

Town of Los Altos Hills

City Council Special Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 29, 2025, at 6:00 P.M.

Council Chambers, 26379 Fremont Road, Los Altos Hills, California

Present: Mayor Kavita Tankha, Vice Mayor Rajiv Bhateja, Council Member Stanley Mok, Council Member Linda Swan, and Council Member George Tyson

Absent: None

Staff: City Attorney Steve Mattas, Acting City Manager Cody Einfalt, Community Development Director Jay Bradford, and City Clerk Arika Birdsong-Miller

1. CALL TO ORDER (6:00 P.M.)

Mayor Tankha called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

2. ROLL CALL

Mayor Kavita Tankha, Vice Mayor Rajiv Bhateja, Council Member Stanley Mok, Council Member Linda Swan, and Council Member George Tyson were present.

3. ONGOING BUSINESS

A. Consideration of an update regarding housing element amendment options and provide potential direction to staff

Council Member Stanley Mok stated that he must abstain from participation in the meeting and from any voting that may occur.

City Attorney Steve Mattas presented an overview of options for maintaining compliance with the Town's certified Housing Element and meeting the statutory January 31, 2026 rezoning deadline. He explained that the Town is proceeding with multifamily zoning for St. Nicholas, Foothill College, and Twin Oaks, adopting objective design standards, and processing a Housing Element amendment that was submitted to HCD, which responded with an October 10 comment letter followed by a conference with HCD staff Paul McDougal and Reed Miller. HCD asked the Town to further substantiate that the three primarily non-vacant sites remain realistic for multifamily development in light of public comments, either by demonstrating property owner interest or by preparing a market feasibility analysis, a tool recently endorsed by the courts as a valid way to demonstrate adequate sites. Mattas outlined a ranked list of 11 options, nine of which could assist with the current zoning and amendment: (1) obtaining updated letters from Foothill, Twin Oaks, and St. Nicholas property owners indicating intention or interest in development; (2) commissioning a market analysis for the multifamily areas on all three sites (estimated cost about \$5,000) to show economic viability; (3–5) increasing maximum density and/or developable acreage at Foothill College (e.g., reverting to 30 dwelling units per acre, considering densities of 40–50 units per acre, and/or increasing the minimum developable area from 8.8 to 10 acres within the existing overlay on the 124-acre campus); (6–8) reverting the Twin Oaks rezoning area (currently lots 4–6) to 30 units per acre over 4.5 acres, considering instead rezoning lots 1–3, and potentially zoning 0.5–1 acre of the nearby Arastradero parcel for multifamily development in light of expressed developer interest; and (9) allowing development on slopes up to 30%, a previously discussed but not recommended Planning Commission option that would increase potential yield across all sites. He noted that options 10 and 11—continuing work of the Alternative Sites Committee

and highlighting the Town's strong ADU production (about 72 ADUs to date versus 60 projected, or roughly 20% above expectations)—are important but will not by themselves resolve the January 31 zoning compliance issue. Mattas clarified that while the Housing Element amendment is currently “out for review,” the underlying Housing Element remains certified and could be withdrawn if desired, but failure to adopt compliant zoning by the statutory date, or failure to timely correct any HCD-identified deficiencies after adoption, could result in the Town being deemed out of compliance and subject again to builder's remedy applications. In response to Council questions, he and staff explained that the January 31, 2026 deadline is set by statute (calculated from January 31, 2023) and is more controlling than the “Q1 2026” language in the Housing Element; that zoning ordinances must be adopted at a regular or properly adjourned regular Council meeting and are not effective for 30 days after adoption, making a December adoption target prudent; and that while HCD may later require corrections to the adopted zoning within a relatively short time frame, they do not pre-approve zoning ordinances before they take effect. Community Development Director Jay Bradford and consultants, including Veronica Tam and representatives from Michael Baker International, also provided supporting information on Foothill's interest in faculty housing, the campus acreage, and the structure of a market analysis.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT (Public Comment is Limited to Items which are the Subject of the Special Meeting)

1. **Michael Grady**, a Los Altos Hills resident, stated that the Town's current challenge is not related to the Twin Oaks site and that modifying zoning at Twin Oaks will not resolve the issue before HCD. He explained that the real problem is demonstrating that the St. Nicholas and Foothill College sites have the development capacity the Town claimed in its housing element, 285 total units, including 125 affordable units. He noted that multiple sources, including the October 21 residents' letter to HCD and presentations by Michael Baker, show that Twin Oaks already meets the housing element's target of 92 units on lots 4, 5, and 6. He cautioned that proposals to rezone Twin Oaks to allow building on steeply sloped lots 1 through 3, or to increase density on slopes over 25 percent, do not address the fundamental deficiency at St. Nicholas and Foothill and would enable excessive grading on unstable hillsides. He emphasized that both Michael Baker and Town residents consistently support locating any multifamily housing at Twin Oaks on the flatter portions of the site.
2. **John O'Connell**, a Los Altos Hills resident, stated that he wanted to focus on offering a solution rather than dwelling on the problems. He expressed concern that the Town is at risk of housing element decertification, particularly due to no-net-loss requirements and insufficient consideration of unit allocations by income category. He proposed a multifaceted strategy to complete by January 31, beginning with continuing the rezoning of Twin Oaks lots 4, 5, and 6 as planned. He recommended adding 7690 El Astradero back into the housing element as a half-acre site zoned for ten lower-income units, noting he has discussed this with the owners and Town staff. He suggested rezoning two to three additional sites, including one owned by the Town, and creating a new program allowing owners of parcels larger than one-half acre to apply for rezoning to support lower-income housing using incentive mechanisms. He emphasized the need to clarify Foothill College's actual interest in developing its site. He further recommended filing a no-net-loss report to trigger a 180-day window to replace lost sites, specifically for St. Nicholas School and any Foothill College land the college indicates it cannot develop. He stated that completing this rezoning package by January 31 would significantly advance the Town's progress toward meeting its RHNA obligations.

John O'Connell thanked the Council for the extra time and urged them to focus on preventing

decertification of the Town's housing element. He said HCD now expects a site inventory and capacity analysis based on current conditions and stressed that the Town must show it can meet its remaining lower-income RHNA, not simply generate large numbers of units through broad density zoning. He explained that the current strategy would require hundreds more units than necessary and cannot succeed. Mr. O'Connell said he has already identified two potential half-acre parcels and is pursuing a third that could each support about ten lower-income units. He also recommended counting recent ADU production toward above-moderate RHNA and filing a no-net-loss report to secure 180 days to replace sites such as St. Nicholas. He concluded by urging the Council to shift strategies, rezone three parcels promptly, and complete the housing element amendment within the available timeline.

3. **Lanvi Evans**, a Los Altos Hills resident, expressed deep concern that, after two and a half years of work on the housing element, the Town remains in the same difficult position. She stated that the Town failed to properly vet the feasibility of development at St. Nicholas School and Foothill College and is now unable to make up for that shortfall by relying solely on the Twin Oaks site. She emphasized that placing hundreds of units on the hillside would create serious safety concerns given evacuation routes, fire risks, and landslide potential. Ms. Evans cautioned against repeating past mistakes, noting that rushing the housing element previously led to problems, and urged the Council to make thoughtful, careful decisions with the limited options remaining. She concluded by asking the Council to focus on what is realistically achievable for the Town.
4. **George Perlegos**, a Los Altos Hills resident, stated that he and his family own property on Elena Road and expressed frustration that, after months of discussion, the Town has made little progress on identifying additional housing sites. He voiced concern about proposals that would allow construction on steep 30 percent slopes, noting that such terrain requires significant grading and large retaining walls, and that past plans showed homes placed on swales, which should not be allowed. He added that setbacks cannot simply be eliminated due to fire risks, especially given the history of fires in the area. Mr. Perlegos cautioned that approving development without proper soil studies and design guidelines would damage the hillside terrain. He urged the Council to secure additional housing sites immediately, emphasizing that relying on a single property owner to meet the Town's RHNA requirements would leave the Town vulnerable and subject to unreasonable demands. He encouraged the Council to consider the approach suggested by John O'Connell and again pressed for action, stating that uncertainty around potential development is causing significant stress for residents in the Corrales neighborhood.
5. **Nina Anand**, a Los Altos Hills resident, stated that she was again expressing her disappointment and disapproval regarding the Town's progress on the housing element. She said residents have repeatedly asked the Council to step in, amend the housing element, and address the problems with site selection, yet the Town is once more facing urgent deadlines with limited time remaining and the holidays approaching. She emphasized that rezoning Twin Oaks is not the solution and urged the Council to use the coming months to develop a viable and fair alternative. Ms. Anand also questioned why the special meeting was called with such short notice, expressing concern that residents were not given adequate opportunity to participate and stating she only learned of the meeting through other residents. She shared her worry that the Town may have already decided to continue pursuing Twin Oaks despite resident opposition. She asked the Council not to create new problems by rezoning the site, arguing that the scale of development being discussed would harm the environment, wildlife, and residents' quality of life, and pose serious risks during emergencies such as fires or

earthquakes.

6. **Ananya Anand**, a Los Altos Hills resident, stated that she has lived in Los Altos Hills for 25 years and is now raising her child in the community, which makes her deeply invested in the Town's future. She expressed increasing frustration with what she described as a lack of transparency from Town leadership, confusing and indirect communication, and a reactive approach to the housing element. She said that residents have repeatedly raised concerns about the Twin Oaks property and the idea of rezoning it for higher density, yet there has been limited discussion about the site's infrastructure challenges, environmental impacts, and safety risks associated with the narrow Arastradero corridor. Ms. Anand questioned what genuine efforts have been made to identify other multifamily housing sites, noting that the Town has had years to explore alternatives. She argued that concentrating most of the housing in a single location contradicts the purpose of the housing element, which is intended to distribute affordable units throughout the community, and warned that locating substantial housing in one area amounts to segregation. She urged the Council to listen to residents, represent their interests, and undertake the difficult work needed to ensure the community's safety and well-being.
7. **Sasha Zbrizek**, a Los Altos Hills resident, stated that he has been a homeowner in Los Altos Hills for nearly six years and suggested that the Town could resolve its ongoing housing element challenges by rezoning the entire town at a higher density, such as 20 units per acre. He said that doing so would eliminate the need to analyze individual sites in future housing cycles, effectively ending the repeated difficulties associated with housing element compliance.
8. **Anne Paulson**, a Los Altos resident, urged the Council to conduct a market feasibility study for the Twin Oaks site and emphasized that such an analysis must account for the Town's development standards, including the small average unit size and large setbacks. She noted that popular and profitable housing types like townhouse units with tuck-under garages would be impossible to fit under the Town's current rules. Ms. Paulson said a detailed pro forma would be helpful but reiterated the importance of also identifying flatter sites with existing utilities. She added that she was confused by several of the options under consideration, noting that with AB 648 now in effect, Foothill College is not required to follow the Town's zoning, making rezoning efforts there appear unnecessary. She thanked the Council for considering her comments.
9. **Martha Bowden**, a Los Altos Hills resident, stated that throughout the housing element process, multifamily housing has been treated as synonymous with dense, urban-style development at 20 to 30 units per acre, which she argued is incompatible with Los Altos Hills' rural character. She referenced a prior proposal by John O'Connell that would have designated all of Twin Oaks as multifamily housing but limited steep-slope lots to four units per parcel, rather than the much higher densities now under discussion. Ms. Bowden said it makes no sense to place high-density apartment buildings on steep hillsides, especially given the history of land slippage in areas such as Saddle Mountain Estates and on properties along Stirrup Way facing the Arastradero corridor. She cautioned that major grading on steep lots like Twin Oaks parcels 1, 2, and 3 could undermine the stability of existing homes on the ridge above them, and she questioned how dense development could be safely accommodated under those conditions.
10. **Cheryl Evans**, a Los Altos Hills resident, stated that the Town's current approach to the housing element feels fundamentally out of alignment with the community's rural character. She said that housing should invite people to become part of the Town rather than placing them

in high-density “stack and pack” developments on the outskirts. She emphasized that appropriate housing for Los Altos Hills should be distributed throughout the community in a way that fits the environment and appeals to future residents. Ms. Evans also expressed concern that knowledgeable speakers are limited to two minutes during public comment and said it is important to form an ad hoc committee that includes residents who have studied the issue in depth. She encouraged the Council to engage community members directly in identifying alternative housing sites and shaping a housing element that reflects the values of the Town.

11. **Namrata**, a Los Altos Hills resident, stated that the two-minute limit for public comments feels overly bureaucratic and counterproductive, especially when residents with deep knowledge, such as John O’Connell and Michael Grady, could contribute more through a dynamic question-and-answer format. She said she was encouraged to hear discussion about identifying additional housing sites and believed this effort should have begun much earlier. As a resident without technical expertise, she was surprised to see Twin Oaks appear again in the materials, since she thought the Town had already converged on an approach involving amending the housing element rather than pursuing increased density at Twin Oaks. Namrata said it appeared that the real issue is clarifying the development potential at Foothill College and St. Nicholas, and she asked for a simple explanation of what is happening with the Foothill site. She concluded by stating that anything related to increasing density or further development on Twin Oaks should be removed from the list of options.
12. **Eric Evans**, a Los Altos Hills resident and a builder with 30 years of experience, said he spent the day visiting the O’Keefe property after seeing it mentioned as a potential housing site. He described the land as flat, expansive, close to the freeway, outside fire hazard zones, and with easy access, noting that roughly 70 percent of it could remain as open space. He stated that the site is far more suitable than Twin Oaks from a topographical and safety standpoint and would have a relatively limited impact on nearby residents. Mr. Evans said that if the Town owns the property, it might also have influence over the unit mix, which could be an advantage.

Eric Evans added that the O’Keefe property includes a natural swale or creek that could serve as a buffer between existing homes and any new development, helping to minimize impacts on nearby residents. He noted that, because of this natural separation and the property’s position adjacent to the freeway, only a small number of homes would likely be affected by potential development on the site.

13. **Sue Welch**, a Los Altos Hills resident, stated that she has been advocating since February for considering the O’Keefe property as a potential housing site. She noted that some residents may be concerned about losing open space, but suggested two approaches that might make them more willing to support removing a portion of O’Keefe from open space designation. First, the Town could commit to identifying and preserving an equivalent amount of alternative open space within a reasonable timeframe. Second, the Town could strengthen protections for Byrne Preserve to ensure it remains permanently protected, beyond the minimal definition of “in perpetuity” used by the state. She said that pairing these measures with any proposal to reclassify part of O’Keefe could help reassure the community.

Direction from Council to Staff

1. Proceed with Options 1–5 and 8

Council agreed to move forward with Option 1 and Option 2 and consider Option 3-5 plus Option 8 for further analysis and recommendation, and to send those options back to the Planning Commission “very quickly” for consideration and feedback.

2. **Coordinate with Foothill College**

Staff was directed to work with Foothill College to determine whether the College is comfortable with the increased density contemplated in the options that affect its property (particularly Options 3–5), and to ensure any changes are done in cooperation with Foothill.

3. **Behave as if in a no-net-loss situation (without formally declaring it)**

While Council did not want to formally declare a no-net-loss situation now, they directed staff and the ad hoc committee to act as though the Town is in a no-net-loss posture:

- Immediately pursue alternative sites (aiming for four or five) so the Town is not “held hostage” by any single property owner.
- Obtain **additional analysis and a written report back** on the no-net-loss issue and strategies to protect the Town’s compliance.

4. **Draft language for a citizen initiative for the O’Keefe property**

Council directed the City Attorney’s Office to begin work on:

- Draft/template language for a potential citizen initiative to remove a portion of the O’Keefe property from open space for use as a multifamily housing site,
- Structured so it would only be exercised if HCD determines the Town is out of compliance and imposes a no-net-loss remedy/builder’s remedy scenario.

5. **Provide initiative timeline (June vs. November election)**

The City Attorney was asked to return to Council with:

- A timeline for when initiative signatures would need to be gathered to qualify for the June ballot, and
- A timeline for the November ballot, with the recognition that June may be tight but November is “definitely doable.”

6. **Continue alternative site work via the ad hoc committee**

Staff confirmed that:

- The housing ad hoc committee will continue to work with residents (including those who have already identified sites, such as John O’Connell) to locate additional feasible parcels, including sites like Moody Road/Rust Ridge and others mentioned in the options list.

7. **Planning Commission and meeting logistics**

Staff will reach out to the Planning Commission to schedule prompt consideration of Options 1–5 and 8.

- Staff will coordinate with the Registrar of Voters regarding the voting machines in the Council Chambers to determine the earliest possible date the Chambers can be used for the next Council meeting on these items.

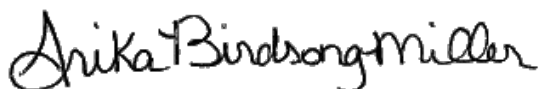
8. **Public noticing and communication**

- Staff reiterated that future meetings will continue to be noticed through the Town’s weekly newsletter and the agenda forecast on the website, and encouraged residents to subscribe.
- Council encouraged residents to communicate with the Acting City Manager and Community Development Director on housing element questions and to alert staff if they see large vacant lots that may be candidate sites.

5. **ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Arika Birdsong-Miller, City Clerk