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COUNTY AND CITY ANNOUNCE POTENTIAL “BREAKTHROUGH PARTNERSHIP” TO PRESERVE MOBILE HOME PARK

Palo Alto – Today County Supervisor Joe Simitian and Palo Alto Mayor Pat Burt announced a potential partner who will bring new resources to the effort to preserve and improve the Buena Vista Mobile Home Park.

Nearly a year after the City and County each committed \$14.5 million to acquiring the Park, they have announced a proposed partnership with the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara, in an effort to fund, acquire, improve and preserve the Park as an ongoing source of affordable housing for its current and future residents.

The proposed partnership is expected to entail:

- A \$14.5 million contribution of affordable housing fees from the County;
- A \$14.5 million contribution of affordable housing fees from the City;

- A financial contribution from the Housing Authority, if necessary (in an amount to be determined), sufficient, along with County and City funding, to fund the cost of purchasing the property; and,
- The Housing Authority will acquire and own the property, with the Park to be maintained, improved, and operated by a non-profit entity.

All three bodies will be voting on the proposed partnership in the coming weeks, with the County Board of Supervisors voting on June 21st, the Palo Alto City Council voting on June 27th, and the Housing Authority's Board of Commissioners voting on June 28th. Following these votes (if successful), the Housing Authority will pursue next steps to fund, acquire and improve the Park, starting with an appraisal of the property.

In announcing the proposed partnership, Simitian said that the Housing Authority was, "the final piece of the puzzle necessary to move forward with our effort to save the Park – and prevent the eviction of its 400 residents. The Housing Authority has sufficient funds, working with the County and the City, to acquire and improve the Park."

Simitian said, "The Housing Authority is the one governmental entity in Santa Clara County that is actually responsible for creating and providing affordable housing. And they can use all the tools and resources at their disposal to move forward with funding, acquiring, improving, and preserving the Park as affordable housing in perpetuity."

Palo Alto Mayor Pat Burt said that the City's commitment of Palo Alto affordable housing funds, along with the identification of a partner to operate the Park is an opportunity to help ensure the Park's residents can remain in Palo Alto.

“The residents of Buena Vista have been an important part of our community, and this partnership will help ensure that our Buena Vista families will be able to stay in the community for the long term,” said Burt. “Palo Alto has had a strong commitment to affordable housing throughout our community, and these funds can only be dedicated for the purposes of affordable housing,” he said.

Katherine Harasz, Executive Director of the Housing Authority, said “We are excited about the opportunity to join the effort. The Buena Vista Mobile Home Park is a unique source of affordable housing in an area where there are few opportunities for affordable housing.”

“We know, of course, that last fall, negotiations to buy the Park stalled,” said Harasz. “Once we have an appraisal and have finished due diligence, the Housing Authority Board will consider acquisition of the Park in an effort to keep these 400 families in their homes, including negotiation and, if necessary, eminent domain.”

“When Palo Alto approved the Park's closure, residents were discouraged and fearful of the future,” said Erika Escalante, President of the Buena Vista Residents' Association. “We're encouraged, excited, and thankful for everyone involved for coming up with a plan to preserve the Park and help the 400 Buena Vista residents stay in Palo Alto.”

The Buena Vista Mobile Home Park is home to approximately 117 mostly low-income Latino families, about 400 people in total. The owner announced plans to close the Park in 2012; and the Park's closure was approved in May of 2015. The Park's closure would displace these families and force them out of Palo Alto.

However, in January of last year community leaders commenced an effort to save the Buena Vista Mobile Home Park, and prevent the eviction of 400

local residents. At the urging of County Supervisors Joe Simitian and Dave Cortese, Santa Clara County set aside \$14.5 million dollars in affordable housing fees to jumpstart the effort; the City of Palo Alto matched that \$14.5 million commitment. A non-profit affordable housing organization was identified to continue operating the Park as an affordable mobile home community.

As the effort progressed, community support was widespread. The effort to “Save the Buena Vista” was supported by:

- More than two dozen former Palo Alto Mayors and Councilmembers;
- Eighteen past and present members of the Palo Alto School Board (including all five current members);
- Local legislators, including Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, State Senator Jerry Hill, and State Assemblyman Rich Gordon;
- Over 500 members of the community, representing every walk-of-life and all of the City’s neighborhoods who gathered at City Hall last spring to express their support;
- The Sixth District PTA;
- Both local organizations active in City land use politics and policy making (Palo Altans for Sensible Zoning and Palo Alto Forward); as well as,
- Local and regional press, who uniformly expressed their editorial support.

Additionally, it should be noted that votes in support of City and County funding were unanimous at both the City Council and Board of Supervisors.

Notwithstanding all of the above support, negotiations to acquire the Park came to a halt last fall in the face of litigation in both State and Federal courts, involving the City, the Park owner, and the Park residents.

“Our goal continues to be what it always has been,” said Simitian, “to keep the residents of the Buena Vista Mobile Home Park in their homes, and to preserve the Park as affordable housing for generations to come. This new partnership will move us closer to achieving that goal.”

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