



## 2020 City Council Candidate Questions

### TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC

**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?**

#### **PAT BURT**

Big businesses and developers should pay their fair share of the impacts they primarily create, including a portion of the the impacts of the housing that is being developed as a result of their employess. The city should re-instate the higher impact fees and re-inititiate pursuit of a significant business tax focused on big business once the economy recovers.

#### **REBECCA EISENBERG**

Yes, businesses should be responsible for reducing traffic and parking impacts. The city can and should require large employers to require that their employees work from home, take public transit, and/or park in lots near the freeway, brought to their offices and back by shuttles. Those are common solutions in other cities that face similar problems.

Businesses also should be taxed and/or pay impact fees that cover their externalities including parking, to pay their fair share like residents do. Right now businesses contribute **zero** to our budget.

That said, all businesses should not be treated the same. We should follow the model set by other cites and tax only our largest and most profitable businesses, exempting: all small and medium businesses, restaurants, retail, community-serving services, and health providers. For example, we potentially could limit our new business tax only to companies with more than 500 employees and/or \$500 million in revenue, and we could create a fund to invest in transit and housing.

#### **LYDIA KOU**

These questions illustrate a repeated failure in Palo Alto's approach to business, that is, it has failed to consider the range and complexity of businesses. We saw this in the (failed) Business License Fee, the attempts to have a Business Tax, the TDAs and TDMs, and the city required merchant associations.

Consider some extreme examples: A psychologist who needs personal contact with clients. Similarly for a physical therapist. Or a retail store where clerks are needed not just to ring up the sales, but help customers find what they need. These are very different from a software company where some/many of the employees can do much of their work remotely.

#### **ED LAUING**

Businesses of a certain size should be required to join the Transportation Management Association for our commercial districts. TMA efforts must be more robust than handing out Clipper passes for Caltrain and include consistent and clear standards for data reporting and accountability for commitments. As stated above, the city must play an oversight role regarding TDM programs by setting standards, monitoring performance and enforcing accountability through penalties for missing goals.

As for parking, the city should complete any parking now under construction (e.g. downtown Cal Ave garage) and then pause on more parking structures. We should structure parking permit fees to encourage use of parking structures as "first choice" for employees. We also must post digital "way finding" signs so people in

cars looking for parking in the commercial districts can find it efficiently. This reduces driver frustration, traffic tie-ups from circling cars, and greenhouse gases.

## **STEVEN LEE**

*[Answerd in conjunction with the question "What do you see as our most serious traffic issues and how would you fix them?"]*

Businesses and our city have a shared role in reducing traffic and parking impacts. We have to acknowledge that our city council for decades have approved unchecked office growth without requiring the necessary housing to go along with it. We, through our elected officials, have enabled this problem in the first place. It is important that we elect candidates this coming November who will get serious about traffic and parking impacts and acknowledge the huge role housing (or rather the lack of housing) has played in generating these traffic and parking impacts. The city needs to get serious about building more market rate and affordable housing near transit corridors and near job centers in order to get our 3-1 jobs to housing imbalance under control. That is the only real way we are going to address traffic and parking impacts. We also need to ask our larger, still profitable businesses to step up, pay their fair share and invest in the services and infrastructure necessary to reduce traffic and parking impacts and more generally support the needs of our community.

## **RAVEN MALONE**

Yes. Businesses should either pay for the parking they need, or reduce their need, but this shouldn't come at the expense of quality of life. Employers should encourage working from home and taking public transit, biking, or carpooling. The PATMA and SRPGo are both ways for businesses to work together, and the City should do more to push employers to work with them. I also support a business license tax on our larger employers to fund transportation improvements.

## **GREER STONE**

No new developments in Palo Alto should be approved without an aggressive Traffic Demand Management plan in place. Currently, Palo Alto's TDM policies lack actual enforcement, and developers have been allowed to make empty promises without fear of reprisal.

My proposal would condition new development on the developer's ability to create a traffic plan that will reduce the impact of anticipated traffic by 30 percent. The developer would then have to come back to council within a year after the project is completed to prove their plan has worked. Any amount of traffic impact over 30 percent would be assessed a penalty. The fees collected by the city for non-compliance could be invested in citywide traffic decongestion projects, such as additional bike paths and pedestrian routes.

## **GREG TANAKA**

I believe it is important for the City to work with neighborhoods to mitigate impacts. When I was President of the College Terrace Resident Association, the neighborhood suffered from cut-through traffic. I worked to get a traffic calming program successfully implemented. Businesses have a role in reducing their traffic and parking impacts.

## **CARI TEMPLETON**

The City should propose solutions that they devise with input from businesses and residents.

## **AJIT VARMA**

Yes, businesses pay taxes and should help the city mitigate the parking impact. Parking can be remedied by contributing to programs to build parking structures their employees and customers use. I think for traffic we should encourage mixed use buildings so people can live in close proximity to where they work.