



November 9th, 2020

Re: Agenda item #13 Palo Alto Forward Supports the RHNA Criteria and Allocation

To: Mayor Adrian Fine, City Council Members, CC Planning and Transportation Commission, CC Working Group

Dear Mayor Fine and Council members,

Palo Alto Forward is a non-profit organization focused on innovating and expanding housing choices and transportation mobility for a vibrant, welcoming, and sustainable Palo Alto. We are a broad coalition with a multi-generational membership, including new and longtime residents.

We have followed the Bay Area RHNA development process closely, including ABAG's methodology committee discussions. As you know, the Executive Board adopted their methodology on October 15th, confirming that Palo Alto's regional housing goal will include 10,058 new homes. As Palo Alto's [staff memo on notes](#) on 8/10/2020, roughly half of the regional allocation is not related to growth but to statutory state requirements focused on helping existing residents, some of which are new to this cycle. The new factors include reducing the number of overcrowded and cost-burdened households (30% or more of income spent on housing), moving toward a more "normal" vacancy rate, and replacing demolished units as a means to not create a further deficit of housing units.

More notable however, is the allocation methodology. Palo Alto Forward supports the criteria outlined, prioritizing housing in communities that are high opportunity areas and in communities with good public transit and car commuting access to large job centers. While the allocation appears daunting, increasing housing in resource rich cities like ours is a pragmatic and equitable way to allocate new homes. If we do not do our fair share these homes will be allocated to neighborhoods like East Palo Alto, Belle Haven, and North Fair Oaks, further exasperating inequity and the jobs-housing imbalance.

Achieving these goals will be hard for all communities but the Housing Element requirement is to identify feasible sites, zoning and policies to meet the requirements. Because Palo Alto didn't make appropriate modifications to zoning and policies during our current cycle, we met just [28% of our RHNA allocation](#). To that end Palo Alto Forward encourages the council and staff to seriously plan for the Housing Element update and the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP), both of which will require thoughtful and innovative elements no matter what Palo Alto's allocation. NVCAP is uniquely positioned as a great site for new housing and our

decisions there will demonstrate how seriously we're working to meet our local and regional housing goals. We can meet these goals, but only if we plan for it.

Sincerely,  
Palo Alto Forward Board