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Honorable Mayor and members of the Council
500 Castro Street
Mountain View, CA 94041

February 7, 2005

The Sierra Club urges the Mountain View City Council to include a multi-family focus option, similar to option 3 from the staff report, in the Environmental Impact Report for the HP/Mayfield Mall site.

As you may know, the Sierra Club has made stopping sprawl a national priority. Sprawl-style development - building subdivisions on open land far from existing population centers - harms the environment in many ways.

Long commutes, mostly by single drivers in cars, cause serious air pollution problems and contribute to global warming by increased energy consumption. Increasing amounts of valuable agricultural land and open space are paved over for roads and housing, which leads to strained and polluted water supplies, loss of habitat, and loss of recreational open space.

The alternative to sprawl development is smart growth: placing housing and jobs in existing developed areas in what's known as "infill" development; creating pedestrian-friendly, walkable communities, and putting both jobs and housing near transit, freeing people from being tied to their cars.

Mountain View's own general plan states "One way to reduce energy use is transit-oriented development. Concentrating housing near transit stations helps reduce auto trips and gasoline consumption."

The Mayfield Mall site is perfectly suited to high density, transit-oriented, infill housing -- especially given its proximity to the CalTrain line.

The City and the community recognized the wisdom of putting high-density housing on sites like this one in the city's general plan. Action 29.c states: "Encourage mixed-use projects with high-density residential uses near San Antonio Center so people can live close to shopping and transit." Action 44.a reads: "Encourage mixed-use projects and the city's highest-density residential projects along major transit lines and around stations."

The Sierra Club encourages the Council to support smart development by following the City's carefully thought out general plan and studying a higher density option in the EIR.

Sincerely,

Melissa Hippard
Chapter Director