



Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning
817 Montgomery Street
Mountain View, CA 94041

September 24, 2019

Mountain View City Council
City Hall, 500 Castro Street
PO Box 7540
Mountain View, CA 94039-7540

Re: 7.1 Oversized Vehicle Parking Restrictions and 7.2 Safe Parking Ordinance, Amendments to the Emergency Shelter Regulations, Other Related Minor Text Amendments, and Direction Associated with Safe Parking

Dear Mayor Matichak and City Council members:

The Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning (MVCSP) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on ordinance and policy changes you might consider that could help accommodate any known or potential plans for safe parking locations within our city.

As you know, Mountain View, as with other cities in our region, currently has a significant number of residents living in vehicles on streets and in lots throughout the city. What this highlights is the urgent need for quality affordable housing available to those living here. But we must take more immediate action to address safe parking needs in our city. Housing prices are simply too high here for many people to afford them, even for those who are working. And, important to note, our most vulnerable populations, such as students at our local schools (as many as 40 in Mountain View Whisman School District schools according to the League of Women Voters), seniors, and those with health issues, are most affected by this.

A large percentage of people living in their vehicles would not choose to do so if affordable housing were available to them. However, we are not even close to having the level of such housing in place for those who need it. Consequently, Mountain View must do everything it reasonably can to provide and support temporary safe parking to meet existing needs until housing options are adequately in place.

Depending on how calculations are made, the number of safe parking spaces now needed could be as high as 400 (if both cars and oversized vehicles are included in the count).

We believe that Mountain View's safe parking program should strive to achieve the following goals:

- Offer humane living conditions for all of our residents.
- Draw qualified residents into programs designed to provide them with permanent living situations.
- To address concerns about bicycling safety, waste issues, and other resident concerns, establish parking areas only on certain streets where these concerns are better addressed.
- Ensure that we ultimately have a successful program in place that residents who care about this issue can be proud of and depend on.

While Staff's proposals for regulating and establishing safe parking lots have many positive elements, they are too reliant on practices in other communities. Mountain View's program should recognize that the vast majority of our vehicle residents work and/or attend school in the city.

To meet this number of parking spaces, multiple location types will be needed. For example, City properties, faith based properties, retail properties, other corporate and other private properties, and individual resident locations.

Obviously, zoning considerations are vital for making this all work. Accordingly, we urge you to anticipate as many possible program needs as you can and recommend any zoning and precise plan changes required to adequately meet these needs.

Specifically:

- The goal through any changes you recommend should be to expand what is provided for safe parking sites and to streamline the process to encourage more community sites to participate.
- City restrictions should be minimized across the board (note that the Mountain View Whisman school board, for example, just decided to back away from considering safe parking at school locations citing challenges to make it come together).

For example:

- The city shouldn't determine the need for outdoor lighting or prevent safe parking during business/church operations as long as there is no parking spillover.
- Requirements for drinking water on site should not be enforced if no water service is available at or near the lot location.
- Requirements for not allowing electrical hookups could be a problem if electricity service at the site might be needed during daytime hours.
- Time constraints must be eliminated as much as possible on lot parking. The restriction noted in the Staff report of 7AM to 7PM would not be reasonable. This restriction is especially harmful to people who work non-9 to 5pm jobs or multiple jobs, and for families with children who need to be home in the early afternoon. The need to move

the RVs every morning and evening would also increase traffic and greenhouse gas emissions.

- We also believe that Staff's contention that 24-hour operation would trigger regulation of lots as Mobile Home Parks or RV Parks under State law is overly cautious. Both Mobile Home Parks and RV Parks are defined as properties requiring the rental or leasing of space. Reserving space free of charge for a fixed number of days should not be a problem. Fees for services, such as electrical service, should not count as rent.
- Setting a limit of 30 vehicles per lot will prevent our city from meeting even existing needs. This criteria is artificial, not based on actual lot size or real world safety conditions. Ultimately, Mountain View needs to be able to guarantee or commit to a number of safe parking spaces.
- Incentives (along with limited restrictions) need to be provided for private property owners who might agree to make their lots available for the safe parking program.
- A clear set of requirements for safe parking lots must be defined and provided.
- No vehicle dweller overnight vehicle ban enforcement should be undertaken until safe parking with an adequate number of needed spaces is up and running.
- The CUP or TUP process for approving any safe parking location should be expedited as much as possible. We understand the process for approving the Terra Bella location took 18 months. This is far too long given the pressing need for parking locations. You could even consider defining safe parking lots for "acceptable use" in some cases to eliminate the need for either CUP or TUP permit requirements.

Addressing recommendations from the Environmental Planning Commission from their September 4th meeting:

- We agree with the recommendation to add a provision for lot capacity expansion over 30 vehicles after one year of successful operation to allow for a change without the need for a future ordinance amendment. However, we feel that one year is longer than necessary for a reevaluation to occur. We suggest a much shorter time-frame, perhaps as short as three months. We also suggest that any approval for a safe parking location be subject to a three-month pilot period, and this could align with the three-month expansion option to allow for more than 30 vehicles per lot.
- Regarding 24/7 operations for safe parking lots, we feel this is the ideal we should achieve, at least at one lot from the beginning of the program. However, we also recognize that this will not be feasible for all lot locations. In the interest of overall flexibility for the program, we suggest that setting the hours of operation be established on a lot-by-lot basis. The Staff report mentions "legislation granting an exemption from State law which might allow 24/7 operations on City-controlled sites." Council members should ask about prospects for the State taking action on this.
- We agree with EPC's recommendation about electrical hookups. Even if large vehicles have onboard auxiliary batteries, they might not be capable of providing power throughout the time the vehicle is parked. Allowing for vehicle or on-site generators (if they are run only during specified hours) and electrical hookups in general makes sense to us, and any further restrictions should be allowed on a lot-by-lot basis. The Staff report mentions adding access to

electricity would be a hardship for lot owners; however, some locations might already have the services in place, so additions would be limited to increasing capacity (but not even that necessarily).

Regarding precise plan revisions to accommodate safe parking allowances, we believe that all precise plans should be considered, not just those for North Bayshore and East Whisman. We urge Council to work with Staff to have all of these plans addressed. The work might be simplified if boilerplate language is used or at least considered for related precise plan amendments. Could an amendment to the General Plan be a better approach for comprehensive coverage here?

Regarding proposed prohibitions on large vehicle parking on city streets, while we appreciate the need to ensure public safety by setting reasonable rules on such parking, the Staff report leads us to believe that these proposed prohibitions would apply to the vast majority of our streets. This is problematic if we want to ensure parking availability for all large vehicles being used by vehicle dwellers. The Staff report sets the current count at 207 RVs, a count that will certainly rise over time. Before prohibiting large vehicle parking on city streets, we believe parking (whether on street or in safe parking lots) must be provided for all vehicle dwellers using large vehicles based on reasonably accurate vehicle counts. One approach Council might consider is exempting particular parking locations from the prohibitions you are considering (such as those identified in ATT 4 - Updated Living in Vehicle Map(s) as Higher Concentration Areas).

We also note that the maps might not be 100% accurate. For example, Pacific Drive is included in the narrow streets map but Whisman Station Drive is not. These streets are both public streets within an HOA community with "No Parking" signs posted.

No matter what, it would be helpful to have a comprehensive map showing all streets with all parking restrictions and another showing where parking would be allowed. If there is a distinction between where any vehicle could park and where large vehicles could park, these distinctions should be noted. An estimate of the number of available spaces for large vehicles would also be helpful to know. Additionally, the City's decisions about where prohibitions exist (including where signs are posted and active enforcement undertaken) should be part of a transparent process under the safe parking program specifically (note that decisions on this could change over time, and the public should have an opportunity to participate in the process).

Regarding development of a safe parking task force, we believe that the effort should be distributed versus centrally controlled, such as with coordinated roles across the City, HRC, and community groups as a coalition spearheaded by the Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning (MVCSP) (this approach is already underway or in discussion). We encourage the City to explore options for establishing a paid, full-time staff person to help with task force functions. Much can be done with volunteers alone, but having the additional resource would be invaluable.

Regarding the geographical scope of the safe parking program, we believe the best approach should be regional in nature (rather than having the City work out the details all on its own). This is, after all, an issue that exists beyond our city borders as well, and it is appropriate for all cities in the area to leverage each other's best practices and communications networks. Likewise, funding should be sought beyond

government entities. For example, financial support could also come from non-profit organizations and corporations (given that corporate job growth patterns have largely led to the housing crisis we are currently experiencing).

Regarding lot operations management, organizations such as MOVE Mountain View, LifeMoves, Dignity on Wheels, and Amigos de Guadalupe might be able to provide such services for Mountain View; it will be important to outsource these services assuming City Staff is unable to provide them directly. However, there is an advantage to have as few operators as possible across the city as this will ensure best consistency across sites. As previously noted, maximum flexibility in how each lot operates is compelling as well. Especially with a lack of incentives for private-property lot owners, flexibility is even more important.

The Staff report mentions a need for an operations plan (page 5); this plan should include all details about how the lot operates (not just emergency evacuations procedures).

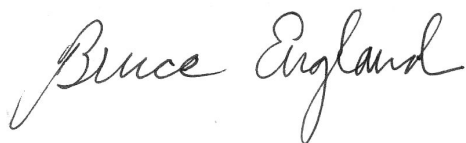
Regarding “Amending Current Government Code Sections 8698 to 8698.4”, we hope Council members will ask Staff about the status of this request through Assemblyperson Berman’s office. Is there a date set for the mayor to meet with Mr. Berman? What was discussed about this legislation at the Regional Work Group meeting of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) convened to look at RV living solutions?

Regarding environmental impacts (page 15 of the Staff Report on the safe parking ordinance), The statements specify overnight parking, but this omits the possibility of some 24-hour operations at one or more lots. We suggest the statement account for all hours, even if the assertions themselves remain valid.

These issues have both practical and moral implications. Please keep in mind how urgent the situation is and consider that breaking from the status quo in our regulations and processes might be required to accomplish what needs to be done. Mountain View should be willing to at least achieve what neighboring cities are doing but also to be a leader in taking action to help alleviate the pain and suffering vehicle dwellers in our city are experiencing. As you know, many are already working on solutions to this, and we trust that the path in place will continue forward with productive results.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bruce England". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Bruce England
for the Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning

cc:

Stephanie Williams, Planning Manager / Zoning Administrator

Kimberly Thomas, Assistant to the City Manager

Nicole C. Wright, Senior Assistant City Attorney

Aarti Shrivastava, Community Development Director / Assistant City Manager

Audrey Seymour Ramberg, Assistant City Manager / Chief Operating Officer

Krishan Chopra, City Attorney

Dan Rich, City Manager

Lisa Natusch, City Clerk

About Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning

The Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning is a group of local volunteers dedicated to making Mountain View as beautiful, economically healthy, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian accessible, and affordable as possible. MVCSP member interest and expertise covers areas such as housing, transportation, the environment, the economy, and beyond!

For more information, see <http://www.mvcsp.org>.

To contact us, send email to mvcsp.info@gmail.com.