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Regina Celestin Williams
*Executive Director***Via Email**

January 22, 2024

Mayor Showalter, Vice Mayor Matichak, and Councilmembers
500 Castro Street
Mountain View, CA 94041-2010**Re: Agenda Item 7.3 – Gatekeeper Review Process**

Dear Mayor Showalter, Vice Mayor Matichak, and Councilmembers,

Silicon Valley at Home appreciates this opportunity to express our concerns related to the recommended changes to Mountain View's Gatekeeper Process. Coming into this process we believed that there was a clear understanding and shared intent outlined in the Housing Element passed by this council and certified by the state Department of Housing and Community Development: identify additional exemptions to the current Gatekeeper process and hold hearings at least annually beginning in June, 2024. We were concerned in December when the staff direction and council action appeared to deviate from Program 1.3 on both points, and we are disappointed that neither of the options presented by staff this week will bring the city back to its commitments.

We recommend the following actions be taken:

1. Accept proposals for development under the Gatekeeper process beginning in June, 2024, under the existing rules,
2. Develop a revised process, to be approved within a reasonable timeframe to be implemented in the next Gatekeeper round, which comply with the goals enumerated in the Housing Element.

Avoid deviation from timeline: The Housing Element's Milestones and Timeframe under Program 1.3 explicitly state that the City committed to "begin accepting Gatekeeper applications before June 30, 2024." Adhering to the published timeline is important for predictability and the viability of proposals being developed, whereas significant delays may jeopardize these projects and be non-compliant with Mountain View's certified housing element. Unfortunately, Staff has made clear that this timeline can only be met if the existing rules are extended. We support processing the first round under the existing rules and standards.

Streamline by adding exemptions rather than additional Qualifying Criteria that add additional barriers: The published strategy included in the Housing Element commits to "Identify(ing) additional Gatekeeper exemptions for residential projects based on location,

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size, affordability and other policy goals.” We believe that the proposed new qualifying criteria do not live up to this commitment. Rather than identifying additional exemptions to the process, the proposed changes add requirements that will impose additional costs on housing projects undermining the urgent need to address housing shortages. We encourage the Council to prioritize and streamline the process for projects that include housing,

Mountain View, like other cities in Santa Clara County and throughout the bay area, faces an acute housing shortage and a crisis of housing affordability. This crisis has a profound impact on the ability of existing communities of color and working people to stay in Mountain View. The city has been a leader in the region in responding to these challenges and has committed to removing governmental constraints on housing development to further the community commitment to addressing the inequity in opportunities. These proposed reforms run counter to this commitment and to the stated goals in the Housing Element.

We recognize that it is early in the implementation process and that staff is working hard to keep up with its commitments and council direction. We are nonetheless discouraged to see this shift in direction and are hopeful that we can get back on a collaborative track.

Sincerely,



Regina Celestin Williams

Executive Director

