



2022 City Council Candidate Questions

HOUSING

What ideas do you have for incentivizing housing construction over office construction?

ALEX COMSA

Yes, we need to create more housing to meet the housing element. One way to incentivize housing construction is actually by making it more attractive for owners/developers, and that could be achieved by tweaking some limits related to density, FAR, and similar. We really need projects that are situated next to transit hubs for obvious reasons such as climate change, quality of life for residents, and more ... so I would be inclined to support even more incentives that could be related to parking reduction if, of course, that is backed by traffic studies. Mix-use projects should be prioritized too, so we could have some of the retail stores on the first level, but I also acknowledge that small retail shops are having a really hard time surviving in our town. How can we bring these shops back to our Downtown? That's a good question. Maybe in some of the city-owned properties.

LISA FORSELL

Developers will build what is more profitable. The City can make housing more profitable than office construction with a few techniques, including:

- De-risk housing development by making the process clear and predictable.
- Revisit density, height, and parking requirements along with affordability requirements.
- Create area plans that spell out what the City wants in new housing development, such as green space, bike/pedestrian paths, and access to amenities along with housing. Make it clear that proposals that meet the area plan will be approved.

BRIAN HAMACHEK

We should severely restrict new office construction; even further than the City already has. Palo Alto has a profound jobs-housing imbalance that needs to be corrected.

ED LAUING

On the Planning Commission I have worked on many projects to accomplish this in the last 5+ years. Perhaps the most important is the Housing Incentive Program (HIP). We made a detailed and concerted effort in dialogue with many parties to adjust building parameters to get more housing. Coupled with that, we opened up new areas for housing such as the San Antonio corridor in addition to the commercial zoning already there. That created a lot more space for new homes, and it has worked. We have a number of applications now for housing there.

The PTC, recently adjusted the HIP program again, and City Council just approved it.

I also think we need to keep the office caps in place to restrain any new office until the office housing imbalance is corrected.

JULIE LYTHCOTT-HAIMS

Palo Alto has a 3:1 jobs imbalance. Too many people have to commute for hours to and from their jobs in our city. We need more housing HERE, not more office space. What's more, many office workers are able to work remotely now, so more offices could create even more of a ghost-town feel here. I would look at zoning overlays than incentivize developers to build housing in place of offices, or to add housing atop commercial lots.

DORIA SUMMA

A moratorium on office construction

VICKI VEENKER

I support policies slowing the rate of office development to reduce our jobs:housing imbalance, such as the two office growth caps that Palo Alto has put in place in recent years.