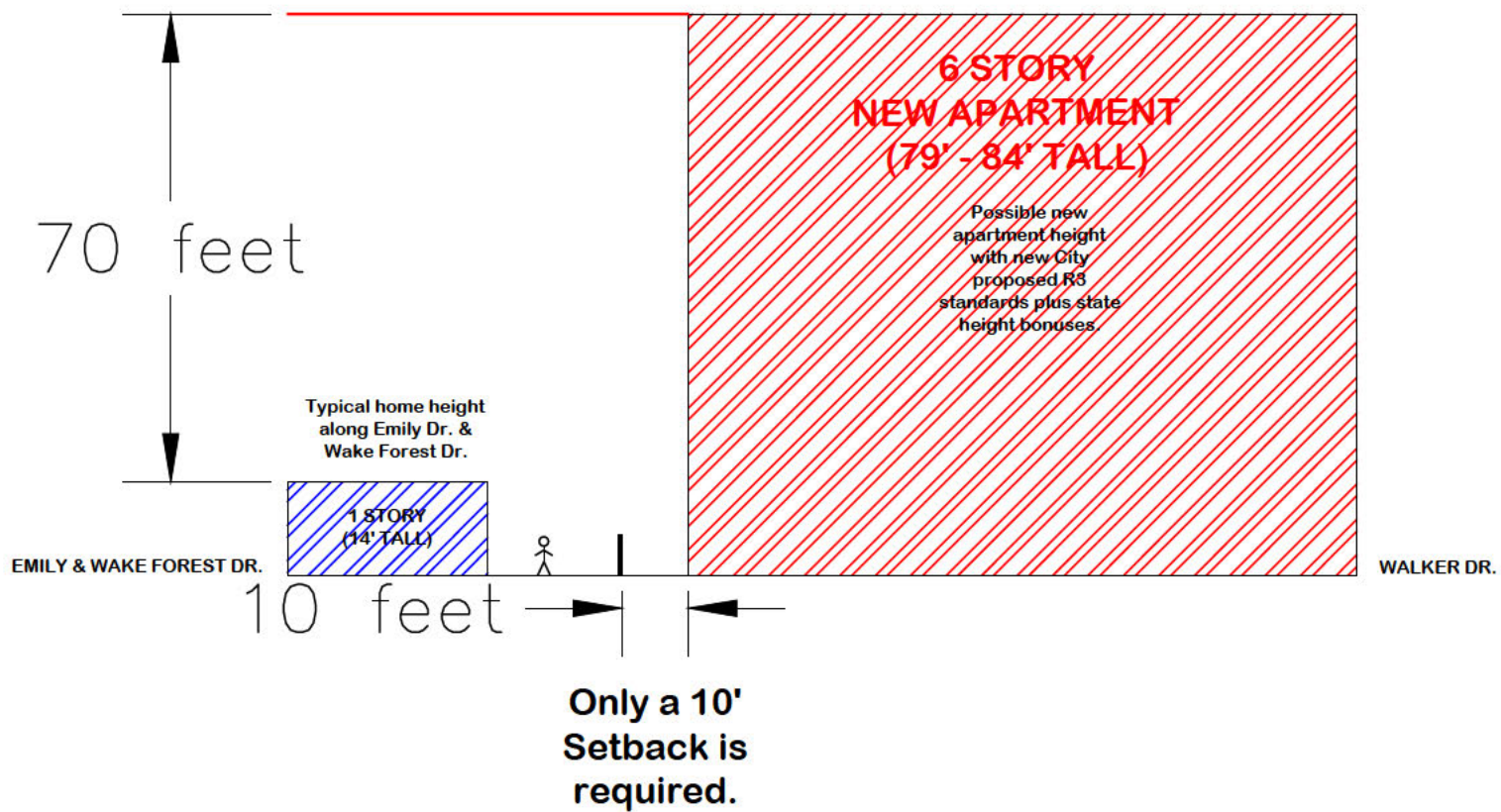
I would like to voice my concern regarding the City's plans to allow for taller multi-family dwellings (apartments) to be built near historically single family residential homes. My family, my neighbors and my friends live along Emily Drive and Wake Forest Drive in Mountain View, CA. Some of us have lived here since 1998 and some decades longer. We have enjoyed living in this neighborhood because it is quiet, safe and we have made many friends here. There is very little crime, occasional speeding cars and electric scooters. The neighborhood is a mixture of new families, middle-life families and older families. At least eleven single family homes back up to an existing older two-story apartment complex located at 520 Walker Drive known as Park Lane Apartments. The apartments were built back in the 1980's.

If the City does not put in any protections, standards or changes the zoning requirements for such areas to limit the height of future multi-family developments, the property currently called at 520 Walker Dr., could be redeveloped and turned into a mammoth 6-story (79' - 84') tall multi-family complex. Such a complex as this would severely impact the quality of life for the families that live along Emily and Wake Forest Drives. If the City does not put in any R3 restrictions such as changing the zoning for this property families will lose their privacy - with people being able to see down into our backyards; loss of sunlight - a tall apartment complex would block out the easterly sunlight; and, major presence of such a large structure. I request that the Environmental Planning Commission consider changing the zoning to an R1 or R2 standard. I recommend you add in provisions to protect existing single-story neighborhoods for having not higher than 3-story apartments built adjacent to them.

Please find some attached some drawings of our neighborhood and the existing Park Lane Apartments as well as photos of the neighborhood. As you can see 520 Walker Dr. butts right up against the single-family homes. One conceptual drawing shows you how tall a 6 story apartment building would be and it impacts would be on the families living in the single family homes. The City does not have the ability to change the State's requirements such as allowing waivers and bonuses so please consider rezoning the apartments to a low height requirement.

Sincerely,
Chuck Muir
Resident; North Whisman Neighborhood Association President





Without consistent goals, the R3 update will further complicate an already complicated process. *We believe the main goal of this update should be to enable new housing.* However, in the staff report this goal is listed last, and is unique in that it is the only goal qualified by the statement “if directed to do so”. Strange because goals 1 and 3 are likely impossible without allowing more density.

As staff points out on page 5, the city has committed to using this R3 update to increase feasibility of projects through reduction in standards. But this goal is only vaguely alluded to in the draft goals. And draft goal #2 is antithetical to this promise. Instead there is a discussion of creating additional requirements – neighborhood fit, unit size mix, open space, transitions, etc – without substantially increasing allowed densities. Increasing density is presented as optional.

We also support including anti-displacement provisions. Finally, with regard to Question No. 2: Project Phasing, we support a combined (single-phase) approach.

Height and Density

If we want something other than rowhouses in R3, we will need to allow more floors.

In the comparison cities chart on page 7-8, *no city has a maximum floor height of less than 7 stories*. No option that staff proposed here would allow 7 stories anywhere. In Campbell, the projects less than 7 stories are all 3-story townhomes. As staff points out, R3 already yields plenty of 3-story townhomes.

Aside from Rich Ave, all other projects in R3 currently approved or under construction are rowhouse developments. Because these projects all demolish existing units at similar densities, these six projects will together only add a net of 28 units, less than the Rich Ave project.

We can conclude that:

#1: Under 45 units/ac we only see rowhouse development.

#2: R3-D is the only proposed option that is likely to yield developments other than rowhouses.

Capacity

The capacity presented in the attached map is only theoretical. Little of this capacity is developable. Recent projects in Mountain View, other than townhomes, have required the density to increase by many multiples to be feasible. (For example, the Gamel Way project turned out to be infeasible despite quadrupling the number of units.)

Large lots are the easiest to redevelop, and all the large lots in R3 are already at or over allowed density. The only likely redevelopment here is more townhomes, further reducing the city's affordable housing stock with a negligible increase in the number of units.

Around ⅓ of R3 lots are under 15,000 square feet. Under current codes, these lots could not have more than 4 units. There is no meaningful capacity here, either.

The staff report takes comfort in the anti-displacement provisions of SB 330, concluding that “the R3 project does not need to result in economically feasible redevelopment of CSFRA properties at this time.” However, since most developable properties in R3 are rent-controlled, this is tantamount to saying that the R3 project need not result in any significant amount of redevelopment at all.

Even apart from the goal of enabling more growth, which many public commenters supported, the lack of feasibly developable capacity jeopardizes other goals (“better design that reflects the community’s vision”, “opportunities for neighborhood-serving uses”). *Achieving these goals requires projects to be built.*

Displacement Prevention

We support the inclusion of anti-displacement provisions in the R3 process. Council has already given direction on what replacement requirements they’d like to enact in case of SB 330’s expiry, if the concern against taking replacement requirements into account is due to potential changes in the state’s guidance.

Density Bonus

The staff report bemoans the lack of control on 918 Rich. But this project yields a net gain of 32 housing units, more than all the other rowhouse developments combined. The only other project in R3 that has a higher net gain is 266 Tyrella – which also uses the state density bonus to exceed three floors. *Without the density bonus, these projects would not be feasible.*

None of the R3 rowhouse projects meaningfully add to the city’s housing stock. The city has currently 6 rowhouse projects approved or under construction in R3, with hundreds of units. But the net total increase in housing from these projects is just 28 homes.

The density bonus and the builder’s remedy are the only reason there are developments other than rowhomes in R3. We should not fear the density bonus.

Process

As Housing Element stakeholders, we do want the city to be able to meet its programmatic deadlines. That said, we think it is too early to predict that the city would miss the deadlines if using the combined approach, which can provide a more cohesive, holistic output with less redundancies and revisions.

Conclusion

The city has committed to HCD to “increase feasibility of projects through reduction in standards”. We encourage staff and the Committee to seek simplicity.

This plan should prioritize enabling significant new housing growth by increasing allowed densities and selecting development standards compatible with those densities. Standards should eliminate discretion wherever possible. Reduce or remove setbacks, height limits, FAR, and du/ac restrictions such that more diverse housing can be built.



Isaac Stone, on behalf of MV YIMBY
Mar 12, 2024

Pancholi, Diana

Subject: FW: COMMUNITY COMMENT: R3 (MULTIPLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL) ZONING DISTRICT UPDATE

From: Wilson, Tamara [REDACTED] >

Sent: Wednesday, March 13, 2024 10:35 AM

To: epc@mountainview.gov

Cc: mtn.view.jose@gmail.com; Anderson, Eric B. <Eric.Anderson2@mountainview.gov>

Subject: COMMUNITY COMMENT: R3 (MULTIPLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL) ZONING DISTRICT UPDATE

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

Chair Dempsey, Vice Chair Gutierrez, and Members of the Mountain View Environmental Planning Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Item 5.1 “R3 Zoning District Update - Goals, Phasing, Sub-Districts, and Location Criteria”.

I wanted to thank you for your time and attention to my comments on this important issue. I appreciate the history of the proposed R3 zoning district update and summary of the public outreach to date, as well as the long list of goals and issues that arise out of this public outreach. Myself and my community strongly believe in providing pedestrian friendly neighborhoods and a focus on building and property frontages is essential, however careful, project-specific consideration is needed to ensure respectful transitions and buffers between new development and lower density neighborhoods. I am also pleased to see that tree canopy retention is valued, as ours is a climate friendly, green city focused on reducing our carbon emissions. My concern is that a single R3 zoning district update across the entire city will over-ride these stated goals and only serves to streamline the permitting process at the expense of existing residential neighbor's quality of life. I am also concerned at what this approach will mean for other infrastructure services outside of the City's purview, including access to schools. Higher density housing often translates into many more students.

I believe that the focus of the current R3 project should be to bring the city into compliance with the Housing Element and other new state laws, which will already have dramatic impacts on new city developments. My community will face impacts from the required upzoning, the decrease in park fees collected, and the removal of parking requirements required by these state mandates. Our city should take time to adjust to these impacts rather than immediately moving into a “one size fits all” upzoning of our city's R3 areas. I'm not clear how many members of the EPC live in communities likely impacted by these decisions. If you don't, imagine that you did live here. I remember being publicly chided for proposing teacher housing in a residential neighborhood on school owned property (i.e. Cooper Park). This was housing for teachers and that was deemed wholly unacceptable – with 3-story rowhomes within a single-family residential neighborhood. However, I have a neighbor who has lived for decades in a single-family home in the Wagon Wheel neighborhood who had to stomach a potential 5-story building abutting his backyard fence, but we are on a “different” side of town. Yes, this new building met the street level property frontage requirements, but created a “less than respectful” transition to existing properties and neighbors. What if this was in your neighborhood or your single-family home? How would you feel about the issue then? A one size solution certainly streamlines permitting and approvals, but is not representative of what is best for Mountain View's current residents and electorate in all parts of our city, and goes above and beyond what is currently required by the state.

I therefore cannot support project goal #5 “Create opportunities for increased densities in targeted areas” at this time. New R3 designations should be restricted to the proposed R3-A, R3-B, and R3-C sub-districts. The proposed R3-D1 and R3-D2 are essentially new R4 designations and should be beyond the scope of the R3 project. Density increases should be discussed in the context of precise plan updates and the general plan updates – this would also give communities and associated school districts ample time to plan for future changes. These changes have cascading impacts on potential new school site purchases, construction, and bond measures which would be needed to fund expansion of existing sites or development of new sites. They also give residents the opportunity to weigh in and ensure their elected officials represent their interests and, if not, elect those that do. Precise plan and general plan updates will enable Mountain View residents to determine how each area best fits into an overall plan to achieve goals like pedestrian friendly

neighborhoods, respectful transitions between old and new development, providing local public serving retail and ensuring the availability of walkable schools with capacity to serve new students.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Tamara Wilson, long- term resident of the Wagon Wheel Neighborhood, former elected school board member of the Mountain View Whisman School District, and board member of the Mountain View Education Foundation



Tamara Wilson
Policy Analyst (detail)
(she/her)

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