



## 2022 City Council Candidate Questions

### EXPERIENCE

**What are the top three goals you want to achieve in the next four years on the city council?**

#### **ALEX COMSA**

Those three goals would be my campaign priorities:

1. Smart Housing – Creating and executing on a detailed plan in order to meet the housing element (in line with state law, we have to add 6,086 units over the next eight years) in conjunction with making sure we have the infrastructure in place too (such as schools and transportation), and preserving the character of Palo Alto too. We can achieve both!
2. Economic Recovery – City Budget and Small Businesses: Making sure the small business sector gets back on track, as small businesses need help now more than ever. The City Budget needs to be balanced as if we don't have funds in place, we would not be able to implement all these great programs in order to improve the quality of life of our community.
3. Community Health and Public Safety: Besides supporting and implementing programs such as Safe Street for Palo Alto, I would focus on improving Public Safety. We need to restore some of the vacancies in Palo Alto Police's staff to make sure we have a fully staffed and efficient Police Department. Also, we need to introduce more technology to our Police Department so we can improve its efficiency and its integration with our surrounding cities. The goal is reducing the crime rates that we are currently experiencing, potentially to the pre-Covid level.

#### **LISA FORSELL**

My three priorities are housing, transportation, and sustainability. Here are three specific goals I want to achieve.

On housing: create several specific area plans that spell out the city's vision for a mix of affordable and market rate housing development, that includes green space, bicycle and pedestrian paths, and access to amenities. Create streamlined processes that give developers predictability so they can move forward effectively. I'd like to see construction begin on several projects within four years.

On transportation: one of the most urgent things Palo Alto needs to do is create plans for grade separations at Palo Alto's four Caltrain crossings (Meadow, Charleston, Churchill, and Palo Alto Ave.) I favor the designs that increase bicycle/pedestrian safety and convenience - ideally with completely separate paths - while still offering vehicle access. City Council needs to approve a specific plan and allocate funding. With a shovel-ready project the City can apply for state and federal funds. I'd like to see construction begin on at least two crossings within four years.

On sustainability: In Palo Alto we have a history of leadership in sustainability. What we do matters when other cities can implement similar policies, and eventually pave the way for state-wide measures. In the next four years I'd like to see 40% of households and businesses transition away from gas appliances to electric versions. The City can support this in a number of ways including

providing selection and installation expertise on staff as well as with incentives, subsidies, and financing to pay for the equipment. There are federal dollars available which the City should tap into.

## **BRIAN HAMACHEK**

When I talk to people around town, I hear the same concerns repeated over and over. People are concerned about a diminishing sense of community among their neighbors, the loss of beloved small retail stores, and the growing influence of outside developers. I would want to make meaningful progress toward addressing these concerns.

## **ED LAUING**

**Expand housing** for our citizens – especially the true below-market-rate segment to provide homes for lower-income residents such as teachers, public safety workers, and other service workers. I believe this is a moral imperative for Palo Alto to increase the economic and ethnic diversity of our community.

**Public safety** is a fundamental obligation to our residents. Increased brazen street crimes have many in the community on edge. I want to increase investment in public safety staff with effective recruiting, training, and oversight and carry forward the city's recent progress in matching appropriate responders to different public safety needs.

**Climate Change** can be slowed. Here in Palo Alto we should upgrade the grid and take additional practical steps to migrate to electric. This includes an active role by the city to subsidize and facilitate retrofits for appliances like electric heat pumps and water heaters for so everyone can be part of the solution

## **JULIE LYTHCOTT-HAIMS**

1. **Housing for people at all income levels, including renters and owners**--My number one priority will be to get our Housing Element approved, and to build all of the housing units we need to build to ensure that everyone has a place in Palo Alto. These units should be in keeping with Palo Alto's character no matter where they're put up, and they should be distributed equitably throughout the city rather than stacked on the south side.
2. **Youth Mental Health**--Sadly, no city knows better than Palo Alto that our youth face serious mental health challenges. And in fact, Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy named youth mental health as a crisis at the national level. I will partner with the PAUSD, and with nonprofits, clinicians, and parents to improve the climate of wellness for our youth including revising the way in which we speak to our youth about our values and metrics for success. I will also create a Youth Task Force on Mental Health to empower and amplify the voices of those growing up in this community, and I will be brave enough to listen to what they say. Notably, I have advised other communities how to have such conversations, and it's time that we do it here in Palo Alto.
3. **Urgent Climate Action**--Climate change is the single most urgent issue facing humanity today, and we must all do our part as individuals at the level of our homes, transportation choices, and other aspects of personal energy use to make the world more sustainable. I will message this with an "I'm doing it, so can you" approach as I have rather recently been convinced of the imperative to take urgent climate action – some contractors are replacing our gas furnace with an electric heat pump as I write this! At a city level, I will strive to fulfill our city's promises as outlined by the Sustainability and Climate action plan to ensure that we are on track to reach our 80x30 goals. By 2035 I'd like to see us stop using gas in our city entirely.

## **DORIA SUMMA**

1. Balancing the need for more housing with neighborhood concerns.
2. Protecting parks and open spaces.
3. Ensuring that laws and regulations including zoning laws are applied equitably.

## **VICKI VEENKER**

1. Fighting climate change and accelerating progress toward our climate goals
2. Restoring and improving city services, such as libraries, police, and parks
3. Increase affordable and economically diverse housing, including for families