



*Message from
the Mayor*

Town of Portola Valley

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TOWN of PORTOLA VALLEY

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LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

AUGUST, 2019

Summer Greetings. As a follow up to my [March 2019 letter](#), I am writing to provide the Portola Valley community with a further update on the progress of the Town's initiatives to increase housing options in Portola Valley. In an effort to provide timely and continuous communications, this letter restates and provides the facts about the Town's housing efforts to date.

I. Background

Portola Valley's current housing efforts commenced in July 2016 in response to the worsening housing shortage affecting Portola Valley. At that time, the Town Council identified the need for additional housing in town as one of its top priorities and developed the [Housing Strategic Plan](#) to guide the conversation on how such housing could be achieved. The Plan focused on a three-pronged approach: 1) Revised Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance; 2) Development opportunities on town-owned properties and; 3) Affiliated Partners' Housing Projects.

II. Accessory Dwelling Units

On March 27, 2019, the Town Council passed a [new Accessory Dwelling Unit \(ADU\) Ordinance](#) following an intense and lengthy public process. The Town's new ordinance provides for larger units on many parcels in town, allows for ADUs on parcels less than one acre (subject to fire safety restrictions), and permits larger internal ADUs. The permitting process for ADUs was streamlined as well. In addition to the work of the Planning Commission and ASCC in creating the ordinance, this process was supported by a subcommittee of the Council created in 2018.

III. Ad Hoc Housing on Town- Owned Property

Concurrent with the adoption of the new ADU ordinance, the Town Council convened [Ad Hoc Housing on Town-Owned Property Committee](#) 2017 and 2018 to identify town-owned parcels that may be suitable for housing. The high cost of developing housing limits our focus to parcels owned by the Town. After eliminating 90% of town-owned properties from consideration due to size, method of acquisition, or other unsuitability for housing, initial concepts were roughly sketched for visualizing housing units on the road remnant adjacent to Corte Madera School and for a possible conversion of the Town Center Maintenance Facility. These preliminary concept drawings were developed to assist the committee in their assessment of what the properties might

reasonably support. At the most recent June 24, 2019 meeting of this ad hoc committee, a large number of residents voiced objections to the possibility of housing being developed on the road remnant due to concerns about compromising the nearby frog pond, losing the enjoyment of the undeveloped land, and enduring increased traffic on the corridor. They also suggested that the Town permanently dedicate the road remnant as open space or park land. No proposal was made by the Committee, nor was any recommendation for the road remnant or other location(s) of potential housing made to the Town Council. The Committee directed Staff and a two-person subcommittee to explore additional options including replacing the Town Center Maintenance Facility with housing units and assessing legal issues associated with developing housing on town-owned land at Ford Field. Once all feasible options have been developed, the Committee will reconvene in the fall to assess the pros and cons of each project prior to making a recommendation to the Town Council.

IV. Affiliated Housing Partners

The Town's third housing initiative [has focused on](#) our affiliated partners, Stanford University, the Priory, and the Sequoias. Stanford is moving forward with their project design for faculty housing on the Stanford Wedge property on Alpine Road and we received their pre-application on July 17th. Stanford hosted two additional workshops for the community on July 25 and 27 to introduce their initial project concepts and receive resident feedback at this early stage. Stanford is expected to submit a project application for their property in the early fall. As with any proposed project, the review process will provide multiple opportunities for public input and comment. Turning to the Priory, plans to add faculty housing are currently under review by the ASCC. Finally, The Sequoias are in the initial concept stage for creating on-site employee housing (workforce housing).

IV. State of California Legislative Updates

In the midst of our own efforts, Governor Newsom's top legislative initiatives are focused on increasing affordable housing and decreasing homelessness. Not surprisingly, the State of California has introduced a record number of housing bills and budget initiatives that could have a significant impact on Portola Valley. Members of the Town Council are active participants at both the state and regional level and continue to advocate for local control of housing initiatives in an effort to forestall larger, more draconian state mandates and maintain local control.

V. Resident Feedback and Outreach

Your input has been and will continue to be critical to the success of these efforts and we continue to seek your feedback. In addition to resident feedback received during public discussions at committee and council meetings, the Town sponsored three separate community-wide convenings hosted by Home For All to engage our residents in the process and solicit input for alternative housing strategies. While seeking significant and ongoing public input, the Town's outreach has been based on an open, transparent and inclusive process. The links provided in this letter provide background agendas and minutes on all housing-related meetings of our governing bodies--Town Committees (permanent and ad hoc), ASCC, Planning Commission and Town Council. Given the significant amount of back-

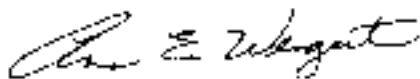
ground documentation, we have also prepared a housing links fact sheet on the Town's web page. We will continue to work hard to provide you with frequent and timely communications through more conventional media channels while also utilizing new technology-based communications.

In total, there have been 38 Town meetings of the Council, Planning Commission, ASCC, and the Ad Hoc Housing on Town-Owned Property Committee on housing-related items¹. The Town has also sponsored an ADU open house, and provided 39 updates through [Town News](#), [e-notices](#), and [social media](#) (including PV Forum and Next Door). The Town's "Community Conversation about Housing" [page](#) and "Planning for Housing in Portola Valley" [page](#) have been regularly updated since 2017 to include meetings agendas, minutes and other materials. For a full accounting of all the Town's meetings and updates, [please click here](#).

VI Final Thoughts

As the work of the Ad Hoc Housing Committee on Town-Owned Property progresses and plans are submitted by any of the Town's Affiliated Housing partners, you will be provided with multiple opportunities to participate in the public review process and I encourage you to do so. I also ask for your support as we work to balance our love of Portola Valley and its open space ethos with the need to respond to a housing crisis that has impacted our ability to house seniors, local workers, and those who grew up in Portola Valley who wish to move back. All of us on the Town Council live here, too, and care immensely about the impacts our decisions make on our friends and neighbors. While I would dearly love for our community to remain as it is, I believe we can remain true to our open space ethos and care for the natural environment while providing a rich mix of housing options. I do not believe these two are mutually exclusive. My colleagues on the Town Council and I have pledged to work hard to manage future change in a way to ensure we have the greatest likelihood of preserving our beloved local environment. Thank you for your interest and your participation in these important conversations.

Sincerely,



Ann Wengert

¹Twenty Council Meetings, ten Planning Commission Meetings, two ASCC meetings and eight Ad Hoc meetings