

Questionnaire:

1. Do you support the current council direction of the Housing Element and the R3 Zoning Update? If not, how should it be changed?

HOUSING ELEMENT

My main concern about the Housing Element is that it includes shopping centers like Blossom Valley, but I'm not sure the current Housing Element process allows the city to do adequate design and community input to make the shopping centers into community assets. Our General Plan and Precise Plans have long cited the shopping centers as Village Centers that could become mixed-use with housing and underground parking added to the current retail and restaurants, so including them as sites for housing is nothing new. My question is just what process allows us to get the best results. I see the shopping centers at Grant and Castro and Blossom Valley as places that could have more trees and some underground parking, more walkability and more pleasant places to eat outdoors. The centers at Grant and El Camino could be redeveloped to give the whole area better traffic circulation. By traffic circulation, I mean pedestrian, bike and vehicular traffic. I question, though, whether the streamlined demands of meeting Housing Element goals allows us to do the comprehensive planning needed in these cases. I do like the Live/Work program we put into the Housing Element because I think that could help us get more retail into places that we are not now doing so. I've seen this solution used increasingly in other Bay Area cities to attract unique mom and pop shops and hope we can too.

R3 ZONING UPDATE

Council put Form-Based Zoning on our workplan because we were not getting good results at many of the R3 sites that redeveloped over the past decade or so. We are getting visually awkward, skinny expensive townhomes that are mostly stairs inside and concrete outside, with a tiny symbolic strip of green space around them. Bedroom windows of your million dollar townhome look out over a vast driveway for all the townhomes. We hired Opticos to change our R3 zoning to Form Based Zoning. Form Based Zoning would allow only certain housing forms that are pre-approved by the community into neighborhoods. There would be very strict design guidelines. I really like Optico's work. I knew of them before we hired them. You can see their work below. I think those forms would be a vast improvement over what we're now getting. However, with the new density bonus laws coming out of Sacramento, I'm not sure we can actually use Form Based Zoning. It appears to me that the community can do a lot of work to come up with forms and design guidelines they like and then developers will choose to do density bonuses and the community's vision will never be used. If that is true, then I think that amendments to the general and precise plans would be a better alternative to the R3 Zoning / Form Based Zoning we are now trying to do.



2. Do you favor amendments to the general and precise plans as an alternative to R3 Zoning Update and the Housing Element?

I've answered this question in terms of the R3 Zoning Update above. I'm not sure what you mean by "Do you favor amendments to the general and precise plans as an alternative to... the Housing Element?" By law we have to do a Housing Element and cannot substitute the Housing Element with amendments to the general and precise plans. I will get this questionnaire in early and perhaps you can clarify, and I can answer after the clarification.

3. Which areas of the city do you see as additional opportunities for housing growth and why

The best area is East Whisman because it's almost all single-story office with large parking lots and also, we were able to comprehensive neighborhood planning through the Precise Plan. Plus, it's near light rail, although that isn't our most functional mass transit, hopefully they will improve it as it is aging. El Camino is good too, but I do not think the design through the Precise Plan was very good. It could have been made much better for pedestrians and I hope it still can be to some degree. North Bayshore and the Gateway entry to North Bayshore are fairly good, although I do fear for the wildlife there. As for areas not yet planned, I think the Moffett area needs a Precise Plan that would include more housing but also retain the retail and restaurants there and make Moffett tree-lined and more walkable. I fear that if we don't do that, housing developers will snap up the underused shopping centers and turn them into huge, gated housing compounds, leaving the area with little neighborhood-serving retail and appearing like a concrete jungle to anyone not living in the new "luxury gated communities." I also believe that there are small pockets throughout Mountain View that are housing opportunities but would be best looked at while updating the General Plan.

4. Do you support a vacancy tax on commercial or residential buildings?

I support exploring these additional sources of revenue, particularly a commercial vacancy tax. As for residential I want to make sure people aren't taxed when their loved ones move to senior homes or pass away and they cannot turn the house over quickly. There are other revenue streams that may be more attractive such as real estate transfer taxes that only apply to very large real estate transfers. Council should start with a study as we did when we did the updated Business License Tax.

5. Under what circumstances should developers be allowed to pay in lieu fees rather than build parking for their projects on site?

Developers should be allowed to pay in lieu fees rather than build parking for their projects on site when we have a parking plan for the area that would make off-site parking feasible and build or otherwise create that parking soon. For the downtown, I support a residential parking program as residents have suggested, with free parking for people housed in the area and time-limited (possibly 3 hour) parking for everyone else. I believe that would send many downtown office workers into garages under their offices and free up hundreds of parking spaces for downtown visitors. I have seen this work in many cities in Colorado. We do not need to wait for paid downtown parking to implement this.

6. Would you support an ordinance that requires heritage trees remain in place (absent health and safety issues) when and if development takes place, both commercial and residential? If not, why not.

Yes, I would support this or whatever other measure or measures would best save the trees that we are now losing to development. Why? Because trees and green space are some of the major elements that make a city livable. We were able to save trees when we developed in the past, think the Park Place Apartments or the Fenwick and West building. There is no reason we cannot do the same thing now. In addition to a new heritage tree ordinance, I would suggest that, as we redo the Downtown Precise Plan, and other Precise Plans as well, we need to codify wider sidewalks **and planting strips** into the plans. Great urban spaces are great in part because they are walkable. Taller buildings put more people on the street. We cannot develop with sidewalks designed for one-story buildings and then put 4-7 story buildings next to those sidewalks. It is unsafe and so unpleasant for walking that it basically tells pedestrians to get back in their cars because this place was not designed for you. The idea of building a four-story building right up to the Church Street sidewalk line is appalling. We did not do it in the recent past. It shows that somehow all sense of how to design a downtown, all that knowledge, has been lost. All the Council members who approve that building said they thought it was a bad idea. They had the power to change it earlier in the process and that night as well. They just did not have the knowledge or understanding of planning and design to know what to ask for, except for Sally who has experience from the previous downtown redevelopment. Council was told that they could deny it if it would be unsafe for traffic, but few people in our city think about pedestrian traffic when they think about traffic and they need to learn to do that.

7. Do you consider Mountain View's current notification limit of 750 feet sufficient for neighborhood outreach? If not, what specific steps would you take to expand and improve outreach to all residents?

I do not think that 750 feet is sufficient for neighborhood outreach and would be interested in looking at best practices for wider noticing. I also think that there are public places in the city that require much wider noticing and a mandatory study session prior to redevelopment. The 590 Castro Street project is one example of such a place. The site is on our Civic Center block which includes our library, main downtown park, performing arts center and City Hall. It is a very family and pedestrian-oriented block and should never have redevelopment without substantial community input. Since Council has designated Castro Street as the only walkable street in the entire city, possibly we should do very wide noticing for any development along Castro Street, certainly along our first three blocks. This is our public square.

8. Please add anything else that you think we should consider while evaluating you for a Livable Mountain View council endorsement this year.

There are a number of upcoming items that are of high importance to me and that I would like to engage with you about. They include:

- The Downtown Precise Plan - Joyce and I started and you all added to a list of recommendations on this that I would like to review
- The Historic Preservation Ordinance - I have some ideas and would like to hear yours
- The Chase Bank project - may be related to the Historic Preservation Ordinance
- The Economic Vitality Strategy - which needs to highlight small businesses, neighborhood-serving retail and filling vacancies
- The new Council Downtown Committee that Sally, Lisa and I were appointed to
- The Active Transportation Plan - think pedestrians, streetscapes and walkability, often overlooked during Active Transportation planning
- The Community Tree Master Plan - this and the next two items are relevant to your question number 6 above
- The Heritage Tree Ordinance
- The Biodiversity Strategy
- Upcoming development design streamlining - this process could drastically reduce the community's ability to comment on projects, but I have some ideas to make this into an opportunity instead of a liability, at least as much as possible by putting strict design requirements regarding trees, sidewalk and planting strip width, etc., up front. I would need community help to get this done.

And then there are these community-based items:

- I've read several articles recently on how, as Millennials grow up, polls are indicating increased support for housing production and we will see that reflected in legislation coming out of Sacramento. Here is one such article: [Poll: Californians want the state to act on housing](#). We're in a very different political environment than we were when I first started working with Livable Mountain View and we need a plan that takes that into account.
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- Work with the League of Women Voters and other organizations to curtail office development and create a better jobs-housing balance

I am endorsed by:

- CA Senator Josh Becker
- The Sierra Club
- County Supervisor Joe Simitian
- The Dean Democratic Club
- The South Bay Labor Council
- Palo Alto Mayor Pat Burt
- Sunnyvale Mayor Larry Klein
- Multiple former Mountain View Mayors
- All MVWSD School Board members
- All 3 of our Peninsula Open Space Trust representatives
- Laura Casas, our Foothill DeAnza Community College Rep
- And many more!

On Mon, Sep 5, 2022 at 12:42 PM Cox, Robert <robert.cox@intel.com> wrote:

Vice Mayor and Council Candidate Alison Hicks,

Livable Mountain View invites you to apply for a Livable Mountain View city council candidate endorsement. If you are interested, please return the questionnaire to the Livable Mountain View City Council Questionnaire Subcommittee, no later than Sunday, September 18, 2022. You can do that by doing "Reply All" because the subcommittee members are cc'ed in this e-mail.

We thank you for the time you spent with us at our recent Zoom interview and look forward to your response.

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8. Please add anything else that you think we should consider while evaluating you for a Livable Mountain View council endorsement this year.

Robert Cox, Louise Katz, and Mary Hodder

Livable Mountain View City Council Questionnaire Subcommittee