



2020 City Council Candidate Questions

COMMUNITY LIFE

Neighbors who were following the two supermarkets, first at Edgewood Plaza and then at College Terrace were dismayed that the City did not enforce the promises made by developers to provide for a grocery store. The City then did not fully collect the penalties that were due the City when the developers failed to provide the grocery stores. How the City should handle such matters?

PAT BURT

The city should tighten the conditions of approval and penalty triggers for such projects. The City Attorney should pursue such fines more aggressively.

REBECCA EISENBERG

The City's municipal code, which was drafted by the City Council and which should be familiar to them, explains very clearly what the City Council should have done but did not do:

1. The City Council should have enforced its own municipal code.
2. The City Council should have collected penalties.

It's not too late for the City Council to apply these 2 steps to developers and wealthy private interests that currently are not interested in complying with the law or their permits.

I recognize that it can be unpleasant (and/or bad for business or social reasons) to tell rich people that they can't do everything that they want to do. But if you are seeking to serve as a member of the City Council in Palo Alto, you have to be able and willing to stand up to wealthy interests. It's part of the job.

I can do that.

LYDIA KOU

Unfortunately, the City Manager, Staff, and pro-growth City Council majority allowed this to happen. It is one more developer "perk" to doing business in Palo Alto. These fines, if collected, could have gone towards saving some valuable City services.

All applicable fines must be collected. Otherwise, bad behavior is encouraged and will occur again and again. It starts at the top, with the City Manager; but the City Council majority can change the way business is done in Palo Alto. Residents, and not developers, must be placed first.

ED LAUING

They should handle them much better! Penalties should be assessed to the fullest extent of applicable contract law. Next, penalize the developer by not letting them build similar projects in town. We need to have a "long memory" on these violations.

STEVEN LEE

As a lawyer, I strongly believe that if we are going to have rules and penalties, then we need to fully enforce them. Otherwise what is the point of having them in the first place? Our residents should be able to trust that when we include certain provisions as part of the larger bargain with the community, that down the road we are

actually going to hold developers to said provisions. We need to improve our code enforcement operations and actually enforce the promises that developers make to our community. Whether a developer has followed through on those promises should be a vital component in evaluating whether those developers are allowed to do work in our city in the future.

RAVEN MALONE

The City should hold commercial property developers fully accountable for their legal commitments to the community.

GREER STONE

These are problems far too familiar to Palo Altans. Often promises of community benefits are made by developers to qualify for a project, and after the project has been approved and constructed, the developer defaults on their promise. Instead of taking the developer to court to enforce the contractual agreement, the city capitulates and the developer gets away with a slap on the wrist. When we continue to allow promises and contracts to be broken with no real consequences, it sets a dangerous precedent to others who seek to take advantage of our city. I will not capitulate and I will not allow developers to renege on their promises without fully collecting on penalties, or taking them to court to recuperate the lost value to the city and our residents.

GREG TANAKA

The first step is to make sure that grocery stores can survive. They are a part of the fundamental functioning of the city. The City needs to ensure that high levels of scrutiny and accountability are applied.

CARI TEMPLETON

We must reimagine what it means for a development to offer a “public benefit,” especially since the concept of a grocery store continues to fail in these sites. Perhaps offering a selection of secondary options that would be acceptable if the primary option fails, would be a better way to structure our agreements. However, when agreements between the City and developers are not met, the City should collect fines unless a preferable alternative solution can be negotiated.

AJIT VARMA

For both of these projects it was clear that developers tried to achieve the city asks but were unable to. The city shouldn't blindly keep trying to make something happen that doesn't work and needs to work to come up with alternative plans that are beneficial to the city but actually feasible.