



2018 City Council Candidate Questions

Pat Boone Responses

REASON FOR RUNNING

What do you hope to achieve in the next four years on the city council?

I hope to immediately bring more professionalism and compassion back to Council, I want a working together environment, not a yelling match between members.

As Palo Alto changes I want to maintain the quality of life in our amazing neighborhoods.

But I also want to finally solve our traffic headaches, approve rental protections so mass evictions can stop, and push for more housing overall.

STATE VS LOCAL CONTROL

What is your philosophy when it comes to local versus state control over growth and development mandates?

I do like the Governor's new law signed in 2016 on ADU's and Junior ADU's, I just think we need to apply these rules in our own way to Palo Alto, simply every city is different.

HOUSING

Given the cost of land and construction costs, how do we make it economically viable to create Below Market Rate housing for low income residents (80% of AMI or lower) in Palo Alto? (80% of AMI is \$66,150 for one person or \$75,800 for two persons.)

See below.

What changes would you make to the rules allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in single-family residential neighborhoods? Should denser housing development be allowed in single-family residential neighborhoods?

I believe we need to revisit zoning options. But I have an issue with dense housing in neighborhoods, I predict it could lead to severe overcrowding.

As for tackling construction and land cost, I believe that every developer we approve for any housing project we must also commit to building a certain number of BMR affordable housing units.

What stronger renter protections, including restrictions on evictions without "just cause" and limits on annual rental rate increases, do you support, if any?

I want stronger renter protections, including restrictions on evictions without "just cause" and limits on annual rental rate increases, do you support, if any?

Do you support a law limiting loss of existing housing units? Explain.

I support all rental protections, and yes I do support limiting the loss of any housing units.

I'm very aware the job growth has developed a new set of imbalance issues in Palo Alto.

Should Palo Alto adopt the "Palmer fix" that requires the inclusion of Below Market Rate housing in new rental housing projects? Please answer Yes or No.

Yes, I think it's a good start. I don't believe this will solve the BMR housing shortage, but it provide homes to some who have no options on where to live.

OFFICE DEVELOPMENT / USAGE

Neighborhood services, such as doctors and therapists, are being displaced by larger tech or R&D businesses (e.g., 550 Hamilton, 2600 El Camino Real, 385 Sherman). Would you make changes to zoning rules or enforcement to protect neighborhood services?

We have no choice but to keep these services in place. We can't let a larger business push them out. It's not just about the local service, but the resident getting to that location.

Should transportation and parking standards be modified to reflect the realities of increasing office and R&D employee densities? If so, how?

I think we need some new parking but let's not get outrageous, and businesses need to foot the bill, not taxpayers. Not sure we can afford another garage on California Ave. I think the more parking we create, the more cars it will bring and neighborhoods will still be loaded with worker vehicles. The solution is enhancing a busing and shuttle service for workers.

QUALITY OF LIFE

What two things would you prioritize to make Palo Alto and its neighborhoods more livable?

Relieving traffic headaches and managing business caps.

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

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.

TRANSPORTATION

Should businesses be responsible for reducing traffic and parking impacts? Should the businesses pay for the remedies and how? What is the City's role?

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According to the latest US Census Bureau data, 88% of Palo Alto renter households have at least one car. Do you support reduced parking requirements to promote building housing? Will renters in these developments park in the surrounding neighborhood? If not, explain why not.

Yes, especially if it means building more ADU's and Junior ADU's.

I believe most younger renters don't have cars nor do they drive. Now of course some do have a vehicle, but we may need to consider enforcing parking permits for neighborhoods to deter a higher number of vehicles in the communities.

What are your ideas for solving our traffic problems (other than using Caltrain, which is over capacity even with planned expansions)?

Buses, shuttles, and carpooling. It has to be an aggressive plan to reduce traffic over the next 5 and 10 years. We need real solutions now.

GRADE SEPARATION

Describe a creative funding strategy you would employ to improve Palo Alto's grade separation options.

#1 Business play a major role in funding,

#2 obtain state and federal grant money for infrastructure projects,

#3 consider a Caltrain slight rider increase for funding.

How should Palo Alto collaborate with other cities to coordinate options and obtain more funding for grade separations from regional, state, and Federal governments

All cities along the Caltrain line must work together in developing real solutions for the train.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Are you satisfied with current Code Enforcement as a way of protecting neighborhood uses and quality of life? If yes, why? If not, how would you increase the effectiveness of Code Enforcement activities?

Somewhat, I think we need more investigations, but to do it we need more Code Enforcement Officers.

We need to speed up responding to neighbor concerns. There needs to be a 24 hour rule on a response, no one should wait more than a day to hear back from the city. And possibly we should consider a Code Enforcement Residents Board.

CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT

In light of the recent departure of several senior city staff members, what would you do to improve the attraction and retention of quality staff?

Develop a more friendly and healthy work environment! Increase our benefit packages, not only for future employees but existing as well on all employment levels - not just senior staff.

Listen to our workforce, on a regular basis, city workers should have an on-going dialogue with council members - we need to know their concerns.

As for hiring, push for long term commitments from future employee's and offer competitive salaries but remain mindful of our city budget.

How would you improve communications and collaboration with the PAUSD and School Board?

One of the highlights value in Palo Alto are our schools. I have experience to develop open dialogue with my journalism experience.

We need to honest open conversation with each other in the public every quarter what we can do to keep our schools leading edge.

Lack of communication continues to be the source of so many problems. We are separated agencies, but we all have one goal - a united Palo Alto.

The public points out that last minute and significant changes at the dais by Council members is lacking in transparency and not good public policy. Furthermore, last-minute changes do not allow for staff analysis or public input. How can we better ensure the public has a chance to review and comment on these matters?

Transparency is crucial in government. I believe no measure should ever be approved without public comment or review.

No last minute changes should be allowed unless the public weighs in, no excuses.

In my opinion, closed session shouldn't be closed, City Council should never conduct the city business behind closed doors.

And the Council needs to be a check on the City Manager.

FINANCES

How do you plan to fund the shortfall in city's long-term pension and health benefits liability?

Immediately review all spending projects in the city. Let's not just get rid of waste, but any unnecessary projects, and then develop more funding sources - maybe a sales tax increase, but their maybe other ways for funding. I think if we can save money from building garages.

During the last economic downturn, Social Services funding was cut and has still not been restored. Do you support increasing the Social Services allocation to at least prior levels adjusted for inflation?

Yes I'm calling for an increase in social services, I believe they are essential in running a city. We can't do without some things, social services is one thing that needs to always stay in place.

The comp plan acknowledged a need to promote commerce, but not at the need of residential neighborhood.

ENVIRONMENT

Do you support dedicating as parkland those properties currently and long used as park space but not formally dedicated as such in order to protect from future development those spaces currently enjoyed by the public?

I believe park space and open space needs to always be protected. Our growth should never outweigh our commitment to the environment. I'll never support growth in area's currently enjoyed by neighbors.