

City Council Members, Redwood City
Council Chambers, City Hall
1017 Middlefield Road
Redwood City, CA 94063

October 21, 2015

Dear City Council Members of Redwood City;

Congratulations on your consideration of an exciting package of initiatives that forward housing affordability in Redwood City! The five affordable housing items you are studying are important steps in alleviating the current housing crisis facing the City and the larger county. The City's direction in providing community benefits through Partnership Redwood City has been built from extensive community input and practical policymaking. We are pleased to support the initiatives under consideration as they will improve health for Redwood City and San Mateo County residents.

As the San Mateo County Health System we know that stable and affordable housing protect health and provide the ability to engage in healthy opportunities. The connections between housing stability and health are critical. Housing is a cornerstone of a healthy community. In the face of rising rents people are forced to do one or more of the following, compromising their ability to lead healthy lives:

- Pay unaffordable housing costs, diverting wages away from other important household needs such as healthy food, medical care, transportation, and childcare.^{1, 2}
- Double or triple up families into crowded housing conditions, that causes stress and can increase the spread of communicable diseases.³
- Accept unhealthy and/or unsafe housing conditions such as mold, lead, or exposed wires.⁴
- Become displaced from their communities, causing stress and disrupting social support systems, and job stability.⁵
- Find housing far away and travel long distances to work, increasing congestion, damaging air quality, exacerbating asthma and other respiratory diseases for everyone.^{6, 7}
- Become homeless, exposing them to dramatic reductions in health.⁸

We propose the following to help maximize the success of these initiatives. First, the scale of the housing crisis and the burden faced by residents are large and call for bold solutions. We encourage the Council to consider adoption of higher impact fees than the \$20/sf for commercial and residential development outlined in the impact fee proposal before the council. We encourage the Council to adopt the nexus study's recommended fee of \$25/sf for residential development and to look to neighboring Mountain View's office impact fee of \$25/sf.⁹ These fees remain a fraction of the maximum justified fees established in the City's nexus study

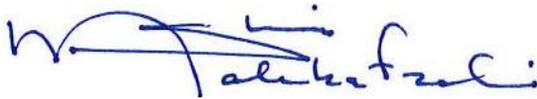
Second, land acquisition in Redwood City is a challenge for affordable housing developers because of high land values. Ample affordable homes near transit can connect low-income residents with important economic and educational opportunities and ensure transit operators a customer base.¹⁰ Connecting low-income residents with opportunity and promoting the use of transit have positive health implications for all of Redwood City



and San Mateo County residents and workers. We encourage the Council to consider mechanisms to secure land for affordable housing such as allowing developers to dedicate portions of their land for affordable housing instead of fees.

Again, we commend you on your thoughtful consideration of critical solutions to the housing crisis. Stable and affordable housing protects health and the Health System looks forward to working with Redwood City to advance solutions that will improve health for all residents.

Sincerely,



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Senior Manager for Policy, Planning and Equity
San Mateo County Health System

¹ Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. (2013). *The State of the Nation's Housing 2013*. Available at: <http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/jchs.harvard.edu/files/son2013.pdf>

² Kushel, M. B., Gupta, R., Gee, L. and Haas, J. S. (2006), Housing Instability and Food Insecurity as Barriers to Health Care Among Low-Income Americans. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 21: 71–77.

³ Causa Justa :: Just Cause. (2014). *Development without Displacement: Resisting Gentrification in the Bay Area*. Available at: <http://cjjc.org/images/development-without-displacement.pdf>.

⁴ Lubell, J., Morley, R., Ashe, M., Merola, L., & Levi, J. (2011). *Housing and Health: New Opportunities for Dialogue and Action*. National Center for Healthy Housing. Available at http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Health%20%20Housing%20New%20Opportunities_final.pdf

⁵ Causa Justa :: Just Cause. (2014). *Development without Displacement: Resisting Gentrification in the Bay Area*. Available at: <http://cjjc.org/images/development-without-displacement.pdf>.

⁶ Department of Public Health, City and County of San Francisco. (2014). *Traffic density*. Available at: <http://www.sfindicatorproject.org/indicators/view/46>.

⁷ Pollack S, Bluestone B, Billingham C. Maintaining Diversity in America's Transit-Rich Neighborhoods: Tools for Equitable Neighborhood Change. Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy, 2010. Available at: http://www.northeastern.edu/dukakiscenter/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/TRN_Equity_final.pdf

⁸ Schanzer B, Dominguez B, Shrout PE, Caton CLM. (2007). Homelessness, Health Status and Health Care Use. *American Journal of Public Health*, 97: 464 – 469.

⁹ Mountain View Affordable Housing Fees, presentation to Grand Boulevard Initiative's Task Force, September 30, 2015. Available at: <http://www.grandboulevard.net/images/stories/PDF/presentations/Task-Force/HousingFeespresentationGBI.pdf>

¹⁰ "Metro CEO says transit agencies need to care about gentrification", Los Angeles Times October 12, 2015. Available at: <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/livable-city/la-ol-metro-gentrification-20151012-story.html>