



2018 City Council Candidate Questions

QUALITY OF LIFE

How do we balance the pressure to build housing against the limits of infrastructure, such as transportation, parks, school capacity, and the environment?

PAT BOONE

This is a great question, I hope was asked to previous Council candidates because this issue should have been discussed a long time ago.

As we move forward, I believe we need to build more near transportation hubs versus neighborhoods. Schools are a big deal, we don't want overcrowding - Council should be working closing with the School Board to ensure they can handle the influx of new students.

On the environmental, less fossil fuels are always better, and I believe and endorse protecting our open space at all cost.

ALISON CORMACK

Thoughtfully. For example, workforce housing in the Stanford Research Park area, coupled with a TDM program, might limit the impact on traffic and the environment. Coordinating that with the work nearby on the Fry's site in North Ventura could address the impact on parks and schools.

TOM DUBOIS

The Citizens group that worked on our Comprehensive Plan did an outstanding job of striking some tough compromises to balance these sometimes competing goals. We need to make sure that Council respects the works of hardworking citizen groups like this one – rash decisions late at night have proven not to work for us.

We can not pursue any one goal to the exclusion of others. Some council members proposed building 10,000 additional housing units in Palo Alto as part of our Comprehensive Plan with no analysis on the impacts on transportation, parks, our Schools or the environment. We need thoughtful leaders who can make choices that let Palo Alto grow in a sustainable manner. This means considering all of these elements, making data-based decisions, and moving in moderation.

ERIC FILSETH

I think a majority of Palo Altans would like to see some more housing in town, but also really like our low-rise, moderate-density environment and our amenities and services. It's our job as government to make these potential-for-conflict things work together. As part of that, we have an adopted Comp Plan, which outlines total housing targets.

Within those targets, one key is prioritization, since we will not be able to house everybody who would like to move here. Socioeconomic diversity is important to Palo Alto, which implies higher priority to BMR housing than market rate. Some of our civic institutions have a higher need for resident workers than others -- emergency services and schools, for example -- so that ought to be a housing priority as well. Lower priority to most Palo Alto would be housing for high-income workers from neighbor cities' knowingly under-housed tech expansions.

A second key is money. If we want something, we ought to be prepared to pay for it. If we decide it's important to have BMR housing in town, then the Community ought to pay for it -- not individual neighborhoods via mechanisms such as unlimited street parking. Instead we should pay actual money, raised from mechanisms such as impact fees; including on market-rate housing as appropriate (imposing fees on BMR housing that we're simultaneously subsidizing is more complicated).

High community priorities in Palo Alto include schools -- we should not add more people than the school system can support. Also our open spaces -- we should not build in the Baylands. And even housing projects should not dump parked cars into neighborhoods.

CORY WOLBACH

The key for me is not to balance by saying "either-or," but to balance by saying "yes and..." For instance, in planning for the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (Fry's site), we should plan for how that whole area will look and function in the future. How much new park space will it have? How much housing? Where will the kids who live there go to school, and how will they get there safely? How will all generations in that area have mobility options, whether driving, biking, or walking, or taking a shuttle, bus or train? How will this new future development minimize water and electricity use, and could it be entirely free of natural gas appliances?

These are solvable problems, but we need to ask them at the front end, rather than try to fix them after poor planning has been completed. This is part of why I am so strongly in favor of coordinated area plans, where the community can work together to pose these questions and think through how to address them for an area.