



Friday, February 6, 2009

Mayor Peter Drekmeier  
And City Councilmembers,  
Planning Commissioners  
Palo Alto City Hall  
250 Hamilton Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA 94301

## **RE: Palo Alto Family and Senior Housing Proposal - SUPPORT**

Dear Mayor Drekmeier and Members of the City Council and Planning Commission:

For 50 years, Greenbelt Alliance has protected the region's working farms and natural areas while making the Bay Area's cities better places to live. A key component of our work is identifying where new growth should occur and which development proposals best meet the needs of the region. Our Compact Development Team (CDT) endorses and advocates for livable, transit-accessible communities with a wide range of housing options for families of all sizes and income levels. The CDT evaluated the Palo Alto Family and Senior Housing project proposed by Eden Housing, Inc. using an established set of guidelines. We write in support of this development because we feel it will be a gain for downtown Palo Alto. Due to its stellar location, its compact mix of uses, and its affordability, we urge the Palo Alto Planning Commission and City Council to approve this project.

The Palo Alto Family and Senior Housing development is proposed for a site that is ideal for compact, transit-oriented development. On the corner of Alma Street and Homer Avenue, it is within walking distance of the Palo Alto Caltrain and VTA bus stations, as well as the numerous shops, restaurants, services, and jobs in downtown Palo Alto. By providing amenities for bikes, including the creation of a new bike lane along Homer Avenue, Eden Housing is ensuring that residents of the Palo Alto Family and Senior Housing project will be able to comfortably bike to work, or use their bikes to reach other climate-friendly modes of transportation. Since they will not have to access a car for every trip or errand, future residents of this development will play a role in reducing Palo Alto's carbon footprint, and creating a healthier, more livable city. By providing a reasonable amount of parking, Eden Housing is eliminating the incentives that encourage unnecessary vehicle travel.

The developer's commitment to building a high-quality community is enhanced by the plan to preserve existing retail services on the site. Eden Housing plans for Palo Alto Hardware, a successful local business, to move into the new project once completed. Construction will be phased, allowing the business to continuously service the neighborhood, uninterrupted. In combining a mix of uses, the development will enhance the vitality of downtown Palo Alto; it is a mix of uses that helps urban areas remain vibrant and attractive. Recent studies have shown that walkable communities have weathered the economic crisis far better than those not friendly to pedestrian and transit travel.

Eden Housing is helping the City of Palo Alto meet its obligation to provide homes we can all afford, given that all 96 of the proposed homes will be offered at below-market rates. As you know, this economic downturn has hit low-income families the hardest, and many who work in Palo Alto cannot afford to live

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nearby. By tailoring some of these homes to families and other homes to seniors, Eden Housing is serving two at-risk populations in one project. We are also encouraged by Eden's plans to greatly exceed Palo Alto's 70 Green Point Rated requirement for new multifamily construction. Greenbelt Alliance encourages Eden Housing to permanently provide VTA EcoPasses to residents of this development, to pursue traffic-calming measures along Alma Street, and to explore the idea of providing a carshare pod to service the broader area.

In closing, Greenbelt Alliance applauds Eden Housing for proposing a project that takes advantage of a prime location, enhances the neighborhood to make it more friendly to those traveling on foot and by bicycle, and provides a mix of uses, ensuring that the project contributes to a complete and diverse community. This kind of development combats climate change and alleviates pressure to pave over natural areas and working farms, while providing affordable homes for the people who live and work in the community. For these reasons, Greenbelt Alliance strongly urges the Planning Commission and City Council's support of the Palo Alto Family and Senior Housing development.

Regards,

/s/

Marla Wilson  
Sustainable Development Associate

*CC: Elena Lee*