

From: [LWV of Palo Alto](#)
To: [Council, City](#)
Subject: Public comment Item 18, Dec. 9 City Council Meeting
Date: Sunday, December 8, 2024 5:34:41 PM
Attachments: [Gap Study comment dec 9.docx](#)

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Please find attached the League of Women Voters of Palo Alto's public comment on the Gap Study, item 18 on the Council Agenda for December 9, 2024.

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League of Women Voters of Palo Alto

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December 7, 2024

Re: public comment on Gap Study of Homeless Services 12/09/24 Council Meeting

Dear Mayor Stone and Councilmembers:

The League of Women Voters believes every person and family should have decent, safe and affordable housing. The City's Gap Study describes recent efforts to increase affordable housing and prevent homelessness.¹

The League applauds the Council's attention to reducing homelessness and displacement by enacting tenant protections--expanding just cause for eviction, limiting security deposits, and establishing the rental registry. We also applaud the creation of an assistant city manager position with responsibilities for affordable housing and increasing staff for homeless outreach, as mentioned in the Gap Study. But more needs to be done.

Tenant Protections

At a time when the wealth divide in our community has never been greater, we urge the city to take immediate action to increase services which have proven especially effective in preventing homelessness: 1) providing increased emergency housing funds for people facing loss of job, illness, or other major trauma; 2) funding right to counsel prior to eviction; and 3) establishing a rent review board to help enforce Tenant Protections and ensure landlords receive a fair return.

Funding right to counsel is not a new idea. Both the recent Gap Study and a staff report on Tenant Protections in 2023 include right to counsel as a Tenant Protection policy. Cities which enact tenant right to counsel programs see declines in eviction and displacement.

Many cities which have adopted tenant protection policies also enact rent review boards to enforce these tenant protections and ensure landlords get a fair return (Mountain View, East Palo Alto, Berkeley, San Francisco). We urge the city to prioritize a study of this option.

Creating Affordable Housing

We urge the assistant city manager's affordable housing responsibilities to include helping move affordable housing projects through the development process. The 2021 Civil Grand Jury Report studied roadblocks in Palo Alto to building affordable housing and noted that the city would benefit from having a dedicated and empowered affordable housing manager to coordinate activities and reduce delay, which increases costs and discourages developers from working with the city. As an example of undue delay, a recent 100% affordable housing project needing no public subsidies has taken close to two years to move forward.

Sincerely,

K. Kalinsky H. Lu
Karen Kalinsky Hannah Lu
Co-Presidents
LWV Palo Alto

¹ The Supplemental Attachment to the Gap Study was not available when this letter was written. We will provide comments on the Supplement at a later date.